

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION TIPS

10 SIMPLE TIPS ANYONE CAN USE TO IMPROVE THE RANKING OF THEIR WEBSITE IN SEARCH ENGINES

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YOU CAN DO THIS.

This white paper addresses 10 relatively easy steps you can take to get your website ranking higher in search engines like Google, MSN, and Yahoo!. While search engine optimization (SEO) can be a difficult process it is easier than most people think and whether an organization plans on doing SEO in-house or hiring an SEO firm understanding these tips will help that organization get the most value for their efforts and/or money.

PLANNING

1. KEYWORDS If you don't have a plan then you're going to fail. Although you might not know it since you won't know what you were trying to achieve. The first step in planning out your search engine optimization efforts is to come up with a list of keywords. The question to answer here is what are people typing into search engines when they're looking for what you have? You can come up with these off the top of your head, but there are some tools that can help. One such tool is found at <http://inventory.overture.com>. Type in a keyword you think might be a good one for you. The results will be a list of related keywords as well as numbers representing the number of times that keyword was searched for during the past month or so*. This tool is helpful because you can find keywords or keyword combinations you may not have thought of on your own.

2. PRIORITIES The keyword inventory tool can also help you set your priorities. Accept this fact: You cannot rank #1 for every keyword you want. You're going to have to focus on which keywords are most important to you. If you're running a commercial website that means which keywords are going to make you the most money.

Making priorities can be tough, and it's not something you're likely to get right the first time. Chances are your priorities will change over time as you get more information from your SEO efforts. The mistake many make is to assume that the keyword that is searched for most will bring them the most business. Not so. A keyword that is searched for only 10 times in a month may bring you more business than one that is searched for 100 times because it may be more relevant to your business.

Once you have created a comprehensive list of keywords pick out 25 you believe will bring you the most traffic and the kind of traffic you want. Then pick five of those 25 that are critical keywords, and finally pick the most important keyword. While your secondary pages may not focus on the top keyword nor even the top five keywords, your homepage definitely will as well as your site as a whole. Having these priorities in mind will help you as you progress through the other steps.

ON-PAGE OPTIMIZATION

"On-page optimization" refers to changes you can make on your website to get it ranked higher in search engines vs. those changes you can make that aren't on your own website, which will be covered later.

3. TITLE TAGS The "title tag" is a snippet of HTML code that should appear towards the very top of the code in every single HTML page on your website. It generally looks something like this:

```
<title>Title Tag Text Here</title>
```

The title tag is critically important to your SEO efforts and writing effective content for the title tags of each page of your website may have more positive effect upon SEO than any other one thing you can do. The title tag is seldomly used by human beings but is heavily used by search engines, which means you can generally make changes to it without being overly sensitive to how it will look to your visitors, because chances are they won't pay much attention to it. However, this isn't to say you should ignore the human element. The title tag is what shows up when someone bookmarks a page or adds it to their favorites menu, so some care should be taken.

* Represents traffic searched for on MSN, Yahoo!, and many other search engines, but does not include searches performed on Google, the most-used search engine.

The title tag is where search engines generally get the text for the main link text which is used to link to your website. Here is a sample result from Google when the keyword combination "utah search engine optimization" is searched for:

Utah SEO Search Engine Optimization Salt Lake City SEO Firm
MWI provides **search engine optimization** services, also known as SEO, to clients in **Utah**, California, New York, Chicago, and Arizona.
www.mwi.com/company/search_engine_optimization/ - 12k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#)

The first line of this search result is a link to the website represented by the search result. This link text exactly matches the text of the title tag on the page to which this link is directed. You'll notice that certain words are in bold. This is because they match the words that were typed into the search. More bold is generally better since it is an indication of how well your title tag is matching a particular search term.

Naturally the question comes up as to whether it wouldn't be smart to include all your keywords in every title tag on every page of your entire website. This would be damaging to your rankings for two reasons; 1) search engines don't like identical title tags on the same website, and 2) as you add more words to your title tag each individual word becomes less important in the eyes of a search engine. This is why prioritization is important. On your homepage you will want to include your top keyword in the title tag for sure, and perhaps a few of the other top keywords. But as a rule of thumb you should not include more than 10 words in your title tag lest they become lost in the crowd.

4. META TAGS A common misperception amongst the general public is that meta tags are important. They are still useful, but they are not critical and they are much, much less important than they were a few years ago. Meta tags are also HTML tags, like the title tag, and they also appear near the top of an HTML page, generally right underneath the title tag. There are many different kinds of meta tags, but two are the most important and if you include no meta tags but these two you'll be just fine. The two types are the description meta tag and the keyword meta tag. Here are some samples:

```
<meta name="description" content="MWI provides search engine optimization services, also known as SEO, to clients in Utah, California, New York, Chicago, and Arizona.">  
<meta name="keywords" content="utah search engine optimization, utah seo, california, new york, chicago, arizona">
```

As with title tags, a common mistake people make is to put too much in them. The description tag should include one to two descriptive sentences about the content on the page, and of course you'll want it chock full of your keywords because if you look up to the search result at the top of the page you'll notice that the two lines under the link match what is in the description meta tag. The keyword tag should have your keywords for that page, separated by commas. 10 or less keywords are recommended. 20 or more keywords could result in your page getting a worse ranking in search engines than it would otherwise.

5. ALT TAGS Each image on your website should have an alt tag with your keywords in them. This does not make a huge difference to your rankings but it is relatively simple and therefore we recommend doing it. Here is an example:

```

```

6. CONTENT Content is king. Like the title tag it is one of the items that will have a large impact on your SEO efforts. Unfortunately it's not so easy. In your title tag you only have to worry about 5-10 words, but with your content you may have to worry about hundreds or thousands of words per page. Optimizing content for search engines can get tricky, but follow one rule and you'll be ok. That rule is "Make content interesting to human beings." If you follow that one rule, chances are you'll be including the keywords you want in your content without thinking about it, and you'll be making sure that real people stay on your site and use it, and they might refer other people to it or link to it, and those links back to your content are gold. More about that later.

Make sure there is HTML text as content on your homepage, but don't put too much or you'll turn off your human visitors. MWI's own homepage has minimal text on the homepage but still ranks quite well for the keywords that are contained within that text.

7. MORE CONTENT Anything can be overdone, but generally the more content your site has the better for SEO purposes. That doesn't mean the more content per page, but more pages. Again, this can come at the expense of your human visitors and you don't want to do that, but try to find creative ways to have more content on your site without overwhelming the humans. Press releases, white papers, newsletters, and articles are great ways to add pages to your site. Rather than having one page of management bios create a page for each team member. Search engines love content, and human beings love good content.

