

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)



SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) is essentially all about ensuring that your website can be found when people search for your products or services (mainly using Google). It is important that you are presented as high as possible on the list when people search.

The things that you need to do to optimise your web-site can be complex and you may well want to use an expert to do it. Even so there is a lot that you will need to do yourself. You cannot get away from this, and it is important that you put time and effort into it, to properly brief your IT expert.

Bear in mind that Google, as well as other search engines, constantly update the way they conduct searches on users' behalf. You will need to keep your SEO up to date.

1. Generate keyword phrases

The first step is the need to identify a list of keywords and phrases that you want to promote the site for. These are based on:

- Common sense, what would we, or a business person, search for?
- The more complex the better (long tail phrases) – typically 4 – 5 words in a phrase
- Geographically-specific helps – Google likes localism – counties and cities are best

For example “Car dealers in Sussex” is better than just “Car Dealers”. There may be fewer searches done for it, but you are more likely to be found. Google has restrictions on the use of the keyword search tool but your IT expert should be able to do this. The aim is to find phrases that are searched relatively frequently, but for which there is low competition (other sites targeting the same phrases). You should aim for about 10-15 phrases.

2. Specific pages

Ideally have a page on the site for each phrase or 2-3 phrases if they are related. Use the phrase between 2 and 5 times on the main page content. However it is very important that the content makes sense – i.e. normal English. If not then it will drive away readers of the site, and also Google can detect phrases being used in a non-normal way and will mark the page down.

3. SEO Metatags

Metatags should be used on the page. These are technical entries that give search engines information about the page. Use as follows:

- Title: very important. Is what appears in the browser title bar at the top. Should include the key phrase in this.
- Description of the page, this is what Google will display in the search results; e.g. Used Toyota car dealers in Yorkshire
- Keywords; not too many phrases, just 2 or 3, separated by commas; e.g. Used Toyota dealers in Yorkshire, used car sales in Yorkshire

4. Back Link Generation

Once the above have been done, the next step is to generate more back links (links from other sites pointing to yours), which will help drive people to the site and help the SEO.

5. Blogs and Forums

A good way to do this is by posting relevant comments in industry blogs and forums. In the blog put a link back to a relevant page on your site. The other sites need to be relevant and the comment and link must be relevant, otherwise it will be seen as spam and damage you.

6. Social Media

Facebook and Twitter are creating back links (called social signals). However Google treats them as short lived and so links from them tend to be not long lasting ones. This is not to say they shouldn't be done, you just need to keep doing them. LinkedIn is useful, but a lot of its content is not visible to Google. Likewise with Facebook content.

7. Google Places

Google places is becoming more important. You should have your office location registered on Google places. This helps with the localism aspect.

8. Directories

Directories can be useful and generate links and traffic. It is important that they are relevant and business related and not just seen as spam. Free index <http://www.freeindex.co.uk> is seen as a good current one.

9. Website content

For good SEO it is important that your site is kept fresh and updated. This means regularly posting items on the site. Good articles naturally generate credibility. Remember that the site must read well for visitors, not just be loaded with keywords. Pictures can be useful, but need to be relevant. Ideally their filename should relate to the topic and alt and title tags used. Videos are important for SEO.

10. Links Out

Links out to other relevant sites are good – for example to blog pages and stories on other sites. It helps your site to be seen as an important industry site. It is recommended that links are opened in new windows / tabs, so as to avoid losing visitors. If there is a good external site, or you have posted something on your own site, don't copy it onto your site, but pull out an extract and then post on your site with a link out.

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