

SEO Basics

*Owning a website you are proud of is one thing - but even the BEST website in the world is useless **unless it can be found by your customers!***

You've got a great business, and a great new website. You keep checking Google every day - okay, multiple times per day - to see where you rank. But you're still on page 3 or 4 - or maybe not even ranking that high. What's wrong?

What you need is a little search engine optimization, or SEO! Just a few simple steps can help your site rank better in search engine results, and attract more visitors.

Just 5 simple steps will make a BIG difference.

1. Do keyword research.

Firstly, what words might people type into the search engines to look for your company? Write down all words and phrases that occur to you. Make sure to include your location and the local region if appropriate.

Once you have a list of 10 words / phrases use [Google Keyword Tool](#) to see which of these obtain the most traffic. Usually the Keyword tool will provide new ideas that are more popular. It is also important to make sure you select keywords with low competition (no new website will rank on first results page for "insurance" or "cheap flight" even though these words have the most traffic).

With your list of keywords, search in Google and work out who your competitors are and what they do to rank well in the search results. Also check which other keywords they are using.

Finalize a list of 5-10 keywords you wish to start your optimization with.

2. Write a unique, accurate title and meta-description for every important page on your site.

The title and meta-description of a web page are the most important elements on the page for helping it rank well in search results. This is also the text displayed by Google in the search results.

Every page needs a unique title and description!

A web page title should tell people – and search engines – exactly what that page is about. Include one or two important keywords to attract search engines and the eyes of people looking for what you offer. The title should be keyword rich but readable and intriguing for people who may find your post in a search online.

If the title is longer than 70 characters, search engines will truncate it, possibly cutting off an important word. For that reason, you should always put your keywords as far to the beginning of the title as possible. If your title is so enticing that people click immediately to your page, you've done a great job.

3. Make sure search engines index your site.

If your site isn't indexed, it can't be found in search results. Create a sitemap – sitemap.xml and place it in root folder of your website (search engines look here for it). Then register your website with Google Webmaster Tools and Bing Webmaster Toolbox and submit the sitemap link.

This will ensure that the search engines can find and index all of your pages (it might take a week though, so be patient).

4. Optimize your content

As the old saying goes “content is king” – this remains true with Google. If your content is not well written (or worse – copied from somewhere), you are unlikely to get a good ranking.

In addition you need to structure your content well – add headings (H1, H2 tags). Make sure the H1 includes the main keyword for this page. Add your keywords and variations of keyword in the “alt” attribute of any pictures.

Make sure your page loads quickly – large images and too many images are the main concerns here. Users and Google both don't like waiting.

NEVER use frames and avoid Flash whenever possible (most mobile devices and tablets cannot view flash!)

5. Get links from other websites

This is the hardest step for new websites – you need to get lots of links to your website to show the search engines that your content is interesting to others.

Make sure you register with any local community website registry, also create accounts with Yelp, Qype, Yellow Pages and DMOZ.org. You should also check where your competition gets their links from; you do know who your competition is don't you? If not, search for your keywords in Google – the companies above you in results are your competition).

As a final step – add **Google Analytics** to your website so you can see how many new visitors you're getting and how they are arriving on your website.