chaosMap
INTERNET MARKETING ARCHITECTS

SEO REFERENCE SHEET

Search Engine Optimization 101:

"How to get customers to find your website"

(The Short Version)

www.chaosmap.com

Overview

The Internet has become one of the single most important business tools for any company to use. Because of that, it is vital that any business have a website. Most companies have, in fact, made significant investments, both financial and strategic, in their websites and the sales that might come from them.

Typically, you find that your company has great products and services, superlative customer service, and wonderful quality, all presented on a top notch website. The only problem is: the sales you counted on aren't materializing. Customers simply aren't going to the website. The situation begs the question, "Why?"

The simple answer is that it is hard to find any given site in the vastness of the internet. There are hundreds of millions of people searching through hundreds of millions of sites to find the information, product, or service they seek. Finding your site is like finding a needle in a haystack. The searcher needs a great deal of help, and that help comes from search engines at the moment.

This situation is reminiscent of the old philosophy joke about trees falling in woods: *If you have a website, but no one can find it, does the website really exist?*

"HOW TO" TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED:

Step One: Ensure your Website is ready for visitors.

Before you embark on a program to increase website traffic, it is important to ensure that the site is ready to receive visitors. It is not helpful if all of the new visitors see a website that still looks like it is under construction or poorly presented. The site should create a positive first impression; this will increase the odds that visitors become customers. Therefore, you should check your images to be sure they display correctly, proofread the text for spelling or grammatical errors, and verify that your site host can handle increased volume.

Step Two: Optimize your Site For Specific Keywords and Phrases.

Search being with users entering keywords and phrases that describe the information or products they desire. Search engines are designed to look for keywords or phrases in specific parts of websites. Hence, it is imperative, in order to rank higher in search results, to identify the most effective keywords for your business and locate them in the proper places in the site. Quality keywords indicate what your business sells and should cover both general and specific topics. For example, if your company sells flavored coffees, your keyword list might include:

"flavored coffee", "flavored coffee beans", "Colombian coffee", and "coffee variety packs" rather than just "coffee".

Once you've identified your keywords, you should use them in the places of your Web site where the search engines will look for them. Search engines will look at emphasized text like titles, headings, and subheadings. They will also notice if the keywords are spread throughout the content of your site. Some of the most important locations are within your "Meta tags", or the actual HTML coding of your site. Here are some key Meta tags where your keywords should appear:

- **Title Tag:** The content in the TITLE tag appears on the top of your browser window. A TITLE tag is an important introduction to your Web page and is like the heading for a book chapter. You should customize the TITLE tag on every page to describe the contents of each page. The TITLE tag should be the first tag in your HTML and should convey the message in about 40 to 150 characters. Be sure you always use keywords in your TITLE tag. A title tag can be inserted between the <head> tags in your HTML like this: <title>Title copy goes here</title>.
- **META Description Tag:** This one describes your site to the search engine as it views the page. Some search engines display the content in this tag as part of the search results. Your META description tag should be between 50 and 250 characters. For best results, no single word should be repeated more than four times, and keyword phrases should not be repeated. The first letter of each word should be capitalized, and individual words and phrases should be separated by commas. A META tag looks like this: <META name="description" content="Your Message Here. This is your natural results 'ad' on the internet. Use it wisely and use a phone number too.">
- **META Keywords Tag:** This is part of your webpage's code inserted on top of each page of your site. The keywords used in this tag are not viewable in a web browser, but they can be viewed as part of the source code. Insert any keywords that are relevant to each page's content. We recommend 75 to 125 characters for each page. You should also avoid the use of stop words—a, the, and, of—in the tag. The HTML for a keyword tag looks like this: <META name="Keywords" content="Add your keywords here">.
- **Page Content:** Each page should contain between 250 and 600 words of unique content. In that content your page's keywords should occur four or five times each. You should generally use no more than three keywords per page; using too many keywords can hurt the site's ranking. Too much repetition of your keywords on the page can also hurt your ranking.

Step Three: Get Search Engines to "crawl" onto your website.

The best way to ensure that search engines can find your site is to have other web sites link to your site. This will also help to guarantee that they return to your site to index it frequently. The more links from other sites that you have on your site, the more search engine spiders will

"crawl" over your site and find new content.   And, the more links you have from quality, related themes/sites – the better.

Step Four: Track and measure results.

Search engine ranking is a dynamic area because algorithms, tactics, and the competition are always changing. As a result, your site's ranking will increase and decrease, depending on what you do and what others do. Therefore, it is a good idea to track the results of your efforts in a systematic way, so that you can exploit what works and eliminate what does not. A simple way to do this is to use a keyword ranking program. It is also important to check your ranking in a variety of search engines, not just Google®. Google® usually takes longer to respond to changes than other search engines.

Step Five: Maintain good results and use best practices.

Since search engine marketing is dynamic, it is important to continually update and optimize your website. You must keep the site fresh and up-to-date with new content and changes to existing content in order to maintain rankings. Therefore, track your industry niche, and add new keywords occasionally and new content constantly. Aim to add at least a few pages of new content each week for a small-to-medium site. If you have an e-commerce site, add a new, detailed product description each day. Test these changes and their impact with an analytical tool (Google Analytics is free).

Summary

Having a good website is a must for any company. Most companies have invested thousands or tens of thousands of dollars in their websites. On the other hand, that investment pays off only if the website can be located among the uncountable number of other sites on the Web. To do that, the company must employ some strategy to market its site online, paid or free (SEO).

However, the SEO process requires diligence, constant attention, and patience to work. It may take several months before the results are noticeable. With Google®, this can be three to six months. Companies may want to consider a paid search campaign while they wait for these results to materialize. While waiting for results, it is incumbent on the company to constantly tweak its site and evaluate the impact of those changes.

The reason for this requirement is the dynamic nature of the Web, search engines, and your competition. Circumstances and search engine algorithms are constantly changing. Thus, those working to optimize sites must keep up with the latest changes and ascertain how to modify websites accordingly to optimize their search engine performance for today and tomorrow. Some resources that may provide valuable information about industry changes:

http://www.mattcutts.com/blog/
http://www.searchenginewatch.com
http://googlewebmastercentral.blogspot.com/
http://developer.yahoo.net/blog/
http://www.searchengineland.com

Obviously, it may be difficult for a company without staff experience in this field to keep up with all of the latest changes and information. Given the investments and size of the potential cash flows, many may prefer to leave the manipulation of link popularity, density and frequency of keywords in page content, HTML code, site themes, and other details to a professional in search engine optimization services.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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