

What Is Search Engine Optimization And How Can You Implement It?

THE CLASSIC DEFINITION

Search Engine Optimization, known with the acronym SEO, is the process of improving traffic and exposure to a website via search engines to get the website ranked highly in the resulting search results pages. It helps to build an online presence that is bigger and better than just slapping a static website up on the Internet and hoping that some people drop by the site. It is a strategy whereby how you create the site, what you do to promote it, and how you analyze the results of those actions that help the website owner to develop bigger and better online exposure.

GOOGLE STARTED IT ALL

Google is the main search engine that started it all. It was through their AdWords campaigns that Internet marketers became more savvy about using the power of the advertising model to help shoot certain pages to the top of the search results pages. They noticed that the same keywords that online businesses were buying because their research showed many people were searching for them could be used to attract those same people to other sites. Soon, it became a standard SEO strategy to include keywords in content that was used to get pages ranked highly in Google's search engine results pages (SERPs).

IT'S DEVELOPED OVER THE YEARS TO INCLUDE MORE

Since then, a variety of services have popped up to help the online business owner compete against others for maximum website exposure. Some of these techniques deal with how the search engine classifies a page topic and what types of elements in a Web page create or obstruct high page ranking.

It wouldn't be fair to neglect mentioning that some SEO tricks are called "black hat" because they tend to exploit weaknesses in the search engine model and can lead to a site using "black hat" techniques to be sandboxed (dropped to the bottom of the SERPs). Marketers trying to game the system may get away with it for a while, but Google has been known to severely punish those that are caught, making it unwise to implement black hat techniques.

Other techniques, known as "white hat" or organic strategies don't carry the risk of being sandboxed. They use the guidelines that carry a sense of integrity and authenticity while gaining wide exposure through providing value and understanding SEO. These are the techniques that we are going to discuss in this report. To caution further, always avoid techniques like

keyword stuffing, spamming people by sending unsolicited emails, and generating false websites with commercial links only and no content (link farms). These activities are considered black hat techniques.

HOW KEYWORD USAGE HAS CHANGED

In the past, keywords were used in meta description tags to give a search engine the hint about what the page talked about. Black hat marketers began to exploit that vulnerability by adding highly searched keywords into that area and basically making that criteria useless to Google. Thus, Google decided to downgrade that criterion, and as a result, keywords are evaluated as a percentage of the actual content on the site for relevancy, not for just showing up in coding. If you know how the search engines rate keywords, you can still game the system a bit, but not without actually creating content that has some value. That's the entire point. Here are a few things to know about keywords when you are writing content for SEO.

STUFFING IS ONLY FOR TURKEYS

Stuffing tastes great at Thanksgiving time, but stuff too many keywords into your content, and you'll get a rapid case of indigestion when Google sandboxes your site. The moral is clear: Stuffing is only for turkeys. This might have been a great black hat technique in the past, but today, Google's analytics are so powerful that they not only look for relevant keywords on your pages, but they also determine how often and where you've placed them. On average, if you put more than 2% of your content as a single keyword, it will count against you, not for you. That means that if your page is a 500-word blog post, at most, any single keyword should not show up more than 10 times. Between 5 and 10 times is average and expected; anything else is considered as stuffing.

USE YOUR KEYWORDS CAREFULLY

You can put the keywords anywhere on your page, but they count more towards relevancy in the search engine analytics when they are placed in headers near the top of the article and are bolded. These actions indicate to the analyzer that the topic is important to the writer and will carry more weight in the search engine.

Matching keywords to powerful keywords that you've already researched as having a high searchability and low competition is also an easy way to

get a higher ranking. It's not just the amount of times you use the keywords, but what keywords you use that determine your SEO ranking. If you use a highly competitive keyword, it doesn't matter if you follow all of the guidelines, as other people have mined that attention long ago. You'll automatically fall near the bottom of the SERPs. Pay attention to how to find good keywords in order to attain higher rankings in the search engines.

HOW TO SELECT YOUR KEYWORDS

When you first start out, you might want to hire a company to develop a list of keywords for your SEO activities. It's going to take some time for you to understand what makes a good keyword selection, and during that time, you don't want to put up content that has no keywords. As you use those, you can start to look at some of the tools and techniques to develop your own keyword lists that you can give to your staff writers to include in their online content.

THE GOOGLE KEYWORD TOOL

This tool is available online at:

<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>. It is created to help online marketers using the AdWords program to create effective marketing campaigns. By entering a keyword or phrase, the Google Keyword tool will give actual metrics that have been measured by Google on various characteristics of that and other similar keywords. For finding rich keywords that can help you gain maximum exposure, it is a first stop for any budding Internet marketer.

After entering the keyword or phrase you are researching, the tool pulls up the advertiser competition and search volume as the default listing. You can modify this listing by pulling down the list box at the top that says, "Choose columns to display." From that list, you can expand the elements that are shown for each keyword and derivatives of that keyword to include CPC (cost-per-click), ad position, volume trends, and the time when the highest volume occurred. All of this is important information for figuring out if the market for that keyword has been saturated and the competition is too stiff to really help you with search engine placement. Take a look at this tool and see if you can find high CPC keywords with a high search volume and low advertiser competition. These are the keywords that will get you noticed quickly.

IT'S NOT GUARANTEED

There is no guarantee that the keywords you pick today will remain popular tomorrow. That's why the best websites for SEO are constantly evolving and updating their content. Fresh content is the best way to ensure that the search engine spider is constantly checking back and getting you noticed. Stale, old content is not only a turn-off to your readers, but tends to drop your site in search engine results pages due to a loss of relevancy. Even using keywords for just a short period isn't going to do the trick. You have to be consistent and build upon the strength of your website's SEO over time to be truly successful in implementing these techniques.

GET THE SEO SCOOP FROM YOUR COMPETITORS

You may be new to this whole SEO thing, but your competitors are probably not. At any rate, you should always do a little market research on what your competitors are doing to stay ahead of the game. This comes to keyword research and SEO strategies too. You may find that you are selling the exact same products and services, but they're able to generate massive Internet exposure and sales while you're lagging behind. That's probably because they know something that you don't: How to optimize their pages to get attention. Why not check out what your competitors are doing and copy the strategies that are working for them? It can only make you more competitive too.

THE NEAT SPY KIT

Ever watch those spy movies where the secret agent gets a neat spy kit that is complete with a steel-cutting laser pen and exploding cuff links? Well, you can get your own kit too to spy on your competitors online! It just takes some understanding of what services are out there that can make spying on others online a snap!

WebCeo.com offers a software product that not only helps you develop keyword lists, but also shows you how the competition stacks up against your choices. You can get valuable information on how to develop a good SEO strategy using this program, even if it comes with a small cost upfront. It is an investment that will pay back dividends.

If you really don't want to spend money, you can also get onto Google Alerts and set up alerts when your online competitors update their sites or send out press releases. You can use online keyword density analyzers

that are free to see what they're doing and how they're targeting their demographics. It may be a bit of a hack, but it's still doable without spending money on extra programs.

SECRET AGENT MARKETER

On the sly, you can simply opt into your competitors' email sales campaigns using some other name and email address. That way, when they start to market to their clients, you'll know exactly what they're doing. This is sort of like playing catch-up, and it works after the fact, but the best way to really develop SEO is to be proactive. Be the first to think up a killer approach because others will soon follow in your wake. The best time to profit from SEO is when you've taken the lead.

ARE YOU A LEADER OR A FOLLOWER?

Let's face it; people who are important leaders get more attention than their followers. The same is true with SEO. Google has a way to assign rankings to different websites; it's called PageRank. This PageRank tells Google and others how important and relevant your site is compared to others on the Internet. PageRank is not about keywords, but it does impact the attention you get on the Internet. PageRank is determined by a variety of factors, but much of it has to do with the quality and the number of inbound, non-reciprocating links to your content and site.

LOW PAGERANK KEEPS YOU DOWN

Page rank can keep you down when you're first starting to implement SEO techniques. If you don't have any page rank, Google will delay indexing your pages and adding them to the search engine. Obviously, you can't get to the top of the SERPs if you're not even being indexed. So, it pays to get your PageRank up. After you have been steadily crawled, it doesn't have as much influence on keeping you from getting to the top. Initially, you want to have a strong page rank of at least a 3 or higher, just to put you on the map.

QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF INBOUND LINKS

You can raise your page ranking by getting a high number of links, getting high quality links, or both. They basically represent the neighborhood and how relevant you are to the niche you are marketing. Some of the best

inbound links are when official segments of the public sector reference your site as a valuable resource. If you get a .gov or a .edu site to link to you, you automatically are associated with more credibility, and as a result, your page rank increases.

However, if you have thousands of backlinks, and the anchor text of those inbound links use keywords that associate you well with that niche, you can also gain significant page ranking. Anchor text is what the visitor sees listed as the description of the link instead of the URL on your site or others. It's a situation where one or the other can work to your benefit.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOUR BACKLINKS

You can find out who is linking to you or to your competitors by going to www.backlinkwatch.com. This nice online tool checks who is linking to a particular URL just by typing the URL into the search box. In some cases, online directories need a page rank of 3 or more to list them in a directory, so concentrating on raising your page rank can also help you gain more exposure on online directories too.

PLAY AND PAY WITH ADWORDS

It stands to reason that if Google is the major search engine that uses SEO to create search engine placement, then using their programs can help to boost your visibility. Using AdWords as an Internet marketer can help you game the system for better search engine placement, but it will cost you some money to do it.

THE ADWORDS/ADSENSE PROGRAM

AdWords is the program Google uses to let Internet marketers compete for advertising based on a cost-per-click (CPC) model. A marketer or online business might want to develop a sales campaign whereby they are selling tulip bulbs, for instance. They go online and do research on different keywords that can be used to search or to describe the types of tulips they have. They find one that is highly searched but without much competition, and they find out what the average CPC that others are paying for it. If they want the pages that they build on their site to be at the top of the Google search engine results pages, they can bid more for the AdWords keyword. That will make that keyword more attractive to publishers who are looking for high-paying keywords and are trying to

game the system too. Thus, the pages will automatically attract more traffic due to showing up more on Google.

AdSense is the publishing part of the AdWords program. There, Internet marketers can use keywords in their content and install Google ads on the page. The Google analytic tool will look for specific keywords and serve up an ad for visitors to click on. If the person who built the page gets it right, higher CPC offers will be shown, and they will stand to make more from the advertising. That's why when a business owner buys AdWords, he/she also contributes to the popularity of the site by encouraging backlinks through advertising.

IT SOUNDS SIMPLE, BUT IT'S NOT

This type of SEO is not viewed as an organic approach. It borders on black hat techniques, but it is acceptable (probably because everyone is getting paid). It is a way to sponsor more attention to your website, which will increase its SEO ranking. It's not as simple as just opening your pocketbook, however, as other Internet marketers are competing for the same keywords and attention as you are. It can be fairly easy to commit to a small advertising budget and not get much extra attention at all. Commit to too large a budget, and you will have spent yourself into a corner. It's a very tricky way to get better search engine rankings and is best left to those that really understand the system. It's not a strategy for beginners.

GET YOURSELF LISTED

It may seem a hard thing to get people to backlink to your site, but it's really not. You can start with directories to get yourself listed. There are numerous online directories that you can add your link to that don't require a reciprocating link. It will get you more exposure, increase your page rank, and add to the relevancy of your site in the SERPs. It is an organic way to raise your SEO rankings and only takes a bit of time to do it. Some cost money and others don't. For the most part, if you get yourself listed, others may start to pick you up by default as they constantly add new listings to stay competitive with other directories.

SOME GOOD DIRECTORIES OTHER THAN GOOGLE

You can submit your site manually to Google, but that's not what we're after here. We're looking to get some major backlinks to your website to

implement better SEO onto your pages. Here are a few directories you can add your URL to:

- **DMOZ**

This is the Open Directory Project. It costs nothing to add your URL. It can take some time to get listed, as it will take at least two weeks for your site to get reviewed, if not longer. It's not an automatic entry, and they do turn away some sites for inclusion. Human editors review the site, so it's not just a mechanical directory. You can get to DMOZ by going to www.dmoz.org.

- **ZoomInfo**

This is a great directory for online businesses, sales professionals, and recruiters. Post a profile here and gain great marketing exposure on a business-to-business level. The site is located at www.zoominfo.com.

- **Yahoo! Directory**

This costs money to join, about \$300 a year. Yet, it is the next largest search engine after Google. It can also give you great exposure and backlinks that add value to your SEO campaign. If you have the money, it's well worth the investment to add your business website to their directory. It is located at <https://ecom.yahoo.com/dir/reference/instructions>.

Don't forget any local business directories, like your local Chamber of Commerce, CitySearch.com, and MerchantCircle.com. All of these directories are a way to get backlinks and advertising for your business to increase the exposure you have online. Some will cost you a lot to implement and others are free for the asking. Determine how each directory can contribute to your overall SEO strategy and then choose wisely which you will pay for. It's always better to do the free ones first and then see how it goes.

SOCIALIZE ONLINE

Another way to grab attention and get backlinks is to join social networking sites. These various sites can instantly create an audience for you if your link goes viral, as it will sweep you onto the front page of Google for sure. It's not hard to join these sites, and you are going to do it to promote your website links, but it's important to do so in a manner that is respectful and that is not too commercial. Social networks are a special breed of site with special rules. Spamming gets you the cold shoulder and sometimes banned from the site outright. Read the terms of agreement for the site if you are unsure on whether a link you place there is going to violate the terms of service.

THE BIG THREE

As far as social networks go for publicity and SEO, there are three that stand out: Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. MySpace is still relevant, but the future of MySpace is spottier than the others. It also tends to market to a demographic that is much younger than the other three. If you are a business that needs to contact a younger demographic, switch from LinkedIn to MySpace, but do include Facebook and Twitter too.

- **Facebook**

This social network allows you to connect with others by befriending them. When you post a news status update on your profile page, it shows that update to all of your friends. If they like your status update, they might comment on it, and then that update is shown to their friends. Thus, even if you only have 20 friends, if one of those friends has 100s of contacts, you can reach a large network. This increases your chances of your link posting going viral.

- **Twitter**

This is called a microblogging site because your status updates are limited to 140 characters. It's amazing what you can fit into that small of a news message. Using link shorteners, you can post links to all of your promotions, and they won't get you banned. Twitter doesn't care about self-promotion as much as Facebook. It's also easier to gain a large following and it has real-time connections versus static connections, making your update quick and effective.

- **LinkedIn**

This is for professional networking. You can post a profile here; this is where you want to add some keywords and your business links. Remember to use anchor text that is keyword-rich and effective to give your backlink more weight. It will also help to get you noticed by people searching for your skills, products, or services online, as this is basically a business-to-business platform.

GOING VIRAL!

What's the point of all of this networking and link generation? The ultimate SEO jackpot is the viral link. In Internet marketing, you really do want to catch this bug. That's because if your link gets so popular that it literally becomes contagious, people will reciprocate your link over and over to tell their friends, and on and on, and you'll have instant high page ranking and the number #1 slot for Google stardom. As you know, nothing gets you more attention than being famous.

HOW TO INCREASE YOUR ODDS

Some types of online media are far more effective at going viral than others. For instance, online videos on YouTube are a very effective way to create interest and exposure for your site. It's also nice that they have a place to put a backlink to them back to your site. You don't even have to be serious to get attention. You can put up a humorous commercial for some product or service and ask people to rate, comment on, and share the video. If enough people like it, it will slowly start to spread across the Internet.

CONTROVERSY SELLS

Controversy can be a very effective way to gain attention, but only if it is positive in nature. If you get too much association with a negative and volatile controversy, people will shun your products and services, even if they visit your site to send you hate mail. It's simply not worth it. Pick your topics for viral videos wisely and try to keep the mood light and positive.

CAPITALIZE ON BIG NAMES

Fame gets you noticed, but how are you going to grab the limelight when other people are already standing there? You can team up with big names to help you promote your content across the Internet. If you get your backlink on a site that already has a significant reputation, and they RECOMMEND you too, you will have a backlink that has significant weight.

The same is true of well-known websites. They have a higher page ranking, and those people they link to are instantly fed a huge stream of traffic and Google SERP rewards. Try to get yourself noticed by the big guys, and you will reap fame through association. It's not black hat, and actually, it's quite old school. It's not what you know, but who you know that can lead you to the big time.

DON'T BE AFRAID OF EXPOSURE

One of the biggest mistakes that people make is that they associate exposure with a lack of privacy. In search engine optimization, you want to be as exposed as possible so that people can find you online. That means that EVERYTHING you do online should be done with the intention of capitalizing on it for SEO purposes. Whether you are commenting on a blog or news story, always consider adding a backlink back to your site. When you send out emails, do you have a signature line that automatically adds your website URL to the bottom of the email? When you update your site, are you promoting your social networks? All of these tiny actions add up when you do them daily to create a powerful and highly exposed online presence.

SHARE YOURSELF

When you add a blog post or a news update to your site, how easy is it for other people to share that information? Do they have to copy and paste the URL to an email to send it? If so, you haven't exposed yourself enough and haven't made it easy enough to share who you are and what you do with others. There are plenty of widgets that you can install into a blog that will allow you to add buttons to the bottom of each post that people can click to instantly share it with anyone on Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, Delicious, and so on.

There are so many social networks out there, and they all represent an opportunity to share yourself. However, you don't have time to cultivate all of those networks, so you must rely on others to share your content for you. Develop a network of people who will share, comment, and rate your content. This helps you to get noticed and shows that you aren't just online talking to yourself. Other people have joined the discussion too. It gives you credibility.

AUTOMATE YOUR EXPOSURE

At some point in this journey, you will realize that you have profiles on multiple sites and that you are having trouble keeping them fresh with content. There's no reason that you can't post the same information on multiple sites, as long as you realize that it's best to automate that action. You don't want to spend tons of time copying and pasting information all over the Web, and it wouldn't be appropriate anyways. Use tools like Friendfeed and Ping.fm to automate the updates you want to send to all of your networks from one central place. This makes it easier to manage an SEO campaign and to also provide multiple backlinks in one shot. It really can't get easier than that.

Check in regularly to each site and do add some live comments to make sure that people feel your presence online. However, try to automate your own posting so that it doesn't take up too much of your time. Once you get the hang of this, you'll be surprised at how quickly you can build an

online presence that not only excites your friends and followers, but also generates SEO riches from the Google search engine and beyond.