The Core Aspects of Search Engine Optimisation Necessary to Move up the Ranking

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ABSTRACT

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of improving the visibility, volume and quality of traffic to website or a webpage in search engines via the natural search results. SEO can also target other areas of a search, including image search and local search. SEO is one of many different strategies used for marketing a website but SEO has been proven the most effective. An Internet marketing campaign may drive organic search results to websites or web pages but can be involved with paid advertising on search engines. All search engines have a unique way of ranking the importance of a website. Some search engines focus on the content while others review Meta tags to identify who and what a web site’s business is. Most engines use a combination of Meta tags, content, link popularity, click popularity and longevity to determine a site’s ranking. To make it even more complicated, they change their ranking policies frequently. This paper provides an overview of search engine optimisation strategies and pitfalls.

Keywords: Page Ranking, Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), Search Engines, Website Optimisation, Website Traffic

1. INTRODUCTION

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is the technique by which we can optimize a website in accordance with search engine requirements (Agarwal, 2009). It has transformed into a highly controlled science, crucial to every website marketing plan as it targets website traffic. When SEO started in late 1990’s it was easily manipulated and abused but search engines developed algorithms that would remove any factors that help influence a websites ranking, this solution was links, but with this development came problems and so Search Engines had to develop Link Building. This eventually stopped people manipulating their website rankings. The evolution of SEO happened with the introduction of Authority, this process was measuring the Authority of a website instead of the popularity of incoming links a website received. The search engine industry is always changing, and as industry standards and trends change so does the methods of SEO. Statistics (Porter, 2011) show how crucial SEO is to a website and how important it is to get ranked as high as possible.

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• 42% of search users click the top-ranking link
• 8% click the second-ranking link
• 62% of search users click a link on the first page of search results
• 23% of searches progress to the second page
• 80% of unsuccessful searches are followed with keyword refinement
• 41% of searches unsuccessful after the first page choose to refine their keyword
• 77% of search users choose organic over paid listing when searching
• 67% choose organic search when purchasing
• 40% of SEO campaigns aware of their ROI achieve returns in excess of 500%

It is important to understand that search engines read and like pure HTML. Major keywords should therefore be placed in the <HEAD> area by using Meta tags and repeated again in the <BODY> area of the page. It is also recommended to emphasize targeted key phrases by putting them in <h1> or <h2> tags plus the early paragraphs on the page. Another useful approach is to place information into all the <ALT> tags associated with each photo/picture. This will then tell search engine robots what the graphic is depicting. Time should be spent deliberating over the actual text surrounding a link (or links from other sites to your site). This is given special precedence by the engines and care should be taken to avoid ‘wasting’ keyword ‘points’ on senseless text such as ‘Click here to...’.

Search engines do not like Flash, JavaScript, Frames, words in graphics and (in many cases) dynamically produced pages (like .asp) which include symbols such as ? in the URL. These types of pages make it difficult to achieve good rankings. Static HTML pages are much more preferable for search engine listings. Spamming the engines is attempting to ‘fool’ the ranking system into presenting a ‘spammed’ site higher than it deserves to be in the results. All engines however are aware of spamming methods and there is a risk of becoming banned should a site be discovered to be using covert methods. Tricks that can get a site banned include repeating words over and over in tiny or invisible text, filling Meta tags with irrelevant terms, using competitor’s names or trademarks and any other method of keyword ‘stuffing’. Although meta tags are often ignored, search engines are aware that so-called ‘experts’ fill them with words to attract surfers so many now check to see if the words listed are actually on the web page, if they are not then a site could be downgraded or banned for spamming (Evans, 2007).

Improved results can be obtained by having the title of each page state clearly in 8-12 words what the page is about, ensuring also that the first 20-30 words of text on the page explain what service or product is being promoted, and making sure that there is also clearly written information about the subject and other sites linking back. Each site that links to a page is an extra vote of confidence in that site, but care has to be taken to ensure that the links are from a reputable third party or related web-site/portal. FFA (Free for All link page) sites and ‘link-farms’ (which contain links that no-one is likely to ever click on) can have the opposite effect and is now a day deemed as another method of trying to fool the search engines. Attempts should be made to copy the potential keywords that each surfer will attempt in their web session. It may be easy to get a top ranking for a company name or an obscure product but how many people will actually come to the site as a result of the obscure products or typing in a company name? Yes, selection of the proper phrases for each market is crucial. Targeting the wrong keywords will be a wasted effort and possibly an expensive mistake if Google AdWords (https://adwords.google.com) mechanism was been used. However, selection of the correct keywords could see traffic growth and sales increases beyond a marketing manager’s wildest dream.

A good practice is to check out what people are searching for. To help with this, there are a number of free and inexpensive tools available to help such as wordtracker.com or Google Analytics service. Some keywords are always going to be much more competitive than others.
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