



Search Engine Marketing Guide

It may seem obvious that simply having a web site does not equal having a web site that is used and visited frequently. Many factors contribute to a site's success - and deciding what constitutes that success is an important definition to agree upon at the outset.

There are two interdependent aspects to an effective web site:

1. **Design - the appearance, construction, content and functionality**
2. **Accessibility - marketing, positioning and search engine optimization**

SITE DESIGN

Planning is probably the single most important stage in the overall process. This phase involves clearly specifying your site in terms of what the goals and objectives are, what and how much content there will be, and what the timeline will be for the different deliverables.

Whether a web site is the equivalent of a dozen or so pages or a large corporate site with thousands of pages - a project specification should be developed before proceeding to the site design and site build. This is because successfully meeting a site's overall objectives, and determining what the end product will look like, is heavily influenced by these important first steps.

Having defined these objectives - the design should have a pleasant, unique and appropriate aesthetic, but it must always demonstrate a high degree of functionality; if it's "pretty," but difficult to use, visitors will exit quickly never to return.

The next important element of the site design is content - many sites contain a lot of information developed from an "inside looking out" perspective - instead of developing content based upon factors that motivate visitors to look for your site. In other words, the content should relate to the target market and be easy for that market to access. The inclusion of items that have a high level of usefulness will also add a great deal of value to your site, enhancing the potential for visitors to make return visits or referrals.

SITE ACCESSIBILITY

Simply registering and publishing your web site does not mean anybody is going to find it. Over 90% of users on the Internet are finding sites by conducting searches using the various search engines. This means Site Accessibility must be considered as an essential step in positioning a site favorably with selected search engines.

Enhancing the accessibility of your site begins as early as the creative stage - when reviewing design layouts, and it influences everything thereafter from code, content, registration, submission, promotion and optimization.

There are a couple of basic ways to enhance your site's accessibility. They are: Search Engine Optimization and Web Site Promotion.



SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

Search Engine Optimization enhances a site within certain search criteria and therefore fundamentally affects whether or not your site is easily found ... or more importantly, if it is easier to find and access than a similar or competitive web site.

Some of the main Search Engine Optimization elements are:

Keyword Development

This involves creation of a list of words and phrases that are most likely used when people are conducting searches for your site. This list is then tested and the qualified results incorporated into the copy, code and meta-tags of your site.

Links

Search engines like sites with links to other sites - so whenever possible, it makes sense to build useful links into your site. This means that if you had two similar web sites - one with no links and one with several links to other appropriate or complimentary sites ... the site with the links would be ranked higher (and appear earlier on a search results page) than the site without the links.

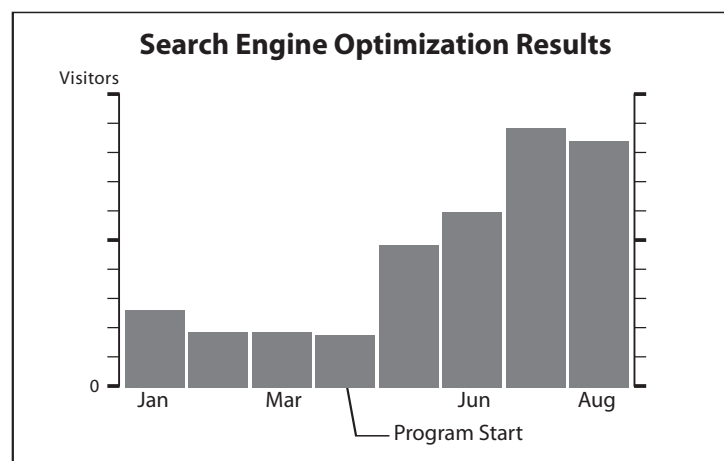
Maintenance

When your site is first deployed, you may receive a high ranking - however, it is important to check on it periodically as your ranking can decline with the addition of millions of new sites to the Internet. Sites should be optimized and submitted on a continuing basis in order to maintain a good ranking.

Some organizations dedicate considerable time and effort to ongoing optimization programs and this activity should be included as part of your marketing mix.

Search Engine Optimization: Example

Being properly registered and optimized with the most appropriate search engines is essential. Different search engines have different criteria for ranking web sites; therefore the proper deployment of your site is critical to its success. Without any other promotion - one of our test sites more than doubled its number of visitors immediately after being indexed by search engines.





WEB SITE PROMOTION

This second method of increasing accessibility is by increasing awareness via promotion. This can take traditional marketing forms such as Direct Mail, Print Advertising and Public Relations Events... or it can take a non-traditional form using Internet Events, Chat Rooms and Animated Banner Ads. Experience shows that the best results are often achieved by employing a combination of both types of marketing styles.

Web Site Promotion: Example

The example below shows how traffic increased when one of our clients cross promoted their web site with an Interstitial Ad in the classified section on the web site of a major national newspaper's web site. This program increased traffic on the web site from 8,000 visitors a month to over 100,000 visitors a month.

