

The Basics of Search Engine Optimization

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- Making sure your site scores high on searches for relevant content
- Search Engine Optimization (or SEO) is concerned with the placement of your site in the natural (or organic) search results of certain keywords or phrases
- Why is it important?
 - 65% of all online sales on e-commerce sites originate from search engines
 - The web is growing so fast, you can't use a human-managed directory to keep up



- Google, Yahoo!, MSN (in that order)
- Together, these 3 have over 90% of the search engine market
- Other search engines exist, but the majority of them follow the same models as the big 3, so whatever you do to optimize for the big 3 will optimize you for the others as well.
- We will mostly focus on Google since it's the largest and other sites take their lead from Google



- **Goal:** You want your site to be identified as the best destination on the internet for certain topics (keywords)
- Content is king!
- You can use all the tricks you want to try and drive traffic to your site, but when it comes down to it, it's content that will be bringing them back



- Search engines attempt to find the most relevant content for certain keywords. Search engine 'spiders' will 'crawl' the web, indexing content.
- In the past (mid 90s), simple things like word frequency were good enough
- However, the explosive growth of the web and the rise of e-commerce brought competition to search engine ranking
- Many sites started to 'game the system', and used techniques like keyword stuffing and link spamming to try and artificially inflate their search engine rank



- Search engines (in particular Google) started to fight back against this by making their ranking algorithms more complicated
- Also by blacklisting some sites that insisted on 'not playing by the rules'
- Google's PageRank algorithm is a closely guarded secret, but it takes into account dozens and dozens of different factors to determine where a page ranks in search results for a keyword.



- In addition to PageRank, which Google uses to rank individual pages, Google also has TrustRank, which ranks entire domains
- A very popular domain (like myspace.com, craigslist.org, or facebook.com) will have a very high trust rank.
- So if one of those domains links to you, your value in Google's eyes goes way up
- Other things that Google considers:
 - Age of your domain (the older the better)
 - Site design and ease of navigation
 - Rich content (not just text blobs)
 - Lots of inter- and outer-linking



- identify your key words
 - know your product and content
 - know your competition
 - know your audience
 - research – Google AdWords suggestions, Yahoo! Suggestions, wordtracker.com
- Have a well-designed, well laid-out site
 - META tags (description and keywords)
 - descriptive page titles
 - SEO-friendly URLs
 - well designed anchor text
 - interior linking
 - site maps



```
<meta name="description" content="AIM Institute  
- a not-for-profit membership organization that  
provides information technology leadership to  
Nebraska and the surrounding region." />
```

```
<meta name="keywords" content="AIM Institute,  
Applied Information Management Institute,  
Workforce Development, Community Growth,  
Strengthen Information Technology Education,  
Strengthen IT Education" />
```



- Use your keywords as anchor text throughout your site.
- Link to yourself!
- Best example – Wikipedia
- From Wikipedia:

Omaha is the largest city in the state of **Nebraska**, **United States**, and is the **county seat** of **Douglas County**.



- Example of an unfriendly URL:

http://www.olug.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=content

- Example of a friendly URL:

http://digg.com/environment/Spectacular_photo_of_underwater

- Simple rule – if it's easier for a human to read, it will be easier for a search engine spider to read



- What we've described so far is what's called 'on page optimization'. It accounts for about 10% of what you need to do.
- If you're really interesting in competing in the SEO game, then you have to appreciate it for what it is – a never-ending competition
- To get really serious, you're going to work with a search engine marketing firm that can help you build entire campaigns around your target markets



DO NOT:

- change your domain name. The older your domain name is, the better
- get involved with 'affiliate' programs that promise to link to your site from millions of other sites on the internet. This is a quick way to get blacklisted.
- Engage in shady in-page practices, like keyword spamming (lots of unrelated keywords in white text on a white background) or automatic page generation to make your site seem bigger than it is



DO:

- Focus on your content. If you can become the definitive resource for your content on the web, then you are set. This might even mean linking to your competitors!
- Be honest and straightforward about what your site is and what it offers
- Avoid overuse of flash, java or ajax. If you use them, make sure that the site is still workable for browsers that have those features disabled.
- Think of each of your pages as a 'key word landing page' that acts as a funnel into your site.
- Use the Google webmaster tools and Yahoo site explorer tools

Thank you



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