



Web sites and search engines

Everyone knows that the first two pages of search engine results provide rich pickings for those who get there. Some of the Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) secrets that influence these results are outlined below.

1. A thousand words are better than graphics that get in the way

Basically search engines work in a text-based environment. When search engine “spiders” (robots, Googlebots or thingo’s sent by search engines to your site for indexing purposes) drop by to read the content of a website, they look at text content not graphics.

So, make sure your website has plenty of text. The right kind of content is relevant and consistent with the overall website theme. More importantly, it should be unique, that is, not borrowed or copied from other websites. This also ensures your website content is interesting to your visitors.

Search engine robots or spiders do not just ignore the images, movie clips, or Flash animations– so compelling to human eyes. Wrongly placed, these visuals can actually get in the way and “trap” spiders, obstructing them from doing their job of indexing your site.

2. Keywords and keyword density

It is essential to have good use of the right keywords. “Relevance” means knowing the words and phrases customers use to search for your products or services. For instance, tourists looking to dine out in Sydney would most likely enter the keywords “restaurant in Sydney” and search engines like Google, would return results that regularly mention one or the other (or both).

A good way to shortlist relevant keywords is to put yourself in the place of the shopper and ask how they might find what they need using common terms. Try to avoid jargon that may be specific to your industry, but unfamiliar to your potential customers. Then, keep building your key words list using tools available through Google Adwords or Yahoo Search Marketing.

TIP! Aim for at least 4% keyword density. Keyword density is the number of times relevant key words appear on a webpage in relation to the total number of words on that page.

3. Links

Whether placed prominently or not, links back to a website have a multiplier effect. The more links you have pointing back to your website, the greater the chance search engines will count your website as popular. Gaining good link popularity is not easy and can take time, especially when you consider that Google rewards link exchanges from other relevant and credible sites that are already ranking well in Google.

4. Do inform the Search Engines

The worst thing that can happen is to have performed the best possible website optimisation and sit back passively waiting for the search engines to find your finely-crafted web site. At our last count, there were over 108 million unique web pages in existence.

So do submit your website to [Google](#) or [Yahoo](#) for indexing (the links provided will take you to the submission page). Simply, follow the prompts and enter your web address. You may also be asked for a keyword-rich three-line description of your website. Then you are done! That is their cue to send the search robots out to visit your site for indexing.

Once these vital steps are behind you, you can confidently expect to be indexed well by the various search engines even as you move on to even more sophisticated SEO measures.

... and finally, choose your domain name carefully.

While domain name selection is not technically part of the optimisation process, we do encourage you pick a search engine friendly domain name for your site.

A marketable domain name/s meets six key criteria (listed below). If you had to compromise on any of these criteria, we would recommend not omitting #5 (based on product/service keywords) as this could impact your search engine ranking the most.

A marketable domain name is:

1. Memorable
2. Registered in a popular extension (.com preferably)
3. Easy to spell
4. Brief (one or two words maximum)
5. Based on product/service keywords (this helps with search engines)
6. Consistent with your brand (low price, premium brand)

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