

Driving Traffic to Your Website Part 1: Search Engine Optimization (SEO) April 28th, 2009

Natural SEO Tips:

- Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the process of helping consumers find you by improving your site's presence on search engines such as Google.
- **Search Engine Optimization is not about your rank.** It is about helping users looking for your products and services find you.
- **Content is King!!!!** Both users and search engines are coming to your site to find content. Try to have at least 200 words on every page. Insert your keywords in your text as often as you can (in upside-down pyramid style – more keywords towards the top of your content) within the realm of quality writing. If it sounds very obvious that you are repeating keywords, then it will also be obvious to search engines and you don't want to get caught "keyword stuffing" as that is grounds for blacklisting!
- **Keep your text up-to-date and fresh.** Give users and search engines a reason to return to your site. If you have the time, the knowledge of your niche and writing skills, think about adding a blog to your website.
- **Create hierarchy** in your content. Use one main header at the top of every page that includes keywords and properly explains the main subject of the content on that page. After the main header (h1), categorize your page content and separate out with explanatory headers for each categorized section. - *See Create Hierarchy In Content For Natural SEO Hand-Out*
- **Bold important information** in your content. Bolding text indicates to a user and a search engine that a word or phrase is particularly important within a paragraph. **Do not bold whole paragraphs or pages** – that defeats the purpose of highlighting important items.
- **Add related internal** (within site) **and external** (other sites) **links** with keywords in the link text.
- **Do not duplicate** your content. Search engines do not like duplicated content because they do not know which page to display first if they both have the exact same content in both pages.
- Search engines crawl the web by following links. Sometimes websites use graphical navigation links (not as common anymore). Search engines do prefer to follow text links. So if your navigation is graphical, be sure to **add an html text sitemap** to your site (generally as a bottom text link on every page) to display your full site navigation in text links. Do include applicable, researched keywords in your text link navigation whenever possible.
- **Steer clear of a javascript menu or any javascript code that wraps around text.** Search engines have a hard time getting through the javascript code to see the text between it.

- To clean up your code for search engines, any **image map code should be moved to the bottom** of the code in your page.
- Because search engines have to crawl through the code of your site to find your text content, **keep your code simple by using external CSS for layout.**
- Make sure every page in your site has a **unique title tag** that properly sums up the content on your page in only about 70 characters. Be sure to add target audience researched keywords to your title.
- Only **add Meta data keywords and description** in your pages **if you are going to take the time to make them unique to the page.** Just like the title, the meta data should represent the content on the page and include researched keywords that reflect the page subject matter.
- If you have images/photos on your site, make sure that they have an **alternative text tag (alt tag)**. The alt tag adds a text caption in the code to an image explaining what the image is. If the image subject reflects one of your keywords, make sure to use keywords in the alt tag. If your image is purely for design such as a curved corner, the alt tag should be empty.
- Add keywords in your url, but also keep it short and simple (exp: <http://www.yourseite.com/product/red-bucket.php>).
- Avoid long dynamic looking URLs whenever possible. Instead of <http://www.yourseite.com/prod.php?id=23485&blt=234> use <http://www.yourseite.com/product/red-bucket.php>
- **Use 301 redirects** if you remove/rename any pages on your live site.

If you have a blog (in addition to the above):

- **Create categories that reflect your blog subject** and use industry related keywords. If your site is focused on *white-water kayaking* then it would make sense to have the categories of *kayak brands, best places to kayak* and *how to tricks in your playboat*.
- **Tag posts.** Adding a tag is like adding the main keywords to your post at the bottom of your post that reflect the content. The tags group all posts that contain the same tags so if someone were reading a posting about *kayaking The Wild Mile in Bigfork* and saw at the bottom of the post that one of the tags is Bigfork and wanted to read more posts that are also tagged with Bigfork, they can just click on the Bigfork tag link and find all posts in your blog that are tagged with Bigfork. Tags are also helpful for third party searches through sites like Technorati (blog directory).

- Switch the permalink to **use text in the url** instead of the default odd character url.
- **Allow for and bring attention to the comments.** If you are getting participation in your posts, it makes your blog look more active and exciting to both users and search engines.
- Set up your blog so posts **link to previous and next posts** allowing for search engines to follow all of those links and crawl further into your blog.

Create Hierarchy In Content For Natural SEO

Web content should be **easy for search engines to scan**. We help search engines know what is important by creating a hierarchy of headers in the code.

Dividing Content Using Headers

Following the example to the right, you are going to separate your content, label it and create a hierarchy.

The first step to organizing your content is to **divide it into sections** that you can **label with a header**.

The header must accurately describe the section of content that it is labeling. You will also want to include your researched key words in your headers because search engines look at the header to get an understanding of what will follow in the content below the header.

Keep in mind that the number of headers and **depth of organization will vary depending on the amount and type of content** you have on a page. A contact page that only contains your address, phone, and email really only requires a Page Title (Header 1) followed by the details of your contact information.

Header 1 - Page Title

1-2 paragraph summary of page contents.

Header 2 - 1st Subject

Paragraph

header 3 - subcategory of 1st Subject

Paragraph

Paragraph

Bulleted List

header 3 - subcategory of 1st Subject

Paragraph

Header 2 - 2nd Subject

Paragraph

Paragraph

SEO Resources

➤ Websites/Blogs

Google Blog

<http://googleblog.blogspot.com>

Search Engine Roundtable

<http://www.seroundtable.com>

SEOMOZ.org

<http://www.seomoz.org/blog>

Search Engine Watch

<http://searchenginewatch.com>

BigforkWEB Blog – SEO Category

<http://www.bigforkweb.com/wordpress/index.php/category/search-engine-optimization-seo>

BigforkWEB Newsletter

<http://www.bigforkweb.com/about-newsletters.php>

➤ Books

Search Engine Optimization for Dummies

- Peter Kent

Search Engine Optimization An Hour A Day

- Jennifer Grappone and Gradiva Couzin

Search Engine Marketing, Inc.: Driving Search Traffic to Your Company's Web Site

- Mike Moran and Bill Hunt