

A Beginner's Guide to Search Engine Optimization for Small Business

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As an Internet user, you likely use a search engine such as Google, Yahoo and MSN to find what you're looking for. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the art and science of modifying a website (onsite and offsite) so that it will display higher in the search engine ranks.

There have been studies done to confirm that 54% of those who use search engines only go to the first page while only 19% of those continue on to the second page with a slim 14% continuing on to the third page. If you're sitting on page 45, the chances are pretty good that no one will find you through the search engines.

You can do a lot of the SEO yourself. Remember, however, that there are several competent and reputable firms who will do a superior job because they are experienced and know what to look for when optimizing your site. If you hired a company to design and upload your website, make sure that you ask them about search engine optimization as this should be an element considered from the outset.

Here are a couple of things to consider when optimizing your site:

CONTENT

- 1) Identify your target audience. What words are they likely to use when they do a search? Use these words and phrases and variations of them as the 'keywords' to be used throughout your website. Use one keyword or phrase per page.
- 2) Keyword placement should be in the title of the page, page URL, in the first 25 words and last 25 words of the copy. The keyword for that page (or variations of it) should also be used throughout the copy of that page.
- 3) Once you've inserted keywords, rework the text to ensure that it is compelling, market-driven copy. Make sure that the tone and text are a call to action for the reader. Above all, speak to your audience and make sure what you provide has value to them.

LINKS

- 1) Create text links within your site. Text-based navigation gets the search engines to more pages on your site. Site maps are useful to help search engines navigate through your site.
- 2) Inbound links to your site elevate the importance of your site in the eye of the search engines. Utilize ezine listings, newsletters, directories, to get your website address published throughout the Internet.
- 3) Generate press releases to get the word out about your product, service or business and submit to an online news forum with a link back to your site.
- 4) Create a blog, make regular and relevant entries, and link it back to your site.
- 5) Be a content provider. Write articles or content for other web sites in your industry and have the by-line link back to your website.