

An Introductory Guide To Search Engine Optimisation

By Zac Nelles

Search Engines aim to provide searches with the most relevant content they can for the keyword searched.

A good website in the search engine's eyes is a website that the searcher goes to and then doesn't go back to the search engine to look again.

Getting to the top of the search engines means you have to provide visitors with a reason to stay, a way to scratch their itch finding what they are looking for.

The art of keywords

Ranking well for the right keywords is what SEO is all about. Choose the right keywords and rank well for them and you will be easily able to get twice the amount of traffic you can from the paid search results. Twice the traffic should mean twice the conversions.

So when selecting keywords, make sure there is good traffic relative to the difficulty of getting to the top of the search engines. Ranking well for keywords that produce buyers, opt-ins or leads is your primary focus. This simple consideration is often left out of the SEO discussion. How are you going to do something profitable with the traffic you are trying to get?

Many businesses operate on the presumption that if you get enough traffic some of it will be bound to convert. I'd really only care about getting the buyers

to my site. Wouldn't get too concerned about attracting non-buyers.

Technical Considerations that can harm your rankings

The second step in SEO is trying to find all the things on your site that are stopping you from getting up the rankings. Things like programming the site in Flash rather than more search engine friendly languages. Being sure that the search engines are able to navigate your entire site easily and that pages don't have long dynamic URL's.

Be wary of using frames on your site (yes still), pages that take a long time to load, displaying text in graphic images – your visitors can read the text but the search engines can't.

All these things can harm your rankings.

If you are using a Content Management System (CMS) make sure that it doesn't generate too much code for the page or dictate each page's URL is or partially write your title and Meta tags. These kind of technical gaffs harm your search engine rankings unnecessarily and once dealt with, give your rankings a onetime shot in the arm.

Be careful with your URL's, many sites have the following home pages in their navigation:

www.yoursite.com

yoursite.com

yoursite.com/index

www.yoursite.com/index

Now a search engine will read this as four separate pages all with the same content – which is bad.

Search engines don't like duplicate content and will pull your site down the rankings if you have it.

So keep your content on one page, use a 301 redirect for the other pages sending people to the home page you choose to use.

Keyword Rich Content

Once you've taken care of the technical things the next thing you have to look at is the copy on your website. Copy that is original and contains keywords in the right places has a better chance of scoring better in the search engines.

The copy on each webpage will tell the search engines which keywords the page is relevant to.

Linking

The links to your web pages will tell the search engines how important each page is. There are two sorts of links to contend with.

Internal Links

Links on your own website to other pages on your website. It's important to get these ones right because you can control the text in the link (anchor text).

The anchor text influences what the search engine sees the page being linked to is about.

So say you have a web site that is about a circus. Now you have a page all about pink elephants on your website.

On another page you have where you mention the pink elephants. You could put *click here* to find out about our pink elephants. (Link anchor text is click here)

Or

You could say something like our pink elephants are the pinkest and great fun for the kids to see. And you use the words Pink Elephants as the anchor text.

When a search engine looks at this page in the first scenario it will see that the page about pink elephants is about 'click here' in the second it was about 'pink elephants.' People who want to see pink elephants probably going to type pink elephants into the search engine.

Internal links are the only links you can control do your best to get them as search optimised as possible.

External Links

Nothing will get your website up the search engine rankings as links to your website from authoritative sites. These are sites that the search engine sees as authoritative not what you think. In-bound links are the largest single factor in determining your website's search engine ranking.

At one stage there were enough sites linking to George W. Bush's bio page on the White House website with the term *miserable failure* in the link text that it got number one ranking in Google when you searched for *miserable failure*. (Google has fixed this, now *miserable failure* yields mostly news results about this event, affectionately called a Google Bomb)

Funny? I'd say yes, but a powerful lesson about getting high quality links to your own webpages containing relevant keywords in the link text.

Have a Content Plan

Search engines prefer sites that are consistently adding new content. So have a plan on how to do this. It might be a blog. Regular addition of articles is another way. But you have to do it, some of your competitors will and they will be rewarded by the search engines for doing it.

It has the additional benefit of providing more material for on your site for others to link to. Most of the incidental links

will come from another site linking to your content or republishing it.

Time

The final factor is time. Google especially is reticent to hand over top spot to a newer website. You have to give it a reason to unseat the current occupier of top spot for a keyword. Especially if top spot is occupied by a website that has been servicing the search engines well for many years.

Time is your enemy when you are trying to climb the search engine rankings. It is your friend once you are at the top. Choose the keywords you want top ranking for carefully because it can be a long wait before you're rewarded. The search engines want to be sure that you are what you seem to be, in it for the long haul and not some fly-by-night operation that will be here today and gone tomorrow. Getting to the top of the search engines can be a war of attrition, but if you plan correctly it certainly is winnable

Zac Nelles is freelance direct response copywriter who specialises in business to business copy. Sign up for his free email course 7 ways to improve your advertising at www.zacnelles.com

To arrange a free no obligation copy-writing consultation call +61 4 21 604 983 or by email at zac@zacnelles.com

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