

# Search Engine Optimization

“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](http://www.webopedia.com)

## Why is Search Optimization important?

Search engines are the primary way people look for web sites. The most popular search engines today are Yahoo.com, Google.com, AltaVista.com, Ask.com, AllTheWeb.com, MSN.com and AOL.com.

## How do search engines work?

There are basically two types of search engines. Those that are powered by robots (also called bots, spiders, crawlers) and those that are powered by human submission.

1. Crawler based search engines are powered by automated software that visits the Web site and reads the information on the site's pages. They also follow HTML links to other pages within the website. The content found is “indexed” within the search engine's own database and forms the foundation of the search engine web page inventory. The crawler will periodically return to the site to check for updates to the content.
2. Human-powered search engines employ people to manually rate Web sites by following links and decide if a site should or should not be added.

## How do search engines go about determining relevancy, when confronted with hundreds of millions of web pages to sort through?

They follow a set of rules, known as an algorithm. These algorithms change frequently, but some general rules are consistently applied:

1. **Keywords** are words used to describe the service or product you offer. Put yourself in the customer's shoes...if a customer is looking for your product or service, what words or phrases is the customer likely to enter into a search engine's input box? For example, using the example of a Bed and Breakfast Web site, general keywords would include: *lodging, bed and breakfast, bed & breakfast, breakfast in bed, mountains, accommodation*, (include common misspellings as well – *acommodations*). Include regional names including nearby towns, your State or Province. Also include keywords based on local activities in your area: *skiing, hiking, mountain biking, surfing, scuba diving and regional names or parks or attractions*.

<http://www.wordtracker.com> is an online resource that lists the most popular search terms. They compile a database of terms that people search for. You enter some keywords, and they tell you how often people search for them, and also tell you how many competing sites use those keywords. Check out this great article for more help on picking your keywords: <http://www.idealerver.com/docs/38769e67c928a05e.pdf>

## 2. Positioning & Frequency of Keywords

- a. *HTML Title Tag* - A page's title should include relevant keywords associated with the page content. When creating a page using SiteCM on the Metadata Tab you will add a Browser Title. Ensure you use descriptive words when giving your page a title.
- b. *Meta Tags*:
  - i. Search Engine Keywords – a list of keywords as described above should be listed here. Use keyword variations (verb forms, singular, plural, upper and lower case and common misspellings). Make the words relevant to the content on the page.
  - ii. Search Engine Description – mini marketing phrases describing your product or service should go here.

In the past, Search Engines put a lot of weight into the Meta keywords and description. However, due to the increased abuse of webmasters "faking it" (using misleading words and phrases), Meta tags have less weight in today's Internet.

- c. *Relevant Content* - Your keywords and phrases also need to be reflected in the top portion of your web page content. Make sure each page has 200 to 300 words of text on it, and use your keyword/phrases as many times as you can within the copy. Be aware of good grammar at all times. Stick to one theme per page where possible.
- d. *Images* - As search engines cannot read graphic files, Alternative (alt) text should be included for each graphic/image. To achieve this, give an image you upload into the Image Gallery a descriptive Image Name, add descriptive words in the "Alt Text" and "Keywords" prompts. You can also add descriptive text to accompany all images used on your site.

3. **Build Links:** Every major search engine uses link analysis as part of their ranking algorithm. The more external websites that link to your website/domain, the better you should improve how well your pages do in the link analysis system. The goal is not to have links from every web page on the Internet. Instead, you want to be linked from good web pages that are relevant to the topics you want to be found for. Contact industry-like Web sites and see if they will do a link exchange with you - you post their link and they post yours. To locate possible free portals within your industry that you can place a link on, open your favourite search and search using "free links page (and subject)" for example: "free links page" + "bed and breakfast."

### Is SiteCM Compatible with Search Engines?

1. **Frames:** Crawler Search Engines do not get along well with websites built with Frames – SiteCM is not built using Frames, so this is not a concern.
2. **Navigation:** SiteCM's main navigation is text links and therefore search engine crawlers can follow the links. If you main navigation links are images search engines will have hard time following them to your sub-pages and they will not be indexed. SiteCM's fly-out navigation cannot be followed by search engines therefore it is important you do one of two things:
  - a. If you have purchased a version of SiteCM that has the Site Map Component (all versions except Micro) then make sure you create a Site Map page and put it in the main menu navigation – first level. This will ensure that the crawler can link to all pages on your site and therefore be indexed.

- b. If you have SiteCM Micro and therefore don't have access to the Site Map component you can purchase the Site Map component. If you do have fly-out pages make sure that one of the pages in the main menu navigation – first level has a hyperlink to the fly-out pages.

3. **Dynamic Pages:** Even though your SiteCM pages are generated from a database they do appear static to the search engines. SiteCM does not use "sessionids" or special characters in the URL address. In addition, SiteCM allows users to build their own directory structure. SiteCM's simple .htm filenames are search engine friendly.

### **Submitting Your Site with Search Engines/Directories**

Major Search Engines (Yahoo, Google, MSN, AltaVista) will eventually pick up your Web site even if you don't specifically submit your website with them. However this could take months. To speed up with this process, it is recommended that your website be submitted to the major search engines. The initial submission to the major search engines is included with the deployment of your SiteCM Web site.

#### **Do I have to resubmit?**

Once the site is submitted the search engines will continue to visit your site. To see if your site is indexed with a particular search engine see:

<http://www.searchenginewatch.com/webmasters/article.php/2167861>

Free search engine submissions at present time:

<http://www.google.com/addurl.html>

<http://help.yahoo.com/help/ca/url>

<http://www.dmoz.com/add.html>

<http://search.msn.com/docs/submit.aspx>

<http://www.addpro.com/submit30.htm>

<http://www.submitplus.com/freesubmit.php>

<http://www.searchenginecolossus.com> and <http://home.inter.net/takakuwa/search> are websites

that list search engines by country – browse and visit the search engines site if applicable to your needs and submit your URL.

#### **Category/Subject specific directories/engines**

In your favorite search engine (a popular engine is [www.google.ca](http://www.google.ca)) search for:

"free links page (and subject)." For example: "free links page" + "bed and breakfast" also see

<http://www.highrankings.com/issue064.htm#guest>

#### **Search Engine Resources**

<http://www.searchenginewatch.com>

<http://www.positioning-search-engines.com>

<http://www.searchengineposition.com>

<http://www.submit-it.com>