

A 10 Minute Search Engine Optimization

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Many small businesses simply do not have the resources to hire a search engine optimization (SEO) company to promote their web site. There are countless resources online for do-it-yourself (DIY) optimizers where professional SEO's offer general recommendations and advice. This article is my opportunity to offer more of my SEO experience in the form of a 10-minute optimization process.

This process will be effective for any page designed in HTML with at least 1 paragraph of html text but for the purposes of this article, I will concentrate on the all-important home page.

Setting the Stage

Before I begin, there are a few things that you must know before proceeding and you should spend more than 10 minutes considering:

- **Determine Your Target/s**

99% of you know who your target market is, now you need to choose the keywords that you believe they will search for. There is no use obtaining top search engine placements under terms that are not being searched. This step, alone, requires extensive explanation but there are a few simple tips to keep in mind. For one, you will want to check your current traffic statistics and note what traffic you are already receiving and under what keywords. Now, visit the site of a competitor who you know is doing well online (either through conversation or news articles). Look at their titles on individual pages and try to determine a pattern in the keywords that they have chosen. Also look at the source of their pages (Internet Explorer: click "View" then "Source") and copy their META tags into a notepad on your computer. Between the titles and the META tags you should be able to determine with reasonable accuracy which keywords are most important for rankings.

It is important to note that professional SEO's have many more resources at hand to determine such information with higher accuracy.

- **Design – Is Your Page Marketable?**

This topic can be touchy to bring up but the simple fact is that traffic will have less impact if your web page is unmarketable. Now this covers a lot of different aspects of design, however, a few basic rules should be followed.

1/ Avoid using strange color combinations that make it hard for a viewer to read your sales copy (red text on a blue background is a perfect example of a painful design). In the same respect it is important not to use text that is too small; try to keep your font size to a minimum of size 10 or 12 (2 or 3 in Dreamweaver).

2/ Unrelated advertisements on your web site provide distractions to your viewers. If you are selling BMW's then it is generally not a good idea to show an advertisement for herbal Viagra.

Every single graphical element of your home page has the potential to add or deny credibility. Using this space wisely will ultimately create happier visitors and generate more profit.

The Ten Minute Process

1. **Spot Check for Spam**

Before optimization begins it is crucial that your page is devoid of any 'tricks' that a search engine may construe as spam. You may not even know they are there! Some web designers with out-of-date information add hidden text because they think it will help your rankings. This is entirely untrue and can cause extreme problems for your search engine visibility. To check for hidden text just hold down the left button on your mouse at the very top of your page and drag it down to the bottom. If there is any hidden text (normally text that matches the color of your page background) it will appear as it is highlighted. Second, you will want to search for unnecessary repetition of keywords on your page. Do you see instances of 5 or 6 keywords being repeated in a row anywhere on the page? If so, remove this.

For more information on other types of spam that may be affecting your search engine ranking, view our resource article: "[Inspecting your Web Site for Spam](#)"

2. **Spot Check for Relevancy**

It is very important for your site to be focused. For example, if your web site is supposed to be devoted to 'BMW car sales' then a link or information on real estate sales is entirely unnecessary. Keep in mind that most of the top search engines will rank your site depending upon the topic they determine you are offering. This determination is largely made based upon the text within your web site. Don't give them any reason to get 'confused'.

3. **Polish & Optimize Text**

The text on your home page is crucial to maintaining the attention of fresh viewers. In fact, copy is so important that many companies prefer to have a professional copy writer create the content. Since this is not an option, you have to keep your text engaging as well as smartly optimized to present an obvious topic to the visiting search engine spiders or visitors. To do this, keep your mind focused on the keyword(s) that you have chosen to target on the search engines while you write the content for the page. Implement the keywords within the text without sacrificing the true intent of the information – to engage and retain your viewers.

Important Note: Often the first 25-30 words of your home page are what the each search engine will use for the description of your web site. Try to utilize your target keyword/s within this area but be certain the resulting sentence is legible and descriptive.

4. **Optimize the Title**

The title of the home page can be optimized quite simply by placing the keyword or keyword phrase that you have chosen to target first and then finish with the name of your company or web site. For example:

"BMW Car Sales – MyBMW.com"

The search engines place a great deal of weight in the title of your home page and the keywords within your title will likely be chosen as the title of your listing on the search engines. The title also plays a huge role in the relevance of your site. The topic denoted within your title will be compared to the content within the body of the page, if the topic and content match, you will have a much better chance of obtaining higher targeted placements.

5. **META Tags**

The META tags located within the invisible source of your web page. They were originally designed to provide the details of your web site to visiting search engine spiders and they still do, to a degree. Since this part of your web page is invisible, META tags were increasingly used to misinform the search engines of the content of a web site – spamming. As a result, META tags play a lesser role but they should still be properly optimized so that they contribute to the topical relevance of your web site.

META tags are basically composed of the Description and Keyword tags. The description tag should provide the same or similar 25-30 word description of your web site that you created earlier for the first text within your visible page. The description is occasionally used as your description within the search engines but it is unpredictable. The Keyword tag should include the keywords/phrases that you are targeting in order of importance. Start with the most important and then proceed to less important but still relevant keywords. It is extremely important that you do not repeat any word more than 3 times within the Keyword tag. This includes words within target sentences. Also do not place repeated keywords close together.

6. **Navigation... Provide Clear Paths**

Is the navigation within your site entirely graphical or programming oriented? In this case I recommend that you create a textual link menu at the bottom of your page. For added punch (and this is a big hit) you should make each link count by using the keyword/phrase that best describes the target page. For example:

[BMW Accessories](#) | [Used BMW for Sale](#) | [More About MyBMW.com](#)

versus these less powerful links:

[Accessories](#) | [Used Cars](#) | [About Us](#)

7. **Test and Spell-Check**

Preview the page and spell check it then once you are certain everything is properly balanced, upload it to your server.

Hurry Up and Wait

What happens now is entirely up to the history of your web site and your marketing budget. There are many search engines that offer paid submission for the regular or prompt indexing of your new page/web site. If you have paid for prompt indexing then you may see the fruits of your labor within a couple of days depending on the search engine.

In this case I am going to assume that you have a non-existent search engine budget. If your site has already been submitted to the search engines then you can simply wait until a spider returns to check for new content, at which time your new it will be found and processed accordingly. If you wish this process to proceed post-haste or your site has not yet been submitted, then you may submit your newly revised page to the search engines for what may be a faster response time. Be sure to read the rules that each search engine carefully defines before submitting or resubmitting your web page.