

How to Improve Search Engine Placements With Content

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November 19, 2003

Just how important is content to the search engines? We all know that well written content is paramount to maintaining repeat traffic to a web site but just what qualities pique the 'interest' of the major search engines? This can be a convoluted topic where the unique characteristics of each search engine are considered to create highly appealing content. In most cases, however, the general concepts are all that you will need to know to attain a positive search engine placement, especially when you are focusing on less competitive goals. After all, accuracy is not always required when your target is as big as a barn and you are only a few feet away.

For maximum effectiveness, content should be,

Unique

Content should be written uniquely for each page of your web site. Why? Well, when a search engine spider indexes each page, it constantly searches for any patterns that match known spam practices. For example, an old (and unfortunately still used by less knowledgeable 'optimizers') spam tactic is to create numerous pages with basically the same content to get multiple placements under a single phrase.

Fresh

Search engines are always on the lookout for web sites that offer information useful to their users. If Google found new content every time it indexed your web site, your site would instantly gain credibility because this would indicate that your site is constantly evolving. Following the logic of a search engine (and they are all essentially logical), an evolving web site is likely to be more interesting to searchers since the content is up-to-date. As a result your site has a better chance of obtaining better placements and maintaining the positions gained.

Relevant

Relevance can not be emphasized enough! It is important that when you create the copy write for a web page you try to maintain the overall relevance of the topic. In other words, if your web page has been created to describe the process of "*varnishing teak*" then maintain that focus throughout the copy. Do not skip to a totally unrelated topic such as (an extreme example) how to change tires... this will dilute the keywords on the page and it will make it more difficult for a visiting search engine to determine the placement that the page should achieve. A great deal of the SEO (search engine optimization) process is ensuring topical clarity throughout a web site. By ensuring that the copy on each page clearly indicates a desired topic (in this case the page focuses on teak varnishing), you will leave a search engine with little choice but to place your web site under your desired listing.

Visible

Seems simple right? Well, there are many ways to unwittingly damage the visibility of a beautifully written web site. Many of the following elements are straight out of search engine placement 101 but they must be noted:

Do Not Use Frames: There are few worse blocks to search engine indexing than framesets. If your site is using frames and all of your content is found within a frameset then you may need to reconsider a redesign. The "why" of this is simple; the home page actually has no content on it other than meta tags and a title because the page is only there to 'call' the framesets (which are

the pages with the content). As a result, the search engines only see a page with a few links on it and some Meta tags; a very poor recipe for search engine placements.

Do Not Create a Site Totally in Flash: Flash is a beautiful medium for advanced and often engaging multimedia BUT, it should not be the sole medium for your web site because the content within flash is not viewable by a search engine. If you wish to use Flash then we recommend interspersing it throughout a web site much like images are. This way you can include the same impressive interaction capabilities and you can still write your content in html; the sole medium that search engines can index. The same rule applies to images; if you want your text to be found and indexed by the search engines then do not include it within a graphic.

Note: Image ALT tags do the job somewhat by providing an ALternative copy of the text shown in the image, however, this is a poor substitution for true visible text.

Provide Alternative Navigation Options: Most sites employ a graphical navigation method which provides a very attractive and often functional method of navigating a web site. By ALT tagging each of the menu buttons with a topical summary of the destination page, graphical menus can even be effective for search engines. There are, however, a couple of alternative navigational items that we at StepForth recommend; a mirrored text menu at the bottom of the page and a text link to a sitemap located somewhere within every page.

The reason behind the text menu becomes clearer when you understand that hyperlinked text is more credible than a linked graphic. This is because the text within the link can be read and, as with any properly designed navigation, the menu's text link defines the topic of the destined page. Also, since this text is visible to visitors (unlike less visible ALT tags) there is less likelihood that you are trying to fool the search engines. This adds further credibility to the overall topic of the destined page which, in combination with the correctly written content, creates an even better atmosphere for top placements.

The sitemap is useful because of a certain well-known characteristic of search engines; they often take a long time to index pages that are located deep within a web site. So by creating a sitemap (preferably with text links) that is accessible from any page, you provide the search engines with a direct route to every page within your site. Not only do you facilitate a faster crawl of your web site but you provide the search engines with more text links which may further increase the credibility of your content.

In Summary

Now that you know what it takes to create content that the search engines will love, you are one major step closer to improving your search engine placements. Once you have a web site that meets the many qualities that were listed in this article, turn your attention to the proper optimization of your pages. If you would like some pointers please see my [10 Minute Search Engine Optimization tutorial](#) which will walk you through the basics of the process.

By implementing my suggestions from this article and the 10 minute optimization you will have a much better chance of achieving better placements simply because they are designed to work with, and increase the value of search engine results. You can't lose if you add value; the search engines will love you!