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**The SEO Journey:**

**By Christine Stander**

**The SEO Journey: by Christine Stander**

Working in the fast-paced search engine marketing industry, I have often been faced with the question: "Where exactly does SEO fit into web site development?"

The relevance of SEO cannot be overestimated. Increasingly, webmasters and site owners alike are beginning to realize the importance of optimizing a site to increase rankings on search engine results pages (SERPs). However, they are not always sure how to go about this.

The Growing Importance of SEO:

A few years ago, web sites were created with the goal in mind of bringing companies closer to their clients, i.e. their target market. As the popularity of search engines grew, the number of web sites being created increased alongside. During this process, webmasters and site owners began to realize how important it was to get that all-important competitive edge by reaching the ideal top 20 positions on SERPs. Thus the battle for the top 10 positions ensued.

With this was born the need for people to find and understand a method of constantly reaching those positions. In the case of SEO, the techniques which evolved can be divided into "good guys" and "bad guys" (the proverbial "white hat" SEO and "black hat SEO", respectively.) Of course, some SEOs evolved into more shades of black than others, finding techniques to "outsmart" the spiders, while others remained true to developing content-relevant sites aimed at users rather than the spiders, while still attaining those sought-after top positions. (But that is a topic for another day.)

Although the black-hats may differ from my opinion here, SEO is no quick fix to propel a site into high-ranking top positions. SEO and usability go hand in hand. Target search engines and searchers at the same time by writing good, relevant, converting content. Map your site well with internal links to related sections. In so doing, you will provide your browsers with easy-to-follow navigation and simultaneously help spiders to index your site.

Achieving a well-balanced site is a tedious journey, but when implemented correctly, may produce

## The SEO Journey:

long-term stable results that will drive your site to top positions and increase your conversions.

Know your territory.

If you want to experience something fully, you have to be prepared for it. You have to research what you need, from the most basic needs through to the finest details. I have been privileged enough to experience the wonders of an African safari. Before the journey, one knows to pack comfortable bush clothes. One also knows that you're not going to need high heels or suits in the bush. It's the basics that count: jeans, sneakers and t-shirts.

When you go out on a game drive, what keeps you at ease amongst lion, leopard, elephant and buffalo is the fact that firstly, you know you're in a Land Rover, driven by an experienced safari guide, and

secondly, that if it comes to it, there's a trusty rifle in the back seat.

The lessons illustrated by this analogy are: research your territory, be prepared, dispense with what is unnecessary and remember that the basics count most of all.

To take the analogy further, launching a web site is not unlike going on safari. Before sending it on its journey to the World Wide Web, you need to pack it full of the things you know it's going to need. Start with the basics.

- Know the territory.

- oWhat is the industry which you are entering?

- Know the climate.

- oHow competitive are your competitors?

- oDoes it call for additional optimization methods such as PPC?

- Know the predators.

- oResearch your competition. Who's going to be out there with you?

- oAre they well prepared? Scrutinize the optimization fluctuation of their web sites.

- Choose a suitcase.

- oEnsure the SEO strategy is developed around the technology you choose to develop the site. Flash, Javascript and dynamic sites' strategies may vary from conventional "straightforward" html web sites.

- Pack accordingly.

- oThe site's clothes are the copy and design elements. Ensure both are enticing, convincing and relevant, and that they flow with the general theme of the site.

- oEnsure your key-phrases fluctuation is relevant to the page content and does not deter from the natural flow of the copy.

- Be vigilant.

- oRegularly check your site's key-phrases ranking and follow-up on your competitors to see if they have made any changes to their strategy.

- Adapt.

- oIn an ever-changing, fast-paced environment, it is crucial that SEOs are able to adapt their style to the most relevant optimization requirement for the intended market.

## The SEO Journey:

SEO is a crucial element throughout the life cycle of a web site. Its roots are firmly planted from the site conception to the launch, and tenderly keep it stable throughout its life.

The only question remaining is: "If you choose to call in the experts, should you do this before or after the fact?"

Choose your guide:

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) consultants can be called upon at any time during the production of a site. It is preferable, however, to include them in the process as early as possible to ensure that your site is as prepared as possible for the journey ahead.

When you go out on a game drive, you have one of two options - either you drive yourself, or you choose to drive with a guide. You may end up driving along the same path, but the guide knows the territory best. They know where to look for the footprints and may often find the leopard hidden in the tree that you may not have found.

SEO is much the same. You may choose to self-optimize your site or to consult a professional. You may achieve a similar result, but the expert will know which potholes to look out for.

The journey ahead:

Whether you choose to self-optimize your web site or call on an expert, the sooner you begin planning your SEO strategy, the better. Whichever option you choose, send your site to the World Wide Web prepared.

By keeping the basics in mind and commencing your SEO strategy early, you'll ensure that the end result is a web site that is easy to find by clients and search engine spiders alike. It will not only speak to your target market, but be loved by search engine spiders.

Enjoy your journey. Preparation will only improve the ride.

Christine Stander is a professional search engine optimisation and online marketing strategist with experience in many facets of search marketing, user behaviour analysis and brand management. For more information on services offered, kindly refer to: <http://www.synthasite.com>

## **SEO – Search Engine Optimization You Can Do**

**By J. Ratliff**

### **SEO – Search Engine Optimization You Can Do by J. Ratliff**

We all know what SEO is, and it seems like it has kind of an "executive" sound to it doesn't it? The truth is, thousands of webmasters spend millions of dollars every year on SEO services. Now, I am not discounting the importance of these services.

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Indeed, SEO is very important not only to the big website portals, but to your website as well.

However, I do believe that a lot of the people who spend thousands annually, do so without needing to. I have done SEO work on a dozen websites for businesses, and about 20 of my own. My secret? It's all in the software.

If you have not checked out this software, I highly recommend it.

(IBP) for

short. I use it everyday, not only for my websites, but also for any SEO work I do.

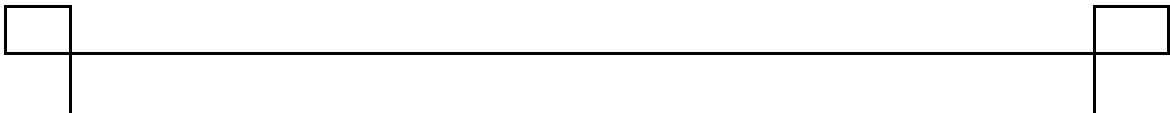
It does cost around \$200, but it is worth every penny plus some.

Save money and do your own SEO work.

J. Ratliff is a webmaster, part time SEO guru, and affiliate guru. He has achieved certified SEO status from ExpertExam.



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