

Background Info for SEO

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the ongoing process to improve programming code, website content, and incoming links on a website in order to optimize the website's search ranking for relevant key search terms with search engines like Google, Yahoo, and Bing.

Background info about SEO

SEO is determined by three main components:

1. Programming code optimized for SEO
2. Enough relevant content
3. Quantity and quality of incoming links

Almost every SEO consulting firm primarily focuses on components 1 and 2 because they are easier to control and implement. Component 3 is typically much more difficult to control and implement, but can have a HUGE impact on your SEO results.

1. Programming Code Optimized for SEO

The programming code of your website is the easiest of the three components to do well. The main focus of the code is to make sure it is created in the way that search engines want to see it (search engine friendly code). Typical items that create problems are using too much flash, weak title tags, weak meta descriptions, using too much java script, no sitemap, no content in alt tags, using graphics with large file size, and on and on... The good news is if you do these things correctly during the setup of your website you won't need to worry much about them over time.

2. Enough Relevant Content

The key with content is to have enough relevant and useful content to describe your products / services, locations, and geographic areas served. How much to say and what to say depend largely on the nature of the website. If you are a retailer with hundreds of products, then you should have hundreds of pages with descriptive, useful content about your products. If you are a small services firm, then you would have far fewer pages.

One major factor with content is key word density. On a given webpage and website there are a limited amount of terms that can be optimized as key search terms. Key search terms are the terms you want your website to show up for in search results (i.e. *Law Firm Portland Oregon*). These key terms should appear more frequently in the website text, and in strategic locations. However, one website is limited to how many terms it can be optimized for. This is why having numerous websites is very powerful, especially when they are each targeted for different and specific products / services, locations, and geographic areas served.

3. Incoming Links

Building incoming links to your website is probably the most critical and yet underutilized strategy for SEO. This is because it is difficult to consistently do, and takes time to get results. To build a significant amount of incoming links normally can take a really long time. However, if you can do this successfully you will have a big advantage over most other websites because it is so hard to make happen.

The number of incoming links to your website tells the search engines how important and relevant your website is. The more incoming links the better. The more relevant the incoming links the better. For example, a link from Ping golf clubs to a golf course website is a relevant link and would carry more weight than an incoming link from a veterinarian clinic.

There are two methods for building links: white-hat techniques, and black-hat techniques. White-hat techniques are categorized as ethical and appropriate by Google and other search engines. Black-hat techniques are discouraged and often websites will be penalized for using black-hat techniques.

White-hat techniques include typical link building strategies such as having relevant websites linking to each other, asking other sites to reciprocate links, writing in blogs, having social media posts link to your site(s), sending out internet press releases with links to your site, listing your business and/or agents in online directories, etc.

Black-hat techniques involve paying other sites to link back to your site. In many cases these links are not even related to your type of product or service. For example, if a bicycle website has incoming links from a wedding dress website this will look suspicious to search engines since they are not obviously related. If there are lots of these suspicious links, then a search engine is likely to consider this black-hat link building and punish the website. Therefore, always make sure you are using white-hat techniques to support ethical business practices, and to avoid the wrath of search engines.

Another important point to understand is that all incoming links are not created equal...meaning not ranked the same for “power”. For example, an incoming link from a major website like CNN.com, or from a relevant website in the same industry carries far more “power” than an incoming link from a directory, press release, or unrelated industry link. This is why having dozens or hundreds of relevant websites all linking to each other is much more powerful than regular links.