Six Things You Can Do To Improve Your Web Site's Search Rankings

When a potential customer looks for your products or services on the internet the order in which companies are listed by search engines is controlled by two factors. The search engine is trying to give the customer the most relevant information and, secondly, many businesses have "tuned" their web site to be (or appear to be) most relevant. This "tuning" process is called Search Engine Optimization (SEO). Here are six simple search engine optimization techniques you can use to improve the visibility of your web site.

1. **Help search engines understand your web site.**
Search engines only understand the words on your web site. They cannot read pictures or videos. Be very descriptive when writing about the services you provide and the products that you sell. Use synonyms and word variations to be sure the search engines will understand all aspects of your business. For example, a Chiropractor might include words like: chiropractic, chiro, subluxation, back pain, neck pain, chiropractic therapy, or chiropractic adjustment.

2. **Improve the "expert" information on your web site.**
Since search engines want to give their viewers the best information available, your site will rank better if the search engines believe your web site contains expert information. In general, the more original verbiage on your web site, the better. Links to other web sites do not help in this regard.

> **Rule of Thumb:** 200-500 words per page are optimal.

3. **Think like your customer.**
Make a list of the words your customers would use to search for your products and services. Exclude any references to your name or the name of your business. Rank these words in the order you think they will be used most frequently. Make a list of the locations you serve like: Wood River Illinois, Wood River IL, 62095. Don't forget to include plurals and abbreviations such as: Saint Louis, St Louis, STL
Pick the most important 5 or 6 keywords and embed them in your web page verbiage, especially in the headings and bolded text.

> **Rule of Thumb:** Each important keyword should appear on your web site 2 to 4 times for every 100 words of text.

Six Things

4.   Add your strong keywords to your meta-tags.
Meta-tags are information about your web site that has been embedded into each page to help search engines understand your web site. There are three meta tags: the title, the description, and the keywords.   Each of these should contain the keywords you identified in step 3.
Your title should contain no more than 10 words and no more than 75 characters, including blanks.

Your description should contain no more than 165 characters.

There is no limit on the number of keywords you can use, but place the most important ones first and don't duplicate keywords.

5.   Ask other web sites to link to your web site
Search Engines will think your web site is important if other important web sites link to your web site.

•   Blogs & Discussion Forums: When you blog or participate in online discussion forums include a link to your web site.

•   Reciprocal links: Some web sites will post links to your web site if you do the same for them.

•   Link farms: Some web sites will post links to your web site for a fee. This should only be done if the other web site has a large audience.

6.   Continually update your web site
Adding new content to your web site lets the search engines know that the site is active and worthy of better ranking. Once you stop updating your web site your rankings will probably fall.

SEO changes take time to take effect. The changes you make today may take as long as a month to be picked up by the search engines and up to 3 months to be fully "digested". Plan to fine tune your web site every 3 to 6 months thereafter depending on the environment and your competition.

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Cerebral Palsy of Southwestern Illinois www.cpswi.org now has a redesigned web site to share information about Cerebral Palsy and the organization's programs. The site can now accept donations and volunteers online.

Mid America Regional Lily Society Site www.marls.org now has a very extensive and image laden web site to educate the public about lilies and to promote their organization.

Millstadt Chamber Site www.millstadtchamber.ning.com held their kickoff meeting in January which included the introduction of a web site to support their organization.   The web site is a social network which displays chamber events and permits each member to create their own web page.

Bill's in Red Bud now offers products for sale online at www.BillsInRedBud.com.   The products are offered on an affiliate basis from Amsoil, Tirerack.com, BG FindaShop.com, AT&T, Wal-Mart, Apple, Overstock.com, and Thrifty Car Rental.

Microsoft Word Advanced Features

Here are some advanced functions that might be useful to you. These tips are based on Word 2007, but some can be used with Word 2003.

Section Breaks
Section breaks allow you to have different types of page layouts within a single document. For example you can have several pages in landscape orientation within a portrait oriented document. Set your cursor at the point where you want the new page layout to begin. On the **Page Layout** tab select **Breaks**, and then select **Next Page**. Now do the same where you want the new layout to end. In the area between the section breaks you can alter the margins, orientation, page size or columns without affecting the rest of the document.

Increasing Or Decreasing Font Size
You can quickly increase or decrease the font size of text by highlighting the text with your mouse, holding down the **cntl key** and **shift key** and then pressing the **Greater Than key** or **Less Than key**. The Greater Than key will increase the font size while the Less Than key will decrease the font.

Save As PDF
Word 2007 has an "add-in" that allows you to save Word documents in Adobe PDF format. The add-in can be found by searching for **Microsoft Save as PDF.** This feature will be convenient for recipients of your documents who do not have Word.

Click the **Office button**, then click **Save As**. Select the **Save As Type** of **PDF.**

Note: The same technique can be used to save a Word document in HTML format, but the resulting HTML document is not suitable for the internet.

Format Painter
The format painter can be used to copy text formatting, like bolding, font style or color, to another set of text. Use your mouse highlight the text area whose format is to be copied, click the **format painter icon**, then highlight the recipient text area. If you double click the format painter button you can copy formatting to multiple areas of text.

Send us your questions and if we use them we will send you a gift. Email your questions, with your name and address, to QUESTIONS . Thanks.

recommended web sites

Here are three web sites that might stimulate or amuse your brain.

LectureFox www.lecturefox.com offers free university lectures, some with videos, on many subjects.

Pandora Internet Radio www.pandora.com is an online music player that becomes attuned to your preferences.

LSAT Logic www.princetonreview.com/lsat-logic.aspx offers a series of podcasts on the use of logic in everyday life.

specials

Tax time is upon us. If you paid for a new web site in 2008 the web site might be considered a capital asset and could be depreciated. Talk to your accountant to see if this is appropriate in your situation.

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