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Tips for Making Your Pages Search Engine Friendly

By Donald Nelson

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Your web site may look beautiful to your eyes, but what about to the "eyes" of a search engine? If you can understand how a search engine "sees" your site, than you can design the site or make the necessary changes so that your site will get a higher ranking in search results.

The first thing to consider is that search engines do not see pictures or other graphics. If you have rendered some very important text (loaded with keywords) as an image, a beautiful multi-colored gif for example, the search engine will not index these keywords. There are some wizard-oriented web creation tools that may automatically change your text into a gif or jpg image. It may look like text to you, but not to a search engine. Thus, you have to weigh the relative importance of good images against the need to give the search engine something to chew on, some "spider food". Usually a balance has to be struck. At one extreme are pages that contain only images. For example if you have an entry page with a beautiful image of the ocean and a beautiful sunset with one word saying Enter. It may be dramatic looking, but it is not very interesting for a search engine. Similarly sites that are only Flash images, don't give anything for the search engine's "spider" (robotic gathering tool) to gobble up and put into the index. If you want to use Flash, consider making a hybrid page, one that has some elements, such as informative text, of normal HTML and a section in Flash. Keep this in mind and make sure that your important concepts and keywords do appear on your pages in a text format.

However as pictures and graphics are very important, there is something that can be done to optimize them for search engine recognition. You can put an alt tag or alternative text on each image. The search engines will read this text and index the words you have entered. Thus if you have your company's logo at the top of the page Acme Widgets, you can write an alternative text: "Acme Widgets, California's first producer of Electronic Widgets". Put your mouse over the A1-Optimization logo at the top of this page and you can see the alt text which I used for this image. Search engines will see this tag and the tag will also appear when your web visitors put their mouse on the image. Whenever you have an image, take the opportunity to put an alternative text tag. But remember that, although the alternative text tag is indeed indexed by the search engines, it is not given as much importance as other text elements.

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If you really have some important text that you want emphasized then use the heading tags, h1, h2, h3, h4 etc, and make use of bold text. These heading tags and text rendered in bold font are given more importance by search engines than other text because headings are thought to indicate the main concepts of your page. The heading tags may not look as nice as a gif image, but if they contain important keywords then whatever you think you may lose in beauty by discarding them, will be returned to you in better ranking positions in Internet searches for your important keywords.

The second thing to do is to Put your important text near the top of the page. Suppose you have put your company's logo (Acme Widgets) at the top of the page, as a gif or jpg image. Underneath it you might put some text reading: "California's first producer of Electronic Widgets". If California and Electronic Widgets are important keywords for you then you have started off your page very well. In fact, some search engines use the first paragraph or phrase as the description that is shown in search

results. So if the first paragraph or first phrase really says a lot and is attractive it may entice someone to visit your page. (Getting a top result in a search engine is one thing, but remember someone has to think that your page is interesting enough to visit if they are going to click on it, and the description shown by the search engine may be the deciding factor determining whether they click through to your page or to your competitor's page)

But, what is the top of the page? It seems obvious but search engines do not see or rather, read pages in the same way that our eye sees the page. Recently I built a web site for someone and then looked at the first search engine results for that site. I saw the words "Choose your language" as the description. (The search engine took a phrase from the navigation bar on the left hand side of the page, where surfers were invited to choose which language version of the site they wanted to see). This happened because search engines have to go through the table structure of the site. In order to align the different elements (text and pictures) of a site, designers often divide the page into tables. If a site is divided into two vertical tables, one for the left hand navigation and one for the body. The spider will first read everything in the table on the left before going to the table on the right. I corrected this problem by putting a pithy, keyword laden descriptive phrase in the left hand column just above the navigation elements. So, make sure that your important phrases are in places where the spider will see them before they reach other less important phrases. If the table structure on your page is not giving the right picture to the spider, then you should make the necessary modifications to correct the problem.

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How Google Can Help You improve Your Search Rankings

By Denise Nuttall

Tips for Making Your Pages Search Engine Friendly

Search Engine Ranking is the most essential ingredient for free traffic. Every body knows that search engine optimization, quality back links and original content are the key ingredients for good search engine rankings. Whether it is a niche one is competing in or a highly competitive keyword, these are a must.

Search Engine Optimization is a highly competitive keyword and a search in Google brings up 93 million search results (93,400,000 to be precise). Sites compete with each other to bring the best search engine optimization services. There are those who guarantee results though not always with legal means.

Ask anyone in which search engine they would like to rank at the top. Eight out of ten would vote for Google. This does not come as a surprise because Google gets most of the search engine visitors. So if Google gives the search engine optimization tips, what could be better than hearing it right from the horse's mouth? Yes, Google has a whole lot of tools to help us with search engine optimization and they are absolutely free.

To use this facility one needs to first to set up an account with Google after which one can go to

. Once here, the "webmaster help" section needs to be selected. From

there one can go to the "webmaster guidelines" section where Google gives guidelines on design, content, quality and other technicalities. Once a website is ready, its URL can be submitted at

(this is a very slow process as it may take at least six weeks for the website to be crawled)

A Google Sitemap is a very effective tool to enable Google to study the structure of the website and increase the number of pages indexed. A Google Sitemap maker tool can be downloaded for free at

. It's an excellent tool and a Sitemap is created within minutes. Once a Sitemap

is submitted Google searches for the Sitemap and displays a message after checking the Sitemap. If there are any errors it will indicate as to what those errors are and the same can be rectified and the Sitemap can be resubmitted.

Google also outlines the various do's and don'ts of search engine optimization. Some black hat tricks like link farming, cloaking, doorway pages are a strict no-no. One can also find an abundance of information on creating Google friendly sites.

So with Google on ones side, the chances of a good search engine ranking increases. With these tools one does not require expensive search engine optimization tools to increase search engine rankings.

Denise Nuttall owns the "Home Business Resource Directory" where you can find everything you'll ever need to start, run and grow a home business at:



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