



White Paper

SEO STRATEGY 101

SEO STRATEGY - 101

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is a complicated and intricate topic. The million dollar question is “How can I get my website to rank better in various search engines?” The answer a few years ago was simpler than it is today. The ever evolving technology is advancing at record breaking speeds. Businesses are learning they need to be adaptable to change for fear of outdated original business strategies.

Search Engines

Search engines are one of the primary ways that Internet users find Web sites. A website with good search engine listings may see a dramatic increase in traffic. Search engine optimization means ensuring that web pages are accessible to search engines and are focused in ways that help improve the chances of being found. There are no "search engine secrets" that will guarantee a top listing. But there are a number of methods that will produce effective results.

Organic Vs Paid Results

Search Engines offer two kinds of results, Organic and Paid. Organic results are a websites natural results processed from search engine crawlers. They are free and specific placement cannot be guaranteed. This document addresses some of the methods one can address to achieve better Organic Results within Search Engines.

Organic Results should be addressed before paying for the paid results. The paid results cost the advertiser money every time the ad is clicked.

The screenshot shows search results for "austin condos for sale". At the top, it says "Results 1 - 10 of about 418,000 for austin condos for sale". The first result is a sponsored link from UrbanSpaceRealtors.com. Below it are organic results from Condo.com and austin.condo.com. To the right, there are sponsored links from JustListed.com and DavisCompany.com. Two callout boxes are present: "Organic Results" points to the Condo.com and austin.condo.com results, and "Paid Results" points to the UrbanSpaceRealtors.com, JustListed.com, and DavisCompany.com results.

Web Strategy – Overview

The goals behind corporate websites are to provide:

- Channels for potential buyers, suppliers and partners
- Internet Sales
- Customer Service
- Brand Equity
- Web Applications

The key points to keep in mind about websites are:

- Building an aesthetically pleasing website provides little value if the target audience has difficulty finding it.
- Marketing a web site is very similar to traditional marketing strategies
- A commitment to the long term is paramount if a website owner wants to see sustainable site traffic growth. Short term efforts will not yield these results.
- Marketing a website warrants the time and dedication of a full time job.

Strategy to Build Traffic

There are many strategies that can help drive users to utilize a website. These strategies include:

- MetaData
- Landing Pages
- Keyword Selection
- Content Creation
- Site Structure & Optimization
- Internal Linking
- Directory Submissions
- Link Building
- Monitoring
- Article Submission
- Press Releases
- Blogs
- Newsgroups
- Forums
- Web 2.0 Participation
- RSS
- Website Age
- Advertising
- Customer Service

Metadata

Metadata simply means data about the data. It is used to inform search engines and users what the data is about. The two most important tags are the title and description tags. It is important that each page has unique values or else most search engines will disregard the entire site due to the appearance of spam or duplicate entries.

Title Tag

The title tag describes the title of the actual page and also is used as the name of the page when someone adds it to their "Favorites" or "Bookmarks" lists. The title tag looks like the following:

```
<title> Real Estate Property Search </title>
```

The title tag should be descriptive of the actual page and limited to 64 characters. Each title tag should be unique and generally should not include the name of the website in the title. Users are more likely to click on your search result based on their search keyword as opposed to the website name.

Description Tag

The meta description tag allows one to convey to crawlers what the description of a page should be. It should be limited to 150 characters.

The meta description tag looks like the following:

```
<meta name="description" content="Door84 is a free easy to use Real Estate website focused on finding real estate, property, rentals, homes for sale, leases, brokers, homebuilders, etc">
```

The following shows a sample of a search engine result of a real estate site, www.Door84.com that properly uses meta tags.

[Real Estate Property Search](#) ← **Title Tag**
Door84 is a free easy to use Real Estate website focused on finding real estate, property, rentals, homes for sale, leases, brokers, homebuilders, etc.
www.door84.com/ - 60k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#) - [Note this](#)
Meta Description →

Landing Pages

Landing pages with proper Metadata are probably the most important concepts for achieving positive SEO results. A landing page can be thought of as an answer to the search query.

After a user clicks a result returned from a search engine, the user has about 1-2 seconds to scan a page before deciding if the website is a good fit or not. Each landing page should be focused to emphasize the specifics and main point about the page.

Keyword Selection

Without a doubt, knowing the target keywords is the single most important part of a marketing campaign. It is crucial to know the words and/or phrases a target audience will use to find sites. A good strategy is to research and analyze competing websites to find the keywords and phrases they are targeting. The target words and phrases can be found in the title and keyword tags of the pages, and scattered throughout the body text.

Overture Keyword Suggestion and the Google Suggest tools are valuable to determine how many times a particular keyword was searched in the last month. Proper metrics can be derived on keyword popularity and suggest other related keywords.

Content Creation

Content is King. Fresh, frequently updated content on a site greatly improves the chances of repeat visitors. Search engine programs will visit a website and rank it high if they feel it is an authority on a topic. If those managing a website don't have the skills or time to author quality content, one can look into licensing content from offline media that is not on the web. Website owners can also hire content writers who understand the area that a website covers.

Authority is achieved through a variety of methods. Authentication is one. Citation of valid sources lends credibility to what is being written. Authority also derives from presentation appearance and presentation methodology. This is true of the written word as well as the spoken word.

Site Structure & Optimization

Designing a house is a good analogy for creating a website. It is crucial to start with a strong foundation. Only after that can the floors and stairs be built. One should carefully

think out the structure of the website and design it with a logical flow. A user should not have to walk blindly through 5 rooms to hopefully stumble into the bathroom.

It is important to keep a site design simple and clean. Avoid using too much JavaScript and Flash when designing a page. Search engines function best traversing through simple HTML code and text. One of the easiest and simplest ways to streamline website HTML code is to utilize Cascading Style Sheets (CSS).

A common misconception is that the home page is the most important. Doorway pages are just as important. Each page of a site is important and should be treated as such. Every page should stay tightly focused on a particular "topic" which gives it the best chance of ranking well in search engines for particular phrases. Using more pages in order to focus on specific, unique and fewer phrases per page will result in a higher chance to achieve a top ranking for the site.

HTML title tags need to reflect the key terms of a page. The targeted search term should also be utilized in the visible, HTML text of the page. A page about 'dogs' should naturally use keywords related to 'dogs' within the content. Lacking keywords within the content will make it hard to achieve desired rankings. In addition, if the keywords appear as an image, search engines will not be able to read it.

Internal Linking

In addition to the value of external links from complementary sites, cross links between related pages should be utilized in the website. This not only helps search engines follow links and index related pages together but also helps improve the user experience. For instance, a page about tennis and tennis balls should have cross links between these pages.

Directory Submissions

Proactive is better than reactive. It is greatly beneficial to submit a site in major directories such as Yahoo Directory, DMOZ and others, instead waiting for the directory to find the website.

Link Building

The Global Link Popularity of a site is the overall link-weight/authority as measured by links from any and all sites across the web, in both link quality and quantity. Think of a web page as a town. If a city has freeways, airports, train stations, bus shelters and a port, then it's probably a good indicator that it is a major hub. That orphaned web page with no

links pointing to it may as well be like a hidden tribe of Amazons that no one has discovered.

Anchor Text of an Inbound Link is one of the most concise assessments another person can make about a site/page. The rate of new inbound links to a site is not all about quantity. Getting fifty links overnight can be a good thing, especially if those links bring traffic from quality sites. On the opposite side of the spectrum, getting 100,000 links overnight, resulting in zero visitors or search queries can be detrimental.

Social Networking sites have become overwhelmingly popular in the last couple of years. Advertising within Social Networking sites greatly helps increase the visibility of a website.

Monitoring

Constantly monitoring rankings in major search engines is important to provide metrics to establish which efforts work best. There are several free versions of software applications that can monitor web statistics including:

- Traffic
- Link popularity
- Repeat Visitors
- Top referring web site
- Most popular page

Google Analytics is the most popular and effective analysis tool.

<http://www.google.com/analytics/>

Article Submission

Original articles that can capture a user's interest provide great value to a site. Authored articles demonstrate knowledge and expertise in specific areas, and provide authentication to the validity of the website's content (see [Content Creation](#) above). The articles can provide incentive for users to return to the web site. It's always a good idea to put website details at the end of the article along with a link to the site.

Press Releases

A PR team is needed to put out regular Press Releases. They can distribute press releases through established services like PRNewsWire if the budget allows. Other more economical options are available such as PRWeb.

Blogs

Blogs have become a fancy term for putting out a journal for users to read. Blogs let employees add content easily. They are a great way to get started authoring content and sharing knowledge and insights with other people. Search engines pick up the content from blogs which can result in better rankings.

Newsgroups

Join relevant newsgroups and try to answer questions as an expert. Once established as a trusted member of the newsgroup, one can start leaving site link signatures.


Forums

Run a discussion forum on the site to allow users to ask questions and engage in discussions. The content for forums will also get crawled by search engines adding value to the relevance of the site. It's important to regularly monitor the forums to ensure that people don't add lewd or crass content.

Web 2.0 Participation

Web 2.0 sites focus on building user communities and increasing collaboration. Web 2.0 sites like [myspace](http://myspace.com), [facebook](http://facebook.com) and [wikipedia](http://wikipedia.com) are great places to market a website. Create company groups and invite employees to join them. Ultimately, spread the word.

RSS

RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication. Little orange RSS or XML graphic icons  are the most common indications of RSS feeds. Users read news on several websites regularly most of which offer RSS Feeds. RSS feeds allow their content or articles to be sent directly to a user's browser or RSS Reader. Creating a RSS feed on a website allows interested visitors to subscribe to the feed and stay updated as new content is created and pushed out.

Website Age

The age of the site is important. Not the date of original registration of the domain, but rather the launch of content that can be seen and indexed by search engines.

Advertising

The concept of Pay For Performance (PFP) advertising is very interesting. PFP is performance based advertising meaning that one pays only when the advertising actually works. PFP includes Pay Per Click (PPC), Pay Per Call (PPC), and some other creative advertising metrics. An advertiser would only pay when a user clicks or calls originated by that PFP advertisement. Website owners can select a set of key phrases and place a bid that they are willing to pay for each time a user clicks or calls their ad. The higher the bid, the higher the rank would be based among competitors for the same term. Combination of Pay For Performance Advertising along with Search Engine Optimization is rapidly becoming one of the most popular and effective marketing strategies for online companies of all sizes today.

No matter which campaign one chooses to market a site, every campaign needs to be managed which requires time and methodology based on performance metrics.

Marketing and advertising a site can be a very expensive venture. Advertising in relevant magazines, billboards, apparel, expositions and other venues is a full time job. There are several marketing companies that can deliver good strategies based on the company's budget and goals.

Customer Service

One should build trust with the website visitors. They should feel comfortable by having the option to talk to a human being including:

- Live Chat Support
- Email Support
- Phone Support