

Search Engine Optimization

You've got the perfect domain name(s). You have a well planned and effective web site that is elegant and eye-catching but fun to use and easy to navigate. So all you have to do is sit back and wait for the phone to ring. Right?

Unfortunately, just having an outstanding web site is not enough to "create" business. Without taking additional steps to promote your web site and draw traffic to your site, your only visitors will likely be those who have already had contact with you or your company. Perhaps they have your business card or your brochure, or saw your web site address on the side of your van! But how do you reach people who have not been exposed to your promotional material?

One of the most effective ways to reach your potential clients through your web site is to ensure that your web site is fully optimized for the popular search engines that people, like your potential clients, use to find information.

Optimally, your web site will be designed with Search Engine Optimization built into its core. However, any site can be optimized to rank higher and appear more frequently in search engines under relevant search terms.

Search Engine Optimization is not an exact science. No two search engines work the same way, and similarly no two web sites are the same. In basic terms, search engines will index your site based on its content, and the frequency of words within the site. For example, a web site that contained the word "landscaping" 16 times would appear higher in the search engine rankings than a site that contained the same term only 5 times.

This alone would result in some unusual results as the English language is full of parallels and synonyms. For example, a site about Black Widow spiders might appear high in the results for someone searching for "web design".

"Keywords" allow us to further prioritize the relevance of words within the site, by giving weight to specific subjects. For instance, if we chose 5 keywords for our Black Widow Spider site, they might be "spider, arachnid, web, insect, poisonous". Some search engines use the keywords, which are hidden in the internal structure of a website, to classify the content that is found inside. In our spider example, our site will not likely rank high for someone who is looking for "web designer" but very high for someone searching for "spider web". Visa Versa, if we owned a web design company (which we do) we might use the keywords "web, hosting, internet, design, and site". We would rank very high obviously if someone searched for "web design" but would not likely be found by someone searching for "spider web".

The close relationship between keywords and body content is the main aspect of Search Engine Optimization, but how it is applied is crucial. To remain successful, a search engine must entice people to use their engine repeatedly. If a user gets useless information unrelated to their search term, they are not likely to reuse that search engine.

Search engines use different techniques to prevent unfair manipulation of their system. Violating a search engine's "policies" will cause your site to be de-listed and not appear in any searches. An experienced optimizer knows how to achieve maximum ranking in all engines without violating their policies and putting the web site listing in jeopardy.

Generating a list of keywords to optimize is important as well. What terms are people most likely to use to find you? What keywords will generate the most traffic for your industry? What keywords will draw traffic from parallel industries? In some cases, certain keywords could lead to negative impact for your site.

Ensuring that your site has maximum "keyword density" is important as well. The more frequently your site uses your keywords within its body helps to elevate its ranking.

What happens if two sites have exactly the same keywords, with exactly the same copy? Which site will rank higher? With most engines, the site with the most "votes" will rank higher. What is a "vote"? A "vote" is another web site that has a link within it directly to your site. For every web site that links to your web site you will receive one vote. Now, between two sites that use identical keywords with identical copy, the one with more votes will rank higher than the one with fewer votes. Many industries have communities or organizations that maintain a web site pertaining to their market. Many of these will offer a free link on their web site. Some of these will ask for you to place a link on your web site that links to theirs in return. This is called a "reciprocal link".

An advantage to having multiple domain names is the ability to have multiple optimizations for the same web site. Each domain can be optimized uniquely to focus on a specific product or service or group of keywords. In this manner, each domain will work equally hard for you, and by tying all of your domain names together into one web site your visitors will always get the same information in the same manner you intended.