

THE 20 MOST IMPORTANT SEO FACTORS IN 2011

Which factors are the most important for organic search engine traffic in 2011? Organic search is the most coveted, not only because it is free, but because it is the most targeted. Make it your goal this year to do the best that you can in each of these 20 SEO factors.

#1: KEYWORD NEAR THE BEGINNING OF THE TITLE TAG.

It can be enough to simply place the keyword in the title tag. It is even better to have it at the beginning of title. Title tag is almost certainly the most important SEO criterion for all search engines.

Preferred format: "Keyword1 – Keyword2 | Brand or Company | location"

#2: KEYWORD USED AS ANCHOR TEXT FROM EXTERNAL LINKS.

Inbound links from other domains that use your keyword(s) as the anchor text are essential for SEO. External links with text "www.yourdomain.com" are much less beneficial.

#3: AUTHORITY OF THE DOMAIN.

Google recognizes domains that have built a strong online presence and weighs their articles higher by default than others. Age of domain also aids authority.

#4: GENUINELY HIGH-QUALITY, UNIQUE CONTENT.

This SEO factor is vital. The key to success for your website / blog is to create amazing content that people enjoy and will link back to.

#5: PAGE LOADING SPEED.

Make your website as fast as possible. Then make it even faster! Use a free browser plugin such as YSlow or the online tool <http://www.webpagetest.org> to see where the problems are and optimize your pages. CMS systems such as Wordpress and Joomla include free plugins to automate this.

#6: THE NUMBER OF QUALITY EXTERNAL LINKS TO A PAGE.

Every link to a page is like a vote. The more links that your site gets, the more popular Google knows that your site is. Especially links from highly rated or topical websites. See Tip #4.

#7: KEYWORD IN H1 TAG.

Google knows that the most important information on the page is in the heading tag. Take the time to make sure yours count.

#8: KEYWORD ANYWHERE IN THE DOMAIN NAME.

Sites often rank well for the keywords that are contained in their domain name. This is more important for Bing and Yahoo, Google doesn't seem to value this so highly anymore.

#9: LINKS FROM SOCIAL MEDIA SOURCES.

Search engines pay attention when they see you creating content that your followers enjoy so much that they share it. You do have a Twitter and Facebook account don't you?

#10: THE EXISTENCE OF A META DESCRIPTION FOR YOUR PAGE.

Providing a META description is crucial, as it is usually the text shown in the search results below your page title. A great description will encourage users to click through to your site. Be honest though – users clicking the back button too quickly to return to search results (bounce) is now a key factor used by Google in downgrading webpages for a particular search term.

#11: DIVERSITY OF EXTERNAL LINK SOURCES.

It's great to have a dozen links from another site. It's even better to have one link each from a dozen quality sites.

#12: KEYWORD AS ANCHOR TEXT TO OUTBOUND LINKS.

Search engines like to see you linking to other relevant sites. Your keyword as the anchor text is a great way to do it.

#13: LENGTH OF THE REMAINING DOMAIN REGISTRATION.

Spammers often register domains for very short periods of time. If the domain doesn't expire for 4 or 5 years, this will add to authority.

#14: KEYWORD IN THE PAGE URL.

Google pays attention to sites with keywords in their permalinks. Make sure yours contains terms that describe the content of each page / article.

#15: KEYWORD IN SMALLER HEADLINES LIKE H2 – H6, BOLD AND ITALICS.

Although these are less important than the H1 header tag, they are still very important.

#16: KEYWORD AS THE ALT TEXT AND TITLE FOR AN IMAGE.

Using a key phrase as the alt text of an image is a tried and true way of earning better listings. Search engines cannot "read" pictures – but

#17: CREATE AN XML SITEMAP.

By providing an XML sitemap and submitting it to Google's webmaster tools, you ensure that Google will be able to find all of the important pages of your website with the least amount of hassle.

PS: Make sure you also submit it to Bing Webmaster toolbox, as Bing is not good at finding all your pages.

#18: CLAIM YOUR LOCATION IN GOOGLE PLACES

Google moved the Google Places listings from the usually ignored upper right corner into the main search results where it is now very visible. This means that more and more people are now using Google Place Search, so claiming a Google Places listing ensures that more people will find your website. Make sure your Places profile is filled out correctly and fully. It is also imperative to get some feedback posted as soon as possible. This will help a lot in local search engine optimization.

#19: INCLUDE LOCATION IN YOUR KEYWORDS

Make sure to include your location (town, region and state) in your keywords if your product / service cannot be exported. There may not be the same amount of daily traffic for these specialized location keywords, but they are certain to be in your target market, and you have much less competition.

#20: LASTLY - DON'T FORGET BING!

Bing is the only search engine gaining market share at present as it now also handles all Yahoo search results (30% market-share in USA already). Make sure you register your site with *Bing Webmaster Tools* and *Bing Business Portal* (USA only at this point).