

# **Search Engine Optimization and Marketing for Beginners**

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**The Write Market**

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## **The Write Market**

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# Introduction

Successful search engine optimization (SEO) techniques require strong organization. This book will provide you with a thoroughly tested, successful process to optimize your web site.

In order to implement the process yourself, you must have the ability to change the text of your web pages. You may also follow the process, develop your own content, and then have your webmaster implement the content for you.

This book will provide a *very brief* look at the following:

- HTML – to recognize specific parts of a web page that influence SEO.

- Basic web writing skills – important to selling your products or services once you get the traffic.

- Navigational structure – like your visitors, search

engine spiders need an easy path to follow. (Search engine spiders are programs that crawl your web site to store them in a database for later retrieval by a search engine.)

PPC or Pay-Per-Click campaigns – these might be an important step after you have optimized your site for “organic listings.”

While the topics listed above encompass different job skills and might even be done by several individuals, it is important to have a basic understanding of how they influence the optimization of your site. To that end, a list of resources is provided at the end of the book. These are valuable tools to help you understand these skills.

There is also a good glossary of terms at the end of the book. In fact, we might suggest that you quickly read through the glossary before you start to read the rest of the book. We’re going to start using some of these terms straight off – so, for the next few hours, get ready to immerse yourself in the world of search engine optimization.

*Good luck!*

# SEO Philosophy

The emphasis of this book is on “how to” optimize your site. However, it is important that we relate a little of our SEO philosophy or theory to let you know where we’re coming from.

**Have a little patience.** We have been optimizing web sites for six years. We’ve seen sites rise and fall in the search engines; at times, we’ve seen fluctuations in ranks on a day-to-day basis. How do we handle this? The answer is “patience.” You must be patient and allow the search engines to put your site into the database. Once in the database, you must be patient when the search engines change their algorithms and do funny things to your rankings. If you optimize using the techniques in this book, your site *will* weather the changes in search engine algorithms. Some search engines change their algorithms every other week! They do it in order to keep their data fresh and relevant. *This book does not*

*reference or recommend chasing algorithms.*

**Be persistent.** By keeping accurate records and reviewing them on a weekly, or even monthly basis, you will enhance your chances of completing all necessary tasks. Persisting at these tasks will put you above your competition. First, you must be persistent with the focus of your site. Whatever you decide the theme or niche of your site will be, keep the focus and never let it slip from your grasp. Second, you must be persistent at getting your sites into search engine and directory databases. Third, you must persist at adding content to your site on a steady schedule. After you initially optimize your most relevant pages, content development will be a continuing task. We will cover this in detail in the last chapter.

**Don't put all your eggs in one basket.** We don't rely on any one specific search engine for traffic. Our optimization techniques will get your pages ranks in *all* search engines across the board. You may see some differences in individual ranks for specific keywords. However, you will also find that if you are fairly well-ranked in one engine, you will do fine in all the others, as well. *This book is not going to teach you about optimizing for specific search engines.*

In the same vein, we tell our clients that they cannot rely solely on search engines (whether pay-per-click or organic listings) to provide them a living. Search engines are merely one marketing method. *Our successful*

*clients realize the necessity of implementing a marketing campaign that integrates offline methods of promotion with online methods of promotion.*

**It takes time.** Optimizing your web pages and seeing some real results is going to take time. *After submission, you should start to see results in about 2 months of time, maybe less.* If you haven't seen results within two months, something is wrong! There is a troubleshooting section and a checklist at the back of the book to help you work through these issues.

**The more property you own the richer you are.**

Think of the Internet as a wild frontier. The more land of that wild frontier that you can stake a claim to, the richer you will become. *The more pages of optimized content you have, the more traffic you will get.* It only stands to reason that if you have more pages indexed by search engines, then you will have more chances to have those pages ranked. We've seen this assumption proved again and again so we're not shy about talking it up. Again, we will cover content development in the last chapter.



# Before You Begin

Before you attempt the process of actually optimizing individual pages of your site, you will need to do several things to ensure that your site is ready for optimization.

## **Acquire your own domain name and hosting services.**

Search engines and especially directories are more likely to index pages in the root directory than pages in subdirectories of the server. Free web sites are placed in subdirectories (not in the root directory). Therefore, they have less of a chance of being found and indexed by search engines.

Hosting services can be obtained very inexpensively. You can find services as low as \$3.95 per month. Do a search for “hosting” in your favorite search engine and you will find a multitude of choices.

Also, people visiting your site are more likely to trust

your offerings if they know you've invested in a real web site. *Having your own domain name and hosting service is imperative.*

**Achieve a professional, attractive design.** You should have a professionally designed template for your web site. This template may include a graphical navigation system and a familiar page layout. Professional designers are skilled at creating intuitive, user friendly, navigable sites. You need a site that people can learn to use quickly and easily.

This step is important for two main reasons:

When you submit to directories, real people (humans, not machines) will visit your site and decide if it's worth including in the directory. *You cannot afford a shoddy design and lose the chance of getting into directories.* Directories are essential to search engine optimization. (More on directories later.)

A quality, professional design entices people to buy your products. People trust a well-designed web site with professional graphics. People will not trust something made by your half uncle's brother's best friend who is dabbling in web design.

With that said, professional layout and graphics do not have to be expensive. There are plenty of sites that now offer free, professionally designed web site templates.

Do a search in your favorite engine for “free web site templates.”

**Ensure that your site has proper navigation.** Proper navigation allows search engine spiders to follow your links and put your pages into their database. People need to find their way around your site, as well. Sometimes, organization is what distinguishes a high quality site from a loser. A well designed navigational system will have a positive impact on search engine optimization.

**Write and develop your content.** *Content is King.* All search engines, directories, or otherwise, will index your web site based on CONTENT. ALL of them. Content is the key to developing an Internet presence.

You will build a good reputation with high-quality content. If you have interesting content other webmasters will want to link to your site. (Obtaining links into your site is a priority for SEO. More on links later.)

Also, your content must be focused. Content that works around one theme will help you attract your target market. You will attract attention to your site if you can become a respected provider of information about your niche.

For instance, [thewritemarket.com](http://thewritemarket.com) provides a wealth of information on web marketing. We try to stick to topics of design, marketing, and promotion – information that

we feel would be useful to consumers looking for web design services. The content has drawn attention to our site and our services. The content helps us sell our services because people trust that we are experts in our field.

*The purpose of this book is to help you write your content in ways that both people and search engines can understand.*

**Download or Bookmark the following tools.** (We cannot guarantee the continued availability of these tools):

- Google Tool Bar with Page Rank: available at [google.com](http://google.com)
- Link Popularity Check: available at [checkyourlinkpopularity.com](http://checkyourlinkpopularity.com)
- Invest in a stats program. If you are a beginner, we highly recommend Advanced Logger: [perlonline.com](http://perlonline.com)
- Bookmark [keywordcount.com](http://keywordcount.com)
- Bookmark [overture.com](http://overture.com)
- Check out [webposition.com](http://webposition.com) – this is a tool that can help you determine what keywords you are getting listings for. The program is useful, but it must be used wisely and sparingly.

**Subscribe to the following free newsletters.** (We cannot guarantee the continued availability of these ezines):

- High Rankings Advisor: [highrankings.com](http://highrankings.com)
- Search Engine Guide: [searchengineguide.com](http://searchengineguide.com)
- Search Engine Watch: [searchenginewatch.com](http://searchenginewatch.com)

The above are the best ezines on search engine marketing that we have found. They will take approximately 1-2 hours per month to read. We highly recommend that you subscribe to them in order to stay abreast of what is going on in the field of SEO.

There are also many discussion boards that you may be interested in. You will find a few of these in the resources section. However, after you gain knowledge and achieve a level of confidence in your SEO techniques, you may find that the boards become repetitive. We highly recommend them if you are a beginner. You may find a point where you want to give them up, or you may find yourself becoming a permanent fixture in their communities.



# Writing Strategies

In the last chapter, we recommended that you write your web pages and develop your content before you begin the process of optimization. You will find that most of the following strategies contain a familiar theme. They are all about readability. Surprisingly, they are also strategies that will help get your pages ranks in search engines. *If you follow these strategies, half the battle of optimizing will be won.* We have found that pages written in this manner do very well in obtaining organic listings.

**Write in “chunks.”** Don’t overwhelm visitors with too much information in one paragraph. Present information in neat, readable chunks. If you chunk, your paragraphs will be about two to three sentences each.

**Use headlines.** Headlines are another way to make your pages more readable. In the past, using keywords in

headlines or heading tags in the HTML was a recommended technique for optimizing your page. We still think it's a worthwhile technique.

**Use lists.** Lists allow visitors to scan your pages quickly, as well.

**Bold.** Bolding is best used to highlight important information. Bolding keywords is another technique that may help your optimization efforts, as well.

**Do *not* use underlines for web text.** Underlines should be reserved only for hyperlinks. Underlining text may confuse your visitors. Does it annoy you when you try to click on underlined text that goes nowhere? Why would you want to annoy your visitors?

**Write at an eighth grade reading level.** You want to make a web page easy to read. That doesn't mean that it shouldn't be interesting. While you need to keep your visitors excited about your content, many people don't have time to read involved text. If you need to include detailed explanations of your product, save them for pages deeper in the linking structure. Even so, always explain things to people in as simple a way as possible. Your first priority is getting visitors interested. For an example of this type of writing, read a newspaper. Newspaper stories are generally written at an eighth grade reading level.

**Use the Inverse Pyramid.** Write your most important

information first. Again, the newspaper story is a good example of this format. This format allows people to read only the first few paragraphs of a story to get the main facts. On the Web, you want to do the same thing: present the juiciest information first. This way, people can quickly scan the first few sentences of the page to see if it contains the information they are looking for.

Using the Inverse Pyramid style of writing has an advantage in search engines, as well. Some search engines will not “read” the entire page. Although this is changing and many search engines are now programmed to read the whole page.

**Write it the way you say it.** Write conversationally. *Talk to yourself!* Having trouble getting something on paper? Dictate, using a tape recorder. Verbalize what you want to say on your web page into the tape recorder - then transfer that to the web page.

Also, write as if you are talking to one person, not to a group of people. Use the word “you.” For example, “Do you have trouble finding the time to read a good book?” Avoid phrases like, “Many people never have time to sit down and read a book.” Make it personal.

**Focus on your customers.** Once you have figured out who your customers are, focus your writing on them. Write just for them. For instance, if your customers are webmasters, your writing may include words that webmasters understand - words like “server,” “host,” and

“FTP.” If, however, you are targeting people with no knowledge of the web, seriously think about your language. If you are writing to mechanics or gardeners or the hip-hop culture, use their lingo and discuss the benefits of your product in a way they would understand and relate to.

**Other writing strategies to help your customers stay interested:**

- Use punctuation (- . , ! “ % \$ & ~ : to name a few). The em dash (—) can be very powerful — leading people to the next bit of text. Get a little creative.
- Use colorful, positive language. Use words that evoke emotion or motivate people.
- Paint images with words. Use comparison and adjectives to create pictures in people’s minds.

**Tell stories.** Telling stories can help people relate a concept to their real lives.

**Is your page neat?** After you finish writing a page, walk away from it for a few minutes. When you come back to the page, does it look neat and orderly or messy and unreadable? Do certain words or phrases stand out? Are those the concepts that you want to stand out? Scan the headlines. Do they make sense? If people just read the headlines will they get the gist of the page?

**Proofread.** If you’re not sure if you can proofread, hire someone. It’s the best thing you’ll ever do for your site.

Nothing turns someone off faster than glaring spelling errors. If your copy is sloppy, people may think your company is sloppy. Also, if your readers are concentrating on your errors, they may miss your message completely.

**Web copy is never finished.** The advantage of the Web over “hard” media is that it’s never written in stone. A click and a save and it’s changed. Keep going over your web copy. There’s always something you can improve.



# Navigation Strategies

Developing a link structure that works for both visitors and search engines is a skill. If you're interested in learning more about navigation, we highly recommend Steve Krug's book, *Don't Make Me Think!*

Navigation is of utmost importance to the “crawlability” of your site. Search engine spiders need to be able to crawl your site as easily as your visitors find their way around. Sometimes, what will work for your visitors, will not work for search engine spiders. The best advice we can give in this area is to keep your link structure as simple as possible. Simplicity may involve giving up certain ideas that you might have for the design of your site.

Flash, frames, CGI, or any dynamic pages (pages that bring in content on the fly) are some types of programming that may hinder the crawlability of your site.

Although, workarounds can be made. If the usability of your site depends on advanced programming, you can see our troubleshooting section for more information.

However, if you're a beginner, we recommend sticking to simpler programming methods for the navigation of your site. Plain old HTML text and image links are the best method.

Also, keep as much code off your pages as you can. Use relative links to your Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) and put your JavaScript in a separate .js file. (It is not the intent of this book to teach you these techniques, but you can learn about them through most HTML books or web tutorials. See the resources section.) Linking each page out to your scripts and styles will speed up the loading of each page. It will also allow the spider to get to your real text faster.

If you do plan on keeping your navigation fairly simple, here are some strategies that can help:

**Your web copy needs to *lead* your visitors to the sale.**

It needs to pull them down the page, forcing them to scroll, because they want to read what comes next. And at the bottom, it must make them want to click to the next page or order.

Before you begin to think about your link structure, determine the goal of your site. In other words, what are you trying to achieve with your site? What information

will you need in order to achieve these goals?

Organize the information. The link structure will emerge as you write your web copy. Develop individual pages that provide clear information. Standard pages might include:

*Home* – a welcome page explaining what people can find at your site, might show some featured products.

*Products* and/or *Services* – these pages might be the entrance to your product catalog and may contain a categorized list of your offerings.

*Guarantee* – your policy for guaranteeing your customer's satisfaction.

*Testimonials* – good things other people are saying about your products or your company.

*FAQs* – if you have a lot of interactivity on your site, you might need some FAQ pages (Frequently Asked Questions.)

*About Us* – how your company was started, interesting facts about your company, possibly your mission statement, a little about different people in your company.

*Contact Us* – how people can get in touch with your company. Give them many options including email, phone, postal address, and fax.

*Resources* – links to other web sites and interesting articles that relate to your industry. This section is extremely important to building the content that will allow you to continue expanding your search engine promotion. We will discuss this in greater detail in the last chapter.

*Order Now* – ordering system. Give people as many options as possible for payment including credit cards, check, cash or money order. Give them options for processing the order including online credit card and check processing, phone and fax ordering.

**Link structure must be carefully planned.** First determine your *Main Navigational Links*. Using a template will help you ensure that you have your main navigational links on every page. These links will generally be graphical links made out of images, not text links. They should either go across the top of the page or down the left hand side. *We recommend a maximum of 10 main navigational links.* A few more won't hurt, but try to realize your visitors need to find what they need and find it quickly.

After your main links, you may need to break your site down into sub categories or *Sub Navigational Links*. Your site may be divided into several sections; each of these sections would be accessible by a main link. From the main link, the section would break down into its own

set of navigational links. For instance, the “About Us” section may be composed of several sub pages including “Mission Statement,” “President,” “History,” etc. This second-level list of pages is called sub navigation.

*Generally, if your Main navigation goes across the top of the page, then your Sub navigation would go down the left of the page. If your Main navigation goes down the left, then your Sub navigation would go across the top.*

Your second-level directories may lead to third-level and even fourth-level directories, especially if you have a product catalog that you need to organize by categories.

*The main point to remember is that if your visitors can easily find what they are looking for, chances are that search engine spiders can also find their way to all your pages.* When trying to achieve organic listings, you must try to get most of your pages spidered and put into the search engine database. This is why navigation is so very important.



# How Search Engines Work

**What is a search engine?** Search engines are the primary tools of Internet users for finding products, services and information over the web. Search engines allow people to search the entire Web (or at least those pages of the Internet that are in the search engine's database.)

**How does a search engine index web pages?** There are four parts to an engine that you need to know about for optimization purposes:

- *The spider* is a program that goes out across the internet, looks for and gathers up web pages.
- *The database* is where the spider will store the pages that it finds.
- *The search engine website*, e.g. google.com, is where searchers go to pull up information from the