SEO
STRATEGIES

The first goal of any search engine optimization strategy is to get your web pages indexed. But even before that can happen, you need to get the search engine crawlers to visit your website.

Depending on the search engine or directory and the overall circumstances (how you invite and solicit crawlers), that first visit could take days, weeks, or even months.

And while it's true that the initial crawler visits can be somewhat unpredictable (or take a long time in coming), once the ice is broken, future visits can be controlled to some degree…

Basically, the more frequently you update your pages, the more frequently the crawlers will show up on your website doorstep.

Of course, that's only half the battle. The other half is getting the search engines and directories to actually index your pages.

In order to do that, you need to start at the beginning. And the beginning in this particular instance is developing and enhancing pages in such a way that the search engine crawlers will be impressed.

The overall search process is simple…

All the text content that search engine crawlers gather is stored and indexed. People conduct searches based on certain phrases (keywords). Whatever content possesses the most relevancy with regard to any given keyword will be placed in the top positions of the search results.

And since the title of the page and the text content generally carry the most weight - at least with regard to what search engine crawlers deem most relevant during their visits - it stands to reason that improvement in page rank and/or search results listing can most often be attributed to having individual and specific keywords properly incorporated into those two prime areas.

Of course, if keywords were the only basis for which page rank and position in search results were determined, optimizing web pages would be pretty much cut and dried…

> pick a keyword > use it in your title and throughout your content >
> achieve high page rank and top position in search engine results

The problem is, there are so many variables that not only come into play but change on a regular basis, it can seem as though achieving solid and effective search engine optimization might never be possible.

Fortunately, it's not only possible, it can be relatively painless as well. All you have to do is satisfy the top three requirements of pretty much all major search engines…

· provide quality content

- · update content on a regular basis

- · get numerous top-ranking websites to link back to your site

And the search engines and directories you should be trying to impress the most are the top four contenders…

Google
http://www.google.com

Yahoo
http://www.yahoo.com

MSN Search
http://search.msn.com

DMOZ (Open Directory)
http://dmoz.org

Beyond that, there are countless other search engines and directories like AltaVista, Ask Jeeves, and AllTheWeb.

Should you optimize for those as well, or simply level your sites on the major players and bypass all the search engines and directories below them? Not necessarily. You still want your pages listed in as many locations as possible. You just shouldn't try to satisfy every one of them with regard to optimization.

Satisfy the top four contenders. Then, if you have the time and ambition to broaden the scope of your SEO efforts, do it. If not, don't worry about the hundreds (or even thousands) of other search engines and directories that exist.

You're only human. And just meeting the optimization criteria of the top four is going to be challenging and energetic enough.

Of course, unless you plan to make search engine optimization your life's work, it's not likely you'll invest most of your energy in that one single area (even when restricted to the top four players). But you do need to invest a fair amount of quality effort.

And that basically equates to these two missions…

1. Get your pages indexed by major search engines.

2. Improve your page rank and position in search results.

In order to accomplish both of those, you need to carefully balance the line between good optimization techniques and the urge to take things a bit too far.

In other words, you need to make certain you carry out your two missions without stepping over the line into what's commonly referred to as "black hat" search engine tactics.

That dark and evil territory would include things like…

Keyword Stuffing - repeating keywords over and over again for no logical or practical reason

Hidden Content - including keywords or text that's the same color as the background for the purpose of manipulating search engine crawlers

Doorway Pages - not intended for viewers to see but rather to trick search engines into placing the website into a higher index position

Although these types of practices were once considered intelligent and effective methods of optimization, they can now result in having your website banned from search engines entirely.

In general, it's better to concentrate on the most popular and most reasonable optimization techniques. By doing that, you'll not only achieve the results you're looking for, your efforts will have long lasting results.

And when you consider how much work is involved in getting any website to the top of search engine rank and position, it's worth whatever effort it takes to get it right the first time.

For the most part, there are three basic things you'll need to do in order to accomplish proper and effective search engine optimization.

- · compile keyword lists

- · publish keyword-rich content

- · establish a beneficial link strategy

Naturally, having software that can help you accomplish those four things quickly and efficiently would be a great asset. So, in addition to exploring each of these areas, we'll include the best software programs for making each task easier to perform.

The core of any SEO strategy is built almost entirely around the group of keywords you choose to target.

The first order of business is to decide which groups of keywords you'll be utilizing. In most instances, those groups will be either directly or indirectly related to the topic or niche that your website is (or will be) associated with.

Once you've established the individual groups of keywords you want to target, you can begin to compile a comprehensive list of top-level phrases that have each of the following characteristics:

- · are searched for by thousands of viewers each and every month

- · have little or no competition associated with it

The more people who search for the term combined with the least amount of competition

associated with it, the more valuable the keyword will be with regard to gaining automatic search engine traffic.

Beyond that, you'll want to compile lists of secondary keywords. These would still be valuable, but not to the extent that the first top-level list would be.

The main advantage of lower level keywords is the fact that you don't have to work quite as hard to get definitive search engine recognition. And since you'll automatically get fairly decent results position, you'll also receive additional targeted viewer traffic.

To make up for the lack of quality in the keyword itself (in most cases that equates to fewer searches being conducted every month and therefore less competition), you need to work with a much larger quantity of lower-level keywords.

Basically, the results will be just as good as what you experience through top-level keywords. It will just take more keywords to achieve those same results.

Of course, the good news is that there are software programs which can significantly cut down the amount of time it takes to gain content - no matter how many keywords you decide to target (see the next segment on Quality Content).

There are several ways in which you can compile keyword lists. One of the quickest and easiest methods is to use the free online suggestion tool that's provided by Overture at http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/.

Although it will give you a clear indication of how many searches have been performed on any given topic during the previous month, it's somewhat bare-bones. Plus, there's no way to easily transfer results from their web page to your independently compiled keyword list.

When you copy and paste the Overture results, you also get the number of times each keyword has been searched. While that might be good for research purposes, you'll have to manually remove that part of the data in order to wind up with a file that only lists keywords.

Wordtracker at http://www.wordtracker.com, on the other hand, does in fact allow you to save your results with nothing but the keywords listed.

You'll have to pay to use their online service, but it's well worth the price. It's highly effective and offers the most in-depth and accurate capability with regard to real searches that people perform.

Although there are numerous ways you can conduct research using Wordtracker, they will all revolve around the ability to compile keyword lists which are based on the groups of keywords you originally established.

Once you know exactly which keywords you'll be targeting, you can begin to implement content that will be associated with each of those phrases.

There are numerous reasons why "Content Is King".

From a viewer's perspective, content not only invites them to visit your website but encourages them to return on a regular basis.

It's a relatively simple equation…