e-Business Marketing Power Tools

YOUR SITE CAN BECOME A MARKETING MACHINE !

THE
Definitive Guide To
SEO

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http://eBusinessMarketingPowerTools.com/Drupal/

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Every business that relies on the Internet knows the importance of search engine rankings, particularly on Google. The difference between being showcased on the first page of search engine results and winding up as an also-ran on the second page is HUGE. Many businesses thrive or struggle as a result of their ranking on the SERP (Search Engine Page Results) for keywords and phrases that their prospects search on. Search Engine Optimization has been important for a long time, but will become even more so as our society continues its tidal shift from all other forms of media to the Internet.

This guide breaks Search Engine Optimization into its 4 major areas and shows how to be successful in each. The 4 areas are as follows:

Keyword Research – You are optimizing each web page on your site for specific keywords and keywords phrases. You need to find out what keywords and phrases your prospects and customers search on. You then have to determine the level of competition for each of these and which ones you have a realistic chance of successfully optimizing for.

On-Page Element Optimization – Each page of your site should be optimized for just a few specific keywords or keyword phrases that you've decided on. You will then have to optimize the many elements on each page for the selected keywords and phrases. The search engines rate the relevance of each page to your chosen keywords based upon how well you have optimized all of the on-page elements for those keywords.

Link Building – The number of links from other sites pointing at your site tells the search engines how important your site is and how much authority it carries. Links are now the search engines' most important criteria when creating rankings on the SERP. Link building is also the hardest aspect of SEO to control, but is extremely important in attaining top rankings for competitive keywords and phrases. Link building should be an integral part of your SEO strategy.

Long-Term Steady Addition of Optimized Content – This is perhaps the surest long-term strategy to obtaining top rankings for your important keywords and phrases. It's pretty hard to trick Google into assigning your site a high ranking on the SERP for competitive keywords if your site doesn't have much content optimized for those keywords. If Google becomes aware that SEO tricks were used to gain higher position, it's a long, fast ride to the bottom of the SERP for that site. Long-term, steady addition of optimized content is the best strategy for continuous improvement in search engine rankings. If your income depends on search engine ranking, you need to allocate permanent resources to the continuous creation of content for your site.

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Keyword Research – You are optimizing each web page on your site for specific keywords and keywords phrases. You need to find out what keywords and phrases your prospects and customers search on. You then have to determine the level of competition for each of these. You will then know which keywords and phrases you have a realistic chance of successfully optimizing for to obtain first-page SERP ranking.

Selecting the correct keywords and phrases is a 3-step process, as follows:

Brainstorm to Create an Overall List of Possibilities – Think like your customers and prospects. What would they search on? Ask them. Here are some other suggestions:

- Words and phrases that describe the type of business you're in.
- Words and phrases that describe your specialties and competencies.
- Buzzwords about your industry. Look in journals. Find articles about your industry. Look in newspapers, magazines, or (more easily) online.
- General descriptors of your industry. Make additions to each general descriptor to make it more specific to what your business does.
- Add geographic descriptors to each of the above.
- Figure out as many variations of keywords as possible – misspellings, plurals, synonyms, etc.
- Throw in action words – "buy" "find" "purchase" "best shipping"
- Throw in descriptive words – "cheapest" "best" etc.
- Keywords on your competitors' sites.
- Look in your own analytics program and web site log. This will show you what keywords were used to find your site up until now. Very important information!
- Enter all of your variations into the Free Google AdWords KeyWord Tool and get an expanded list.

Determine What Is Relevant On Your Overall List – You now need to narrow your list. Some, or many of the terms on your list will be too broad or obviously not relevant. For each term or phrase, ask whether a person searching on that term is likely to be a prospect for you or not. The more that terms and phrases can be identified specifically with your company or your products, the more likely it is that searchers of those terms will be prospects. In this step, get rid of search terms that are too general and less relevant to your specific company.

Pick Your Relevant Keywords Based on the Level of Competition On Each – The Free Google AdWords Keyword Tool provides an indication of how many searches are made on each term every month. Your goal is to be on the first page of the SERP. A hugely competitive search term will take a LONG time and a LOT of continuous effort from you to attain first-page SERP ranking. You are usually better off choosing less competitive terms and phrases.

The more specific a keyword phrase and the more words in it, the less competitive it will be. Keywords that have less competition for them are sometimes called "long-tail" keywords because of where they are in a graph of volume of searches. Their low-volume places them all the way out in the far right tail of a search volume chart. Long-tail keywords are usually not difficult to attain first-page ranking in the SERP.

An easy keyword combination to get a good ranking is one that contain 3 to 5 words specific to your business type and also contains your locality. Definitely look into this valuable combination.

The more specific a keyword phrase is to a product you offer, the farther along in the buying cycle that prospect is likely to be. Prospects search for general terms early in the buying cycle. Their searches become more specific as they move through their buying cycle. Keep this in mind if you are seeking prospects who are looking to buy right now. Prospects who search on general terms and contact you early in their buying cycles should be entered into a prospect nurturing program. An automated email program is ideal for this.

An excellent tool to use for gauging the competitiveness of a search term or phrase is the SEO Chat Keyword Difficulty Tool. This tool rates the competitiveness of the keyword with a score. A score of 60 or more will require not only successful optimization of on-page elements, but lots of links as well.

You can also gauge the competiveness of a keyword or phrase by the number of paid ads that show up when searching on that keyword or phrase. If there are more than 10 paid ads that appear for a term, it is likely a competitive term for which it will not be easy to attain a first-page SERP ranking. The paid search ads will be designated as such by the search engine and will generally appear on the top of the SERP and in the far right column.

A bottom line is that it is usually a good keyword strategy to choose long-tail keywords that have a reasonable search volume.

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On-Page Element Optimization – Each page of your site should be optimized for just a few specific keywords or keyword phrases that you've decided on. You will then have to optimize the many elements on each page for the selected keywords and phrases. The search engines rate the relevance of each page to your chosen keywords based upon how well you have optimized all of the on-page elements for those keywords.

Before we go into optimizing specific on-page elements, one important bottom line of content creation is write content for your prospects and customers first, not the search engines. No matter well you rank in the search engines, if your content doesn't resonate with your prospects, sales will not be anywhere near what they could be if the content was directed at satisfying visiting prospects.

With the above in mind, there are several schools of thought regarding creating content:

One method of content creation is to create content entirely for the visitor without optimization in mind, and then optimize the content for the specific keywords and phrases chosen for the page after the original draft is completed.

Another method is to determine what keywords and phrases are the optimization targets for the specific page and to write content that will be heavy on those words and phrases.

A third method, somewhere in between, is the best approach. First, determine the topic and general format of content that will appeal to a visiting (or repeat) prospect. Next, determine what keywords and phrases are related to the topic. Third, write the content with a focus on pleasing the prospect, while remaining aware of the chosen keywords and phrases. Finally, go over the completed content with an eye for inserting the keywords or variations of them in ways that blend with the content.

Variations of the original keywords work for the search engines. Variations might include singular or plural forms, synonyms, and mixing the word order of phrases. The end result will be an optimized piece of content that your prospect enjoyed reading - the best of both worlds.

The user experience is very important to get conversions. Your content should be easy to read and scan. Make sure it is in short paragraphs, in conversational form, with bullet-point lists, and has lots of headers for quick scanability (which is the way most people "read" on the web).

Having said that, let's dive into optimization of on-page elements. Following is a list of on-page elements and how to optimize them:

Title Tags – Create a unique and accurate title for each page. SEO experts generally agree that the page title is the single most important on-page element for the search engines. Try to include the chosen keywords or phrase in the title. Remember that you

should try to optimize each page for no more than four specific keywords or keyword phrases. The title should accurately describe the page's content and should be brief. If the title is too long, search engines will not show all of it in the search engine results. Google limits title tag display to the first 63 characters.

One important fact about the title tag is that the first words have the most importance to the search engines. Be sure that the targeted keywords appear near the beginning of the title tag.

"Description" Meta Tags – These are actually not important for attaining a high ranking on the SERP, but they often are displayed as the search result. They should be written with the purpose of enticing a searcher to click on your search result. In this respect, they are quite important, but they won't get you a higher ranking. Meta tags should be unique for each page. Inserting keywords in them won't increase ranking, but keywords will show up on bold on the SERP if that is what was searched for.

URLs – Including keywords or phrases in URLs will benefit a page's ranking. It is okay to include several words in a URL without any separator. Search engines have no problem picking keywords from this structure. If separators are used between words in a URL, it is better to use a dash than an underscore.

You should try to make your URLs readable and user-friendly. The URL will appear in the search engine result. A short, readable URL will be more enticing to a click than a long one. Also, remember that when people create links to one of your pages, they often use the URL as anchor text. Anchor text is the text on the page that is read which contains the underlying link. Create URLs with the view of making them enticing to click.

Image Alt Tags – These are very important for SEO. Make sure every image has an alt tag which contains targeted keywords and phrases. People search on images quite often. Optimized images will bring traffic to your site.

H1, H2, and H3 Tags – Your pages need these tags, but in the right proportions. Use only one H1 tag and just a few H2 tags. These tags tell the search engine what the page is all about. They have only slightly less importance than the title tag. Think of your page as an outline and the H1, H2, and H3 tags are the outline headers.

Keywords Near the Top of the Page – Your page need to have the targeted keywords and phrases in it. Content near the top of the page is deemed by the search engines as most important so make sure you have keywords there.

Keyword Density – Much has been said about this. Most often quoted are figures between 3 and 5% of words on the page should be keywords. The best advice is to write content naturally. Keyword "stuffing" will be make your content unattractive to a reader and will kill conversions. Worse, if search engines determine that your site is "keyword

stuffed," your site can be severely penalized in search engine rankings. Definitely avoid keyword stuffing.

Use Only 1 Version of a URL – Using more than one version of a URL whenever you reference a web page could cause people to create links to the same page through different URLs. This will lessen the SEO boost of links to a single web page.

Anchor Text Should Contain Keywords – The anchor text is the text that people see when they are clicking on a link. Internal links within your site should have keywords in the anchor text. Internal links to provide SEO boost to the recipient page.

Create a Simple Directory Structure – In addition to making your site simple for visitors, an uncomplicated directory structure is good for SEO as well. Search engine spiders may not reach and index content on your site that is six directory layers deep. The flatter the site structure, the more crawl-able your site is to the search engine spiders.

Place Keywords inside <strong> and <em> tags – These tags carry weight with search engines, particularly at the beginning of a page.

Generate Sitemaps with both HTML and XLM – Both of these provide SEO boost. Put an HTML site map page on your site and also create an XML site map file. Google Webmaster Tools can be used to create the XML site map.

Use HTML Text, Not Javascript or Flash to Create Navigation Links – Search engines can't read Javascript or Flash. Using either of these to create navigation links creates a danger that content won't be indexed because search engines could not reach it.

Don't Use Frames – Frames can confuse search engines. They should be avoided if possible.

Use a robots.txt file on pages that contain duplicate content and other non-sensitive content that you don't want indexed by the search engines. There are other and better ways to prevent search engines from indexing content that might be sensitive. You want to prevent search engines from indexing duplicate content because your site can be penalized by search engines for having duplicate content.

Use CSS Wisely – CSS can cause page content to be read by search engine spiders in a different order than it is seen by the site visitor. Remember that content that the spider determines to be near the top of the page is the most important for SEO purposes. Having keywords in CSS style tags does not influence ranking.

Google Has Finally Figured Out That Subdomains Are As Important as Subdirectories – No worries with Google about this issue any more.

If Content Needs Registration or Form Submission to Reach, It Won't Be Indexed – Search engines can't fill out forms. Make sure not to make important content accessible only by filling out a form.

Periodically Check For Broken Links – Eventually some will break. Broken links stop spiders.

Don't Use Deprecated Tags – Search engines could lower your ranking because deprecated tags make it appear that your site is not well maintained.

Use and Maintain Social Bookmarking Tags On Your Site – This will allow visitors to tag your site with social media. These links provide SEO boost.

Convert Dynamic URLs To Static URLs – Search engines can't read dynamic URLs. If your site is hosted on a Linux server, use Apache's mod_rewrite module to present dynamic URLs as static ones.

Optimize Your Blog's Content – If your blog is in a subdomain or subdirectory of your site, you definitely want to optimize your blog using all of the same SEO practices that you would apply to your site. Google loves blogs because they indicate new and relevant content. Create lots of optimized links between your blog and the rest of your site.

Use Google Analytics to Determine What Keywords Are Bringing the Traffic – Optimize for these keywords.

Be Careful Who You Link To – Link only to other relevant sources from your site. Linking to "bad" sites will get you penalized in search engines rankings.

Purchase Your Domain For a Longer Time Period – This provides credibility to the search engines. Long-term domain ownership indicates that the site is not a fly-by-night operation.

Don't Create Important Content With Flash or AJAX – Search engines have a hard time indexing FLASH or AJAX.

Create RSS Feeds To Allow Content Syndication

Link Building – The number of links from other sites pointing at your site tells the search engines how important your site is and how much authority it carries. Links are now the search engines' most important criteria when creating rankings on the SERP. Link building is also the hardest aspect of SEO to control, but is extremely important in attaining top rankings for competitive keywords and phrases. Link building should be an integral part of your SEO strategy.

Getting inbound links to your site is not easy. Here are the most widely-used strategies:

Provide Useful and Remarkable Content
– This is THE most effective link-building strategy. Make your content unique and informative enough that your site visitors want to link to you. Lots of exceptional, informative, helpful, unique content is the key.

Beg For Them
– Good luck with that. I don't know anyone who will put a link in their site to an unknown source on the basis of an unsolicited request. This is not a good strategy, unless you are requesting for a link from a site related to yours and they can provide lots of traffic to you.

Link To Your Site As Often As Possible From Your Own Social Media Sites
– Links to your site from your Twitter account(s), your tweets, your Facebook profile, your LinkedIn profile, etc., carry SEO juice. Create profiles linking back to your site on as many of these social networks as possible.

Openly State That Others Are Free To Share Your Content
– One way to do this is to tag your content with a creative commons license that allows the distribution of your content. Go to www.creativecommons.org for more details.

Build a Blog Roll In Your Blog
– A blog roll is a list of links to other blogs that you consider worthwhile. Typically a blog roll appears within a blog. Quite often the recipient of a blog roll link will create a link in his or her blog roll back to your blog.

Ask Other Bloggers To Include You In Their Blog Roll
– If both blogs speak to the same audience or are on the same topic, the other blogger should be receptive, especially if you have placed him or her on your blog roll.

Make Your Blog At Least a Subdomain of Your Domain
– If your blog's address is, for example, yourblog.blogspot.com and not your domain, you are missing out on any SEO boost from links to your blog.

Submit Your Site To Established Directories
– Most directories that are worthwhile will require a payment for inclusion. Research the directory first. In some cases it is a good investment. Good directories will typically have a high page rank. Some

of the directories I can recommend are: http://www.dmoz.org/, http://webworldindex.com/, http://worldwidewub.com/, http://gimpsy.com/, http://wowdirectory.com/, http://www.goguides.org/, http://joeant.com/, http://www.uncoverthenet.com/, http://web-beacon.com/, http://yahoo.directory.com/

Guest Blogging – If you have particular experience in your niche that might benefit other blogs, the blog owners may be open to have you "guest blog." They get good, new content and you get the opportunity to create a link or two back to your site in your guest blog article.

Ask Your Satisfied Customers To Link To You – If they have sites or blogs, they might be willing to link to you.

Link To Community Buttons and They Will Link Back To You – Many communities provide buttons to for members to place on their sites to show loyalty. If you place such a button on your site, the organization should create a link back to you as well.

Create Enticing Link-Bait – Link-bait – content that attracts links can usually be characterized by creative, very useful, easily shareable, and entertaining. You'll need to put on your creative hat to come up with some good link-bait. Effective link-bait is hugely valuable. Link-bait comes in many forms. It can be useful list or directory that gets updated regularly, something very humorous, or a useful widget.

Submit Articles to Top Article Directories – Most article directories will allow the author to include an author bio with a link. Some of the well-known online article providers are: http://ezinearticles.com/, http://www.goarticles.com/, http://www.articledashboard.com/, and http://www.isnare.com/ .

Distribute Press Releases – Press releases sit around forever with your link pointing to your site. The most well-known press release site is http://www.prweb.com/ .

Get Someone To Submit Your Best Content to StumbleUpon – Success on StumbleUpon results in a steady, long-term increase in site traffic, not just a one-time traffic surge like on other bookmarking sites such as Digg.

Start an Affiliate Program – If you start a good affiliate program and get lots of affiliates, you'll get lots of links to your site, at least 1 link from each affiliate. If you make a product that you sell to the public, a successful affiliate program could provide a big boost to your sales.

Create Your Own Squidoo Lens – This is an easy way to create a valuable link to yourself. Go to http://www.squidoo.com/ .

Get On Your College's .edu Alumni Page – Most colleges have a section of their website devoted to alumni. Many of these sections will allow you to link back to your site. Links from .edu and .gov provide a powerful SEO boost.

Write Testimonials – Send testimonial emails to companies whose products you like using. Include a link in your testimonial.

Update Wikipedia – If you can add content to a Wikipedia page that is under-developed, and your contribution is accepted, you'll get a link back to your site Wikipedia, which is one of the highest authorities on the web. Links don't get much better than this (Page Rank 9 !).

Buy Ads in eZines and Newsletters

Run Ads in Free Sources Such as Craigs List – These links to your site will stay up for a long time. You'll get a lot of juice out of them. Regular editions with links to Craigs List will boost your rankings. I can tell you from first-hand experience that this works well.

Create Lots of Free Tutorials, eBooks, and Templates – People love to link to these. The more you give away, the more you get back.

Donate Money To Open Source Initiatives – There are a number of open source projects that require donations to continue. A small donation can get you and your link listed on these sites.

DON'T BUY LINKS OR JOIN LINK FARMS– Google penalizes heavily for this.

Monitor Your Incoming Links – Some useful tools for doing this are:

Number of Pages Indexed on Google - Type into the Google search bar: site.yourdomain.com

Number of Incoming Links - http://backlinkwatch.com or type link:www.yourdomain.com into the Yahoo search bar

The Most Complete List of Links To Your Site Can Be Found at: https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/dashboard . You need to have an account with Google. The first step to doing this is to get a gmail account.

Get a List of Links to Your Competitors' Sites at: https://siteexplorer.search.yahoo.com/mysites . You need to have a Yahoo account. Get it by obtaining a Yahoo email address.

To Get a Competitive Analysis of the Strength of Web Presence of Any Site:
http://www.searchenginenews.com/ssitool/

Create a Google Video Sitemap If You Have Videos on Your Site:
http://www.google.com/webmasters/videositemaps/

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Long-term, steady addition of optimized content is the best strategy for continuous improvement in search engine rankings. If your income depends on search engine ranking, you need to allocate permanent resources to the continuous creation of content for your site. Your site should always be a work-in-progress.

Plan that you will run out of steam and lose interest in creating new content. To avoid a slow-down or complete stop, establish a strict schedule for content addition. I personally try to create a new blog entry every 4 days, whether I feel like it or not. My Google Analytics account tells me that my steady addition of content is driving more and more traffic to my site.

Steady addition of good content is your surest way to rise in the search engine rankings.

Good Luck !