

Websites That Work

The Secrets of
Search Engine Success

by Ron Giles



Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

Achieving a high Search Engine ranking

For most search engines, ranking is based on a complex algorithm (formula) that is different for each search engine. It would be a huge investment in time if you tried to optimise your website to suit all of these various algorithms and then you will find that usually a page that ranks well on one search engine will not rank so well on other engines. You would need to write separate doorway pages optimised for each search engine to achieve this. Good luck with that.

If you are going to use your website to sell a product or promote services, then you have to get visitors to the site. This is achieved by promoting the site through advertising, promotion or by rating highly in the popular search engines, especially Google. Surveys have shown that 80-90% of people discover websites through a search engine and 65% of those will be using Google. Several other major search engines also use the Google search engine so if you rate highly on Google, you will also rate highly on those linked search engines. Your website may need to be tweaked by an expert so your site rates in the first ten – that is, it will be on the first search page. Web surfers do not tend to go past the first page when they are searching. The top 10 listings receive nearly 80% more traffic than those in position 11 to 30. If you are not listed in the first ten, it is important to do something about it. This is called Search Engine Optimisation. The aim is to get into the top three listings to maximise your exposure.

Top 10 Search Engine Ranking Factors

This document represents the collective wisdom of 37 leaders in Search Engine Optimisation.

1. Using the main Keyword in the Title Tag

Placing the targeted search term or phrase in the title tag of the web page's HTML header has consistently been the most important on-page SEO factor for the many years.

2. Anchor Text of Inbound Link

The Anchor text of the inbound link is one of the most concise assessments another person can make about what your site/page is 'about'. But it can be hard to influence that tag.

3. Global Link Popularity of Website

The overall link popularity/authority as measured by links from other quality websites - a site's overall link popularity will drastically affect rankings.

4. Age of Website

Defined by the date of the launch of website when indexable content is seen by the Search Engines - aging has taken on more significance in the ranking factors. It is very difficult for a new website to gain a first page ranking in Google. There has been some speculation that

many websites fall over in the first few months. Google does not waste space ranking those websites, until they prove they are survivors.

5. Link Popularity within the Website

This refers to the number and importance of internal links pointing to a certain target page - without the proper linking structure, the target page may not get enough emphasis.

6. Topical Relevance of Inbound Links

The relationship between the sites/pages linking to the target page and the target keyword must be relevant. Such relevant incoming links are important and will help with rankings.

7. Link Popularity of Site in Topical Community

The link weight/authority of the target website amongst its topical peers in the online world - a niche site may not have a high quantity of links but a few links from the 'authorities' in the web community is often enough to rank the site above the authorities for niche-related keywords.

8. Keyword Use in Body Text

Using the targeted search term in the content of the page - it is important to use the keyword/phrase throughout the page. This is called keyword density and there are several free tools to check this aspect.

9. Global Link Popularity of Linking Website

The link popularity of the linking page and website is probably the most important factor when deciding on a link.

10. Topical Relationship of Linking Page

Evidence of page contents from a linking page affecting rankings of page being linked to has been important for a long time.

A high ranking in a Google search is not achieved through luck. It results from a partnership between the website developer's technology and the client support systems. It is also vital that clients take the trouble to write high quality content. And then they need to continually improve their websites, testing, measuring and tuning them to constantly enhance their performance.

When my trout fishing website, www.trout-fishing-new-zealand.com was struggling to get into the top thirty sites, I asked a fishing mate and website listing expert to help out. Ben Kemp was a Lake Brunner trout fishing guide who spent his off season improving website rankings through Search Engine Optimisation. After Ben had given my site a makeover, my ratings jumped to #1 in Google, Yahoo and MSN – the rest don't matter as these search engines are by far the most important . There was nothing particularly obvious on the web pages to reveal what Ben had done. It was a matter of adjusting the html code, and inserting meta tags, alt tags and keywords so that they optimised the site

for ranking when the Google spiders came crawling over it. The bad news is that it is much more difficult to get a high ranking for each page of your website on all the main search engines as individual internal pages usually rank lower than the Home page. The exception is an internal page that has been specially optimised for a more specific keyword search term, one not targeted on the Home page – these are called Landing Pages.

How do I get a good ranking on



The answer is not straightforward. Why? Because Google uses a complex algorithm to rank web pages. This ranking formula is extremely important to website owners because knowing which factors Google uses to rank websites is critical to optimisation of your website.

The trouble is Google rarely tell you what the current ranking formula is!!

Google's ranking factors affect how and where you are listed in their search engine results. Since obtaining top positions for your targeted keywords often spells success for your site, knowing Google's ranking factors can be very beneficial.

Everyone knows that Google is the biggest search engine – for example, they account for 64% of visitors to my website. Getting on the first page of Google is essential to the success of any website that is relying on Search Engine ranking.

I have listed below some of the main factors that affect the ranking of your website. You should be optimising your web pages with these factors in mind. Webmasters who concentrate their SEO efforts on optimising for Google will give their site an edge over the opposition.

The main ranking factors to consider are:

1. Keywords in your Website Title and on your pages

Put your keyword (or keyword phrase) in the title of each page and also in your content. Many webmasters use variations of their keywords on a particular page and also include it in the main headline.

2. Keywords in your URL

It is important to keep your page relevant to the website. It is useful to have your keyword in your URL. A good example is www.website-consultant.co.nz where the targeted keyword is website consultant. You should also use your keyword in the secondary headlines. And make sure you place it in the description and your other meta tags. But, whatever you do, keep your content readable and useful. Be aware of the text surrounding your keywords as search engines may become more semantic in future years, so context is important.

3. Create high quality, relevant content

Content is King! You must have high quality, relevant content on your pages to get a good ranking in Google. Your content should be related to the subject of your site and updated regularly. I try to add a new article every second day. I believe it is the quality of my content that saw my babyboomers website indexed in two days and ranked #1 after only four weeks.

4. Internal onsite linking

Internal linking is important to your overall ranking. Make sure your linking structure is easy for the robots/spiders to crawl. A simple automated sitemap with links no more than three clicks away from your home/index page is vital.

5. Only get links from high quality related websites

It is important to only link from high quality (ones with a good Page Rank) sites. Being linked to by high quality sites shows the search engines that your website is very useful to your visitors. Build relationships within communities on the subject of your site. Be extremely careful with your outgoing links – if they are not high quality and relevant to your website, don't add them. I even am a bit harsher – if the outgoing link is not producing revenue for my website, I don't add it. Just ask yourself the question – what's in it for me if I add this link.

6. Global Linking Popularity

One of the major ranking factors is the Global Linking Popularity of your site. You should try to build large numbers of inbound links from quality sites. One simple and effective way to do this is through writing articles and submitting them to the online article directories. Only related websites will pick up and display your articles with your links back to your site. These are usually one-way-links which are more highly-rated by Google. Articles with quality content that will help the reader first and the links will come naturally.

7. Anchor text is very important

Anchor text is an important factor as these inbound links should be related or relevant to your site's topic. This will play an important role in your rankings. Don't ignore the text surrounding your links and use different anchor text links to avoid keyword spamming. Keep in mind, as search engines become more semantic, the whole text of your article will probably be considered your anchor text, thus making articles even more important to your rankings.

8. Topicality of your incoming links

Your inbound links should also come from related websites that are regarded as an authority in your field. The more links you have from these popular, authority sites, the higher rankings you will get – as long as those sites are relevant to your content. Many SEO experts suggest you should have a steady stream of new sites (inbound links) added each month to keep your rankings growing. These links will age and increase your rankings after 4 or 5 months. Both quality and topicality is important.

9. Reliable server and service

Like any business, Google is just supplying a product to its customers, so this service must be continuous and available at all times. Make sure you have a good reliable server because any extended downtime, when your site is inaccessible to the Google robots (spiders), may be detrimental to your rankings. If the site is down for more than 48 hours, you could be dropped from the index.

10. Duplicate content is a no-no!

Make certain you don't place duplicate content on your site. This may affect your rankings and get your pages sent to the supplemental index. Be careful not to use duplicate title or meta tags on your pages as this will lower and disburse your internal page rankings, resulting in poor optimisation.

For the best search engine optimisation, every item of content on your website should be original; not previously published elsewhere on the Internet. The reason for that is that copying content from other websites and republishing it on your site will harm your search engine ranking because search engines like to present searchers with unique content from the original source. You can copy content (as long as you give credit to the original writer) but you need to add an introductory paragraph. This will be enough to show the Search Engine that this is not duplicate content.

There is no debate that Content is King and good quality content will eventually see your website rise to the top of the rankings:

Results 1 - 10 of about 150,000 for [website consultant](#). (0.27 seconds)

Search Results

1. [Zeald.com Website Consultant Ron Giles](#)

Need a *website*? Want a better *website*? Author and *Website Consultant* Ron Giles can help. Get free advice on any aspect of *website* development.
www.website-consultant.co.nz/ - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

More on Incoming Links - How important are Incoming Links for Google Rankings?

Many website owners and webmasters are not sure how to go about gaining incoming links so that their sites rank well in the search engine results. Google, Yahoo and MSN/Bing all calculate link popularity as one part of their search algorithms. So building link popularity is an important part of getting recognition and high placement in the search engine result pages (SERPs). In my experience, this factor is more important in the first three months of a website 'going live'. After that, content becomes more important.

Link popularity is a count of how many web pages point to one of your web pages.

The Google Version of Link Popularity

PageRank (PR) is a Google tool that gives a value to every web page on the Internet, with 10 possible rankings. In essence, it is an expansion of the simplest link popularity calculation.

If you look at the Google PageRank tool:

- 1/ The Gray Bar in the PageRank tool indicates that a web page has not been added to the Google PageRank database, or it might mean that Google has banned the website.
- 2/ PR0 to PR10. PR0 indicates that the web page has been added to the Google database, but it does not yet have any PageRank assigned to it, usually because there are not any high (more than PR3 value pages) that link to it at this time.

If you are tracking PageRank from the Google toolbar, you should understand that the database that stores PageRank values is only updated once every 3-4 months.

Google PageRank Basics

Since Google drives the largest portion of search traffic on the Internet, it is important to understand their link popularity system. All web pages have been assigned a PageRank value by Google, according to the value of the web pages that link to them. This number is always changing as links are added, lost or change in value.

Pages linking to your pages have their own Google PageRank value, according to who links to them, and the value of the pages that are linking to their web page. As the web pages linking to your web pages gain value, then your pages will also gain value in the Google PageRank algorithms.

As a Webmaster, it should be your goal to create as many links to your website, as you can. Eventually, most of those linked web pages with real value will gain their own PageRank, and they will pass some of their PR value to your web pages.

Initially article marketing was a great way of improving your Google PageRank. It was common for a new article placement to help the ranking of any website mentioned in the article to initially rise in the search rankings, then to drop away after a while after that initial impact. But article placement was abused by SEO practitioners and Google has downgraded their importance.

Building Link Popularity

In essence, even if search engines did not include link popularity as a part of their ranking criteria, you would still want to develop links to your website. Links are the pathways that keep surfers moving from one website to another. The goal is to get the website visitor to click the link to the target website. With every visitor to a website being a potential customer, it makes good sense to get as many visitors to the website as possible. That goal requires getting as many links as possible pointing to your website.

Google's Main Index and Supplemental Listings

In order for the referenced website to get the PageRank it needs to climb in the search results, the web pages linking to it must have their own PageRank. As a single web page gains in link popularity and PageRank, the web page will also improve in the search results.

When a new article is placed for the first time, it is always placed on a "brand new" page on the Internet. New pages on the Internet, by their very nature, do not have any external links pointing to them and therefore, they do not have any established PageRank.

In recognition of this new-to-the-Internet status, Google is giving a pass to those new web pages. As far as the Google algorithm is concerned, these brand new pages might have value, but that value cannot be determined yet, as Google does not yet register the number of links pointing to the page.

At the end of Google's "pass window", Google checks to see if this new page has developed any of its own inbound links. This will determine the Google PageRank value. If the new web page has not developed any value of its own, after a window of 30-45 days, then the new page will be moved from Google's main index to Google's Supplemental listings. If the new page has developed PageRank, then the page will remain in Google's main index.

Google say that having urls in the supplemental results is not a penalty on the website. The main determining factor of whether a site is in the main web index or in the supplemental index is PageRank.

Many web pages that have slipped into the Supplement listings may gain their own PageRank over the medium to long term and then those pages will return to Google's main index. If your articles are valuable resources to surfers, then those articles will be given their own inbound links and therefore PageRank. But just don't expect that to happen overnight.

As a general rule, it appears that the average web page will gain a measure of PageRank somewhere in the range of 90 to 180 days from the day the web page went live. While not all pages will receive inbound links (and therefore PageRank), enough of them do to make the whole process worthwhile.

Yahoo & MSN/Bing

Originally Yahoo and MSN did not employ a link popularity calculation in their search algorithms. But when Google became the dominant search engine, then the other SE's had to respond, if they want to stay competitive. So after years of lagging behind Google, Yahoo and MSN decided it was time to add a link popularity calculation into their search algorithms.

Then the whole game changed when Microsoft launched their new Search Engine, Bing, in 2009. Initially, the Bing search returns seemed very similar to Google. My website, [www.website-consultant](http://www.website-consultant.com) was #1 in Google; #2 in Yahoo and #1 in Bing. In mid July, 2009, MSN/Bing started sending out their own robots/spiders. Coincidentally, the rankings changed. My website-consultant website went from #1 in Bing to #6! Around the same time, Yahoo and Microsoft announced collaboration. At this point, we have no idea how this will affect rankings on Yahoo and MSN/Bing. Will Bing will take over as the search engine provider for Yahoo? Will Yahoo robots cease trolling the 'net? Will the manual editor regime of Yahoo be replaced with a Google-like automated indexing on Bing?

The ultimate question is: will this really give Google significant competition in the search engine race? It is too far too early to tell but I suspect it is not going to make a huge difference. Why? If a typical Google user has tried Bing and decided to continue using Google as their search engine of choice, they are not going to abandon it just because Yahoo is using it. Does it matter that much to Google if Yahoo users are using Bing? They were already using Yahoo over Google, so what's the impact on Google?

Microsoft and Yahoo may get some more advertisers out of this, with the combination of Bing and Yahoo making up a greater percentage of the search market share. But it is not likely that this is going to draw advertisers away from Google, which still controls the dominant amount of that market.

Bing's launch may have highlighted some things you could do with a search engine but the launch has been more about branding than anything. Despite the fact that Bing does have some new features, weighing it all up, this partnership between Yahoo and Microsoft is unlikely to have much of an effect on Google. Although most of us would like to see more competition in the search industry, there is no guarantee that this new collaboration will provide it.

Why? Because Google is so dominant for a simple reason – we like Google. I use Google. 65% of you readers use Google. Even if the some new competitor offers a product that is just as good or even better in some ways, Google would have to drop the ball and drive people to Bing for there to be a significant change to the search engine market.

The problem is that Google is so far ahead and the fact that it has been for so long. It is not just Google the search engine. Think about all of the products that Google users are already using: from Gmail to Google Analytics to Adwords to Adsense, etc. Google search is only part of the package.

At Zeald.com, we started developing complex website statistics analysis tools some years ago. When we saw Google were spending billions on such tools (Google Analytics), we backed off and just preconfigured our websites to accept easy assimilation of the Google Webmaster tools. Website users have a lot of their online lives invested in Google and switching Search Engines is probably not likely for most of them. It is all about convenience and familiarity.

Time will tell - just make sure your website host is keeping up with these developments and keeping you appraised.

But whichever Search Engine is dominant, it needs repeating - your website will never gain link popularity if you do not increase the number of links to your website. If the web page never gains link popularity, it will not gain PageRank, and it will not rise in the search engine rankings. If you are not accomplishing link popularity and search engine placement, then you need to work harder on gaining quality incoming links. This is critical in highly-competed for keywords; in less competitive areas, original content will be just as effective, ranking-wise.

Reciprocal Links - Good or Bad?

The Downside of Reciprocal Linking

It is surprising how many people still think that it is still important to exchange links with other websites. Have a troll through my website and see if you can find any reciprocal or outgoing links. I'll save you the trouble - there is only one - to www.zeald.com (my main source of income!). Unless there are overwhelming commercial reasons for having an outgoing link; don't have them! You have spent a lot of effort to get a visitor to your website - why make it easy for them to leave your website? The old days of having pages of outgoing links are long gone. If someone wants to pay you for one – fine. Or if you are being paid commission for a purchase made by someone coming from your website to a website you have linked to – fine.

In the old days, (like 5 years ago!), Internet experts raved on about the importance of adding reciprocal links to your website in an effort to gain Search Engine ranking. The theory was that Google, in particular, rank highly websites with a huge number (more than 2000) of incoming links. This was based on the idea that Google want to have popular sites ranking highly on their responses to Search Engine user's questions. The theory presented was that the reason those sites are popular is that they contain a lot of good content. Because they have good content, many other sites will link to them.

So you were told the first thing you needed to do was to begin reciprocal linking i.e. trading links with other sites. But the rules have changed and you should ignore those "reciprocal link request" in your email inbox. Why?

1. Most of the requests are automated

It used to be flattering to get a link request, as it showed that someone had visited your site and wanted to exchange a link. But these days most of the requests are done with automated software and it means that no one has actually visited your site. Automation is not necessarily bad, but it leads to all kinds of abuses. It can prevent you from picking out the good links from the bad. Even if you have an automated directory to handle link requests, you will still be swamped with large numbers of link requests.

2. Most link requests are of very low quality

The original idea of linking was to provide your own visitors with quality sites that were relevant to the topic of your website or complementary to it. The links were provided as an additional resource to your own site; adding and amplifying the information on your website. Today many sites have been set up only to make money from Google AdSense or other similar advertising programs. Driven by the need to get a high PageRank, many webmasters spent all their waking hours sending requests to large numbers of websites, whether they were related to their site or not. If a link is to be a resource to visitors of both sites, then the two sites should somehow be related and the sites should be of comparable quality. Most reciprocal link requests fail this test.

3. Links are buried on pages where they will never be seen

In addition to being a resource for your own visitors, you want to exchange links in hopes of getting some targeted traffic back to your site. It used to be easier in the old days. What

would happen is a webmaster would have a site with, say, ten different pages and one of his pages would be a Links Page. On that page, they would display a large number of links. The link to this page would be prominent in the website's navigation tabs. You would normally be assured of getting some serious traffic, if your link was placed on this kind of page.

That has all changed. People now build huge directories of hundreds of categories, stuffed with pages and pages of links. It is extremely unlikely that many visitors will drill down through all the pages and find your site in such a directory. The other downside of website directories is that many of them now seem to be a huge source of spam. Get a link from these dodgy directories and watch your junk mail folder fill.

4. Many of the link requests are for Three Way Links

What is a three way link, I suspect you are asking? I link to site A, then they will give a link to my site originating from site B. Three way links were a device that tried to get around the fact that Google no longer rates outgoing links, only incoming links. If someone links to you without asking you and doesn't request a reciprocal link; that means that your site is really good. This is why Google rates more highly true one-way links. The three-way links proposed by many Webmasters are just an attempt to trick the search engines; they are not true one-way links. Google soon got wise to such schemes and this kind of effort will yield little benefit to the linking websites.

And, with this kind of linking arrangement, you first have to check out who you are linking to. So you are then faced with the chore of checking another site that is going to link to you. Usually the site where the link to you will be placed is some kind of obscure website directory, essentially just a link-farm.

This is the state of reciprocal linking today. I have never bothered trying to gain reciprocal links for my websites. Yet my websites still rank Number 1 in their fields. Why? Quality Content! That goes back to the original premise if your website has quality content, other websites will link to you. Even if you don't have many links, Google will rank you highly solely due to the quality and volume of your content. But I have learned from experience that if you are in a hugely competitive field, great content alone will not guarantee you a high ranking.

People come to the Internet to solve a problem, find a solution and get information. If you can make your website a true resource and a great place where visitors can get the information that they need, then it will not go unnoticed.

But if you are not convinced and want to gain more links, here are a few suggestions on how to get quality incoming links without adding reciprocal links:

1. Blogs and Forums

You can learn something from forums and blogs and you can contribute something as well. Always try to leave your domain name when you make a comment or a posting. If you offer good advice, you will gain a good online reputation and become known as an expert in your field. This newly-found recognition as an expert, combined with links from these blogs and forums, will be worth much more than low quality reciprocal links.

2. Article Marketing

Article marketing involves writing articles about your field of interest and distribute them for publication on other websites, blogs and ezines, with a link back to your site. Each time your article is published on a website, you get an incoming link to your site. As with most good things, this method has been pounced upon by Internet marketers and the net is flooded with millions of low-quality articles. But if you produce worthwhile, original articles, you can still gain some benefit from distributing your articles.

3. Social Networking

The latest method of increasing incoming links is to use the huge power of the social networking websites like, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Bebo, Flickr, LinkedIn, etc, etc. If it is good enough for Lance Armstrong, it is good enough for you. Load your profile on every one of these sites – every time with a link to your website(s). You will soon build up a number of quality incoming links.

So instead of adding to the flood of reciprocal link requests, build your own quality content and start using more reliable methods of increasing the number of incoming links to your site.

Your overall Search Engine Optimisation strategy should be to provide valuable, relevant content and plenty of incoming links. These are most important ranking factors Google uses to rank and display their search engine results. Optimising your site and keywords for these factors will see you have on-line success.

Paying for exposure

Many website owners just can't be bothered with the hassle of constantly updating the website so it meets the ever-changing criteria of the search engines. An option is to pay for a sponsored listing. You choose the key words and then set the amount you feel you can afford for every 'click through' – someone that clicks on the link to your site on the Google search engine. How much you are prepared to pay affects the ranking of your link. If you bid 10 cents per click through and someone else bids 11 cents, their link will be placed above yours. You can set the limit of the amount that you want to spend per day or per week. When that amount is reached, your link is removed until the next day or week. What this means is that you can spend as little as \$50 per week and test the effectiveness of this new marketing technique. You will get maybe 500 click throughs for your fifty bucks and it will be easy to analyse just how much business was gained from this advertising campaign. That is difficult to gauge with most other forms of advertising like TV, radio and any of the print media.

Is your website in Google?

If you wonder why your site does not appear in a search on Google, you can quickly check if its actually being indexed... try the following search;

“site:www.yoursite.co.nz” and of course, replace “yoursite” with the URL of YOUR site! e.g. site:www.trout-consultant.co.nz

This should produce a list of all the pages in your site that Google has found, and decided were worthy of indexing. If no pages were found then you need to call

Google offers several similar little tools, if you go to Google Webmasters Tools. Each of these tools provides useful information about your site, and an insight into the way Google “sees” it. In a Google search box, just type the operator and your domain name (less the http://www/ portion as per the previous example.)

e.g.

site:babyboomersguide.co.nz will list all the pages that have been indexed by Google

allinurl:babyboomersguide.co.nz will list all the pages that refer to your site's URL

link:babyboomersguide.co.nz will show every website that is linked to your site

cache:babyboomersguide.co.nz will display the current cache of your site

info:babyboomersguide.co.nz will show all the information Google have about your website

related:babyboomersguide.co.nz will show a list of websites that are similar to your site

See the Internet Glossary on my website, if any of the above terms are not familiar.

Google Sitemaps

Signing up for a Google SiteMaps account is also a good move as a great deal of extra information about your site - as Google sees it - is available. This includes Crawl and Index errors, and also a range of Crawl & Index statistics. It is possible to gain an insight into what keywords Google associates with your site - both from the site itself, and from the sites that link to it! The errors (if any) are very important, as they may reveal sound reasons for Google not indexing your site fully.

Whilst submitting a sitemap is in itself no guarantee of inclusion, or of rankings, it can help get all pages indexed and at the same time ensure that appropriate emphasis is placed on the most important pages, e.g. that the Product/Services pages are treated as more important than the About Us, Privacy Statement etc pages.

If your site does not show up in the site:yoursite.com search, you certainly have a problem that you need to get to the bottom of. There can be a variety of reasons for exclusion from Search Engine indexes, including;

1. Insufficient incoming links - some Search Engines think that if no one links to you, then you are not worth indexing...
2. You have duplicate content - multiple domain names pointing to the same pages
3. Other transgressions such as hidden text, excessive use of doorway pages, cloaking etc

Submitting your sitemap to Google

A couple of years ago, Google and Yahoo insisted that website owners produce an automated Sitemap - this is just a complete list of all the pages on your website. The reason was to make it easy for the Search Engine spiders/robots to find every page on a website. An automated sitemap will automatically add a new page you have added to your website to the Sitemap, making it easier for the Search Engines to find and index the new page.

One of the most common omissions by new website owners is to fail to submit their sitemap

to Google. Many website designers (usually the graphic designer, non-commercial types) will tell you this is not necessary - Google will find you eventually. That may be true - but how much business will you have lost in those months?

The process is not overly complicated but is worthwhile. After submitting my Sitemap and URL to Google, both my Zeald.com websites were indexed in 2 days. So tell your website developer you want an automated Sitemap and go through the submission process.

Visitor Stats

You can also use the statistics provided by your hosting company to improve your website. One important piece of information is on what page visitors left your site. There is some problem with that page. Maybe you have an external link to another website that is proving so attractive to your visitors that they are leaving your website in droves. Or the page is so slow loading that your surfers have given up and clicked somewhere else. Remember many people are surfing at 56 kps on a dial up modem. Only 50% of NZ residences are on broadband at this point. And if they live in the country, it might be even slower than 56k. If your website takes more than 10 seconds to load, you are in danger of losing your visitor.

An example of just how slow some websites are occurred to me recently. I accessed the Internet at a motel using a dial up connection. I noted that I was connected at 36.4 kps. The first-ranked website on my Google search took more than three minutes to load. If I did not particularly need to see that website to prepare for a presentation, I would have been long gone. One suspects that even though that website is highly ranked, it will not be a commercial success.

The other important factor to consider is that Google announced in 2009 that they will take website speed into consideration as a factor in Google rankings. Their mission is to speed up the web and slow-loading websites will be penalised with poorer rankings. So don't risk a poor ranking – check your website loading speed. There is a free tool on the Zeald.com website.

Other information available from your hosting company will include:

- what country visitors live in
- what browser they are using
- what version of Microsoft software they are using
- what page they arrived at your site
- what Search Engine sent them there
- how long they spent on each page
- what pages they visited
- where they left the website
- the number of hits this week/month/year
- more importantly - the number of page visits this week/month/year
- the number of page downloads your visitors made

There will probably be more information available than you can handle. You can spend days analysing your website stats and even more days modifying your website. It is necessary to be disciplined and allocate a certain number of hours to the task of reviewing

your stats and improving your website. But leave it that – don't let it become an obsession. It is important to keep your website updated as a neglected website will fall in the Search Engine rankings. They send out 'spiders' which are automated website checking software programmes to check websites every three months or so. Every time they find that your website has not changed, they will rank your website lower. If they visit your site three times and find it has not changed, they will delist it completely from their rankings. So you must refresh your website regularly to keep up your ranking.

A friend of mine found that out recently. Sarah Kerr has a very successful Interior Design business. Having a regular spot on a national radio programme helped considerably and Sarah felt her website was also contributing. But when I checked out her website, I found it was invisible on the 'net. Even when I entered the name of Sarah's website into a Google search, it did not come up. The reason was that the website content had not been changed for a year or so and Google had delisted the site. Their spider had visited the website three times and found nothing new. They had assumed it was an obsolete website and accordingly delisted the site (removed it from the Google index). The lesson is – keep refreshing your website. Sarah now does that and is back to having a real web presence.

It is important to spend at least 3-4 hours per month analysing, improving and updating your website. Less than that means you are not harnessing the power of this amazing machine.

Do you need Web 2.0 on your website?

My clients are often asking 'what is Web 2.0 all about? Do I need it on my website?' That is a good question. There is a lot of hype about Web 2.0 but it is more than a passing fad. Web 2.0 is simply a phase in the evolution of the World Wide Web. Whether or not, it is a major development - well, the jury is still out.

The main thrust of this phase of the Internet is that the Web is no longer simply about information, it is now more about interaction. There are new and existing applications and technologies associated with Web 2.0 - from blogs to social networks to RSS. These new developments enable consumers to interact with your company and your other consumers. It also means your consumers can participate in and influence decisions made by your company management. In this way they control their website visiting experience.

So what does this all mean to your Internet business? Consumers are now better educated, Internet-wise, and are accustomed to more interactive relationships which maybe sustained over a longer period of time. As options for communicating with consumers expand, companies have an increasingly difficult task of determining where to invest their scarce resources. As we have always emphasised at Zeald.com, to make the best investment decisions, you need a measurement strategy for your website initiatives. This needs to be a solution that enables you to track and monitor the business impact of Web 2.0, particularly as it relates to your Internet Marketing investments.

Those of you with a modern website will already have website analytics and measurements, either in the backend of their website or supplied by their website host. That is nothing new but there are new requirements for measuring in the Web 2.0 world. Companies that are able

to effectively measure all their web interactions with visitors, both Web 2.0 and conventional websites, will enjoy a competitive advantage.

The importance of measuring unique visitors has always emphasised by all website gurus; the Web 2.0 paradigm accentuates this importance. Succeeding in the Web 2.0 world means that you need to measure and value the website engagement with your consumers. It is no longer about conversion at a point in time. It is now about the nature of the relationship over time, and the many ways that an individual website surfer can add value to your business.

Social Media

Web 2.0 can be characterised by such sites as YouTube, MySpace, Del.icio.us, Digg, Flickr, LinkedIn, Bebo, Facebook... there are more turning up every month. Web 2.0 technology involves uses website scripting languages such as Perl PHP and RSS feeds to construct interactive platforms that websites can use to create all this user-generated content.

Many refer to these evolving formats and scripting platforms under the name AJAX (Asynchronous JavaScript and XML). That comes from Google and takes web-based interactive programs such as Google Maps, previously only associated with desktop applications, but now being applied on the web. If you have used Google Earth, you will realize how powerful and revolutionary these new applications can be, not to mention, they are a whole lot of fun. The latest development is to apply these interactive web-based applications to mobile phones. There is a lot more benefit to be gained from having Google Maps on your cell phone than on your desktop!

Where did the name Web 2.0 come from?

Most give the credit to Tim O'Reilly, a regular innovator of technological changes on the 'net. O'Reilly has been at the forefront in discussions and conferences on the nature and substance of the 'meme' open source platforms dominating the new social media.

Where all this new interactive website phase ends up is unknown but all website owners should equip their sites with Web 2.0 features and take full advantage of all the SEO possibilities presented by this stunning new Internet development.

Here are the top interactive features suggestions for your website:

Have a Blog

Get a blog on as many of the social networking sites as you can. Include a link to your website at the beginning or end of your blog and that is another incoming link to be recognised by Google. That will be important to improving your PageRank. Having a blog will also place your site into the whole tagging process. Each category you create in your blog will be seen as a tag by such sites as Technorati.

Tagging

You should always be aware of the tags (keywords) you're creating with your blogs and sites. This can have a very beneficial effect on your traffic and rankings. Closely relate these tags to the content on your sites and build higher rankings in all the major search engines.

RSS Feed

It is a good ploy to include a RSS feed on your website. This is a fairly simple procedure to set up using the free server-based programs. RSS stands for 'Really Simple Syndication' and your RSS feeds will get your content distributed across the web. This is a simple and easy way to tap into the new Web 2.0 universe.

Social bookmarking

Join as many of the interactive sites as you can: Bebo, Flickr, Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Del.icio.us, Digg, Wikipedia, Squidoo, and LinkedIn where you can list the different topics that interest you. User-provided content is what drives these social networking websites and that content is what makes all these social media sites successful. Include links back to your websites in your posts helps to promote your website and can generate massive traffic

Interactive Platforms

Place interactive JavaScript and platforms on your own sites. Have membership forums, polls, blogs, feedback forms, and user-contributions... this all helps to build unique content-driven sites. Let your website visitors do the work of providing content for you!

Having a Newsletter

Giving visitors an opportunity to sign up for a free email newsletter is a good way of gaining returning visitors as well as adding to your database.

Google Maps

A Google Map can help to make your website more interactive. Google maps can be used in many ways: you can use it to display a map of your location or you can use one of its built-in features to add more functionality. It is also possible to customise applications for your website using Google Map's powerful development API.

Google Custom Search feature

The Google custom search allows websites to implement search functionality on their website using Google's powerful search algorithms. It is possible to restrict the search to your website only or include other partner websites in your searches.

Creating a Long Tail

This is especially important for affiliate marketers as you need to cover special niches where there is less competition. These narrow 'net niches make up a large portion of the vastness of the 'net. Creating content in these unique areas will get your site included in the search engines a lot quicker and keep it high in the rankings.

Related Articles

This tool can be used to improve the readership of your website by providing users with content that are related to the article that brought them to the website in the first instance. It is relatively easy to implement on a website; either by assigning manual tags or keywords or automating the process.

Commenting on articles

This is commonly found on blogs. Allowing users to comment can be useful in many ways. In addition to feedback, it also allows the content to build up with user-generated content. It should only be added to relevant sections of the website.

Most Recent Posts

If you have a blog, then you can display a list of 10 most recent posts from your blog on your main website. It can add value to your website especially if your blog and website target the same niche.

Surveys/Polls

Having a survey or a poll on your website is a great interactive tool as they can be used to get feedback from your customers or clients.

Latest Content Tab

A list of latest content from relevant sections of the website can improve the usability of the website.

Feedback forms to gather information

Feedback forms are still an effective method to collect response from website users. It is used by many websites. The form should be customized to the specific needs of a website.

There is no doubt that Web 2.0 will have an increasing role in the development and evolution of the web. Make sure your sites are optimised for the Web 2.0 game. Create blogs, RSS feeds, interactive forums, membership areas, user-generated content and really make your website interactive havens. Just remember to tag everything and your sites will reap the benefits of this new Web 2.0 generated SEO gold rush.

Will a Blog help your Search Engine Rankings?

The latest SEO technique is to use a blog to generate additional traffic to your website. This can mean significant increases in traffic, especially if you can generate qualified traffic. But how effective is a blog in improving your search engine rankings? That all depends on how well you do you write the blog.

Disciplined Content Creation

You want to attract visitors who want exactly what you are offering on the website. That requires a disciplined approach to content creation:

1. Research and consider carefully what your post is about, and always keep in mind why you are writing it. In other words – don't lose sight of the objective!
2. Identify the keyword phrase/s that people are using to find information relevant to the topic of the blog. You can use www.wordtracker.com or Google Adwords keywords tool to identify these. Or study the report in the backend of your (modern) website that details the words/phrases that your website visitors used to find your website in the first place.
3. Ensure you place keywords in the title of the blog and early in the first paragraph. Then put some additional emphasis on those words, such as bold / italics
4. Include “exact match” keyword phrases throughout the body of the article.
5. Add tags i.e. a short list of specific relevant keywords - this may be used in the post page Keyword meta tag.
6. Write a concise Excerpt, loaded with keyword phrases - this may be used in the post page Description meta tag.

If you are not a great speller - use the Spell Checker. This article may be the first introduction a potential client has to your business and you must impress them right from the start. Remember that you NEVER get a second chance to create a first impression!

Business Blogs Should Inform & Educate

A business blog is there to inform and educate potential clients about aspects of your business by trying to provide useful information without a blatant sales pitch. On a website, this is known as having “pre-sales pages”. You are inspiring trust and credibility by providing free information. Encourage visitors to “read the free report” or “contact us for more information” but don't overdo the sales pitch. Your goal is to convey your depth of knowledge; provide I for free and so build credibility.

Blog Search Engine Optimisation

If you want to maximise the effectiveness of your blogs, it is not sufficient to just write it and forget it. You need to ensure that your Business Blog is properly “optimised” to produce unique, accurately categorised, and clearly-labelled content. This requires some SEO work on your blog to ensure that your Posts, static Pages and Category pages are unique. WordPress is probably the fastest and easiest blog platform to customise. It also has a comprehensive array of free SEO options, although some of these may be outside of the scope of new website owners.

Accurate Content Cataloguing Pays Dividends

If you pay attention to detail to blog generation, blog publishing and Search Engine Optimisation of the blog page, you should see dramatic improvements to blog traffic. At the same time, it will ensure that visitors get exactly what they were seeking, thanks to the accuracy of your blog content cataloguing efforts.

That will encourage social networkers to bookmark the website, or specific webpage, and to come back looking for more information.

Good luck with your efforts to achieve a high ranking – I hope this E-Book has helped.

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