



## Search Engine Optimization

**Commit to an ongoing, evolving program to keep your web site relevant**

What does it take to get your site closer to the top of the search engine results page? Search Engine Optimization (SEO) can help you make great strides. But it's more than the science (and yes, art) of developing or updating your site to be more visible and attractive to search engines. In fact, more of the effort lies in regular analysis of site performance data and monitoring what your competitors are doing.

### **A great way to give new life to an old site.**

Your site may not be returning results nearly as well as it did when it launched, even though you've diligently updated it. It's likely that your site's content and structure have become less relevant to current search engine page ranking protocols. A thorough SEO review and upgrade can make your online pages more visible to search engines and give you upward mobility on search return pages.

### **Write (and research) in the language your customers and prospects use.**

Although search engines look for all kinds of invisible things, there's no replacement for content your prospects care about. Your site must be rich in keywords, specific descriptions, and benefit-oriented copy that match the search terms your prospects use. Don't fail to include the power of verbs; you may be thinking you offer an "efficient pump," but your prospects might be searching for "increasing pump efficiency."

Popular search engines offer excellent analytical tools to help you identify the search terms—keywords or key phrases—that are relevant to your business. You might be surprised at what you're overlooking today. A competent SEO provider can help you refine a search term list into one you can manage effectively as you monitor site performance over time.

Search engines also acknowledge unique content. So at the same time you consider terminology your prospects and competitors *are using*, you must also strive for wording and linking strategies that *don't appear elsewhere*. This is where understanding your prospects true needs and desires can pay off when you address them in creative, though credible variations in text and site architecture.



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### **Commit to a year of effort.**

Even though initial results can be extraordinarily satisfying, SEO isn't something you should do as a single-shot effort, then ignore for a couple of years. Instead, you'll succeed by continually measuring results and refining your site to achieve incremental improvements in search rankings. This kind of effort can also yield better, expanded site utilization by visitors who are more likely to further engage with your business. SEO experts counsel that you should stay very actively engaged in the process for a full year in order to really get it right. Thereafter, you'll still need to monitor and adjust, though with less frequency. And every few years, you should plan a significant SEO review and update to keep pace with technology and best practices.

### **Connect with a resource that keeps current on search engine technology.**

SEO is a moving target. You'll save time, money, and headaches by hiring a pro to do your SEO work. A withering amount of pure focus and time is required to keep abreast of advancements in web technology and search engine algorithms. Unless you're in the SEO business, you'll miss important things today and you won't be able to anticipate evolving good practices.

### **Long term, it pays to play fair.**

Don't attempt to manipulate search engines by devious or questionable means. There are many spurious "black hat" techniques that can help boost your page rankings in the short term, and they can be tempting. Right now, you see terms like spamdexing, cloaking, doorway pages, link farms, and others. Next year the list will be different. But, take note: the search engines that matter are aware of these techniques and many more the rest of us haven't heard of yet. Blatant manipulation can get your site banned from ranking. Then what kind of effort will be required to wipe the slate clean or start over? Instead, rely on doing your homework: learn what your prospects need to know, follow best accepted practices to embed that information in the right places and the right ways...then monitor, measure, and refine your site's performance.

