SiteCM™

SiteCM Common Sense SEO

About Search Engine Optimization

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is a complex subject fraught with misunderstandings and technical challenges. One of the most common confusions is the difference between SEO and Web Marketing. Web Marketing looks at a diverse range of methods for increasing your visibility across the Internet. SEO focuses on web content and site structure to ensure that your site will be indexed the way you want and will draw visitors from search results.

SEO can cost thousands of dollars if you contract out the work. Most SEO firms won't tell you what they are doing because they don't want you to know how easy it is. The sense of mystery is how they make their money. We would rather point your team in the right direction and let you do the work. You can still spend that money, but it is cheaper for you to give a part time employee an extra 5 hours a week and do the SEO work in house.

"Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the process of increasing the amount of visitors to a Web site by ranking high in the search results of a search engine. The higher a Web site ranks in the results of a search, the greater the chance that that site will be visited by a user. It is common practice for Internet users to not click through pages and pages of search results, so where a site ranks in a search is essential for directing more traffic toward the site.

SEO helps to ensure that a site is accessible to a search engine and improves the chances that the site will be found by the search engine." www.webopedia.com

SEO looks at how you create every page on your site. SEO should be something you do out of habit. An external SEO firm will rewrite everything for you after you have already taken the time to create it and add it to your site.

" Isn't it better to know how to write it well in the first place? "

No SEO firm can guarantee you top position on Google or any reputable search engine for anything other than your brand name, and even then it is not a sure thing. Search engines gain our loyalty and trust by serving us useful search results. They spend millions of dollars every year paying very smart people to figure out ways to keep the system tamper proof. If someone finds a loophole, chances are it will be plugged and the chances are also good that sites that use that loophole will end up being penalized. Unless you have an SEO budget to match Google's R&D budget, it is not a wise move to try and crack the code. Save your money and buy lottery tickets.

"MSN Search website ranking is completely automated. The MSN Search ranking algorithm analyzes factors such as web page content, the number and quality of websites that link to your pages, and the relevance of your website's content to keywords. The algorithm is complex and never human-mediated. You cannot pay to boost your website's relevance ranking" www.msn.com

Search engines use little computer programs called bots, or spiders that follow links between sites and web pages and index all the text content on the pages they visit. The search engine uses this content and many other factors in a complex algorithm to determine what your site is about and how relevant it is to any given search request.

The key to search engine visibility is to have easily accessible web content. This means no frames, and judicious use of Flash. Flash should be avoided because it is just a big vector based image file with nothing a search engine can identify as text. The text a Flash file contains won't end up in the search engines which means it won't be shown in search results, and any links in Flash files cannot be followed by the spiders. We are not saying Flash cannot be used on your site, but use it judiciously. Flash is great for product demonstrations or entertainment but should never be used for your information

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Keywords: How do you want to be found?

Once you have a search engine friendly web site, you need to think about what you are going to say. Google uses a complex formula that weighs over 500 criteria to determine your page rank and relevance for any search term and they guard the secret carefully. There are some good guidelines that you can follow for common sense search engine optimization.

You can't be all things to all people. It is important to concentrate on a handful of carefully selected words. Think about your industry and its vocabulary. If you sell "clothing" you don't have a chance of ranking well for the keyword "clothing". You will have a better chance of owning more specific key phrases like "no-iron chef uniform" or "blue silk skirt". A lawyer is better of focusing on geographic and specialized terms like "corporate lawyer Mississauga" than "lawyer".

Think like a customer. Make sure you use terms that your customers will use and avoid jargon unless your customers will also be using jargon.

Do your research. WordTracker (www.wordtracker.com) can tell you how many people are searching for a term and the number of sites that are returned for every search. You will have a better chance getting good ranking by focusing on terms that have a high page to search ratio.

Building your pages in SiteCM

Browser Title

Your page titles should use keywords that you want to be visible. Words used in the title tags are important to search engines not only to tell them what the content is about, but your page title is used as the link to your site in the search results. The title is the most eye catching part of the search results and will be clicked more frequently if the searcher sees what they are looking for quickly. Lots of people build sites with a page titled "about us". Have you ever searched for "about us"? I did. Google returned "about 14,290,000,000" pages. Yes. 14 Billion pages. It is much more effective to have a page titled "About <your fabulous product and keywords> by <your company in your location>" or "About <your company> and <your fabulous product & keywords>". Whatever you do, do not call your home page "Home Page" (11 billion results).

In SiteCM you can set your browser title on the Metadata tab of the page editor as shown here.

Standard Metatags / Advanced Metatags

Browser Title	Overview
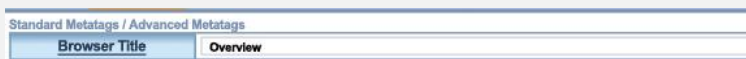
Your company name is included by default after your title and the complete title is shown at the top of the visitors' web browser and as a link in the search results.

 Overview || SiteCM Content Management System .

(let everyone know what they are going to see before they see it)

SiteCM allows you to easily change page titles and Metadata within your pages. When you are using the manager to create or edit pages, you will have several options when setting up your pages. The next section contains screenshots from within the SiteCM manager and the results when using searching engines like Google.

Metatags

The next part of the page editor is your metadata which is contained in your meta-tags. Meta tags are bits of HTML code that do not show on your pages, but are designed to tell people what your page is about. The most common, are the search engine keywords, and search engine description. Google uses your Description metatag to display with the link to your page.

The metatag description should be a keyword rich readable sentence or two. Try to limit your description to 150 to 250 characters. Search engines will use this description in the search results to readability is important. Different search engines reproduce different amounts of your description so make sure your key(word) message is at the start of the description.

(place the most relevant keywords at the start, keep it short!)

Google stopped using keyword meta-tags because they are too easy to stuff with irrelevant data or repeating key phrases (known as search engine spamming). So many people did this that Google started to ignore the meta-keywords. Some of the smaller search engines still use Keywords though so it is not a total waste of time. Keywords and key phrases should be separated by commas. If the search engine detects keyword spamming, they will ignore all your keywords so include your keywords and phrases 3 to 7 times at the most, and not all at once. The total length of your keywords should be 1024 characters or less.

(search engine descriptions are your first impressions)

Your page content is the heart and soul of your search engine success. A page with no text to get indexed and analyzed will not do you any good on the search engines. The reality is that you have absolutely no idea exactly what your prospects will be searching for. We once got a call from one of the top technology companies in Canada because we had one page where I used the exact phrase that they searched for. It wasn't part of a huge strategy, but it helped them find us. Creating good content takes time and money but content is what gets indexed by the search engines and search engines bring in traffic.

Text should be optimized for your customers and to help you sell. After all, you need to convert your site visitors to customers if you want to make any money.

Keep each page relatively short and focused on a single topic. By focusing on a specific topic on each page you will increase what is known as the "keyword density" of the page and the search engine relevance for keywords related to that topic. If your page covers multiple topics, your relevance for any individual search topic and related keywords is reduced. This recommendation is also supported by good web writing guidelines that recommend keeping pages and concepts short and encourage the use of bullet points.

Where you say something is almost as important as what you are saying. Start your page with a headline formatted using the <h1> or <h2> HTML tags. This helps your visitors to quickly see what the page is about. Try and include a keyword or keyword variant or two if it can stay readable. This reinforces your keyword relevance for the search engine by indicating that you are highlighting this topic for your site visitors.

The page content should use your keyword vocabulary as often as possible without detracting from the flow and readability of the page. Cramming keywords into your content might be great for search engines, but if it makes your page hard to read and your site visitors choke, then you are not doing yourself any favours. Where possible, use variations on your core vocabulary including plurals of key terms and positioning of words in your key phrases. If you focus on "<city> <product>" as a phrase, and someone searches for <product> <city>, you are less likely to show up so if possible present the terms both ways.

Using images to layout text creates a nice visual effect and gives you precise control over font and positioning, but the text cannot be indexed by the search engines. If you do use images that contain text, make sure you use the ALT tag to replicate the text contained in an image.

When linking between pages on your site, use keywords in your link text. Most search engines pay attention to the context of the links into your pages. If a link is coming to your page from a related site with a strong page rank, then it is worth more than a link coming in from a generic directory listing. The same applies for what the link actually says when it is linking to you. It is common to see things like "SiteCM is a powerful content management tool. Learn more!" which is great if you want the search engines to give weight to the keyword relevance for "Learn More". It would help your SEO more to make the link phrase something like. "Learn more a powerful Content Management System, known as SiteCM". The search engine will then know that the page you are linking to is about a Content Management System, known as SiteCM.

Use keywords in your web page file names. Search engines index the full URL of your pages so use your keywords in your directory and page names. For example, a URL of "www.siteCM.com/products/sitecm/seocontentmanagement.htm" is more search engine friendly than if the content was located at "/pages/tips.htm"
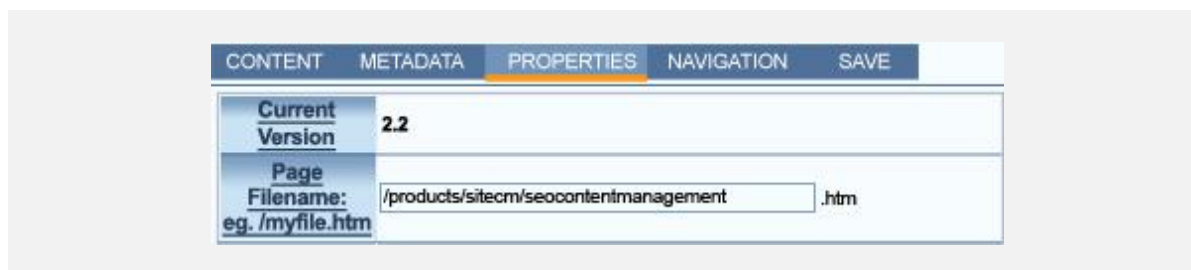
Some content management systems pull your data from a database using variables. Your page file name might be *"template.php?id=46".* This does not tell the search engines anything about the page. SiteCM is different. SiteCM allows you to file your content in a logical format. Not only is this an excellent way to keep your website organized, it will also help with your search engine placement.

Getting Incoming Links

Once you have your site and content ready your next search engine chore is to get relevant links into your site. This is where SEO starts to cross the line into search engine marketing (SEM). Getting good quality incoming links takes a considerable amount of effort and not all links are the same.

The best links are ones created organically because your content is compelling and worth linking to. Search engines pay attention to the topic of the pages that are linking to you. If a bunch of pages that are about your product / content all link to you, then search engines know that you are a good source for information on that product or topic and will rank you higher on relevant searches.

(create useful content)

There are also thousands of web directories. Most are not worth anything because they do not get any traffic. Don't bother with directories that ask you to link to them. These sorts of link farms are ignored by most search engines and have no significant relevance for any keywords. **Look for industry and localized directories that show up when searching with your target keywords.** If there is a larger organization or community that you belong to, it will likely have a high relevance for your search terms. If you are a member, look into the possibility of getting a high value link to your site from theirs. There are also likely industry magazines, discussion groups, and blogs. Participate in online communities and without being gratuitous, try and get links back to your site. This can be as simple as having a link to your site in your signature for a post. If you can, see about contributing articles that draw on your industry knowledge.

Search Engine Don'ts

In addition to the warning about Flash, there are some other search engine traps to avoid.

An old trick that some people still try is to include text at the bottom of pages that is the same colour as the background and is keyword dense gobblygook. Don't. If you do not want visitors to read the text, then the Search Engines rightfully assume you are trying to pull a fast one on somebody.

Doorway pages are another popular but ineffective search engine technique. These are small or single page sites whose sole purpose is to appear as a unique page and send links to your main site. The search engines are onto these and will ignore them and perhaps penalize you.

Resources

http://www.searchenginewatch.com

www.google.com/webmasters/docs/search-engine-optimization-starter-guide.pdf

www.seochat.com

http://www.searchengineposition.com

SiteCM™ *Professional CMS*

www.sitecm.com