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What Your Web Designer Isn't Telling You

By Kalena Jordan

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If I was to ask you right now "Are you absolutely certain that your web site is optimized for high search engine rankings?", what would you say?

What if I was to ask "How many search engines has your site been registered with?" Or how about "Does your site have tailored title and META Tags?"

If you would answer "No" or "I don't know" to any of these questions, you would be amongst the 70% of web site owners whose web sites are missing out on search engine traffic because they are not designed for high rankings. Has your web designer optimized YOUR site? Have they submitted it to the top ten search engines and directories? More than likely, you don't know because they haven't told you. Ask them TODAY!

But what exactly is search engine optimization? Simply explained, it is the technique of attaining a high ranking in search engines and directories via changes to your site code to make it more search engine compatible.

Did you know that key search words and phrases in your "title tag" and "META tags" (in the HTML script of your site) and body text are often very important references that search engines use when ranking web sites for search relevancy? Optimizing your site meta tags and your body text for search engines ensures that it ranks highly for particular words or phrases that you would expect potential visitors to type in to search engines to find your site.

For example, if you are a Miami florist, you should have logical search phrases such as "flowers", "Miami florists", "bouquets Miami" and even target search terms such as "Miami weddings", "Valentine's Day gifts" etc integrated in your title and meta tags, as well as in the visible text of your site. That way, if anyone types in those phrases in a search engine, your site is more likely to appear higher in the search results.

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So why wasn't your site optimised for search engines when it was built? Depending on who developed your site and how it was built, you'll find a million different reasons for this. Many web developers believe it is the site marketer's job to ensure the site is found in search engines and vice versa. Most don't bother submitting your site to the important search engines, assuming you or your marketing department will do it. Or perhaps it wasn't in your original development budget.

Not many web design firms know how or have time to optimize a site successfully, no matter what they tell you. They might feel it is outside their core business, or they might believe it is not part of the "design process". Consequently, your site can be launched for many months without the search engines having any idea it exists. Some web development firms don't include even the most basic META tags in your site code when building it. Or those that do include META tags without close consultation with you, resulting in the wrong search terms used and poor performance. This is quite typical! Remember that search engine optimization is a relatively new science and requires both client

interaction and constant monitoring to be successful.

The bottom line? If your designer can't show you the high rankings they've achieved for other clients, they won't be able to optimize your site properly. Search engine optimization (SEO) specialists have sprung up to fill the need for these services. Many SEO's will work either directly with you or with your web site designer to ensure your site gets the exposure it deserves in the most popular search engines and directories. Find a specialist with a good track record and reap the results.

Remember, search engine users generally only explore the first 10 or 20 sites in the search results. If you site isn't in the top 20, you won't be found, it's as simple as that. Always include search engine optimization into your marketing budget or your site could be as effective as a billboard at the end of a dead end street.

Article by Kalena Jordan, CEO of Web Rank. Kalena was one of the first search engine optimization experts in Australia & New Zealand and is well known and respected in her field. For more of her articles on search engine ranking and online marketing, please visit <http://www.high-search-engine-ranking.com>

7 ways to keep web development costs down

By Jon Wilson

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Many web development projects – large and small alike –

can produce difficulties for both sides of the

designer/client relationship. There are opportunities for

designers and clients to become frustrated. Most businesses have little experience of commissioning web projects, and for designers it is difficult to communicate their needs to clients.

There are a number of concepts that will help both sides of the relationship, and most importantly from the client side of the equation, keep costs down.

Spend Smart

Remember what services you are buying. Paying a web designer to carry out data entry or word-processing tasks for your web project is not a cost effective use of your web budget.

Unless you are engaging your designer to carry out copywriting or copyediting services for you, try to ensure that the source materials are in a form as close to the final product as possible.

Plan Properly

Get as much work done up front as possible. Changes are easier in the planning stages than in the execution. If you are uncomfortable with the colours or layout at the concept sketch stage, it is safer not to assume that the niggles will 'grow on you' as time goes by.

Trust Your Designer

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Trust your web designer. Whilst it is true that the customer is always right, but the designer should be more experienced in the field of Internet design and development, and should be able to offer you plenty of constructive advice at all stages. If you cannot trust your web designer, you may need to find another web designer that you can.

Know What You Want

Try to establish your own requirements in advance. The more information you can present to your web designer on who your company is, what your company does, your target audience, and so on, the better.

Building a basic profile of your requirements before engaging a designer is free. Having a designer build a profile of your requirements from scratch will be chargeable, even if the charge is not transparent.

Concentrate on your goals and objectives.

Think Results Not Methods

Think more about what you want to achieve than how you want to do it. A goal-oriented approach makes the communication between client and designer easier – especially if the terminology is unclear.

Concentrating on your goals and objectives will mean

that you are detailing your requirements based on your own area of expertise: your business.

Again, place trust in your designer's experience – present your designer with the goals you are trying to achieve, or the functionality you are looking for, and let them present you with the best solutions.

Keep it Clear

Make sure that the documentation at all stages of the project is clear and understood by both parties.

If there is any relevant terminology specific to your market or industry, make sure the designer knows what it means – and vice versa: your designer should explain any specialised concepts used.

If your designer is presenting you with something that is unclear or unintelligible, let them know as soon as possible – if you understand what they are talking about, you will be able to understand what they are delivering.

Remember Who's Who

In every web development project the client has a role and the designer has a role. Remember which is which.

If you are paying your designer to fulfil your requirements, let them do so. If you are going to do the

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work yourself, why pay a designer?

The design process should be a collaboration – it makes it far more likely that the end product will be something that you are happy to be paying for. Provided you have chosen a good designer, remember that you know your business, and they know design. It is up to you to tell your designer about your business, and up to your designer to tell you about design.

The little things can keep any supplier–customer relationship running smoothly – the seven points in this article are just some of the ways in which the designer–client relationship can be made that little bit more harmonious.

Jon Wilson is an independent writer, consultant and developer, bringing high quality internet services within reach of small businesses in a time effective, cost effective manner. For more information and articles, see his site at <http://www.notbob.co.uk> or email jon.wilson@threespot.co.uk



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