TOP RANK YOUR WEB SITE - Getting To The Top and Staying There by Aron Suzuki

This very moment someone is using a search engine to try to find your products or services. Unfortunately, unless you have optimized your website to rank high with the search engines there is little chance that your web site will receive enough visitors to be successful.

Webmasters like to build pretty web sites because they look great in their portfolio. It is unsettling how many web sites are built by "professional" web developers that have great creativity, but somewhere along with the process optimization for search engines is completely disregarded. In defense of the Webmaster, search engine optimization (SEO) is a relatively new topic. It is a highly specialized process and still in the early stages of development.

As a web site owner, your goals are probably related to your bottom line. The key to a successful web site is to drive high traffic to your site, build awareness and ultimately find new opportunities to sell your products and services. Yet, unless you have a decent online ad budget, you need to find cost effective techniques to maximize your web site traffic.

A well optimized site, properly submitted can easily receive a first page ranking within the major search engines (Yahoo, MSN, AOL, Netscape, etc.). So what's the big secret? The upside is that many of the techniques used to optimize a web site are relatively easy to perform.

A search engine is a pretty basic animal. You submit a word or combination of words related to what you are trying to find. The engine then returns a list of web sites that it believes are relevant to the criteria you submitted. Sounds simple, huh? Yeah, right! If it was that simple, everyone would be doing it.

As search engines have improved, relevance has gotten more accurate. However, it is still more common than not that a search engine will return a list of tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousand of web sites. Suddenly, the supposedly convenient, user friendly, e-commerce enabling search engine doesn't seem all that great.

Every major search engine uses the information provided on your web site to decide how to rank it. Therefore, a well optimized web site can land in the top 10, while a poorly designed site could leave it omitted from the ranks completely!

So how do you secure a good ranking? The real secret isn't even a secret. A web site is simply a collection of web pages. For optimum ranking, each web page should be evaluated individually and adjusted based on the content of that page. The URL and title of your web pages are two of the primary factors used in ranking. So, don't overlook their importance. Meta tags — description, keywords, etc.— are also very important to your rank. Finally, the content of your web pages should be well thought out and needs to honestly reflect the focus of your business.

The URL of your web site, otherwise know as your domain name (www.domain.com), is not usually something you can alter. However, if you sell widgets, you can create a web page on your site called widgets (www.domain.com/widgets.htm). Most search engines reward URLs that contain relevant text with a very high rank. So it's important to use your product or service in the title of the individual pages.

Web page titles get a lot of consideration by search engines. Since titles are displayed in the top of a browser window, they are prime real estate to give a concise description of your web page. When determining the title, make an effort to use the words you think people would use to search for your type of products or services. A good title for a company that sells widgets, dongles and doohickeys could look something like this: Acme, Inc – Widgets, Dongles, Doohickeys. Don't worry about being case-sensitive, most search engines simply ignore it.

Only the search engines, not the user, sees Meta tags. The two most important Meta tags are the description and keyword tags. The description tag is commonly used by search engines for ranking. Many times that description is included with your web site link when a search engine returns results. Keywords are used by the search engines to classify what search terms should match your web site. However, overuse and repetition of keywords can dilute your relevance. Try to only use the keywords that are absolutely necessary to describe the content of your site.

The content of your web page will be used to verify that your URL, title, description and keywords are accurate. Search Engines use all types of formulas to calculate your position. Many search engines will compare the content of a web page and determine what ratio (relevance) is contributed to a search word or term. So even if you have a web page with a URL, title, description and keywords containing the word widgets; if widgets does not appear anywhere on your web page you may still get a low rank. As if that's not complicated enough, how many times the word appears and where it appears can also have a big impact.

No matter what, beware of using frames, flash, links and image maps. Such things can prevent search engines from accurately assessing your content and ultimately your rank.

Armed with this new knowledge, don't waste any time making those necessary changes. Once you have revised your web site, resubmit it to the search engines again (don't use bulk submission services). Although some search engines will update your listing, hopefully with a higher rank, some can take a few months. So be patient.

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