

# **E-Marketing Performance**

**Effective Strategies for Building, Optimizing and Marketing  
your Website Online.**

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## **Introduction:**

# **How Online Marketing Can Make a Difference For Your Business**

*Search engine marketing has boomed in recent years and statistics show that spending for online marketing is only going to continue to increase year after year. Several years ago the concept of running a website in conjunction with your “brick and mortar” store was seen as just another avenue to generate a handful more sales each year. Today, running a website is not only a great way to generate a considerable amount of new revenue, it is almost essential to the total marketing plan of your business.*

*Every day, millions of people go to the web for research, shopping, news, entertainment and more. Offline stores are heavily promoting their websites to their consumers in the aisles and at the checkout stand as a means of building brand loyalty as well as shopping convenience. Marketing your website online can literally add thousands, hundreds of thousands and even millions of dollars into your business bank account.*

*As consumers turn to the web for a variety of reasons, planning the online marketing strategy of your website can help you tap into each of those avenues as a way to generate new traffic, more conversions, and a loyal customer base. Ignoring the potential of the web will only serve to give your competitors a substantial advantage in reaching your target market. Not investing appropriate time, money, or resources into the online marketing of your website is akin to handing your customers over directly to your competitors.*

*Let’s consider the success of Amazon.com. When you think of online bookstores, most people think of Amazon. Why is that? Why not BarnesandNoble.com or Borders.com? Ten years ago, when the web was in its infancy, yet growing in popularity, Jeff Bezos jumped into the online game with a bookstore of his own. He got his store online before Barnes and Noble and Borders and now runs one of the most successful marketplaces online: Amazon.com*

*Even today, as all national booksellers are selling their products online, they have not been able to overcome the online success of this one guy who started a bookstore in his basement. Here we are, ten years later, and there are still thousands of businesses that have still not built up their online presence. Many have websites, but very few are marketing their websites effectively. You may not become the next Amazon.com success story, but effective marketing of your website can add considerable coin to your purse.*

## Making the Decision to Invest Online

Making the decision to invest hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars into a website may seem pretty daunting, if not downright risky. After all, there are no guarantees of success, and statistically one in ten businesses fail in the first few years. This is just as true with online ventures as offline. Most business failures are directly attributed to lack of finances. This means that setting a budget and investing appropriately into marketing can mean the difference between success and failure. Again, this is just as true with online ventures as offline.

Before you invest online, you need to make sure you have the correct mindset to move forward. Your business website should not be considered an IT expense, computer expense, or web expense. While it may be all of those, above all it is a marketing expense. Everything from web hosting to purchasing ads should all be part of the big marketing picture. Once you have the proper mindset, you can then plan and move forward with the best strategies in mind, not cutting corners for a quick buck, but for a long-term investment that will pay dividends in multiples.

## Internet and Marketing Statistics

- 77% of online consumers in the US use a search function to aide their e-shopping experience. (Pricewaterhouse Coopers, March 2001.  
[http://www.shop.org/learn/stats\\_usshop\\_general.asp](http://www.shop.org/learn/stats_usshop_general.asp))
- Those with household incomes of \$50,000 and above are more likely to purchase online (81%) than consumers with household incomes under \$50,000 (64%). (Greenfield Online, March 2001.  
[http://www.shop.org/learn/stats\\_usshop\\_general.asp](http://www.shop.org/learn/stats_usshop_general.asp))
- 28% of e-shoppers say that the Internet makes them shop more often and 33% say they tend to exceed their shopping budget online. (Cyber Dialogue, April 2001.  
[http://www.shop.org/learn/stats\\_usshop\\_general.asp](http://www.shop.org/learn/stats_usshop_general.asp))
- In 2003 it was determined that 31% of the total adult population (36-country survey) uses the Internet.  
([http://www.feb.ugent.be/fac/research/WP/Papers/wp\\_03\\_205.pdf](http://www.feb.ugent.be/fac/research/WP/Papers/wp_03_205.pdf))
- E-commerce sales will account for 10% of total U.S. retail sales by 2008. (Forrester Research, August 2003.  
[http://www.shop.org/learn/stats\\_usshop\\_general.asp](http://www.shop.org/learn/stats_usshop_general.asp))
- Online consumer retail spending reached \$1.02 billion for the week ending June 27, online sales in the first six months of this year reached \$27.8 billion, up 25.27% from \$22.2 billion in last year's first half. Sales for the week ending June 27 were up 31% from the corresponding week a year ago. (ComScore, July 2004.  
[http://www.shop.org/learn/stats\\_usshop\\_general.asp](http://www.shop.org/learn/stats_usshop_general.asp))

- Nearly 100 million adults made purchases after doing online research last year, coming close to the number of adults who purchased through catalogs, direct-mail ads and telemarketing calls combined. (The Dieringer Research Group, August 2004. [http://www.shop.org/learn/stats\\_usshop\\_general.asp](http://www.shop.org/learn/stats_usshop_general.asp))
- For every \$1 spent online, consumers are influenced to spend another \$6 offline. (Jupiter Research, August 2004. [http://www.shop.org/learn/stats\\_usshop\\_general.asp](http://www.shop.org/learn/stats_usshop_general.asp))
- 43% of Internet users bought products from a retailer's offline store after viewing them on the seller's Website. (Jupiter Research, August 2004. [http://www.shop.org/learn/stats\\_usshop\\_general.asp](http://www.shop.org/learn/stats_usshop_general.asp))
- In 2005 online shopping is expected to reach \$168 billion in sales and as much as \$316 billion by 2010. ([http://www.shop.org/learn/stats\\_usshop\\_general.asp](http://www.shop.org/learn/stats_usshop_general.asp))
- 70% of US adults use the Internet as an information source when shopping locally for products and services — up from 60% in October 2003. (Kelsey Group and ConStat, March 2005. [http://www.shop.org/learn/stats\\_usshop\\_general.asp](http://www.shop.org/learn/stats_usshop_general.asp))
- Search engine optimization is one of the most affordable forms of advertising and produces an exceptionally high return on investment (ROI). (<http://www.polepositionmarketing.com/knowledge/advertising.htm>)
- 93.4% of respondents use the Internet to research a B to B purchase decision. (<http://www.searchengineguide.com/mintz/004217.html>)
- 63.9% of respondents go to the search engine as the first step in the buying process. (<http://www.searchengineguide.com/mintz/004217.html>)
- 54.6% of the people are 1-3 months away from making a buying decision. 89.7% of the people are 2 weeks to 6 months away from making a buying decision. (<http://www.searchengineguide.com/mintz/004217.html>)
- 36.8% researched and bought online; 27.3% researched online and bought offline; only 7.9% didn't find what they were looking for. (<http://www.searchengineguide.com/mintz/004217.html>)
- 76.7% of Google users used the natural search links. (<http://www.searchengineguide.com/mintz/004217.html>)
- The top 3 organic listings accounted for 59.6% of the click-thrus. (<http://www.searchengineguide.com/mintz/004217.html>)
- The cost to acquire a customer is about \$8.50 for search, \$20 for Yellow Pages, \$50 for online display ads, \$60 for email and \$70 for direct mail. ([http://www.parkerwebdevelopers.com/PWD\\_News\\_041805.pdf](http://www.parkerwebdevelopers.com/PWD_News_041805.pdf))

These statistics should reinforce in your mind the value of not just building a website but investing in effective online marketing strategies.

### **Research Exercise: Discovering Purchase Decisions**

I'm sure you've spent a good amount of time researching things on the Internet, perhaps even making an online purchase or two (or hundreds!). Online shopping can be easy if you already have your preferred stores that you go to when making similar purchases. Do you buy all your DVDs at DeepDiscountDVD.com, your books at Amazon, your CDs at Tower? But take a moment and perform a fresh search for something that you've never purchased online before, something that you won't normally find at your typical place of purchase.

#### **Take notes about what things effect your purchase decision:**

- Where did you begin your research?
- What steps were taken and why?
- What made you look at certain websites?
- What websites did you visit that you ultimately passed over?
- What made you pass over those sites and select another?
- What made you feel confident in making a purchase where you did?

You don't have to go all the way through with a purchase, but go as far as you can and only continue as you remain in your online buying comfort level. If you wouldn't make a purchase at a particular site, then find one you would.

Once you've gone through this process at least twice, looking to purchase two distinct items or services, have a friend or family member do the same for the same items. Chances are you'll find that both of you "purchased" from different websites for different reasons. Comparing notes will give you valuable insights as to what you can or should do with your website to make it an effective sales tool.

#### **Here are two ideas for this research exercise:**

**Motorcycle Battery:** You need to purchase a battery for your motorcycle. What kind of motorcycle do you own? I don't know, make something up if you need to. (This will make the exercise more effective when you have your friend do the same.) Shop as if you are really making a purchase. Do whatever is necessary to ensure you are getting everything you want/need out of the purchase.

**Wedding Ceremony:** You're getting married. First time? Second time? Again, only you know. Look for a location to hold your wedding ceremony. You need to find a place that will meet all of your (and your fiancé's) needs and expectations. Be sure you are reasonable as to where you would actually travel to get married as well as with your budget.

## **Section 1:**

# **Creating a Marketing Focused Website That Sells**

*Many people look at a website as a separate expense from marketing. This is unfortunate and the reason why many websites under-perform in their sales potential. The Internet is still very much in its infancy and therefore our view of the web is still developing. It's been a slow process, but many business owner's attitudes towards website development and marketing has begun to evolve.*

*Unfortunately, far too many businesses still don't consider website development as a part of their marketing efforts. They'll pour thousands of dollars into traditional forms of marketing (which often produce significantly less return on the investment dollar) but fail to properly plan and execute their website or invest in effective online marketing strategies.*

*As you begin to put time, energy and (likely) significant sums of money into your online presence it is important that you consider your website as part of your overall marketing plan. Instead of being viewed as just another IT expense, your website should be considered as a marketing endeavor worthy of being incorporated fully into the marketing budget. Businesses that take this view are setting themselves up to have a long-term presence on the Internet as well as lasting success.*

## 1.1 Compiling the Pieces that Build a Full-Service Sales Experience

With the exception of cloned websites, every website has its own unique characteristics. When building your site there really is no one-size-fits-all pattern to follow. Your site should be built to fulfill your informational and sales needs, while being effective in getting your target audience to take the desired actions. In order to do this there are basic components that almost every website should have in place in order to be effective both with the usability and marketing aspects.

### Home Page

Every website has a home page, even if it's just a one-page site. The home page is the single most crucial page of a site because it is the page most likely to be viewed, as well as the page most likely to send people away if they don't like what they see. It doesn't matter what you have beyond the home page if you can't get visitors to click past it and into your products or services.

Your home page must accomplish several things:

#### ***Establish Your Brand***

Your visitor's need to immediately know where they have landed (who are you), what you do or offer (broad concepts), and you must be able to touch them in such a way that they will be interested enough to click deeper into your site and/or return at a later point.

#### ***Show What You've Got***

Visitors need to quickly be able to find the specific products or services they came looking for in the first place, with a clearly established path to take them to the relevant pages. If you can't direct them effectively from the home page, you lose them at "Hello."

#### ***Generate Interest***

If your site is not compelling, all the information in the world won't get them to click any further. Your copy and layout must generate enough interest and give them the desire to keep digging.

#### ***Convey Trust***

Trust is an important element in the sales process. Your home page is often the first impression your visitors get of you. If your site comes across as a slick salesman selling a used car out of an impound lot, chances are visitors will bolt.

#### ***Don't Give Information Overload***

Pace yourself. Don't try and give too much information on your home page. We know that every additional click a user has to perform causes visitor loss, however putting too much information on a single page can also confuse them. Sometimes forcing them to click is the surest way to establish active interest.

## Contact Us Page

Every site needs to have a designated contact information page. Even if you have your phone number, email address, fax number and snail mail address on every page of your website, it's still important to have a full page dedicated to this exact same information. Why? Inevitably there will be people that will simply not notice your large and dominantly displayed phone number and start looking for the contact page.

On top of displaying all your contact information, you should consider putting a contact form on this page as well. Different people have different preferences and it's best if you can cover as many of those as possible. You can use the request form to gather some information such as name, company, email and phone information, as well as subscribing them to your newsletter, auto responders, or coupon mailing list. Those who don't want to fill out the information can utilize the other ways of contacting you, but don't be too intrusive; otherwise you'll lose the contact altogether.

## About Us Page

The "About Us" page is one that is used to provide information that instills additional confidence in your business in the hearts and minds of your visitors. The "About Us" page can be used to provide reassuring company information such as how long you've been in business, organizations you belong to (chamber of commerce, BBB, etc) as well as provide bios of the executive staff. All of these things will help many visitors feel more comfortable when deciding to take the next step in purchasing your products or utilizing your services.

## Product & Service Pages

If you sell anything, whether a product or a service, you need a page or sets of pages dedicated to providing details about what it is you offer. Do you have only one item that fits easily on the home page? That shouldn't matter. Keep the home page information paired down and use product or service pages to expound, giving additional details, testimonials, uses, expected results, frequently asked questions and so on. These pages will allow you to tell anything that anybody might possibly need to know to make an informed purchase decision.

As with the home page, don't overload a single page with too much information about the product or service. It's recommended that you break out information over multiple pages, each highlighting a different set of information. This ensures that each visitor can quickly and easily navigate to the information that helps *them* make their buying decision.

## FAQ – Frequently Asked Questions

If possible, assemble a FAQ page for each product or service you offer, or each grouping of your products or services. This allows a one-stop page where potential buyers can find out just about anything they want. FAQ pages can be as long as they need to be to cover

all of the potential questions someone might ask. You can also break long pages up into multiple pages with the main page highlighting each question and linking to its answer.

## Site Navigation

Construction of your site navigation can make or break your website's performance. Shoddy and haphazard navigation schemes can easily confuse visitors causing them to make that dreaded click out of your site and onto a competitor. A properly constructed navigation can help visitors easily move from page to page finding everything that they are looking for quickly and easily.

### *Be Consistent (Placement)*

However you construct your site navigation scheme it should be consistent from one page to the next. Don't confuse your visitors by changing how the navigation looks or by moving its on-page location to a different area.

There are many different forms of navigational elements: main menus, sub-menus, breadcrumbs, etc. All of them should work together to create a consistent and recognizable flow as the visitor navigates through the site.

It is very important that no matter how big or complex the structure of your site gets, each web page must keep a consistently located and easy to find link back to your home page.

### *Be Obvious (Breadcrumbs)*

Being obvious with your navigation prevents your visitors from "getting lost" on the site and not knowing how to navigate back to other important pages that may be in different sections of your site. It's important that your visitors be able to quickly discern what page they are on and figure out where to go from there.

One of the simplest ways to display where a visitor is on your site, regardless of how deep within the site's architecture they are, is to use breadcrumbs. Breadcrumbs are a set of navigational links that show the navigational path from home to the current page.



Most visitors don't actually use the breadcrumb links for navigational purposes, but instead they act as an important visual cue allowing the visitor to see what page, sub-section, and section they are within the site.

### *Be Helpful (Site Map & Search)*

Websites with large quantities of pages or products can easily create a navigational nightmare. Even with properly implemented navigation, visitors often find themselves "lost" and don't know how to navigate specifically to the information they are seeking.

While it's important to eliminate these frustrations as best as possible, you also want to provide some navigational "shortcuts" for your visitors.

**Site Map:** Site maps provide a one-stop destination that allows your visitors to always be no more than two clicks away from the product or information they want. This is a helpful feature allowing anybody to quickly see what you offer and where to get it, all from a single page.

Site maps are also useful to search engines allowing them to easily crawl and index every page on your site. Most engines will only index a couple of clicks deep with each visit, often taking weeks or months to dig all the way through your site. Site maps can speed up that process by making every page easily accessible to the search spider.

In the same manner that you have a consistent link to the home page, you also want to have a link to the site map on every page as well.

**Site Search:** A site search feature isn't required for good navigation, but it can add an extra element of usefulness for your visitors. Allowing your visitors to perform a quick search for the product they are looking for can speed up the conversion process and eliminate site abandonment.

Before implementing a site search feature, consider that most site searches fail to deliver great results. Before making your search feature live, run extensive tests to be sure that results are accurate and relevant. Try using product numbers, brand names, misspellings, etc. If you don't carry an exact product which may be searched for, be sure to deliver results for the similar or relevant products you do carry. If you can't make your site search engine perform under all of the above situations then it's best not to have a search function at all.

Putting all of these pieces together, much like a puzzle, allows you to present a complete picture of who you are, what you do, and how you can meet the needs of your visitors. While your website can and will function without any one of these pieces, there will always be "something" missing, and that something just might be what some visitors need to push them into that final decision to purchase. A complete website, with all the pieces in place is a much more effective website through and through.

## 1.2 Constructing Effective Web Pages That Meet Your Audience's Needs

Even if you employ or hire programmers and designers to handle all of the coding elements of your website, it is important for you to have a basic understanding of the various web page elements. Ignorance of such things is only bliss until you realize you spent hundreds of dollars on a project only to find out that it doesn't quite meet your needs.

I made this mistake a while back when I paid a programmer to build a tool for our clients to use. The initial development of the tool functioned fine. Later, though, I found out that adding new functionality and improvements would require that the tool be rebuilt in a different programming language that offered more flexibility.

For any single web page to be effective very little is actually needed. More often than not, the less you have, the better a page performs. Having a basic understanding of the construct of your web pages allows you to ensure proper progress of your development and marketing teams and that their work will ultimately be able to perform to expectations while allowing room for growth. For marketing purposes there are many key elements of a web page that must be utilized properly and efficiently in order for it to be effective.

### Language

There are many different programming languages that can be utilized within the code of a single web page. One isn't necessarily better than another as long as whatever you use is determined to be the best language for the functions you wish to perform.

#### ***HTML – HyperText Markup Language***

HTML is the basic programming language of the web and consists of a basic set of rules that, when followed, allows your information to render properly on the screen. Most other web languages use some form of HTML or can operate within the HTML framework.

#### ***XHTML – Extensible HyperText Markup Language***

XHTML is basically the next evolution beyond HTML 4. It is designed to be a sleeker, cleaner version of HTML that relies heavily on CSS (cascading style sheets) for on-page formatting, allowing the actual page code to be as lean as possible.

#### ***ASP – Active Server Pages***

ASP allows for an application environment in which you can combine HTML, scripts, and reusable ActiveX server components to create dynamic and powerful web-based business solutions. While still popular, many programmers are moving over to the more scalable PHP programming language.

### ***PHP – Hypertext Preprocessor***

PHP is an open source, server-side, HTML embedded scripting language used to create dynamic web pages. PHP, like ASP can be used within an HTML document and is often used to add functionality to a page while reducing the amount of coding necessary to accomplish the task.

There are many other languages that can also be integrated into your web site to enhance functionality as well as productivity. Before you build your site you will want to consider carefully what language, or combination of languages, will be needed for your web site's marketing needs. The functionality you want on your website will help determine what programming languages(s) are utilized.

## **Page Title**

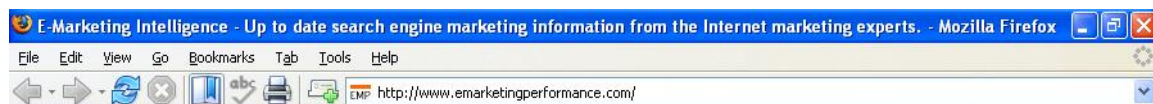
Every web page is considered a unique document. Unlike a book or a brochure, where pages simply flow from one to the next, each web page should be given its own unique purpose to perform before sending the user on to the next page or pages. Therefore, each page must have its own title to briefly describe that page's purpose and/or contents.

The title of each web page is found in the <title> tag between the <head> tags in the HTML code, unseen to the visitor except in the top bar of your web browser.

```
<head>
```

```
<title>E-Marketing Intelligence - Up to date search engine  
marketing information from the Internet marketing  
experts.</title>
```

```
</head>
```



Search engines will generally show the title of each ranking page in SERPs (search engine results pages), which is the clickable text that leads you to the page.

[E-Marketing Intelligence - Up to date search engine marketing ...](http://www.emarketingperformance.com/)  
(EMP) E-Marketing Performance, E-Marketing information and search engine marketing  
resources: Featuring up to date search engine marketing and optimization ...  
[www.emarketingperformance.com/](http://www.emarketingperformance.com/)

Many people want their business name to be at the very front of the title tag. This is a great tactic for branding, but if you're not Target or Nike it will be more important to use your title to let people know what that page is about. For marketing purposes the title tag should contain your primary keywords in a natural sentence format. If you must have your business name in the title tag it is generally best to place it at the end. The length of the title tag should remain in the confines of common sense. Most are in the range of 3-15 words in length.

Each page of your website should have its own unique title. It's easy to get lazy and simply cut and paste the title of the home page on every other page. From a search marketing perspective, this is a mistake. Take the time to make each title tag unique.

## Page Description

The page description is determined by the Meta Description tag which is also found near the title within the <head> tags in the code. Short of viewing the source code, the page description is not viewable with the browser.

```
<head>

<title></title>
<meta name="description" content="(EMP) E-Marketing Performance,
E-Marketing information and search engine marketing resources:
Featuring up to date search engine marketing and optimization
information covering a variety of topics relevant to the search
marketing and Internet promotion industries. Search marketing
information to render your competition powerless."/>

</head>
```

Some search engines will use the page description in the search results as was seen with our Google shot above, however most will pull snippets of text to use as the description in the SERPs. The Meta Description is used to tell the search engine what each page is about allowing for more words than the title tag. Most engines assign very little relevance to the Meta Description but it is still an important part of each page.

As with the title, the description tag should be unique to each page. Don't go overboard by trying to place your entire page content in the description tag; a good rule of thumb is 30-50 words in length.

## Keywords

The keywords you wish to associate with each page can be added using the Meta Keywords tag and can also be found in the same vicinity as the title tag. As with the Meta Description, the Meta Keywords tag is not viewable on the page.

```
<head>

<title></title>
<meta name="description" content=""/>
<meta name="keywords" content="e-marketing intelligence, Internet
marketing information, search marketing resources, search
marketing industry news"/>

</head>
```

Search engines used to heavily weigh the Meta Keywords but today they are virtually ignored due to abuse. Some website marketers don't even bother with a keyword tag anymore, while others still feel that it should be utilized but kept short and clean. Don't

try and fit every keyword for your site in the keyword tag, but only what is relevant to each particular page. Only use words in the keyword tag that are found in the viewable textual content of any given page and don't worry too much about the format (commas, no commas, etc.).

## Paragraph Headings

Paragraph headings, found in <Hx> tags, are good for both visually separating out elements and causing certain textual elements to stand out to the search engines. Headings are located between the <body> tags which contain much of the code determining the content and layout of the website.

```
<body>

<h2>Finding the Perfect SEO Firm</h2>

</body>
```



Headings can be labeled 1-6 (<h1>, <h2>, ..., <h6>) and should be used to separate out text sections on each page. Only one H1 tag should be used per page and lightly use the others as it makes sense to do so.

## Body Content

Aside from the title tag, the visible text of each web page is the single most important element for marketing purposes. Body content is located between the <body> tags (along with other elements) and usually found in <p> (paragraph) tags.

```
<body>

<h2>Finding the Perfect SEO Firm</h2>
<p>SEO companies come in all shapes and sizes. You've got your
solo... </p>

</body>
```



## Finding the Perfect SEO Firm

SEO companies come in all shapes and sizes. You've got your solo

Many website owners don't like a lot of text and rather go for the visual effect. Recent online case studies, however, have proven that quality text is one of the most essential elements of selling the visitor on your product or service. The visible text is also what is heavily analyzed by the search engines.

It's important that the textual content be in HTML form and not embedded within images or JavaScript as search engines cannot read text in these elements causing them to be virtually invisible. Be sure to utilize your important keywords within the textual content but don't try to stuff them in everywhere you can. Text should be written in the best natural language possible, clear of grammatical and spelling errors. There is nothing like a poorly written website to make customers quickly leave for a more "professional" competitor.

## Images

Images can be used to convey many important concepts and visual cues to the visitor while also giving your site a more professional or elegant look. It's important to use images properly but within moderation, consistent with the needs of your target audience. As mentioned earlier, text in images is virtually invisible to the search engines. You should only use text within an image if it is unimportant to the search engine optimization and ranking process.

In the HTML code, images are placed using the <img> tag and designating the location of the source (src) file.

```

```



When using images, be sure that each is used appropriately to enhance the concepts conveyed on the page it is on, is clean, and works to help “sell” your product or service.

## Alternate Image Text

When users have their images turned off or are using screen readers, the alternate image text, or “alt text,” can come in handy. Alt text can be found in the “alt” attribute of the image tag and is used to describe or name the image.

```

```

EMP E-Marketing Performance, Search Marketing Information to Render Your Competition Powerless!

Many web users on dial-up connections turn images off to speed up page loading times. In these cases the alt text will be visible in the place of the image itself. Also note that the alt text is audibly read to disabled users who use screen readers.

You want to be sure to use alt text conservatively and properly for each image. In our image above you’ll see that the alt text uses the exact words found in the image itself. Don’t use alt text just to stuff additional keywords into your page, but only to properly describe what the image visually conveys to the viewer.

## Code Comments

Comments are additional coding elements that are viewable only to those that are looking at the source code and can fall anywhere in the HTML code.

```
<!-- Begin Second Paragraph -->
```

Comment tags were designed to allow for code documentation and organization without affecting the page display. Search engines used to weigh comment tags for ranking purposes, but due to manipulation and abuse, they have all but abandoned them. Comments can still play a role in your online marketing campaign, but only if utilized properly and sparingly.

## **Research Exercise: Flowcharting Your Site**

I bet it's been a while since you've had to build a flowchart for something, right? Flowcharting is a great exercise before you begin to build a website as it allows you to determine how the important elements are going to be connected together and presented to the visitor on the page.

In this exercise you are going to begin flowcharting your website. If you already have a site, start a flowchart from scratch and use it to determine how your current site can be improved.

### **Start with the Basics**

Begin flowcharting with the home page, contact, about us, etc. then add all of your major product or service categories. Consider then the sub-pages for each category; those pages that will provide the visitor more detailed information about what you offer. What will that information be? Product specifications, details of services performed? You figure that out and get it on the flowchart.

Be exhaustive, ensuring that no page, regardless of how unimportant it seems, gets left out. In this process it's better to err on the side of too many pages than too few, as you can always eliminate pages if you don't have content to fill them with. These pages can be projects to be added to the site down the road.

### **Look Beyond the Page**

Once you're done flowcharting, start considering programming languages you might need. You can even start working on preliminary page titles and descriptions, deciding what kind of images might work for each page and so on.

As with most first-phase processes, much of what you have when you're done will be different from the finished product, but that's only because you have something to work from and improve upon. In the end, you should have a site that functions well and provides users with everything they need to make you rich.

## **Section 2:**

# **Laying the Foundation for a Successful Online Business**

***B**efore you begin to build your website you want to make sure you have laid the groundwork that will ensure that you are able to operate and market your website successfully. All too often websites are designed and developed and then rushed onto the Internet without anyone having taken the time to properly consider the long-term marketing aspects that may later turn into substantial roadblocks to success.*

*Some extra time, careful consideration and a bit of foresight can help you steer clear of common pitfalls that would otherwise cause thousands of dollars in potential revenue loss.*

## 2.1 Securing a Marketing-Rich Domain Name

Choosing your domain name is a no-brainer, right? Not so fast. Your domain name, or URL, can have vast consequences in both the online and offline marketing arena. Long or difficult to spell domain names can be the death toll for any website, long before its even been given a chance at success. Short or clever domain names can make people remember where to go more easily, while keyword domain names can often bring in unintentional, yet quality, traffic as people type in *whatever.com*.

If you already operate a successful business it's important that you purchase a domain name that will compliment any branding strategy that you have already put in place. The most obvious thing to do is to get your business name as your URL, however if you're late getting into the game you may find that your business name is already taken by another similarly named business or by a domain name squatter, or possibly a future competitor. Purchasing a business name domain name isn't always the right way to go, and when left without that option, a keyword domain name might work just as well, if not better.

If you have not yet established your business, you may want to wait on deciding your business name until after you have found an available domain name that is suitable to your marketing efforts. The best possible domain name is one that is both a keyword domain and your business name such as *outdoorsportinggoods.com*.

### Build Your Brand

Whether you like it or not, your domain name is an important part of your branding efforts. Your domain name goes on your letterhead, business card, printed materials; it must be spoken verbally over the phone, presented in email communications, and appears in the search results when your site ranks well on important keyword searches. Because of all this, your URL must be able to fit into your long-term branding strategy.

#### ***Keep it Short & Memorable***

The best domain name is one that is relatively short and memorable. Long domain names or domains with hyphens are often just too cumbersome for someone to remember or even pass along to others. Are you better off telling a potential customer to visit *debbies-hair-care-supplies.com* or *debshaircare.com*?

There are times when having a long URL is really the only way to go, but be sure before you go that route. Before I registered PolePositionMarketing.com I considered several other options such as ppm.com (already taken) or PPMarketing.com (too urinary), PoleMarketing.com (doesn't really "say" anything). Ultimately I went with PolePositionMarketing.com because it assisted in the branding process while saying something about what we do to anybody who sees it.

#### ***Use it for Email***

There are many free email services out there: hotmail, gmail, yahoo mail, etc. These are great for personal use, allowing you to have one email address forever. However, for

business purposes I would strictly use your domain name for email correspondence. Receiving business documents, quotes, or other business communications from stoney@polepositionmarketing.com rather than stoney@hotmail.com is considerably more reassuring to most people looking to do business with you.

Using your domain name for email does the following:

- Gives your communications a more “professional” feel
- Helps build your brand
- Increases the likelihood people will remember, and therefore return, to your website

## **Secure a .com**

I strongly recommend purchasing a .com domain name as opposed to a .net, .info, .biz or anything else. If your chosen domain name is not available in a .com, keep looking until you find one that isn't taken. You'll find it worth the extra effort as .com domain names are by far the most common and most remembered. When telling a potential customer to go to your website, you may tell them to go to “mysite.net,” but what they may actually hear is go to “mysite.com.” If that happens, which is often the case, you'll be sending someone to a competitor rather than your own site.

Once you secure your .com domain name, you might also consider purchasing the .net and other extensions as well. Securing the alternate extensions, whenever possible, can be a great strategy to keep a competitor from purchasing and building a site with a similar name as yours.

## ***Country Code Top Level Domains (TLDs)***

If your site is designed to targeting an audience in a specific country other than the United States, its best to purchase the domain extension that is assigned to that country. Here is a list of TLDs by country: <http://www.domainit.com/country-domains.htm>

### **Most Popular:**

- .co.uk (United Kingdom)
- .ca (Canada)
- .fr (France)
- .us (United States)

Before you purchase the URL for the specific country you are targeting, I still recommend purchasing the .com. While not technically assigned to any country, .com domains are the ‘default’ extension used in the US. Securing the .com prevents a US competitor from sneaking into your particular branding efforts.

If you are trying to reach visitors in multiple countries, you might want to set up unique websites, each using the TLD for the specific countries you are targeting. As a side note: be sure to have your text translated in the language you are trying to target. In the case of other English speaking countries it is important to translate using local language nuances.

## Don't Hyphenate

Avoid getting stuck with a hyphenated domain name as your main website address. While it may be easier to read in print, it is very difficult to speak it. Try telling someone to go to —window dash coverings dot com” or —window hyphen coverings dot com.” See what I mean? Most of the time people will type in windowcoverings.com which would again direct them to a potential competitor.

## Spell Words Properly

It is usually not a good idea to use incorrectly spelled words in your domain name, even if you've done that to create a clever business name. The exception to this rule is if you have secured both the correctly spelled and incorrectly spelled URLs. You'll want to make sure you use proper redirects to send visitors from the correctly spelled URL to your main (misspelled) address.

Here is a quick example. Without using a search engine, find a website which would be verbalized as —On Site Graphics.” Where did you end up? Did you find onsitegrafix.com? Most people probably won't, which clearly demonstrates why you want to use proper spellings of words in your domain, at the very least as a redirect to your real domain.

## Securing Multiple Domains

I mentioned earlier the strategy of securing alternate versions of your domain name to prevent competitors from squeezing in on your branding efforts. This is a good marketing strategy that can be used to capture additional type-in traffic, secure other branding avenues you may wish to pursue, or simply to prevent your competitors from securing them.

When securing multiple domain names be sure to implement proper safeguards and strategies to avoid negative search engine ramifications. This will be covered in more detail later.

### *Type-In Traffic*

Many URLs are purchased simply to capture type in traffic. Type-in traffic is when someone goes to the address bar of their web browser and types in *keywords.com* instead of performing a keyword search on a search engine. Securing domain names with a fair amount of type-in traffic can be a great boost to sales. If you sell bean bags, your main URL might be BarrysBeanBags.com. To capture potential type-in traffic you might also secure and redirect the following:

- KidsBeanBags.com
- BeanBagChairs.com
- BeanBagFurniture.com

### ***Misspellings***

It is always a good idea to secure potential misspellings of your domain name. I recently did a radio interview and at the end of the interview I provided my domain name. Unfortunately I did not take the time to actually spell it out. Upon realizing my error, I immediately went out and purchased multiple spellings of my URL to redirect to my main site.

- PolPositionMarketing.com
- PullPositionMarketing.com
- PollPositionMarketing.com

This allowed me to capture all traffic from any listeners that may have had a different spelling of my site in mind, which increased my visitor rate from those who listened to the broadcast substantially.

Along with misspellings you should also consider purchasing plural and/or singular versions of your domain. I was doing research on some of my competitors and over the course of several weeks kept revisiting certain sites. One site in particular I had continuous trouble finding because I kept typing the domain name incorrectly. If I was the owner of *grantasticdesigns.com* I would also purchase and redirect the following:

- grantasticdesign.com
- grandtasticdesigns.com
- grandtasticdesign.com

### ***YourDomainSucks.com***

If you are in a highly visible industry you might want to consider getting yourdomainsucks.com. Several years ago someone put up an anti AOL website at aolsucks.com (You can see a version of this at <http://web.archive.org/web/19980111060209/http://www.aolsucks.com/>).

Who might do such a thing? A disgruntled x-employee, a customer who had a bad experience or even a former spouse or partner. Setting up and hosting a website is relatively easy, and often bad press travels a lot further with a little effort than good press with a lot of effort.

There are some significant drawbacks from trying to capture all negative versions of your domain name. You'll have to grab all hyphenated, non-hyphenated, plural, and misspelled variations. That can be quite a bit. Take that even a step further, you'll want to buy the .net, .org, .info, .biz and .us (or your country code) variations. Don't forget *YourDomainSux.com* or *YourDomainReallySucks* either.

Is it worth trying to get all those variations? You'll have to decide. For some ~~any~~ press is good press." For others, not so much. In any case, someone registering a ~~sucks~~" version of your domain name is likely to create a legal battle that perhaps neither side wants to engage in.

### ***Hyphenated Versions***

I mentioned above that you should not purchase a hyphenated URL for your main site. For marketing purposes, however, there are sometimes legitimate reasons to do so. My business owns *PolePositionMarketing.com* and *Pole-Position-Marketing.com*. I purchased the hyphenated version simply to prevent a competitor from securing it and stealing my branding. I also have the option of using the hyphenated versions for other marketing efforts, but I don't recommend doing so unless you are fully aware of the potential ramifications.

### ***Use Proper Redirects***

When setting up multiple domains such as those mentioned above, it's important that you set up each one properly. Setting up domains improperly can lead to duplicate site/content penalties on the search engines which will ultimately be bad for business.

The best method of setting up multiple URLs is to set up a 301 permanent redirect. The 301 redirect tells the search engine that the URL it is trying to access has been permanently moved to a new location, presumably your main URL. The cool thing is that when a visitor types in the redirecting URL they are automatically flipped to your main site.

Many websites employ on-page JavaScript or meta refresh redirects, or even worse, framed pages pulling in the main site. These methods are effective from the user standpoint but not from the search engine standpoint. The 301 redirect is generally the safest method of redirecting users.

To set-up a 301 redirect you'll want to talk with your web host, as different servers require different methods of implementation. When redirecting multiple URLs there is a neat little trick that saves hosting fees that you'll want to use.

- 1) Take one of the redirecting URLs and host it on the cheap. This is the URL that will be set up with the 301 redirect to your main URL.
- 2) Take all your other URLs and park them to point to the URL above.

With this method, you pay for only one additional hosting account (\$5 at the most) and all your URLs will automatically flip the visitor and the search engines to your main URL.

## **2.2 Selecting a Web Host Provider That Meets Your Business Needs**

How or where you host your website may not seem like it's all that important to the overall marketing plan of your site, but I guarantee that you'll only think that until your website or email goes down when it matters most. Over the years I've used almost a dozen different web hosts providers. In that time, I've found only one or two which were virtually hassle-free, and for that I had to pay some pretty sizeable hosting fees.

Web hosting costs have reduced drastically in the last several years; however, you shouldn't choose a web host based solely on cost. As inexpensive as it might be month to month, a poor provider can cost you thousands of dollars in lost sales if your site or email goes down or simply fails to function properly on a consistent basis.

When researching various hosting companies, look for quality over cost. You don't necessarily have to pay an outrageous monthly fee, but you do need to find a host that provides you all the features you need with minimal inconveniences and ongoing problems.

### **Tech Support**

A good web hosting company will provide around the clock call-in tech support. Personally, I avoid any provider that only offers email or online tech support. That's a personal thing for me; you'll have to make your own judgment on that. If you call, you should not be left on hold for more than four or five minutes before reaching a representative to help you. If you email a tech support issue, be sure your provider responds to requests quickly—within hours, not days—and is able to quickly and competently provide you a solution.

### **Down Time**

Many providers offer some kind of uptime guarantee. Be sure to read the small print in order to fully understand what that means. I've dealt with providers which the guarantee was only for the website and not for email. I went a full day without functioning email and the host refused to give me any discount on that month's service charges.

Many providers give a 99.9% uptime guarantee. This means that the provider guarantees that their servers will not go down for more than 8 hours per year or less than 45 minutes each month. Of course, if you're in the middle of a big marketing campaign, 45 minutes can be crucial.

If a provider fails to meet their guaranteed up time, you can usually get your hosting charges waived for the month. If it happens regularly, you can literally go months without having to pay fees. Sounds nice, but it's really not adequate compensation for the amount of traffic, and perhaps business, you lose while your website or email is not functioning

as it should. If you are currently with a host that goes down more than a couple times a year, you may want to reconsider who you host your website with.

## **Server Load Monitoring**

You want to choose your hosting plan carefully to ensure that it will be able to handle whatever server load your site might generate, especially during peak times or big marketing pushes. Most web hosts allocate a certain amount of bandwidth usage each month. If you exceed that, you may find yourself paying extra fees, or worse, your site may be inaccessible until you ante up more money.

Be sure to know your bandwidth usage and how much you are allocated. Knowing that, you'll also want to be aware of the consequences if you exceed that bandwidth. Plan for this to happen in advance so you're not caught off guard when you get a sudden surge of traffic.

## **Secure Server**

If you are processing credit card information or storing personal data that should not be exposed, it is important that you have access to a secure server. Security is a growing concern with Internet shoppers and many businesses report an increase in conversions just by displaying a secure symbol in their shopping cart area.

Some web hosts will provide you access to a secure portion of their server. In these cases when visitors navigate to the secure area, the URL will actually change and the visitor will no longer be on your site (i.e. [www.yourdomain.com](http://www.yourdomain.com)). In most cases the user probably won't even notice, however many websites place their entire online store on these external secure areas. The downside to this is that it removes many potentially valuable pages off your site making any potential search engine ranking benefit inaccessible to you. Each of these pages could otherwise be an entry point to your site via the search engines.

The other option is to have a secure area on your own site. You can do this by purchasing a secure certificate for your domain name. This certificate is then installed through your web host giving you unlimited secure areas of your site to work with—all on your own domain. This is the most professional solution and allows you to keep potential search engine friendly pages indexable with the rest of your site.

I would also recommend keeping as much of your website out of the secure area as possible and only transfer visitors to the secure area when they are in the checkout process. If they leave the checkout to continue shopping they should also leave the secure area.

## **Free Hosting Services**

Free web hosting services, such as Geocities, are not recommended for any business that wants to develop a professional online presence. Leave those free services for hobby and personal sites. If you want your business to thrive on the Internet you need to be able to direct someone to [www.yourwebsite.com](http://www.yourwebsite.com), not [www.geocities.com/~mycoolsite/index.html](http://www.geocities.com/~mycoolsite/index.html).

## **In-House Hosting**

Many companies are bypassing the web hosting providers altogether in favor of hosting their sites on their own in-house servers. There are some definite pros for doing this but I don't recommend going this route unless you have a full-time IT person on staff who is skilled at web server management.

I once flirted with hosting my site in-house. I have a rented in-house file server which comes with ongoing customer support. My tech sold me on the benefits of hosting my site in-house. After moving my site over I quickly realized that there was much more to web hosting than meets the eye. Days went by as I waited for my server tech to set-up proper email functionality and domain redirecting. After about a week with calls to the domain registrar, server tech, and programmer, all saying the problem is somebody else's issue, I return to using a real hosting provider.

In-house hosting also raises site access issues. When hosting in-house the ability for visitors to access and download your site is largely dependant on your local ISP and the connection speed you receive. Even with broadband DSL or cable, typical connection speeds are much slower than can be provided with a quality web host. This can increase download times and create a more sluggish site if you have many visitors at once.

In-house hosting also does not provide you with any kind of uptime guarantee, and in my experience, excellent tech support. Should your server go down, you temporarily lose Internet access, or power goes out, your website will be unavailable to your visitors.

In my experience, quality web hosting is difficult to come by, but is absolutely essential for any business that takes their online marketing efforts seriously. Be sure to research your potential web host providers carefully. Find out what services they provide for free and what you have to pay for. Make sure they provide sufficient tech support, guaranteed uptime, as well as a good reputation from others. If you need to, be willing to pay more for quality service. A little extra each month can help eliminate thousands of dollars in potential lost revenue if your website or email goes down at an inopportune time.

## **Research Exercise: Finding the Right Domain Name**

If you already have a website you have probably already gone through the domain name selection process, but did you pick the absolute best one available? Let's find out.

In this exercise you are going to go to [doster.com](http://doster.com) or [godaddy.com](http://godaddy.com) or any other registrar that allows you to search domain names. You're going to research the availability of domain names that you think might be great for your site.

### **Get Your Hands Dirty**

This can be a quick exercise or a lengthy one, that just depends on how creative you are and what you find. Go deep, considering all kinds of alternates and variations as well as availability of .nets, .orgs or hyphenated versions.

Once you've compiled a thorough list of excellent candidates, begin to pare the list down into top, second and third tier choices. Now present your list to family, friends or business associates and get their opinions. Were you able to come up with a new business name or a strong URL for your current business?

If nothing else, you might have some good domain names to purchase and redirect for any possible type-in traffic, or to keep your competitors from grabbing them.

## **Section 3:**

### **Designing a Money-Making Website**

**D**esigning a website is relatively easy. Designing a good looking website requires artistic talent. Designing a money-making website requires a combination of artistic, technical and marketing related skills. Any one of these components without the other two will prevent a website from reaching its fullest potential.

*In the early infancy of the Internet, any web page would do. Hey, all you needed was to be online and that was enough to attract visitors. How things change. The Internet today has grown far more sophisticated and has drawn substantially more sophisticated users. No, not all web searchers are web savvy computer geeks; that's not what I mean. The sophistication lies in what attracts visitors and keeps them interested in what your site offers and what compels your visitors to make that purchase.*

*Users have expectations of what a website should be, how it should look, what it should do and how it should make them feel. If you can't meet their expectations, they'll find someone who will. And as more and more corporations invest heavily into building their web business, those expectations will only grow.*

*That does not mean that you have to drop tens of thousands of dollars building your website. In fact, many find that meeting expectations of professionalism on the web is not a difficult or expensive task to live up to.*

## 3.1 Building a Professional Website that Achieves Your Goals

Your website is an electronic extension of your business. Sites with poorly crafted or designed web pages often fail to provide users with a satisfying web experience. Because it's an electronic medium, web users are developing higher expectations from the websites they visit. The web page equivalent of neighborhood kid's flier advertising his car washing services, or a cheesily produced free access cable show, will no longer be effective at convincing shoppers that you're ready to handle their business. The design of your site lends directly to your business' credibility. If you get credibility, you'll get sales.

### Meet Industry Expectations

A "professional" look can vary from industry to industry. For one industry you might need a site that screams "corporation," while another industry might perform best with a mom and pop feel, still another might need a fun or artsy look. Building your site to meet industry expectations simply means knowing your audience and what they expect. Be careful that you don't confuse any of the above with shoddy design. Whatever "feel" you give your site, make sure it comes out looking great.

Start by researching your competitors and taking an in-depth look at their websites. If all your competitors are going for a particular feel then maybe there's something to that. Be sure to do your own research so you aren't solely relying on what your competitors are doing. Often times you'll find that your competitors are doing the wrong thing entirely.

Overall, make sure you are doing what's right for your audience. In your design you don't just want to match your competitors, you should seek to exceed them. Have your site designed to look and perform better, while still providing the overall tone your target audience is looking for.

### Incorporate Usability Elements

As you put together your design elements, think: usability. There is nothing more frustrating to a visitor than trying to navigate through a website that is poorly constructed and does not provide obvious, user friendly markers directing them to the information they came looking for.

#### *Intuitive Linking*

Use textual links within the body content as part of your navigation scheme. Your website is not a brochure where people flip from one page to another; it is an active document that should allow visitors to navigate as they read, following links to wherever interest strikes them. Contextual linking in the body content provides that avenue without forcing the visitor to rely on the main site navigation to decide what to do next.

It's the difference between asking your spouse what movie they want to see or asking if they would like to watch a comedy, sci-fi, action, drama or chick flick. With the first,

you're forcing her to do all the thinking and decision making for herself. With the other you are simply presenting options, allowing her to make a decision based on what she desires. That is how you want your visitors to feel. You want them to go where they want, but at the same time be leading them, through various routes, to the point of action (i.e. sale, conversion, sign-up, etc.)

### ***Emotive Colors***

Colors fuel emotions so be sure the colors you use for your website bring out the emotions that best reach your audience. Integrating color elements effectively can create a more inviting website that can easily lead your visitors to take the desired actions.

### ***Calls to Action***

You've heard the saying, "you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." On the web, many people try to get the horse to drink without even leading him to water. When visitors come to your site they need to be lead to their desired destination. Use visual calls to action throughout your site that will direct your visitors to click, buy, purchase, read, get, view, order, continue, apply, enter, or whatever else you want them to do.

## 3.2 Meeting Your Targeted Audience's Wants and Needs

Some of the most important aspects of website design, development and usability get left out of a website until it is realized that the lack of those elements may be preventing the visitors from making that decision to purchase. Every industry has a different niche audience (those seeking your services specifically) as well as a much larger one: everybody else. While you don't have to provide a perfect user experience for everybody who might stumble across your site (an impossible task anyway,) you do want to be sure to incorporate the elements that everybody, including your target audience wants and needs.

### Display Contact Information

This was mentioned earlier but important enough to repeat. Be sure your contact information is easy to find, don't make your visitors hunt for it. Every page of your site should have a "contact us" link taking them to the page that provides all the information necessary to allow them to contact you with their preferred method of doing so.

Having a prominently displayed phone number on every page can increase phone traffic and resulting sales significantly. If you target a national or international audience, be sure to display a toll free number.

### Create Fast Loading Pages

Even though broadband access is increasing, there is still a significant portion of those still connecting to the Internet via dial up. Keep this in consideration when you design your site. Be sure that every page downloads relatively quickly, with minimal lag time. Don't make your audience wait for you because they won't.

Using CSS and external scripts can significantly decrease download time of your pages. Use them! Limit your images and, whenever possible, compress them into smaller byte sizes.

### Focus on a Single Theme

Don't try to do too much with a single website. Unless you have a nationally recognizable brand name, such as Wal-Mart, that sells both Barbie dolls and car batteries from the same store, you need to keep your websites focused on a single theme. Focusing your site(s) accordingly will help drive customers to the closing sale with minimal distractions, as well as enhancing keyword targeting for search engine placement. The less your website is about, the better you'll be able to focus the engines and the visitors to what you have.

### ***Developing Multiple Sites***

If you wish to sell products from different industries you're better off creating multiple sites to do the job. Few people will trust a clothing website to sell auto insurance! When going after different markets, it makes good business sense to create a new site for each industry you are targeting. When using this strategy, be sure to follow a couple of simple guidelines:

**Target a Unique Audience:** You want to be sure that each site is targeting a substantially unique audience or customer base. If you own a site selling house plans, don't go build five new sites with each one selling a different version of the same thing: garageplans.com, houseplans.com, customhomeplans.com, colonialhomeplans.com, etc.

This tactic is often used by those trying to dominate the top results of the search engines, edging out all their competitors. It is also considered a severe form of spam by the search engines. Each site that you set up must have a unique purpose with virtually no crossover with your other sites. Some examples of uniquely targeted sites are: houseplans.com, landscapingplans.com, homeofficeplans.com.

Somebody looking to convert a room into a home office is not necessarily going to be crossing over with someone looking to build an entire house. On the other hand, someone building a house might also be looking for landscaping plans, but that is essentially an entirely different area of design altogether. Each of these potential websites can be built to be substantially unique and target seekers of different needs.

**Use Unique Content:** Each site that you build needs to contain substantially different content. In our examples of acceptable unique sites above you want to make sure that you don't use similar content from one site to the next. You also should avoid using the same design template as well as the same business name and contact information on each site.

When I first started a blog for my business I had incorporated it into my main business website. About a year later I decided to roll it off into another completely new site hoping to garner some broader exposure. I could have easily kept the Pole Position brand for the blog but instead decided to create an entirely new name, look and feel for this new site.

On the other hand, I also created a small web directory where I kept the Pole Position branding, but chose a different name: PolePositionDirectory.com.

In each case, each of these sites serves an entirely different purpose with unique content. Even though someone can easily determine that all three sites are related to some degree, they are each unique entities going after different audiences looking for different things.

### **Reduce Shopping Cart Abandonment**

If you sell products or utilize a shopping cart system in any way, you can easily increase conversion rates simply by improving your shopping cart system. The fewer clicks visitors have to go through to finish the buying process, the less likely they are to abandon their cart midstream and move on. Make the process simple, have them fill in only what is necessary to process the order and get them out the door.

Think of your shopping cart checkout process like the checkout line at any store. If the line is long many people, especially those making only small purchases, are more likely to set their products down and leave. Maybe they'll come back another day, or maybe they'll find the same item at another store with a smaller line. I don't know about you, but I've done that more than once. Shorten your checkout line and capture every sale possible, no matter how small.

## **Eliminate Those Annoying Ads**

If you operate a commercial website don't clutter your pages with advertisements. Ads may be a great way to generate additional income but they also might be taking away more than they are generating. Everything on your site should be designed to draw the visitor toward the sale. Ads are designed to draw attention as well and therefore they often do no more than to draw the visitor away from one sale (yours) and off to another (a possible competitor!).

If you operate a non-commercial or information-only site, ads can be great. Use them sparingly and stay away from useless banner exchange programs. If you're going to sell ad space, then determine what that space is worth and sell it accordingly.

### 3.3 Avoiding Common Web Design and Marketing Mistakes

There are some typical dos and don'ts of building a website. Sometimes we get caught doing something that looks cool without realizing that the audience is really not served properly or that we are limiting our marketing options. When building a website there are some common design practices that are ultimately counterproductive to generating a great marketing driven site that is able to meet customer and client expectations.

You can read more about common mistakes here:

<http://www.polepositionmarketing.com/emp/search-engine-ranking-killers/>

#### No Splash Pages

Splash pages are 100% useless to your site visitors with the noted exception of adding extra eye candy to your site. But eye candy, with no real additional purpose, can ultimately be a detriment to the conversion process. It seems that the only people who like splash pages are the website owners who had them developed.

One of the more significant negatives of splash pages is the load time required to view them. Very few are willing to sit and wait for page to load, then sit and wait again for the "presentation" to finish. Imagine walking into Wal-Mart and being stopped at the entry doors forced to watch a 30-second video. Now imagine that you were required to stop and watch that video every time you visited the store. Need I say more?

Splash pages are little more than an annoying barrier keeping your customer from getting to the information they need quickly. They create an extra click in the information or product finding process, potentially causing lost sales by putting the desired information one too many clicks away.

#### No Framed Sites

Framed sites are basically composed of multiple pages all assembled into a single browser screen. Usually there is a top header, side navigation and main body content, and sometimes a footer. Building a site using frames is great to create an easily updated site-wide navigation system. That's where the value of frames ends. There are far better ways to accomplish global navigation updates that frames provide. Without going into those at this time, let's discuss some of the issues inherent in using framed websites.

#### *Search Engine Ranking Problems*

When a search engine visits your site, it grabs and indexes each page individually. Framed pages can have a good amount of textual content and can therefore achieve search engine rankings. Unfortunately, these pages, outside of the framed navigational structure, lack headers, footers, site ID and other necessary navigational elements, creating "orphaned" pages. An orphan page essentially leaves the visitor stranded, not knowing where they are or how to find more information on your site.

### ***Bookmarking Problems***

Framed sites also create problems for visitors who wish to bookmark (or add to favorites) specific pages of your site. Because the visitor never really leaves the home page but only navigates by swapping one content page for another within the framed structure, you eliminate the ability to bookmark any specific page other than the home page.

If you are a brick and mortar store, forcing visitors to walk through high-selling items is a great way to up-sell, but in the online world, forcing visitors to have to navigate through your site each time they want to get back to the useful item or information they need only creates a frustrated visitor.

### **No All-Flash Sites**

Flash sites are a lot like splash pages, the only people who seem to like them are the developers and site owners that use them. Flash can be a great enhancement to a website when used properly, it should not, however, be the whole site. All-flash websites have the same problems found with framed sites, just for different reasons. Search engines rarely find substantial indexable content within the flash and users have no way to bookmark specific relevant pages.

### **No Text in Images**

Website designers often like to utilize images when laying out a website. A good designer knows when to use an image and when not to, but some fall into the trap of trying to control the appearance of a site too much. When valuable text is placed within an image, the designer has ultimate control as to how the web page will be presented to the visitor on virtually any browser and operating system. Unfortunately, this kind of control is extremely limiting to the search engines.

Search engines rank sites largely based on the text that they read on the pages. If that text is in an image, then it is unreadable to the engines. The engines then have no way of knowing what your site is about or what search phrases it is relevant for, leaving you unable to achieve search engine positions for relevant keyword phrases. It's okay to use images for text that is irrelevant for search engine placement, but if it's good quality content, keep it out of the graphics altogether.

### **Check Dynamic Systems**

Search engines don't have the trouble indexing dynamic sites that they once had, but dynamic sites still can present a myriad of issues. If you need to implement a dynamic system be sure to do your homework to find one that is search engine friendly. One of the best ways to test a dynamic system for search friendliness is to use a search spider simulator to navigate through a site. If the spider can easily navigate to every page then the biggest roadblock has been averted.

***Reduce Variables***

It's always best to eliminate excessive amounts of variable characters such as —?, —ID”, or —” in the dynamically generated URLs. In the past, these often acted as stop characters, forcing the search engine spider to move on to more friendly URLs. This is no longer the case, today. However, if a URL has too many variables, then the search spider may have cause to be more wary and index fewer pages of your site with each visit. Also, note that you should not force user IDs on your visitors until after they have added products to your shopping cart.

***Implement Mod Rewrite***

If possible you should implement a mod rewrite on your dynamic URL strings. The mod rewrite is a server side function that changes dynamic URLs into more search engine and user friendly URLs while still allowing the dynamic system to function properly.

www.mysite.com/product.htm?categoryID=45682903\_ProductID=34394098

becomes

www.mysite.com/honda/battery\_charger/

**Alternate JavaScript Navigation**

Using JavaScript can allow you to implement some pretty cool site navigation features. Unfortunately, using JavaScript for site navigation can create a site that does not allow the search engine to crawl past the home page.

JavaScript navigation can be supplemented using CSS accomplishing much the same effect while allowing the search engines the freedom to crawl through the site at will.

## **Research Exercise: Uncovering the Good and the Bad**

In the regular course of web surfing we all see things that we like and dislike about certain websites. In this exercise you are going to pick two websites that you frequent regularly (it doesn't matter if it's for work or play), and two websites which your site will be competing against.

Once you have your sites selected, get out a piece of paper or use a word processing document, to start taking notes. For each site you are going to make a list of Pros and Cons or Goods and Bads. Take your time and go through each site thoroughly, writing down as much information as possible.

### **Here are some things you need to consider:**

- Page layout and functionality
- Ease of finding contact information
- Page load times
- Page/site theming and its effectiveness
- Shopping functionality (if applicable)
- Does the site utilize any of the common mistakes noted above?
- Effectiveness of the navigation
- Image usage
- Color scheme
- Domain name
- Broken links

Don't limit yourself to just the points above. Pick out anything that you like or find useful as well as anything you don't like or hinders your enjoyment/user experience.

Once you've completed your lists, go back and start making additional notes on what you would have done differently for each site.

## **Section 4:**

### **Marketing with Search Engines**

**T**here are many different avenues for marketing on the Internet but only a few that are effective. Overall, proper online marketing can be substantially more effective than most offline forms of marketing and advertising.

*One of the first effective forms of online marketing was search engine optimization. Today, search engine optimization is only a subset of a complete online marketing campaign, which can include link building, sponsored ads, pay-per-call, usability, performance, conversions and more. As the web grows in sophistication, site optimization alone is no longer sufficient to ensure a successful online marketing campaign.*

*While search engines drive a larger share of traffic than we would probably all want, other forms of online marketing must not be ignored. Of all forms of online marketing, search engine optimization along with usability and conversion marketing usually will provide the best ROI or return on investment, however other forms of online marketing can be effective, provided that the costs remain low and ROI is measured effectively, ensuring the absolute most value for your money.*

*We see many SEO-only companies that are now rounding out their services to be geared more toward the total online search engine marketing experience. Those that continue to focus exclusively on optimization (while excluding other essential marketing factors) will soon find the quality and success of their campaigns limited. I believe that only those SEO providers that provide a full compliment of online marketing services will be around by 2010. More and more, businesses are demanding much more than simply achieving top rankings. Traffic and conversions are being recognized as just as, if not more, important as top ranking placement.*

## 4.1 Understanding the Search Engine Components

Before we take an in-depth look at search marketing campaigns, let's first explore the search engine itself. Search engines are literally more than the sum of their parts. They are vast databases, high-capacity servers, perpetually crawling robots, complex algorithms, and a whole lot of brainpower that keep all of these functioning together in a coherent way in order to produce results that instantly know (or assume) what you're looking for when you type in a search query.

Let's take a look at just a few of these components in expanded detail:

### Crawler

The crawler, or spider, is essentially a program that is constantly roaming the web. Crawlers either travel from one site to the next following hyperlinks on web pages, or go directly to billions of web pages from the search engine's URL server. Most search engines have multiple crawlers always moving about from page to page, each performing a specific task. In very simple terms, it is the job of the crawler to travel from web page to web page gathering data and then sending that information back to the document repository, where documents are stored in a compressed format.

### Document Indexer

The document indexer retrieves documents from the repository and parses the document information into a list of word occurrences. Additional information related to word occurrence such as position, frequency and text size is often stored in the word list. The document indexer also parses all link data as well as surrounding text, which is usually stored in a separate database that computes citation based importance scores. Before any web page can rank for a particular query, it must first have been found and included in the search engine's index. You can find out what pages of your site have been included in Google's index by performing the following search:

*Cache:www.yoursite.com/page.htm*

When performing a cache search most engines will just show you the copy of your page that they have in the index. Depending on how long ago it was cached and how recently the page was changed, the cached version may be different from the live version. Google allows you to see the date that the page was last cached.

### Sorting Algorithm

The algorithm is the set of mathematical formulas used to determine how pages rank for different search queries. Search engine algorithms analyze dozens, if not hundreds, of factors that are weighed in differing proportions, all to determine a site's relevance to the searched query. In some cases a search engine may use an entirely different algorithm depending on the actual search query used.

**Query Processor**

The query processor receives, interprets, parses and fulfills search query requests by scanning the document index for query matches and sorting the results by passing them to the sorting algorithm.

## 4.2 Optimizing for Maximum Search Engine Performance (aka SEO)

Search Engine Optimization, once its own “entity,” for lack of a better word, is now considered to be a part of a larger grouping known as search engine marketing. Many commonly practiced SEO techniques bleed into the realm of search marketing but in its strictest form, search engine optimization is really just about getting a site to display at the top of the natural search engine rankings.

The primary downfall of search engine optimization, in its true form, is that while rankings are the primary goal, traffic and conversions are not. A SEO only firm will consider your campaign a success once top search engine rankings are achieved for whatever keywords or phrases that were chosen. If those keywords do not deliver traffic or the site itself fails to convert visitors into paying customers, this is not the SEOs problem.

Effective search engine optimization must be joined with other, more traditional, marketing aspects such as usability (as we discussed earlier), ROI and conversion tracking (which will be discussed a bit later) and overall site improvements.

Let’s begin to look at how best to put together an effectively optimized website.

### Know Your Competition

Knowing who your competitors are and what they are doing is not the most important aspect of an optimization campaign, however knowing this information early on can help guide the optimization process in the most effective direction.

While it is quite easy to change the focus of your optimization efforts, doing so can cause you to lose any momentum that had been propelling your site forward in the search results. This can be devastating on a short term basis, often forcing your site to start from the ground up once again. Depending on how well your site was built, optimized and linked, and also how drastic of a change is occurring, you may find some of the past efforts carry over to the new efforts.

Having a firm grasp on your competition can help you assess the appropriate direction you need to embark. But be careful, though, not to do something simply because a competitor is doing it. I’ve seen far too many business owners fall prey to this temptation only to find that their competitors were doing it wrong to begin with.

Accessing the competition will give you a good idea of who they are, where they are, what they are doing, what’s right or wrong about their campaign and what is or isn’t effective. This data can then be assimilated into the other areas of pre-optimization research to develop a campaign that will be effective at achieving top search engine placement and delivering results.

### ***Naturally Ranked Competitors***

One of the first things you need to look into is who exactly you are competing against. You may already know your off-line competitors, but you also need to know what websites dominate the top positions for your targeted phrases. This research gives you a good idea of what sites you'll be going up against as you optimize.

As you look at the sites that are in the top positions, you need to see if they are in fact sites that are in your same industry. Often times what you think is a good keyword will produce results completely different from what you expected. It may very well be that your audience is performing different searches than you thought they would and/or the search engines analyze that phrase completely different than you had expected.

If you don't get the results you were seeking, then perform different keyword searches until the results show sites that are in your same industry. Once you get competitor websites coming up in the search results you can start getting a sense of how competitive you'll have to be to outperform them.

Are you looking at average sites with very little name recognition and financial marketing investment, or are you seeing the giants of your industry that have deep pockets funding their online marketing efforts? Again, knowing this information can help you set the right course for success.

For full awareness of the challenge before you, you'll need to perform some of this competitor research now using typical industry keywords and then again after the keyword research phase gives you additional search phrases as your consumers perform them.

Once you know what you are up against for all the various highly searched terms you have a choice to make. Will you compete on the same level as those with the deepest pockets and largest marketing budgets? Or will you compete on a more manageable level with other sites within your range?

If you're one of the big guys with deep pockets, then by all means go for it. If not, and unless you're ready to invest big with little short-term payout, don't try to be a David up against Goliath. A good strategy is to begin your efforts on a more manageable scale that will ultimately start bringing in returns sooner rather than later, producing quality results and increased sales.

You can then use that foundation, having built your site up and achieved a status as an industry authority, to work yourself up to the more competitive keywords. The investment over the long term is usually about the same, the difference is how quickly you start bringing in quality traffic and increased sales.

### ***Paid Placement Competitors***

Along with your natural ranked competitors you should also check out the paid ranked competition. Seeing who uses paid advertising, analyzing positions, consistency of ad occurrence along with checking cost-per-click rates can give you a good idea of the kind of budget that is being employed to achieve top ranked positions. At times, you may find the same competitors ranked both naturally and in the sponsored results.

A little research into the sponsored results areas can give you an idea of what kind of budget your competitors are spending each month to maintain those positions. One way to check this is to simply set up a sponsored ad account on either Google or Yahoo!, or both, and build an ad for the same keyword phrases. The tools within those systems will give you an idea of the per-click costs to hold those top positions. See how much a top position costs for each click then multiply that against the estimated traffic stats provided. This will give you an estimated monthly cost for the ad.

You might want to monitor sponsored results several times a day over the course of a couple of weeks, noticing if the ads are always showing or if they are rolling in and out. Advertisers can set daily budget limits that prevent the ads from being clicked on too many times each day, keeping the advertiser on budget.

Also be aware that click thru rates can be as much as 10-15% or as low as ½ of a %, depending on the individual ad. If your competitor has a poor performing ad they may be spending less than you would assume.

### ***National or Local Competitors***

Knowing if you should compete in a national (or global) or a local market can help you better determine who your real competition will be. If you are only targeting your local geographical region you don't need to bother trying to compete against national organizations. Your keyword selection process will reflect that accordingly.

Businesses often get caught up in the “just want more traffic” mindset, when what they need is targeted traffic. More phone calls is not necessarily a good thing if you are fielding calls from visitors to your website who simply cannot buy from you because you don't serve their area. Much time and energy can be saved by targeting locally (when appropriate) to ensure you are reaching your true target audience.

## **Research Your Targeted Keywords**

Proper keyword selection can help you establish the proper foundation for most of your online marketing efforts. The keywords you target can make the difference between a highly successful campaign that drives quantities of quality leads, and a campaign that delivers very little relevant traffic.

The keywords you choose will help power your search engine optimization efforts, sponsored ad campaigns, link building campaigns, press releases and more. Before you begin any of these marketing efforts you must have already determined what themes your site will be built upon, and what keywords will fuel your online marketing efforts.

You'll want to note that there is a big difference between a marketing campaign that delivers a lot of traffic to your site and one that delivers *relevant* traffic to your site. More often than not, sites that generate small amounts of targeted traffic see a better return on investment than sites that generate large amounts of untargeted traffic.

### ***Raw Data***

The first stage of keyword research is to gather all the raw data you can find. Raw data is simply a collection of every possible keyword phrase that pertains to your industry and will deliver relevant traffic if top positions are achieved. In the raw data collection stage you're really not as concerned about traffic volume or how often words are searched as you are about uncovering every possible variation that might produce some measurable amount of relevant traffic.

**Server Logs:** Every time your site gets visited, that visit is recorded in what is called a server log. These logs, when analyzed correctly, can be a great resource for mining raw keyword data. The trail a visitor leaves behind in the log can be quite considerable giving you a goldmine of information. While the server logs record much more than keywords, this is the information we are primarily concerned with when doing keyword research. The server log maintains a record of every keyword phrase that was used as a search query which brought a visit to your website. This gives you a list of keywords that are already producing measurable amounts of traffic.

Analyzing other data in the server logs can help you determine if each keyword is also producing relevant traffic as you'll find both relevant and non-relevant keyword phrases which were used to bring in visitors. Mine out the relevant phrases and add them to your raw keyword data list. The non-relevant phrases can later be used to edit words from your site in an effort to eliminate as much non-targeted traffic as possible.

**WordTracker:** Another great resource for mining keyword data is WordTracker ([www.wordtracker.com](http://www.wordtracker.com)). This is probably the #1 tool for keyword research used by SEOs. WordTracker monitors several major meta search engines and tallies the number of times any query is used within a two month period. Using the WordTracker website, this data can then be mined giving you estimated daily search volume for any keyword phrase.

WordTracker has an excellent interface which allows you to type in specific words to retrieve a list of all phrases in the database that use that word, or group of words. You can then go down that list of results and select the phrases that specifically pertain to what your site offers, adding them to your "basket" for later export.

Most of the keywords we gather in our research come from WordTracker data; however WT does have its limitations. Often you'll find very obscure keyword phrases showing regular search activity—which is possible, but not very likely. On more popular phrases we also find that the 24-hour search estimates provided are often understated.

**Yahoo! & Google Sponsored Ads:** Both Yahoo! Search Marketing Solutions (<http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/>) and Google AdWords (<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordSandbox>) have their own keyword research tools that can be accessed without creating an actual account. Both tools offer keyword suggestions similar to what WordTracker offers as well as providing monthly search volume statistics.

Where WordTracker pulls from other meta search engines, Yahoo! and Google both provide search volumes drawn from their own engine search stats. Because WT monitors

only a handful of lesser used engines, you'll usually find additional keywords here that did not show up in the WT research.

### ***Selection***

Once you have researched every possible avenue for keyword searches related to your industry, it's time to begin the process of selecting the keywords that will most benefit you in your marketing campaign. The gathering process is simply a matter of knowing where to go to compile your list of keywords, the selection process requires some skill, knowledge and bit of foresight.

The selection process starts with the process of elimination. The goal is to eliminate any and all keywords that simply don't meet your marketing goals. This is done by the following:

**Understanding Your Business:** You know your business better than anybody else. Unfortunately, many business owners start selecting keywords based solely on search volume, rather than on the ability to drive targeted traffic. If you have a furniture store, the temptation will be to try and go after the keyword `_furniture` because it has high traffic volume.

Knowing your business means understanding when a keyword isn't going to bring in highly targeted traffic. If a visitor comes to your site after searching for in `_furniture` will your furniture site provide them specifically what they are looking for? Maybe, but it also depends on what kind of furniture you sell and what kind of furniture they really want. You may sell home furniture while the searcher is looking for office furniture. You may sell patio furniture while the searcher is looking for kid's furniture. The searcher may be looking for discount furniture while you sell only high-end. Understanding these distinctions can help you select the best keyword possible.

Ranking well for the generic term `_furniture` may produce a considerable volume of traffic to your site; however, that traffic will be poorly targeted creating a very low conversion rate. Quantity traffic can still mean lots of sales but it can also lead to more work for fewer rewards. The goal in keyword selection is to increase your conversion rate which reduces the overall cost per sale. Targeting keywords properly works to achieve this goal.

Before you go and disregard this advice, you should also consider the following:

- 1) It is nearly impossible to rank well for single or generic keyword phrases. You can end up spending a considerable amount of time and marketing dollars trying to displace the Ashley Furniture or Thomasville equivalents for your industry instead of going after something more attainable that will provide more immediate returns for less.
- 2) Recent search studies have shown that users who search using three and four word phrases are actually more prepared to make a purchase than those who are typing in a single keyword search query. In other words, in the research phase, let the users go to Ashley and Thomasville, but let them find you once they are ready to buy!

**Understanding Your Audience:** As you whittle down your raw data keyword list it is important to get into the mind of your audience as much as possible. As you do this, you'll often find that many keywords or phrases have multiple meanings. Phrases that you might use within your industry may not be the phrases the layman uses. In your research you must determine the particular meaning of a phrase as it's used by the common searcher.

Let's consider some generic phrases and then see how those phrases might be better targeted:

- Clothes
  - Baby clothes
  - Summer clothes
  - Winter clothes
  - Outdoor clothes
  - Sports clothes
  - Women's clothes
  - Men's clothes
  - Girls pink shorts
  - Men's business suit
- Car
  - New car
  - Used car
  - Ford
  - Mazda
  - SUV
  - MPV
  - Used 2003 Yukon Reno
- Electronics
  - Mp3 Player
  - Ipod
  - DirecTv DVR TiVo
  - Multi-disc region 2 DVD Player
  - 60" Sony Plasma TV
- Batteries
  - Duracell batteries
  - Cell phone battery
  - Rechargeable AAA batteries
  - 2004 Suzuki DRZ 400 motorcycle battery

**Understanding Your Competition:** Now that you have narrowed down your list to actively searched, targeted phrases, you now need to start looking at the search results returned for each of the remaining keywords. This will tell you what site's you might be going up against for top search positions.

As you perform these searches you want to take note of who's ranking in the top positions. Are these sites your direct competition? Are they informational sites? Are they government sites? These are all things you need to analyze before deciding to keep or reject a keyword phrase beyond this point.

If you find your direct competition in the search results for any keyword query, then you'll probably want to keep that phrase on your list. If the sites in the top positions are all non-commercial sites, non-competing sites, or government sites, then you should consider dropping that phrase. It's likely the search engines view that phrase as being relevant for something other than what you were thinking, in which case it's possibly not a good keyword phrase to keep. Before you go removing it, however, you'll want to make a few extra considerations.

Just because no direct competitors appear does not mean that this keyword will not produce targeted traffic. Do a little research and be sure that the phrase is not a shared term with another industry. If it's a shared term and the search engines feel that the other industry is more relevant for that query than yours, then remove it from your list and move on.

If it's not a shared phrase, and the results are dominated by non-profit or government sites, you'll want to consider carefully whether you want to go for these top positions. Sites such as these are often considered topical ~~—~~authorities" making it that much more difficult to displace them in the search results.

**Understanding Return on Investment:** Now it's time to narrow down your selection to the keywords that produce the highest return on investment (ROI) possible. One of the biggest misconceptions in the keyword selection process is that phrases that have highest traffic volume are going to produce the most sales. That sounds logical but it's not necessarily true.

Many high traffic terms that are chosen for optimization campaigns produce very little targeted traffic and are not the phrases people use when they are ready to make a purchase. You'll spend much more time and money trying to get your site to rank well for these kinds of phrases than you would by going after more targeted phrases reaching the ~~—~~ready to buy" audience.

A few tips on selecting high ROI keywords:

### ***Avoid Single-Word Keywords***

Single-word queries generally produce the highest volume of searches, but also the lowest amount of targeted traffic. Many people start their searches with single word-keywords only to find that the results are not targeted for their specific need. They then go back to refine their search, often multiple times.

Let's say you're looking for a doll for your daughter so you go to Google and type in ~~—~~doll." Are you looking for a large doll, small doll, a cartoon doll, an action figure doll, a Raggedy Ann doll, a Barbie doll, a celebrity doll? The possibilities at this point are limitless and you realize that the search results for ~~—~~doll" are not giving you enough options so you go back and refine the search.

Many will use single phrases as a means of learning how best to refine their search. While this may prove valuable to the searcher it is essentially of no value to the sites listed. The better place to be is in the refined search results where the user is more likely to click through and buy.

### ***Target Multi-Word Phrases***

When looking at search volumes for particular keyword queries, the raw numbers will show that single word terms often get more queries than multiple word phrases. Studies have shown, however, that more people search using two- and three-word search queries in greater numbers than single words. Most searches for single-words end up being re-performed as multiple word queries as searchers find ways to target their searches more effectively.

These highly-targeted, multiple-word queries tend to produce more qualified traffic than the single-word queries. Because of this, it is in your best interest to target variations of these multiple word queries. Proper selection and targeting of these phrases will result not only in greater traffic volume to your site, but a higher conversion rate as well.

### ***Target Phrases with Measurable Search Volume***

While making sure your phrases are as targeted as possible for your audience it is important to go after phrases that register at least a measurable amount of search volume each month. Keyword phrases that have no search volume, no matter how targeted, generally won't do anything to increase business or sales.

Using search volume and additional competitive matrix information you can then determine which keywords will be your primary phrases (those that produce largest amount of targeted traffic) and which keywords will act as supporting phrases (less competitive, yet extremely targeted.) Both kinds of phrases play an important role in creating strong, well-rounded website that is able to achieve complete market dominance for related phrases.

For newer sites the primary phrases are often out of reach—at least early in the optimization campaign, if not for months. Selecting a combination of primary and supporting phrases for each page can help you achieve results that begin delivering traffic earlier, while building the foundation upon which you'll be able to begin displacing your competitors on the primary phrases down the road.

### ***Target Multiple Phrase Variations***

Every keyword phrase will have multiple variations that should accompany it in the page. Such variations are plurals, singulars and stemmed variations such as ~~ing~~,” ~~ed~~,” etc. In many cases you can also swap word order. ~~p~~ontiac used cars” can become ~~u~~sed pontiac cars.”

Don't get locked into using the keyword phrase precisely as its most often searched, even if the stemmed variations show little search volume. When writing, use all variations as they would naturally be used within the context of what you have to say.

***Localize Phrases When Necessary***

If you are targeting an audience specific to your geographic location, be sure to localize your phrases accordingly. To do this you can place city, county, state or other local references such as city districts or zip codes before or after each phrase.

Localizing your phrases will ensure that you get targeted traffic to your site and eliminate the need to deal with emails and phone calls from searchers who are not in your geographical location, and therefore not your target audience.

***Organization***

Now that you have finalized your list of keywords, you need to start organizing them into themes. It's best to start using a broader theme first and then narrowing that down further into sub-themes.

Grouping keywords into tightly focused themes allows you to ensure each page has a very specific focus, allowing visitors to immediately see they found the right information to satisfy their search query. It also enables you to target more than just one or two keywords per page without diluting that page's overall effectiveness or focus.

Your home page theme should be constructed a bit differently from the internal page themes, especially with sites that have multiple primary themes to target. In these cases, the home page should target each of the main site themes (keeping the number of keywords within reason and only to what is most important.) Each of these keyword themes should then be targeted individually with their respective keyword counterparts throughout the site.

**Find the Root Theme:** The process of theming requires first knowing the root theme of any given phrase. Take this under careful consideration as many similar themes may actually have a different root. For example, the phrase leadership management training can have a root theme of either leadership training or management training or leadership management. Your theme will be determined by the focus your website and/or any given web page. These roots will be your broad and specific themes with which you'll begin to populate with the related keywords.

Let's say you sell travel bags of all kinds. One of your broader themes will be backpack." Here is a list of keywords that would fit into that theme:

- sports backpack
- sports backpacks
- school backpack
- school backpacks
- girls backpack
- girls backpacks

You also might find that back pack" is a natural theme as well, therefore the following keyword phrases might apply:

- sports back pack
- sports back packs
- school back pack
- school back packs
- girls back pack
- girls back packs

If you find a large number of related keywords for any one theme, then break that broad theme into several more specific themes. In this case, “girls back pack” is a sub-theme of the “back pack” theme:

- girls flower back pack
- girls sleepover back pack
- girls Barbie back pack
- girls sports back pack
- girls Bratz back pack

In the process of theming, start first with your broad themes and then begin to break those down even further as necessary. Don’t be afraid of having too many themes. Allowing many highly targeted themes will help you build a very robust site that serves your audience and the search engines well.

**Limiting Keywords per Page:** With the exception of a few, almost every web page on your site can essentially be constructed to target a different keyword group or theme. It’s tempting (especially if you’re paying an SEO on a per-page basis) to try and load too many keywords per page. Most SEOs who really know what they are doing will not allow you to target any more than two or three keywords per page. Going after too many keywords per page dilutes the ability to be effective for any of the keywords.

If your themes are built right you can target up to 5 to 10 keywords on any one page effectively, though I don’t recommend targeting any more than five per page. On each page you should target a single primary phrase and then a few selected, and tightly themed, supporting phrases. The primary phrases are generally the more competitive phrases that also produce a good amount of targeted traffic. All the other supporting keyword phrases should produce a measurable amount of traffic but are largely used as a means to help build out the page theme properly and improve results for the primary phrase.

There are times when you can go after multiple primary themes on a single page, but do so selectively and only if it won’t inhibit your ability to rank well for all targeted phrases for that page. Often the home page will and should target multiple primary phrases (with no supporting) in order to provide adequate representation of the whole site. These primary phrases should again be targeted on additional pages within the site.

**Assigning Keywords to Pages:** Once you have all your themes built and broken down into multiple sub-themes leaving just a small handful of keywords in each group, you want to start assigning these keyword groups to existing pages of your site. Using your

site's hierarchal structure, assign your highest priority themed groups to the pages highest up.

If you've done your keyword research and theming right, you might find that you have more themed groups of keywords than existing site pages to work with. That's okay. This gives you fodder to build new pages for your site that will server to provide great information, your visitor's need, while targeting additional phrases for search engine placement.

## **Write Page Content**

The text copy of each of your web pages is probably the single most important on-page optimization factor (with the possible exception of the title tag). Text is what allows the search engine to determine the topic of your site and subsequent pages and assign a ranking value for the appropriate search queries.

While some high-powered sites such as nike.com, sony.com or wal-mart.com can rank well for high-traffic keywords without much, or any, optimized on-page copy, most sites can't. Consequently, it is important that you make room in your site's design to allow for creating good, quality content.

We often run across potential clients that want optimization without making any changes to the appearance of their website. From a marketing perspective, I understand the desire for strict control over every aspect of a site's appearance. Unfortunately, there is very little effective optimization that can be done for such sites.

On the other end of the spectrum are the SEOs that don't understand that the copy of a website isn't just for obtaining top search engine rankings but is an essential component to the sales process. Good optimization strategies must be combined with good marketing strategies creating pages that can achieve top search engine rankings and improve sale conversion ratios.

### ***Professional Copywriter***

The copy of each web page is the primary sales component that you have to offer. Many people believe the web is primarily a visual medium and therefore text just gets in the way. This is far from true; many people look to the text of any web page to help them make their buying decisions.

When developing content for your site, nobody knows your business like you do. I recommend that you, or someone as familiar with your industry as you, write the text for every web page. From there, you should then hire a professional writer to rework your content, making sure the traditional marketing aspects are in place and functioning along side the keyword optimization aspects.

**Write for User Experience:** The most important thing you can do with your body content is to write for the reader. All other considerations are secondary.

Use a professional writer to work in natural usages and variations of your keyword phrases in a way that ensures proper readability. What you don't want is a website that reads as if keywords were haphazardly thrown into the content solely to achieve top rankings, offering no real value to the reader themselves. There is no sense optimizing to bring in more traffic if you're unable to convert that traffic due to poorly written content.

Writing natural language ensures that you don't end up looking silly to your buying audience. Nothing will kill a sale faster than text that simply does not read well. On top of that, modern search engine technology is getting better at analyzing natural language over garbled sentences and stuffed keywords.

**Write for Search Engine Experience:** Ideally, writing for the user is the only consideration you need to make, however when keyword targeting, you also have to write for the search engines, meaning that you need to ensure that your targeted keywords are utilized on the page properly. If your keywords are themed and selected properly, a good writer will be able to write content for each page utilizing your primary and supporting keyword phrases naturally. This will provide the search engines the information they need to judge each page based on its themed content while also the integrity of the content's marketing value.

### *Necessary Rewrites*

If you already have great or professionally written content which is un-optimized for your targeted keyword phrases, don't be afraid to re-write the content as necessary. Websites that are under strict control of the marketing department generally have trouble letting go of the content allowing it to be properly optimized. The reasoning here is understood, however, without allowing some leeway for the optimization process, your marketing copy may have no problem achieving the sell, but the number of visitors coming from search engines will be minimal.

### *Image Content*

Text in images is invisible to the search engines. Text can be placed in the `alt` attribute in the `<img>` tag, however alt text is largely ignored and/or devalued by most search engines. Using text as an image can have benefits as well as negatives. The one thing you should keep in mind is that if something is important enough to say, you probably want to say it in real HTML text.

**Don't Use Images for Optimized Copy:** You definitely don't want to put any optimized text within images. Forgo a bit of control on how your site appears so that you can create good content readable by the search engines. Placing good quality content in images can kill your optimization efforts.

**Use for Images Non-Optimized Copy:** Placing text in images can be used effectively to prevent `–diluting` your optimized content with un-optimized text. Sometimes there are portions of a page that require rotating different content in and out such as temporary specials or temporary visitor information. Largely, adding or rotating this text will not hurt the optimization efforts, but you may find that this text, rather than something better, might appear in the `–snippets` used in the search results. To prevent this from happening, it can be useful to place this temporary text within an image so the search engine spiders won't index it with the page.

### ***Flash Content***

While flash files can now be optimized for the search engines it's still a good idea not to place optimized text within flash content. Search engines are getting better about reading flash text, but you still lose out on usage of many of the important text weighting elements when using any kind of text other than pure HTML.

### ***Headlines & Sub-Heads***

In your optimized content you want to be sure to use headlines and sub-heads throughout the page. Each page should have a main headline, and where possible, one or more sub-headlines. While it's no magic bullet, these elements allow you to weight text areas appropriately giving the search engines more to consider than a page with nothing more than straight text. Headings, when used properly can also be effective at helping your visitor to quickly scan through the page and find what is most important to them.

### ***Localization***

If you are optimizing for keywords for your local / geographical area, be sure to use the relevant geographic words within the text. Don't go overboard by stuffing your city name before every keyword phrase, but work them in as subtly as possible so that your localized content reads naturally and appropriately.

## **Page Coding**

While the visible text copy is the most important element of the optimization process, the coding elements should not be overlooked in any way. In the early days of optimization it was the coding elements that played the primary role in the optimization process. That has changed now, yet the code is still very important.

### ***Standard Code Elements***

HTML has many elements, and a handful of them are often adjusted during the course of optimization. Knowing what to do with these elements is important to ensure that the optimization is done correctly while ensuring that each element is used properly.

**Title Tag:** The title tag, by itself, holds just about the same level of importance as the entire body content of the page. It is extremely important that you utilize your primary keyword phrases in the title as naturally as possible. We often try to create a theme in the title using the first couple of words with a naturally flowing sentence to follow.

Title tags should be relatively short, usually between 6-10 words. You can make them longer, but only if it makes absolute sense to do so. Keep it down to one non-run-on sentence. Don't try to stuff your keywords into the title, be succinct and use natural language.

Most people are tempted to put their business name in the title tag. There are branding reasons to do this, but when you do you lose prime keyword real estate. Many studies have also shown that title tags are clicked more often in the search results when the company name is not used. If you must use the company name put it at the end of the title, rather than the beginning.

```
<title>Page Theme: Creative keyword titles can be effective  
marketing tools.</title>
```

**Meta Description:** The meta description tag has been largely devalued since the early days of search engine optimization. Many SEOs forgo the description entirely, but I believe that a description is still relevant and important enough to place a unique description on each page.

The description should be around 25-30 words in length. You want to utilize your primary and supporting keyword phrases in natural language without “stuffing” them in. Each page should have a unique description that accurately describes the content of the page.

Overall, the description should be used to reinforce the page content and should not be used in a way that attempts to deceive the search engine as to what your page is about.

```
<meta name="description" content="While many believe the  
description is largely ignored some search engines will use the  
meta description in the search results below the clickable title.  
Make sure your description is compelling and accurately reflects  
the content of the page." />
```

**Meta Keywords:** With a few possible exceptions, the meta keywords tag is virtually useless in the search optimization landscape. As with the description, most SEOs don’t even bother with the keyword tag, but to a much greater degree. The keyword tag, however, can still be useful to reinforce what’s already on the page, or for keyword misspellings.

Due to its irrelevance we don’t recommend putting a considerable amount of time into constructing your keyword tags, simply use one instance of each of your primary and supporting keywords, separated by commas, and then move on.

```
<meta name="keywords" content="primary keyword, supporting  
keyword, stemmed variations, keyword misspellings, done" />
```

**Alt Attribute:** The alt attribute is used to describe images. Often used to stuff keywords, search engines have devalued the words in the alt with a few exceptions. For the most part the text in the alt is considered as link text if the image is actually hyperlinked to another page.

The weight of that alt text in any image is probably relatively small, but this does not mean it should be ignored. As with any devalued part of a page, the search engines may at anytime start valuing it once again.

Image alt text should accurately reflect the image or the purpose the image serves. Remember that those that surf with images off or use screen readers will see or hear the text used. Always make sure the alt information is relevant and accurate.

```

```

**Comments:** Comment tags allow you to make notes in your HTML code without affecting the display of the page. Primarily developed to allow webmasters to section out areas of the code, early SEOs used the comment tags for keyword stuffing.

Due to this and the fact that comments are not seen on the page, comments have pretty much no relevance in the search engine algorithms. But don't be afraid to use them for appropriate purposes.

```
<!-- This is the end of the Standard Code Elements section. -->
```

### ***Code Bloat***

Removing code bloat is an important part of the total optimization process, yet one that is often overlooked by many professional SEOs. While search engines strive to be extremely forgiving in the code structure, I strongly believe that search engines do consider elements beyond simple textual and link relevance when determining the value of a site.

Eliminating code bloat can mean different things to different SEOs. Some will move a few non-essential elements from the page while others will go all out reorganizing the code into the most streamlined form possible. While often times site structure and backend development may prevent a site from having the leanest code preferred, it's always best to adjust what you can to get the leanest code possible.

**Page Styles:** There are many ways to format the look of your website. The traditional way is to use HTML code for page layout and font display such as size, color, alignment, etc. The total layout of a site can be performed using HTML but for simplicity we'll look at basic font styling only.

A typical font styling in HTML would look like this:

```
<p><font face="Verdana, Arial, Helvetica" size="3"  
color="red"><b>Large bold red text.</b></font></p>  
<p><font face="Verdana, Arial, Helvetica" size="2"  
color="black"><i>Regular italicized text.</i></font></p>
```

And display as:

**Large bold red text.**

*Regular italicized text.*

Each time you wanted to use either of these font styles the code would have to be repeated for each and every paragraph. With enough paragraphs on the page, this can create a substantial amount of unnecessary code.

You can easily eliminate much of this code bloat by using what's called CSS or Cascading Style Sheets. CSS are external files that contain all of your on-page styling information. Using CSS the above can be changed to:

```
<p class="bigred">Large bold red text.</p>
<p class="i">Regular italicized text </p>
```

With this added into the style sheet:

```
.bigred {
font-size:
font-family: verdana,arial,Helvetica,sans-serif;
font-style: bold;
color: red;
}
.i {font-style: italic}
```

While this may appear to be the same amount of code, the information in the style sheet only needs to be downloaded once (for the entire site) and all that is needed on the page is the style identifiers.

Eliminating large amounts of code bloat can often lead to pretty large style sheets. Many times you can use multiple style sheets for different sections of the site using different styles altogether. The biggest benefit of using style sheets is that regardless of how many you need to use, each one only needs to be downloaded once allowing each page to open up much more quickly.

Removing code bloat also allows the search engines to more quickly parse through the HTML document, finding what is relevant for the ranking criteria much more easily. The less the search engine has to “think” when indexing your site, the better off you are.

There are three methods of creating a style sheet; embedded, inline, and external. Embedded style sheets are usually placed within the <head> tags of the HTML, while inline is added specifically to the line of code which you are styling. While both of these have their place, the external style sheet provides the leanest code.

To create an external style sheet simply place a style.css file in your root directory and reference from each page as follows:

```
<link type="text/css" href="style.css" rel="stylesheet" />
```

**JavaScript:** JavaScript is a programming language that can be inserted into an HTML document. Like CSS, JavaScript code can easily be moved out of the page into an external file. Simply create a file called scripts.js and place in the root directory with your style sheet. You then reference the JavaScript from the page as follows:

```
<script language="JavaScript" src="scripts.js"
type="text/javascript"></script>
```

**Excess Tables:** Part of the code cleanup process should also include the elimination of excess tables. One page placement formatting of text, menus, headers, footers, etc can often be easily done through CSS eliminating many of the excess coding elements that otherwise slow down the page load time. It’s not essential for all tables to be removed, but you want to eliminate as many as you can, giving you the leanest code possible.

## ***Validation***

Code validation is the process in which you make your web page coding conform to the industry recognized professional standards. These standards are set by the World Wide Web Consortium or W3C, which is a professional organization that sets the specifications and guidelines for HTML and other web technologies. You can check your pages for validation errors at <http://validator.w3.org/detailed.html>, and check your CSS at <http://jigsaw.w3.org/css-validator/>.

Code validation is another step in the optimization process often overlooked by some SEOs, however more and more SEOs (and designers) are seeing the value in validation. Those who don't validate, however, often cite a few seemingly logical reasons:

**It Works Fine in the Browser:** Non-compliant HTML code will often display just fine in various web browsers. Many feel that if it looks good and there are no related usability issues, then there is no real reason to worry about validation. However, while the browsers tend to be forgiving of coding errors, search engines are much less forgiving. In fact, some validation issues, while displaying properly on the screen, can actually prevent search engine spiders from indexing your content. They may get hung up on a piece of bad code, in which case, instead of trying to figure the intent as a browser does, the spider will simply move on.

**It's a Cumbersome Process:** Validating each page of a website can often be an extremely cumbersome process. Most validation issues themselves are small and irrelevant to the browser, the search engine and the process of achieving top search engine rankings. In the process of optimizing some of our clients, we've run across pages that had over three hundred validation errors. Most small errors are repeated over and over again and while easily fixed, it does take time.

**Search Engines Don't Care:** Aside from the issues that actually prevent the search engines from properly analyzing a site, many believe that the search engines simply don't care whether a page is valid HTML or not. While it is true that valid code may not translate directly into top rankings, as mentioned above validation ensures that you leave no errors that will prevent search engine spiders from properly indexing your content.

Using valid code should be assumed as especially important by designers, web developers and webmasters. Using invalid code is the equivalent of using poor quality materials or incorrect tools while building. That would be unacceptable for a general contractor to do, and it should also be unacceptable for web professionals. If it is the job of the web SEO to produce a search friendly site, validated code is undoubtedly one of the best ways to ensure that you do.

## **Search Friendly Elements**

To create a fully search engine friendly website there are many elements of the site that need to be in place. Most of these elements are design issues that should have already been accounted for, yet often times are missed.

### ***Site map***

Site maps are a great way to ensure that the search engines can easily find every page on your site. Although they are most beneficial with large sites, small sites should not overlook the value of a site map either.

Large sites often require deep surfing to find every page. Search engines will often crawl an entire site, but only go a few clicks deep each time. A carefully constructed site map will allow search engines to find every page on your site just a single click from any page. This allows all pages to be accessible no more than two clicks from the home page.

### ***Custom 404-redirect***

There are many reasons why users may try to access a page on your website that does not exist. No matter how hard you try to prevent it there will always be internal and external links to pages that no longer or do not exist.

Web pages are often deleted from websites as they become irrelevant or page URLs change as pages are moved during a website reconstruction. Many times you'll find that there are websites or user bookmarks that still link to these old pages, or search engines may have the old page still in its index causing it to continue to rank well for certain queries. Maybe a page has moved but some internal links were not changed, or perhaps someone simply mistypes the URL of the page they are trying to access.

Implementing a custom redirect prevents surfers from finding the standard "404-Page Not Found" error if they click on a bad link within or directed to your site. Instead users are taken to a customized page that lets them know the page they were looking for has moved or been removed while also directing them to the correct area of interest, or additional services you offer.

Building a custom 404 page is as simple as creating any standard web page with a few exceptions:

- 1) There will be no links to this page, it will simply reside on the server.
- 2) You need to be sure all images and hyperlinks are absolute rather than relative. That means this page must use the full URL rather than the file path shortcut (<http://www.yoursite.com/thispage.htm> vs. [/thispage.htm](#))

One of the most famous customized 404 pages, and one of the most useful to visitors, is the one found at apple.com: <http://www.apple.com/anypage/>. You'll notice the standard navigation is at the top, just like any other page, a customized not found message, and lots of links to information that you might be interested in.

When a visitor is taken to a custom 404 page rather than the default one, that visitor is more likely to continue surfing through your site, perhaps making a purchase. Getting the default page not found message tends to drive visitors away on to other sites or searches.

### ***robots.txt***

The robots.txt file sits in your root directory folder and allows you to tell the search engine robots where to go. Creating these files is fairly simple, but if done incorrectly can cause a great many problems with search engine rankings.

The big deal of robots.txt files is that you can tell the search engines not to crawl or index certain areas or pages of your site. Let's say you have information on your server that you don't want the search engines to index. In this case you would place the following in your robots.txt file:

```
User-agent: *  
Disallow: /forbidden-directory/  
Disallow: /allowed-directory/forbidden-page.htm
```

The user-agent is the command that lets you reference which search engines spiders you wish to direct your command to. The `—*` indicates you are directing to all spiders. If you only wish to exclude certain engines then you'll need to find out the names of their crawlers.

While most crawlers politely honor the robots.txt file, some do not. It is up to the engine programmers to decide what to do.

Not every site needs a robots.txt file; however it's common for the search engines to look for this file first before spidering other pages. For this reason, it is better to give the search engines something rather than nothing, even if it's just a blank file.

### ***Navigation Menus***

There are many ways to create navigation menus, and there are just as many wrong ways as right ways. When building your navigation you need to be sure the search engines are able to read and follow all your links. If there are no navigable links for the search engine to follow they'll assume you have a one-page site and move on.

Menus created using flash and JavaScript can be problematic unless certain measures are employed to ensure spiderability. The best bet is to create all your navigation links using standard HTML, or at the very least have alternate HTML navigation available on every page. This will ensure the search engines have no problems indexing all of your content.

### ***Keep Load Time Minimal***

When building and optimizing a site, it is important to keep the load time to a minimum. While search engines should be able to download your site rather quickly, you want to be sure they are not burdened with trying to download excess that can simply be eliminated. If a spider requires too much effort to read your page it will move on to another site, instead of consuming valuable resources on yours. This same principle can be applied to your user. If the page takes more than a few seconds to download, most users will move one.

**External Files:** We talked about utilizing external style sheets and JavaScript files above. These are essential to building a slim page that requires minimal downtime. I'm surprised to see how many people continue to put their JavaScript code and style sheet information in the HTML. Using external files, whenever possible, is a great way to keep load time down.

## ***Flash***

You've heard the saying –all things in moderation?" This especially applies to using flash on a website. While flash may look cool, most surfers are not looking for cool, they are looking for information, products and services. If you can integrate flash that enhances the user experience, then by all means, go for it. But used too much or incorrectly, flash can simply be an obstacle for the visitor to overcome to get what they want. On the web, people are impatient. Don't make them wait for your flash to load before they are allowed to begin browsing your site.

## **Common Mistakes**

Optimizing for search engines is essentially a form of manipulation. You manipulate your site to get the search engines to consider it relevant for whatever keyword phrases you are targeting, which in turn helps you achieve top search engine rankings. While search engines like sites that utilize great content, site structure and whatnot, they don't like blatant manipulation designed to achieve top rankings.

The worst offenders are those that manipulate without trying to create the most relevant experience for the user. Essentially, they want to be #1 without actually having a site worthy of being there.

Some of the mistakes mentioned below are blatant spam, while others are simple accidents or bad business practices. Either way, these mistakes should be avoided.

## ***Keyword Stuffing***

Stuffing keyword phrases into your code or in the content is tempting when trying to game the search results, yet does little to enhance the user's experience. Any keyword usage on a page, whether it's visible or hidden in the code, needs to have a distinguishable purpose, other than to achieve top rankings.

Keyword stuffing is still common practice by site owners and SEOs that learned a bad practice some time ago and never really unlearned it. Those that keyword stuff really don't know much about true, results oriented SEO. Aside from the Meta keywords tag, you'll often find keyword stuffing in the alts, descriptions, comments, and often as –hidden" text that the user does not see.

Regardless of how it is employed, keyword stuffing is a practice that is more likely to hurt than help you. The concept of achieving a certain keyword density is really no longer a factor to the algorithms. It's no longer about how many times you use a word on a page, it's about how your words are used.

## ***Overwriting***

Many times site owners feel that they just need to write and write and write and write some more to get the search engines to notice them. Building a good site with lots of useful content is generally a good practice, not just because search engines love large sites, but because you are serving your user/buyer as well. The problem often stems from those who are writing or adding content for their website with no real purpose or goal.

If the content being created does not provide substantial value to the user, then the bottom line is that it's not good content and there will be no reason for the search engines to consider it otherwise. A site full of useless content may or may not generate multiple top search engine rankings in the short term, but from a business perspective, drawing people in to read junk content is a bad business practice and will not often result in many conversions.

### ***Not Trusting SEO***

Another common mistake is hiring an SEO to do a job but then not trusting them enough to do it without interference. The best thing you can do for yourself and your business is to sit back and let the SEO do the job you hired them to do. Track progress but understand that results take time. And when your SEO suggests something be done, work to have that implemented ASAP.

If you feel your optimization is not bringing you the results it should, talk to the SEO, listen to them and give them room to work. There will come a time, if the SEO is unable to get results, that you will have to break things off and try something else, but you need to know when that time is, having given adequate amount of time for all the odd issues related to SEO to be resolved.

### ***Flash***

All flash sites are generally ineffective at achieving top placement (with a few exceptions), and flash splash pages create an extra barrier to the main site. Neither is good for business.

### ***Session IDs***

Sites that require session IDs for each user create a duplicate content issue for search engines. A unique session ID is attached to a visitor each time they visit the site. If I visit your site tomorrow, I'll get a different session ID than when I visited today.

Search engines rely on pages remaining in the same location. The About Us page will always be located in the same place, as are the product pages, etc. When session IDs are required, every time the search engines visit they find the About Us page in a different location. Yesterday it was `/about-us.htm?id=344543432` and today it's at `/about-us.htm?id=9879834023`. As far as the search engine is concerned, you have multiple About Us pages, each one with the exact same content.

This may not be an issue with an un-optimized About Us page, but it is an issue with a keyword rich page that ranks well in the search results. Session IDs create multiple, but duplicate, keyword rich pages that could potentially all rank well. Now it looks like you could be gaming the system.

If your site needs to assign IDs for users to track their purchases, consider using cookies instead of session IDs. Alternately, you could assign a session ID only after a product is added to the shopping basket. This can help eliminate a large part of the search engine indexing loop session IDs cause, allowing the engine to index all content pages up to the point of following a link that goes to a shopping cart.

## ***Frames***

Framed sites are not friendly to search engines whatsoever. There are workarounds that will allow the search engines to index and rank your pages but there are a number of problems that remain.

Search engines do not follow links in the other pages in the `<frameset>`, which is the code that allows you to build the framed site. Putting in the `<noframes>` tag allows you to create content that the search engine will see, but you need to be careful with this to avoid the appearance of spamming the engine. The content in the `<noframes>` tag must be the same as the content the user sees when viewing the frame.

Using the `<noframes>` to place content and links to other pages can lead to the issue of creating orphaned pages. These are pages that have content but no navigation because the main navigation page only appears when the pages\ is viewed within the frameset. When this happens, even if a top ranking is achieved, the user will usually be lacking any kind of site identification or effective linking, leaving them with no action to take with the information they are viewing.

Sites can be built without using frames while still maintaining the development convenience that framing allows. Through PHP or ASP you can build a site that is essentially framed on the server side, not on the browser side. By using SSI you ~~–include~~” your navigational elements from a single page into the code, but to the user and the search engine it all appears to be a single page, not a framed page. This is a far better solution and gives you the same navigational control as does a framed site.

## ***Dynamic Pages***

Dynamic pages are not the problem they once were. Not long ago search engines avoided dynamic pages to prevent getting caught in another endless loop. Sites that let you select products by size, color, men’s, women’s, boy’s, girl’s, etc. can essentially have hundreds and hundreds of dynamically generated pages, one for each differing variable.

While dynamic pages are not the problem they once were for the search engines, it is still a good practice to use a mod rewrite on all dynamically generated URLs. Mod rewrites take long dynamic URLs and turn them into simple static URLs.

`www.mysite.com/product.htm?categoryID=45682903_ProductID=34394098`

can be changed to

`www.mysite.com/honda/battery_charger/`

Using the mod rewrite eliminates the ugly dynamic strings and converts them into viewer and search engine friendly URLs sporting your targeted keywords.

## ***Plugins***

Using programming on your pages that requires special plugins to be viewed can often lead to a negative user experience. While some plugin features offer some cool site tools which may or may not be extremely useful to your visitors, if the visitor does not have the plugin installed in their browser they won’t get that experience.

Most users don't want to have to go out of their way to install additional components simply to be on your site. Unless you know that a majority of your target audience will already have the required plugin installed, you are better off finding another solution to create the experience you are looking to provide. Otherwise you'll be left providing few users a great experience while showing many more users the door.

### ***Bad Navigation***

Any navigation that does not allow the search engines to efficiently crawl your site is bad navigation. Unfortunately, many of the cooler navigation effects are created using flash, JavaScript or some other programming that requires a plugin download that the search engines have a hard time following.

It's okay to use some of these more fancy navigational elements provided that you have alternate, more search engine friendly, navigation on each page. You'll find that sites often do this by creating an extra set of navigational links at the bottom of each page.

### ***Multiple Domains***

Earlier on we discussed using multiple domains when you are selling products or services to a different audience. That is an effective form of marketing. On the other hand, building multiple websites, all targeting the same audience and same keywords, is one of the most blatant forms of spamming. This is a practice utilized by some who want to obtain all of the top positions for a given keyword phrase.

If you have a good business model and your site is well-constructed, informative and provides a valuable user experience, this will be all you need. Setting up multiple sites for the same product or service is the offline equivalent of McDonalds building 10 restaurants on the same block. Doing this online is one of the quickest ways to get all of your websites permanently banned from the search engines.

### ***Bad Validation***

Validating your site can help eliminate many problems that may prevent search engines from properly parsing through your site and finding the valuable content. While browsers tend to be very forgiving with code, search engine spiders are not so much. What may appear fine in a browser may actually have many errors in the code that will simply cause the search engine to stop trying to index your content and move on to other sites.

## **Spam**

There is no such thing as a spam-free search engine. Anytime one spamming technique is caught, another loophole is found in the algorithm and is therefore taken advantage of. While spam can be a problem for sites that hope to rank well by "following the rules" only to find the results filled with spam, it is even a greater issue for those searching for something only to find a bunch of garbage in the search results.

Because search engines are trying to provide the most relevant results possible, they will forever be tinkering with their algorithms to eliminate pages that are irrelevant to the search queries or provide a poor user experience.

### ***Spam Works***

So why do people spam? Because it works—even if temporarily. Most hard-core spammers work for themselves, throwing up sites left and right, siphoning off ad dollars for a month or two until the site gets thrown out of the engines. By then they have two more sites up and by the time those are banned, they have four more in place.

Spamming has gotten more and more sophisticated and it creates big dollars for those in the game. The one thing spammers lack though is a long-term game plan. Everything they do is based on quick money, instead of making a solid long-term investment.

### ***Algorithm Changes***

Because of spammers, search engines are always adjusting their algorithms. Because search engines are always adjusting their algorithms, spammers are always adjusting their tactics. It's a viscous cycle with good quality sites caught in the middle.

SEOs, working to keep your site atop the search results, also need to keep up with algorithm changes but only to ensure that client sites stay relevant to the search engines. For the most part, what was quality SEO last year, is still quality SEO today and will most likely be quality SEO tomorrow. The job of the SEO is to keep watch to see what search engines favor more over time. This information is translated into on or off-page SEO changes allowing the site to naturally emphasize those things the search engine wants to see.

### ***Consequences of Spam***

The consequences of spamming can be devastating to any legitimate business. Search engines, especially Google, are known to actively punish sites caught utilizing any form of spam techniques. While the search engines prefer to eliminate spam through the algorithm they are also not shy about placing a manual ban on the most gregarious of spammers.

**Banning:** Over the years we've worked with many businesses that came to us after having their sites thrown out of Google because they were caught spamming. Once banning occurs you have a only a couple of options, neither of which offer quick fix solutions.

#### ***Start All Over***

Your first option is to scrap your current site and start all over with a new one. This will allow you to begin with a clean slate. In going with this approach you need a new DBA, a new domain name, new site design, and a whole lot of time to build a new foundation in the search engines.

#### ***Clean Up the Spam***

This sounds easy enough, but just cleaning up your site will not instantly get you back into the search engine index. Most often you'll have to contact the search engine, sending them a polite email informing them that you're no longer a spammer. You'll want to admit errors, let them know you fired whoever was responsible (you did, didn't you?), let them know that your site is now squeaky clean, and ask to be un-banned.

Before you do that though, be sure that your site is 100% squeaky clean, otherwise the search engine will ignore your request completely, or assume that you're still trying to get away with spam. Requests for reinclusion are often not approved right away. The search engine may keep you on a watch list for a while just to monitor what you do with your site.

If you keep the site clean and don't engage in any additional spamming efforts, after a period of time the engine will grant your request, but don't expect to be taken off the watch lists just yet. Nor should you expect to jump right back into top positions. That will have to be earned which will take even more time.

**Damage to Brand:** Spamming can also damage your brand and business name. Sites that get caught spamming can often be subject to bad press or land on some anti-spam crusaders watch list. That can be bad for business.

Even getting away with spam can be a bad business practice. Searchers who come across your site in search results only to find poorly written content or other garbage techniques designed to achieve rankings only, can create negative buzz or even a backlash against your company. That, too, can be bad for business.

### ***Know What's Going On***

The best thing you can do before optimizing your site, or paying someone to do it for you, is to be informed of the practices that will be employed. If an SEO tells you that they have a way of sneaking things past the search engine, or tricking the engine in any way, be warned, they will be spamming the search engines on your behalf.

The best defense against unintentional spamming is to stay current on what is or isn't good SEO practice. This is difficult to do because there is so much misinformation that gets spread on online forums, blogs and articles. Even today I hear people talk about SEO as if it's just a matter of changing the meta tags. (It hasn't been that easy since the turn of the millennium.) Knowing good SEO from bad SEO will ensure that you do not employ an SEO firm or implement any optimization strategies that might cause your site to fall foul of the search engines.

When employing an SEO, find out what their strategies are. If they find them difficult to explain to you then chances are it's because they really don't want to let you know what their spam tactics are. Such SEOs will often try and use words that make the spam sound better than it really is. Usually its just code for: we spam.

On the other hand, many SEO spammers will tell you upfront what they plan to do and will outline the risk vs. rewards. You are certainly free to choose such an SEO as long as you are fine with the potential consequences it might have you your site and your business overall.

## **Timeframes**

Search engine optimization is by no means a quick process that produces instant results. I like to consider optimization as being like boiling water. You fill your pot with water,

place it on the stove, turn the burner on and, well, you wait for the water to reach boiling temperature. Once the initial process of optimization is complete, your site is set on the burner and you have to wait for good strong performance to be achieved.

### ***Set-Up***

The set-up process for optimization can take anywhere from several weeks to several months depending on the number of pages being optimized and the amount of work that needs to be performed. The set-up phase is where the bulk of the research is performed to make sure that the campaign is put together properly. Everything from keyword research, to industry research, to site history research, and more is part of the initial set-up process.

Once the various research is performed, the optimization strategies can be implemented onto the page. Writing quality content and removing code bloat can take a big chunk of that time, ensuring that each is performed correctly for search engine and visitor results.

### ***Ongoing***

Once the initial optimization is approved and rolled out, the ongoing month to month optimization process begins. This encompasses more research and analysis for your site, usually on a monthly basis, monitoring rankings, adjusting elements for better performance, and continuous link building. Many man-hours are spent each month to ensure success with time.

**Established Sites:** Well established sites will generally produce results far quicker than new sites, however, being well established still does not mean instant results. Such sites are still subject to competition and other algorithm anomalies that force sites to wait to get results.

**New Sites:** New sites are some of the most difficult to achieve rankings for primarily because they have not yet had a chance to establish a history, which many search engines rely on. New sites also have no links so the link base must be built up in order for the site to become “relevant” for the keyword phrases.

**Sandbox:** The sandbox phenomenon is a fairly recent issue with no clearly established parameters in what causes it. The effect however is the same; sites will not perform in the rankings until after the site is removed from the sandbox.

The search engine controls which sites go in and out of the sandbox so there is nothing that an SEO can do to get you out, other than to simply ensure that your site is properly optimized and continue to keep it relevant to the algorithm.

Sandboxing, it seems, is just a way for engines to watch sites that are either new and/or have undergone recent and drastic changes, to see if those sites are or will employ any kind of spamming techniques.

The duration of sandboxing has been noted to last from a two to ten months.

**Aging Delay:** The aging delay can be applied to new sites, or new links pointing to a site, or both. Basically, this delay is a way for the search engine to ensure that the tactics employed on the site are genuine and not a simple effort to game the engine.

Aging delays are most commonly associated with linking. Often newly optimized sites will have an aggressive optimizer going out and purchasing large numbers of links. Purchased links usually cost a good deal of money each month and the aging delay applied to links makes this practice less lucrative. After an unknown period of time the search engine will determine that a link is valid, if it has remained, and therefore credits that link whatever value it might receive.

**Links:** Sites with few links, or few counted links, will generally perform poorly in the search results. Links are a large part of the search engine algorithms, which makes it that much more difficult for new sites to get good rankings.

## **Re-Design**

Every site must go through a periodic re-design. In fact, your site should constantly be evolving as you test different marketing tactics, check conversation rates, etc. But the really big redesigns tend to occur once every couple of years.

When you do have to go through a redesign of your website you want to take extra care in order to maintain your top rankings. In cases where structural changes are being made, ranking drops are inevitable. Good planning can reduce that as much as possible while allowing for a quick recovery.

### ***Filenames***

If at all possible, you want to avoid changing your page filenames and locations. Any such change basically removes the page from the server making it no longer accessible. If search engines rank a page well and that page gets removed, the link in the search results will lead to a broken page. It won't be long before the search engine find that the page is gone and therefore removes it from the index, along with all associated rankings.

### ***301 Redirect***

When site structural changes are necessary you'll want to implement 301 permanent redirects from the old pages to the new pages. The 301 redirects tell the search engine that the page is no longer there and has moved to a new permanent location.

Unfortunately, the 301 redirect still sometimes causes you to lose rankings, but on a much more temporary basis. The great thing about 301 redirects is that visitors to the old pages are automatically flipped to the new page ensuring they never get a "page not found" message.

### ***404 Redirect***

As discussed earlier, you'll also want to implement a custom 404 redirect page. This will ensure that the user stays on your site if you failed to implement a 301 redirect for any page. The custom 404 redirect, at the very least, lets the users know that your site is still in business and allows them to follow a few links to find what they are looking for.

## Research Exercise: Digging for Keywords

We talked a great deal about keyword research so now we're going to do some. Go to [www.wordtracker.com](http://www.wordtracker.com) to begin. We'll make this exercise quick so you can just sign up for the free version.

### Researching

The first step is to type in your broad theme keyword. Click on one of the results and start adding keywords into the basket. Since the free version is limited, I recommend putting no more than 5 keywords into your basket from any one broad theme.

Now go back and try searching another broad theme, add your five keywords to the basket, and so on. Do this until your basket is full. Now move on to step three.

### Exporting

From here we are not going to use step four, however we're going to go ahead and export our keywords. This should open up a new browser window with all of your keywords listed. Copy these and put them in an Excel file.

### Theming

Now its time to start organizing and theming. Using your noggin, begin separating keywords into themes. The keywords might break down pretty easily into the groups of five keywords that you selected, but maybe not. Carefully consider which keywords belong grouped together.

Now look again and see if any of these groups can be broken down any further. If so, then go ahead and do that.

### Assigning

Ok, now if you did this research based on your own site you can begin assigning these keyword groups to pages. You now have an idea of how to write or rewrite your page content to fit the keywords you selected.

When using the full version of WordTracker as well as server logs, Yahoo! and Google, it's not uncommon to export a list of 100-200 or more keyword phrases.

### 4.3 Paying for Click-Thru's (aka PPC)

While search engine optimization generally provides a significant higher return on investment than other forms of online advertising, money spent on sponsored ads consumes a substantial majority of online marketing dollars spent. This proves that the majority of online business owners have yet to unlock the power of SEO.

One of the reasons why sponsored ads consume the lion's share of online marketing budgets is due to its ability to bring in near instantaneous results, and flexibility to track, change and adjust on a whim. This makes sponsored ads a valuable part of both short-term and long-term online marketing strategies.

#### Ad Providers

There are many avenues for PPC advertising with the two primary providers being Google and Yahoo! (Formerly Overture). Each of these offers unique features in the ad building and reporting processes, and campaigns in each should be monitored and tracked separately to maximize your results.

##### *Google AdWords*

Google's program is known as AdWords and can be found at <http://adwords.google.com>. From there you can login or set up your account, create your ads and have them appear in the search results in just a few minutes. Google allows you to change an ad on the fly and see the results reflected right away. Ads are subject to editorial approval which usually comes a few days later.

##### *Yahoo! Search Marketing (formerly Overture)*

Yahoo! Search Marketing can be found at <http://searchmarketing.yahoo.com>. From there you can create your account. You won't be able to get your ads up right away as Yahoo! requires editorial approval before an ad goes online, giving a lead time of about three days. Anytime an ad is changed it is pulled from the results to await editor's approval before going live once again, which generally takes another three days or so.

#### Research

Just as with optimization, research is important before you begin your sponsored ad campaign. Most of the ad services provide researching tools, which we also used in the optimization keyword research.

I would recommend using the exact 5-phase keyword research that was outlined in the optimization phase. In fact, going through that research will provide you information that is valuable to many of your online marketing campaigns.

## Build Your Ads

Building your ad campaigns is a pretty simple and straightforward process. With the keyword research completed you now have the outline of how to effectively build your targeted keyword groups. Each group or theme that was the final result of the keyword research should be a keyword group for your sponsored ad campaign.

### *Creating an Ad*

The construction of your ad is important to how well it performs. Each ad generally allows you a clickable title and a short description along with your URL.

**Title:** Ads which contain the searched keywords in the title generally outperform ads that don't. Constructing the themes properly in the keyword research phase will help you create more effective ads, with each ad group using the keywords in the title in some form.

**Description:** The description can vary in length depending on the parameters allowed. Again, you want to utilize your keywords in the description while also making it compelling enough, along with the title, to attract clicks.

**URL:** The URL area of the ad shows where the searcher will go when they click. Usually you can create a display URL such as [www.mysite.com](http://www.mysite.com), while directing the traffic to a specific page within your site: [www.mysite.com/productpage.html](http://www.mysite.com/productpage.html).

You always want to send the user directly to the page that is most relevant to the search performed. You don't want to send them to your home page then force them to go through multiple clicks to find what they wanted. Most users, if they don't find exactly what they searched for in the first page, return to the search results and click another ad or search result. That's money spent with no conversion.

**Targeting:** You want to build your ad so only your targeted audience will want to click on it. This will save you money by being compelling to your buying audience while also eliminating those who might otherwise click the ad looking for something you don't have.

If you sell motorcycle batteries, you might think that an ad for "battery" or "batteries" would be great for business. These keywords, however, would end up producing a high volume of non-targeted traffic: cell phone batteries, rechargeable batteries, camera batteries, etc. This would end up costing you a great deal of money for fewer sales.

If you used a targeted keyword in your title and description, such as "motorcycle batteries," you eliminate a substantial number of non-converting clicks, and attract only those looking specifically for motorcycle batteries.

If you don't offer batteries for every kind of motorcycle it would be a good idea to target your ad with the actual manufacture of the motorcycles for the brands which you do carry. Such examples would be "honda motorcycle batteries", "suzuki motorcycle batteries." This will eliminate paying for clicks for people looking for "triumph motorcycle batteries" if you don't sell them.

## Pricing

Pricing for a sponsored ad campaign generally rests on a cost-per-click model, which is why these campaigns are referred to as pay-per-click or PPC. For each keyword or targeted campaign you bid a maximum amount you are willing to pay for each click to your site. Your ad is then placed in the results based upon that bid. The higher you bid the higher your ad will appear.

Google also implements a measure based on effectiveness of the ad, essentially allowing an ad with a lower bid to show higher than yours, if that ad attracts more clicks. You'll want to make sure you construct your ad in a way that invites targeted clicks but is also effective at targeting your buying audience.

## Testing

One of the great advantages of PPC over SEO is the ability to implement temporary testing campaigns. You can test ads, landing pages, keyword effectiveness and whatever else suits you. This allows you to adjust each campaign to improve your return on investment. Even a small% increase in ROI is valuable over the long term, especially when you are dealing with a large-scale campaign.

### *Placement Testing*

Many times you'll find that the #1 position is not the best place for your ad to be. Studies have shown that many searchers instinctively click on the #1 ad without really looking at it. This can create additional untargeted traffic that you'll end up paying for. You can usually cut down your ad costs significantly, while improving your return, by keeping the ad in the second, third or fourth position.

You'll have to do a good amount of monitoring of your campaign, but you can test which ad position produces the highest click-thru rate and the highest conversion rate. By doing this you can place your bids appropriately to keep your ad right around the same position pretty consistently.

Remember, though, that with Google the better an ad performs the higher up it will move without having to adjust the bid. In this case you may actually be able to lower your bid to keep your ad in the position you want it to be.

### *Ad Testing*

Testing your ads effectiveness is important to keep click costs low and ROI high. Run ads for several weeks and see how they perform. Make a minor but trackable change and run that for a few weeks. Take this information to build a comparison table tracking each change and its effectiveness. After several months you'll have been able to build a highly effective ad that generates quality clicks and sales.

***Landing Page Testing***

The most important element to track, and often the most overlooked, is the landing page. It really does not matter how many clicks your ad gets if the pages they are landing on fails to convert them. Go through the same process of testing landing pages as mentioned above for ad tracking. What you might find, is that after you have thoroughly tested and created the best landing page for each campaign, you can go back and retest your ads and squeeze out some additional return.

***Stats***

Most of the ad providers offer a good number of statistics to measure the success of your campaigns. You'll want to take this data and combine it with your own stats for conversion rates, and how users navigate through your site once they arrive. Stats are an important part of the testing process.

**Reach**

Another benefit of PPC advertising is that you can expand or contract your reach to suit your purposes. PPC marketing offers an incredible amount of control over your campaign, allowing you to target specific countries, or just local geographical locations.

## 4.4 Increasing Link Citations

In the early days of search engines the algorithms relied primarily on the on-page factors when determining a site's relevance. Titles, keywords, descriptions, body content, etc. While these factors still remain important, Google realized that they are also subject to easy manipulation and spamming. While other engines dabbled in using off-page factors as part of the algorithm, Google was the first to do it successfully.

### PageRank

Google developed a ranking system called PageRank which, in simple terms, counted the number of incoming links a site had and rated its importance accordingly. The more ~~important~~ a site was the higher it would appear for relevant keyword phrases. Links have become one of the primary off-page factors considered by the search engines.

Before I get too far, I want to stress that PageRank, as we know it and as it is displayed in the Google toolbar is a generally worthless measure. The algorithm no longer places much weight on PageRank itself, but uses it, along with multiples of other measures to determine how sites rank. Links, however, are still vitally important to the overall ranking process.

### Incoming Links

The most important aspect of linking is the number and quality of inbound links pointing to your site from other websites. That word ~~quality~~ is subjective to the search engine and regularly changes with time. A ~~quality~~ link today may become a worthless link tomorrow with a small change in the algorithm.

Many SEOs actively go out to solicit or purchase links to their site. The search engines actively adjust their algorithms as measures to counteract this ~~artificial~~ form of linking.

While some sites may generate large quantities of links on their own, you usually have to obtain top search engine rankings for your site to be considered for a link from other valuable sites. You can't get to the top without having links in the first place. This means, any site looking to achieve top rankings must undergo some kind of linking campaign or undergo other marketing efforts.

### *Link Measures*

Links to your site provide the search engines two primary measures which are factored into the algorithm.

**Importance:** The number of links pointing to your site can tell the search engine something about how important your site is to the online world. The more links you have the more important your site must be.

To fine tune that a bit further, the more links you have from other important websites the more important your site becomes altogether.

**Relevance:** Search engines can also measure relevance of your site by the links themselves. By weighing the words in the link text, this tells the search engines what others consider your site to be about.

### *Quantity*

In the early days of measuring links it was all about obtaining quantity links. To some degree this is still true, but to a much lesser extent. Webmasters would go out and solicit links from hundreds and thousands of websites, of all different kinds, just to get a large quantity of links pointing back to them.

This created a whole industry of guestbook and now blog spam. Guestbooks would allow anybody to “sign” them so aggressive webmasters would find as many guestbooks as possible and post a link to their site along with some other nonsense. Few sites do guestbooks these days and links from them have since been devalued to be almost completely worthless.

The same thing now happens with blogs. Most bloggers want people to post comments. Today spammers use automated software to seek out blogs and generate hundreds, if not thousands of comment posts every minute all across the web. Due to this sort of spamming, search engines created a new <nofollow> tag specifically for blogs, which causes an automated comment link to be of no value to the search engine whatsoever.

While many can still attribute their top rankings to large quantities of links, search engines are actively devaluing sites that use such practices while also seeking ways to rate only relevant, on-topic links.

### *Quality*

SEO's that employ link building campaigns have begun to move away from obtaining quantity links in pursuit of links of a higher quality. There are many different levels of link quality, some which hold more importance than others.

**Reciprocal Links:** The most common form of link achieved by SEO's is a reciprocal link. This is where you link to someone in exchange for a link back to your site. Generally reciprocal links all fall on “link” pages which often contain dozens to hundreds of links on each page, broken into various categories

Reciprocal links are considered some of the lowest quality links, outside of non-relevant links. Many believe that search engines devalue reciprocal links simply because they are largely unnatural in nature. Reciprocal links require an agreement between two sites to link to each other, not because they each feel that the other site is of any particular value or importance, but simply to get the benefit of the link with the search engines.

Reciprocal links are not always pre-arranged or unnatural, but because of abuse, search engines very well may consider them as such.

**Three-Way Links:** To create a more valuable link than a reciprocal link, many moved to creating what's called a three-way or triangle link. A three-way link would look like this: Site A links to Site B, Site B links to Site C and Site C links to Site A, creating three one-way links between the sites. This is an attempt to get more value out of each link.

Many sites looking for such three-way links have usually created a link directory on a different URL which they use to link out, expecting you to link to them from your main site. The problem here is that the link from the link directory, even though a one-way link, is usually of very little value.

**One-Way Link:** One-way links are considered some of the best links to achieve. Search engines like one-way links because they determine that if you are willing to link out to a site without requiring a link back, there must be something special about that site. Therefore, if you can get someone to link to you, without having to offer a reciprocal or three-way link, you're getting a higher quality link overall.

Be careful, however that you don't just hoard incoming links without linking out anywhere else. This is considered just as unnatural as a site with all reciprocal links and can therefore be devalued accordingly.

**PageRank (PR):** Earlier we discussed Google PageRank. The PageRank algorithm assigns values to each link depending on a couple of factors 1) the PR of the page linking out and 2) the number of other outgoing links.

Links from pages with a high PR are considered more valuable and of higher quality. At the same time, links from pages that contain fewer outgoing links are also of higher quality. All things being equal, a link from a PR7 page is better than a link from a PR6 page. However, in the PR universe, a link to your site from a PR7 page with 100 other outgoing links may actually be of lesser value than link from a PR6 page with only one outgoing link.

A while back, when checking backward links on Google, the results would only show links to your site with a PR4 or higher. Because of this, many SEOs refused to exchange links with sites with any lower PR because they felt they were valueless. This wasn't exactly true, as any page carries weight with each link.

Now, a backward link check on Google will show links from pages of any PR but Google will only show a representative sample of the backlinks, never all of them. Since the Google PR bar only updates once per quarter at most, relying on PageRank as a measure of a link's worth has become less accurate and less valuable in the broader sense of what you are trying to achieve.

**Relevant Website:** One of the best links is a link from a site related in content and relevance to your own. Essentially, a link from a competitor would hold one of the highest link values, however very few wish to link out to their direct competition. Finding relevant, but non-competing websites to link to you can be a very time consuming process.

### *Links from Your Specific Industry*

Finding sites related to yours requires scouring through your industry to find websites that relate to what you do without being direct competitors. If you own a wedding site, links from other wedding sites in non-competing areas would be ideal. If you sell kids winter clothing, links from other clothing stores, such as adult winter clothes, or kids summer clothes, would be a great match.

### ***Links from Your Broad Industry***

After you have exhausted your specific industry, start looking more towards the broad aspects of your industry for links. Usually you'll need to branch out significantly to find enough good quality sites worth obtaining a link from.

The wedding site would start looking for local limo services, banquet halls, tuxedo shops and more for good quality links. If the wedding site provides all of those services, they need to look even further to dating sites, honeymoon destinations (travel), wedding planners, and more. The kid's winter clothing site would look for parenting sites, kid's activities, winter sports, etc.

### ***Links from Hub Sites***

A hub site is a site that essentially acts as a portal to many other sites within your industry. A hub can be a commercial site just like any other, but generally they are non-commercial in nature and act as a resource finder for information of a specific topic.

Links from hub sites are very valuable, as hubs are generally only known to link to sites with what can be considered quality and relevant content.

### ***Links from Authority Sites***

Links from "authority" sites are the best that you can get. These are sites that the search engines have determined are the "it" places that people go to for information regarding their industry. Authority sites generally have a lot of links coming in from hubs. Authorities are linked from many hubs. Nike might be considered an authority site in the area of shoes.

Authority sites also generally rank the best for any relevant keyword phrases. Many authority sites are also hubs in that they link out to other great resources as well.

**Contextual link:** While most links bought, solicited or exchanged can usually be found on either link pages or in advertising blogs, which search engines can easily devalue, contextual links provide the most honest form of linking and are some of the most highly valued.

A contextual link is a link [within the text](#) of a website, as opposed to being part of a list of links. Very few sites, outside of hubs, authorities and blogs offer any real kind of contextual link. The reason for this is that most people want to keep visitors on their site and if a contextual link is placed in the content there is a chance the visitor will leave the site. Not to mention that you can only logically get so many contextual links on any page. For these very reasons, search engines place a very high emphasis on contextual links.

***Links from Pre-Sell Pages***

A new form of link buying has emerged called pre-sell pages. With pre-sell pages, instead of buying a link that appears on virtually every page of the site, you buy a page which you fill with content and use that content to link back to your site. Since the page is yours to do with as you please you can create the link or links to your site in any form you want.

***Links from Articles***

Writing and distributing articles that link to your site is a great way to get a high quality link, provided that the article is relevant to your site and is placed in a location that is also relevant.

**Publish:** There are many places online where you can publish your articles. The sites that do this are generally hubs and most are a niche for specific industries. Each article you write can generally contain a bio line which you can use to provide general information about yourself (i.e., what makes you an authority on the subject you are writing about) as well as a link to your site.

**Exchange:** Another great way to get a high quality contextual link is to exchange articles with other sites, instead of exchanging links. The cost in time is higher, but the quality of link is higher as well. When exchanging articles you want to write something that is informative and relevant to the visitors where the article will be placed, while also providing information that pertains to what you offer. You then make sure that the article contains a contextual link to your site, and vice versa.

***Links from Press Releases***

Along the same lines as articles, press releases can provide some highly relevant, top quality, and one-way links to your site. Press releases are often picked up by news agencies as well as other online sites running news feeds. A single press release can generate a substantial number of one-way links to your site from other high quality (as well as low quality) websites.

***Links from Blogs***

Participating in the blogging community can be a great way to contribute as well as provide links to your site.

**Comments:** Many blogs allow you to post comments on any post. By posting relevant comments in industry related blogs you can become known in the blogosphere. Once you have some credibility you can offer your insights while also posting a link back to something relevant on your own site.

Since blogs have been hit hard with blogspam, most blogs won't let you post a link if your comment is blatant self-promotion. Many blogs now automatically use the <nofollow> tag for all comment links eliminating any effect the link might have with the search engines.

**Trackbacks:** If you run your own blog you can use the trackback feature to post stories linking to other blog postings of interest. Most bloggers keep up on who links to them and at sometime may return the favor by linking back.

**Directory Links:** Web directories were once held in high regard by the search engines until every SEO and their dogs put together a web directory of their own as a way to create one-way links. While most directories are glorified link farms, there can be found many quality directories in which you may find it worthwhile to submit your site.

### ***Submitting to Directories***

Submitting your site to directories can be a significant chore in and of itself. There are a lot of directories out there and you'll have to take the time to discover which ones are the quality directories and which are just ones used to generate links.

**Paid:** Most directories are commercial enterprises and therefore a small submission fee is required to be included. Paying for submission does not make a directory either good or bad.

**Free:** Some directories are free of charge, usually because someone is either trying to build a real community resource or just trying to build a glorified link farm. Again, just because a directory is free does not necessarily make it either good or bad. Watch out for directories that are free but require you to link to them in return. This is not someone looking to build a community resource but looking for a free way to get links.

**Choose Category Wisely:** When going through the submission process for any directory, be sure to choose the category to which you are submitting wisely. Some directories such as DMOZ will reject your site simply because you did not submit it into the correct category.

Sometimes finding the right category is difficult. I recommend searching for your main keyword phrase and see what categories come up. Click through those categories and look at the sites listed. If the sites in a certain category are your competitors, then that is likely the best place to submit to.

**Follow Submission Guidelines Carefully:** Every directory has different criteria for what sites will be included and what sites won't. Carefully read through the submission guidelines for each directory you are preparing to submit to. Ensuring that your site meets the criteria before submission can save you the cost of a non-refundable submission fee.

### ***Quality Directories***

There are an innumerable number of directories on the web, most of which provide little or no link relevance whatsoever. There are, however, a few top tier directories that are commonly crawled by the search engines and a larger amount of relevance is assigned to sites which have been included in these directories.

**Top Tier:** There are only two directories that are considered top tier. These are both listed in Google's guidelines and should be given top priority when submitting your site.

**Yahoo ([dir.yahoo.com](http://dir.yahoo.com)):** Yahoo is the original web directory. Yahoo used to list sites for free, however, for commercial sites there is now only the paid option. This option provides you a seven-day turnaround to have an editor review your site for inclusion. Yahoo currently charges \$299/year to review your site and there is no guarantee for inclusion—and no refunds.

**DMOZ ([www.dmoz.org](http://www.dmoz.org)):** DMOZ, or the Open Directory Project (ODP), is the largest free, all-volunteer directory on the web. Google places a lot of emphasis on sites linked from this directory because DMOZ has no commercial interest in including your site, or any others, with the main criteria for inclusion being quality.

Unfortunately, because all the DMOZ editors are volunteers, many do not actively review submitted websites. Nor does DMOZ have a format in which you can contact an editor to see if your site has been reviewed or not. Submitted sites routinely take six months to a year to be included. Since editors don't inform you if your site is rejected for any reason, you are left not knowing if your site is still waiting to be reviewed, or has been already reviewed and rejected. Resubmitting your site will cause your site to be moved to the bottom of the queue, provided that you were still in the queue.

Despite the importance of a DMOZ listing in Google, you should make your submission to DMOZ only after you have thoroughly researched submission guidelines and categories. Once you submit, simply forget about the submission and move on.

**Second Tier:** Getting your site included in the second tier of web directories will still provide a highly relevant link to your site.

**Business.com ([www.business.com](http://www.business.com)):** Business.com is a B2B directory so it's not a relevant submission place for every site. If your business provides products or services to other businesses then this is a directory worth submitting to. The current cost of submission is \$199/year. If your budget is tight, I would recommend submission to all of the lower fee directories instead of business.com.

**MSN Small Business Directory ([sbd.bcentral.com](http://sbd.bcentral.com)):** \$49/year for inclusion.

**Gimpsy ([www.gimpsy.org](http://www.gimpsy.org)):** Gimpsy is different from most directories. Whereas most directories list sites by category, Gimpsy lists sites by what they do. When drilling down the categories you are asked if you want to Get, Visit, Compare, etc. Gimpsy will only include sites in which a full transaction can be made online. If you require your customers to call to place an order then don't bother submitting. Gimpsy charges a \$40 one-time fee for review.

**JoeAnt ([www.joeant.com](http://www.joeant.com)):** JoeAnt charges a \$39.99 one-time fee for review.

**Skaffe.com ([www.skaffe.com](http://www.skaffe.com)):** Skaffe.com charges a \$39.99 one-time fee for review and guarantees a 24 hour turnaround.

**Other:** There are a small handful of other directories that many would consider second-tier, however if you want to keep your fees to a minimum we generally only recommend the above second-tier directories. Beyond that, there are a many other directories on the web, some are quality, most are not. You can usually find good directories to submit to if you look for niche directories that list only sites in your particular industry.

### ***Solicitation***

Many website owners and SEOs actively solicit other sites for links. This practice has been frowned upon by some within the industry while considered of utmost importance to others. You'll have to decide for yourself if soliciting links is right for your business.

I'm sure you have at one time or another received an email asking for a link exchange. Unfortunately, most link solicitations are from people who have never even seen your site, even if the email says they have. We get dozens of solicitations every day from sites that simply are not relevant to our visitors.

If you choose to solicit links, be sure to review the site you are sending the request to and make sure that you offer something of value to their visitors. In the email, write something about that site that shows the reader that yes; a real person did actually review the site.

### ***Anatomy of a Link***

There are two parts to a link, the link text and the page it is linking to. Both should be carefully considered to get the maximum value out of each quality link.

**Hyperlinked Text:** The one thing that holds the most value in a link is the actual link text. Search engines use the link text pointing to your site to help determine what searches your site is relevant for. Whenever you embark on a link building campaign you want to be sure that the link text uses keywords you are targeting.

**Link-To Page:** Most people have links pointing to the home page. This is fine, but you should consider having sites link to your inner pages as well. The keywords used in the linking text should help determine which page a link should point to. In the keyword research phase we separated keywords by themes and pages. Link text using specific keyword phrases should point to the page which is targeting that particular phrase.

Of course, you never have total control over someone else's link to you. If you don't like the link text or the page that is linked send a polite email asking for the link to be changed. If they do, great, if not, a mis-targeted link is better than no link at all.

## **Outgoing Links**

Your outgoing links can be just as important as your incoming links. Search engines consider both when determining how important and relevant a site is for any particular query.

### ***Linking to Authority Sites***

Every site should link out to one or two authority sites in its industry. While you'll also want to try to get links from authority sites, simply linking to one tells the search engine that you know enough about what you do to know who the industry authorities are.

### ***Becoming a Hub***

If you build up a substantial enough informational website with highly relevant, contextual links to authority sites, you can build yourself into a nice hub. Being a hub can be valuable in that you set yourself up as the one who knows not just where the authority sites are but where other relevant industry sites are as well. All things considered, it is probably more beneficial to get a link from other hubs than to become a hub yourself. However, if you become a substantial enough hub, you are only a few steps away from becoming an authority, should you provide enough relevant content that others see linking to your site as beneficial to them.

## **Internal Links**

How you set up your internal linking can be just as important as your external linking. Generally speaking, setting up your site in an effective hierarchal structure produces the best internal linking. This should be a primary consideration in the design phase.

## Research Exercise: Mining for Links

The practice of link building is probably one of the most mundane jobs in the optimization process, yet it's also one of the most important. Before you can hire someone to do this job for you, you first must know what to do yourself.

There are many programs out there that will help you research links. I recommend Arelis by [Axandra](#). For this exercise you won't need this, or any other, tool, just your head!

### Brainstorming

It's always best to start with a brainstorming session. On a piece of paper begin writing down industries that are related to yours. Try to think specific and broad. At this point the larger list is the easier the research will go. You should be able to come up with five to ten, maybe even twenty related industries.

### Gathering

Now that you have your list, go to any search engine and pick an industry and begin searching for such sites using whatever keywords you can think of. As the results appear, look at the sites that come up and check to make sure these are the type of sites you were looking for. You might miss a few times on the keywords, but that's okay. Individually now, start clicking into sites to check them out. As you do, ask yourself the following three questions:

- Is that a site you would want to link to?
- Is that a site you would want linking to you?
- Is that a site you're visitors would find helpful?

If the answer to all three is yes you then want to look for an email address. Once you find that, document the URL and the email address, the owner's name, if you can find one, and possibly even a phone number. These will be helpful later.

Many will also look to see if the site also has a links page or shows some other form of external linking effort. If yes, then your chances of getting a reciprocal link are high.

### Requesting Links

After you have exhausted all possible keyword searches for one related industry, you should have enough sites gathered to begin sending link requests. There are a number of ways to do this and there is really no right or wrong way, unless you have never really looked at their site. People quickly learn to tell the difference between a genuine request for a link and one that's sent out via automated software. The personal touch is the right way.

**Here are some helpful ideas:**

- Send an email providing some information about who you are and what about their site interested you.
- Mention why you think their visitors would be interested in your site and vice versa.
- Say something that lets them know that you were really on their site. Telling them, “Your site is great,” doesn’t count.
- Point out grammatical, spelling or visual errors on their site, with suggestions on how to fix them.
- Point out a broken link on their site.
- Link to them first, before requesting that they link to you.
- Link to them, regardless if they link back to you or not.
- Use the phone instead of email.

After a few you’ll find what you’re most comfortable with and what works best.

## **Section 5:**

### **Marketing Online Via Other Avenues**

*Search engine marketing should not be the only means of drawing traffic and sales to your website. All too often businesses put all of their online marketing efforts into search engine optimization only to find one day that all their top rankings disappeared with an algorithm update. In such cases, turning to PPC ads can be an effective stop gap, however it can also be expensive.*

*Branching out into other marketing avenues allows you to build a nice solid foundation which doesn't rely on any one avenue for success. Each has their place in the total marketing game and you should develop an effective strategy for each.*

*One of the nice things about many of the other online marketing options is that many of them carry some weight over into search engine marketing. Even still, these should be considered separate marketing strategies that are implemented simultaneously with search engine marketing efforts. Complacency in these other avenues, when things are going well with the search engines, can lead to substantial and irrecoverable losses should you see your search engine rankings suddenly start to fall.*

## 5.1 Submitting Press Releases

Sending out press releases is a good strategy both on- and off-line. While most press releases don't make it into everyday news, you can target your niche industry with a properly thought out and distributed submission.

In the online world, a press release can be optimized for specific keywords. Optimizing your release will allow it to appear atop search results when a news search is performed. Many online news vendors also scour press releases for distribution, and even traditional news media seek out releases to publish on their websites.

There are multiple online press release distribution points ranging in cost from free to several hundred dollars, depending on the kind of exposure you are looking for. In my experience, even the free distributions get picked up quite heavily by news scraper sites and customized news alert services.

Aside from the basic value of getting such broad exposure to your target audience, press releases can also add multiple high-quality links back to your site.

## 5.2 Distributing Articles

Writing and distributing articles can be a highly effective way of building your name brand and your reputation as an industry expert. This credibility will bleed over to your business, gaining you new customers and possibly even some referrals from others within your industry.

A little research can help you find places within your industry that regularly publish contributing articles from experts such as yourself, even going so far as distributing your article in newsletters, forums, blogs and other high traffic areas.

## 5.3 Blogging

Blogging has become a popular phenomenon, which is likely to lose steam in the near future. Relevant and informative blogs, however, will remain as an online staple for distributing thoughts, opinions, and insights to those seeking out such information. Blogging is extraordinarily time-consuming and many who start a blog often abandon them in short order.

A good blog should provide help, tips, tools and advice regarding your industry, while also directing readers to other highly valuable information sources when warranted. Seeking out this information and posting regularly can often be a chore in an already long workday, however, managing your blog correctly can be substantially rewarding.

Much like articles and newsletters, blogs are a great way to establish yourself as an "authority" within your industry. It may take a while to build a solid audience, but faithful blogging of valuable tips and insights will ensure that you'll begin to earn earnest

readers. If you strive to offer something unique that cannot necessarily be found elsewhere you can build up a prime destination for industry insiders while increasing your customer base at the same time.

## 5.4 Writing a Newsletter

Newsletters are an important marketing tool and can be used to keep in touch with your target audience. Not every business needs a newsletter but if you can dedicate the time to putting out a regular issue—even once each month—you will find that it will be a good tool to increase sales.

On more than one occasion I've had subscribers to my newsletter call me years after their initial subscription to sign up for our marketing services.

## 5.5 Placing Banner Ads

Banner ads are growing in popularity after taking a nosedive during the .com bust. Finding a highly relevant high traffic site can be a prime candidate to place some kind of image advertisement for your website.

As with all marketing, be sure to monitor costs, click-thrus and conversion rates. It's best to build landing pages for each ad so you can place multiple ads at the same time and be able to track each campaign effectively.

### **Research Exercise: Finding Out What the Competition Does**

Start looking at your online competitor's websites to find out what they do in terms of online marketing efforts. Do they send out newsletters? Subscribe to it and read it faithfully. Do they blog? Get the URL and visit frequently.

Perform some news searches for keywords to see if any competitors have put out a press release recently. It's a good idea to set up news scrapes for your industry keywords.

Now see if you can find any places where your competitors may have written articles. Read these as well.

After a few weeks of this you should be ready to take the next step in your marketing process. Don't try to do everything at once, but at least start doing something that you're not doing today.

## **Section 6:**

### **Improving ROI and Conversions**

**O**ne of the most important aspects of any marketing campaign is learning how to lower the cost for each sale made. Each visitor to your website essentially has a cost associated with it as does each sale made. The goal is to increase sales, without increasing the cost of the sale.

*The rate at which visitors convert to buyers is your conversion rate. Since the conversion rate determines your overall cost per sale (CPS), your goal is to improve the conversion rate which then lowers the CPS.*

*As each marketing campaign delivers visitors at a different cost per visit (CPV), finding great marketing avenues will help you lower your overall CPV, but the conversion rate and CPS will remain relatively the same. Increasing your marketing budget only serves to increase visitors at the same CPV. Sales will increase due to the higher traffic volumes, but profit%age remains stagnant.*

*By closely tracking and monitoring your marketing campaigns, each campaign can be adjusted to increase conversion rates without increasing traffic or the CPV. When you adjust your campaign to increase conversions without increasing costs, your CPS lowers dramatically, putting more money in your pocket without any extra spending.*

*Once you are able to maximize your conversion rate, and improved your CPS, you can begin to focus on additional marketing spend. At your new lower CPS, increasing traffic will serve to increase profits exponentially.*

## 6.1 Improving Site Navigation

One of the simplest things you can do to lower your cost per sale is to improve your website's navigational structure making information and products easier to find and purchase. Many sales are lost simply because someone cannot find what they are looking for on the site.

### Site Search

If you own a large site or one with lots of products or deep pages, implementing a site search may offer a good solution for your visitors. Be aware that some studies have shown that site searches largely fail to deliver the desired information and cause users to abandon the site even though they could have easily have found what they were looking for through standard navigation.

If you do implement a site search feature, be sure it is very comprehensive. Test it thoroughly and make sure it works. Try searching for your products or services and check the results carefully. Are the most relevant pages to the query right there at the top? Are those the pages you would have directed them to if they called or emailed?

What happens if someone doesn't know the actual name of what they are looking for, will they be able to find it using other descriptive text searches? Try all kinds of variations. Be sure to get out of the industry mindset and consider what those outside your industry might search for.

You also want to try searching for misspellings of your products to make sure the search function is intuitive enough to deliver the correct results. If you don't carry or offer the exact item searched, the results should display products that you do have that is a suitable replacement for the actual product searched.

If your site search cannot produce the desired results 90% of the time, it may be better for you not to have a search feature whatsoever.

### Standard Navigation

Regardless if you have a site search feature or not, your main navigation must be simple and comprehensive enough to allow every visitor to easily navigate directly to the information they are looking for.

This can be difficult for large sites with deep pages, but it is necessary if you are serious about converting your visitors. If you already have a site, a re-design may be in order just to create a consistent, easy-to-use navigation. If you have not built your site yet, I recommend mapping out all your pages before hand.

Use an intuitive hierarchal structure that allows visitors to drill through until they have found what they are looking for. Even small sites should consider their navigation

carefully. An ill planned navigation structure for a small site can be a considerable burden as the site grows and more products and content are added.

## **6.2 Adding Trust Seals**

Using trust seals, such as Better Business Bureau logos, secure site symbols and similar images associated with your industry can go a long way to improving a visitors trust in your business. Most buyers make decisions based on emotion and using these images help generates the emotions of trust and security necessary to bring them a few steps toward the conversion.

Seals by themselves are relatively meaningless unless it can be backed up with specific information about your website. For instance, the BBB provides an online seal that links to information about your company and lets visitors know if you are in good standing with the bureau. Other trust seals should do the same thing, if possible.

Seek out relative seals for your industry, anything that helps establish you as authentic or as an authority.

## **6.3 Making the Purchase Easy**

Another way to increase conversions is to implement an easy-to-use system for making a purchase. This can be as simple as reducing the number of clicks necessary to checkout, to adding a toll free number prominently on every page so customers can pick up the phone and call you if they have any questions or concerns.

### **Use Secure Symbols**

In the checkout process, using secure shopping symbols helps ease concerns over credit card and identity theft. Realistically, unless you are processing thousands of credit card transactions each day, nobody will take the time to try and hack into your system. But what matters to buyers is the “feeling” of security that you can convey with the simple placement of secure images such as Verisign or Thawte, or whatever else may be applicable to your system.

## **6.4 Tracking Your Traffic**

Tracking the effectiveness of your website and marketing campaigns is the single most important thing you can do to increase conversions while lowering advertising expenses at the same time. Unfortunately, most online businesses neglect the tracking of campaigns only to use traffic increases as the primary measure of effectiveness. Not tracking the effectiveness of how your site converts visitors is akin to the NBA not tracking points scored in the playoffs.

Increasing traffic should not be the goal of your online marketing efforts. Increasing traffic isn't even a necessary means to the end. The end (if there is one) should be increasing the number of sales while lowering the cost per sale generated.

## **Server logs**

One of the ways to monitor your site and its effectiveness is to monitor your server logs regularly. There are many server log readers available, ranging in price from free to costing thousands of dollars a month. Find one that is right for you and provides the statistics you need.

Your web host should provide you with server logs. If not, then you need to find a new web host ASAP.

The server logs record the complete record of everyone who visits your site. You can find out what search engines were used to find you, what search phrases were used, how long someone stayed on your site, what page they clicked to, what page they exited on and much more. Knowing this information can help you greatly improve how your site performs at achieving your goals. You can also use this information to measure your sites ability to drive visitors to the point of action, that is, where they buy, call, sign-up or request information.

## **Landing pages**

A landing page is any page a visitor lands on when they first hit your site. Each marketing campaign should use its own landing page, but in the case of optimization, every optimized page is a landing page.

Using server logs and monitoring conversions, you can gauge the effectiveness of your landing pages, arming you with knowledge necessary to make changes designed to improve conversion rates.

## **Research Exercise: Throwing Out the Garbage**

In an earlier research exercise I had you looking through competitor websites to see what worked and what didn't work. Now we're going to do the same with your own website.

Taking everything that you've learned from this book, go through your site page by page, and just as you did with your competitors, do for your own site.

### **Here are some things you need to consider:**

- Page layout and functionality
- Ease of finding contact information
- Page load times
- Page/site theming and its effectiveness
- Shopping functionality (if applicable)
- Does the site utilize any of the common mistakes noted above?
- Effectiveness of the navigation
- Image usage
- Color scheming
- Domain name
- Broken links

Don't limit yourself to just the points above. Be your own worst critic and find everything that is wrong with your site, being sure to write it all down.

You now have a game plan of what changes you need to make to your site to be successful in the online marketplace.

# **Conclusion:**

## **Online Marketing is Essential to Continued Success**

**O**nline marketing is not much different than most other forms of marketing. TV, radio and print advertising all have one goal in mind: to establish your brand, draw new customers and generate more sales. Online marketing is (or should be) about those very same things.

*The primary difference between online and offline marketing is that while offline marketing, only the human element must be factored. With online marketing, the human element must be weighed appropriately, with the search engine element, each carefully balanced.*

*One thing is certain: The continued success of any business will be largely dictated by their online presence. Much in the same way that MTV changed the face of popular music (you can't have a top 40 hit without releasing a video), the Internet is changing the face of business. I believe there will come a day when businesses will need a strong online presence, even to succeed offline, as more and more shoppers turn to the Internet for research and purchasing.*

*For this reason, it is essential that every business take their online marketing efforts seriously. Gone are the days of looking for quick fixes and cheap solutions to bring traffic to your website. Those measures are short sighted, at best, and harmful for long-term success at worst.*

*To ensure that your online marketing efforts are successful, budgets must be appropriated accordingly, with careful thought and consideration to which avenues of online marketing will be pursued (if not all) and when. Decisions must be made whether to perform such marketing in-house or to outsource to an online marketing firm. Is it cheaper to do it in-house? Will in-house be able to provide the same level of excellence and performance as outsourcing?*

*Think through each decision carefully and choose wisely. The success of your business can be determined by the decisions you make today regarding your online marketing campaigns. Remember, with search engines, there are only ten top ten positions. The sooner you establish yourself firmly online, the better you'll be able to hold off your competitors. The longer you wait, the more your competitors will gain their own foothold, leaving you to pick up the scraps.*

*Move quickly, yet thoughtfully. Begin establishing your online presence today and you'll soon reap the gains from those marketing efforts.*

## **Resources:**

### **Where to Go for More Information**

There are literally thousands of online marketing resources available, both for free and at a price, on the web and in the local bookstore. Even if you plan on outsourcing your online marketing efforts it's a good idea to stay knowledgeable. Here is a list of excellent resources for your convenience.

#### **Newsletters**

- High Rankings Advisor ([www.highrankings.com/advisor.htm](http://www.highrankings.com/advisor.htm))
- Search Day ([www.searchenginewatch.com/searchday/](http://www.searchenginewatch.com/searchday/))

#### **Blogs**

- (EMP) E-Marketing Performance ([www.emarketingperformance.com](http://www.emarketingperformance.com))
- SEO Book ([www.seobook.com](http://www.seobook.com))
- Search Engine Watch ([blog.searchenginewatch.com](http://blog.searchenginewatch.com))
- ThreadWatch ([www.threadwatch.org](http://www.threadwatch.org))
- SitePoint's Keywords (<http://www.sitepoint.com/blog-view.php?blogid=17>)
- Search Engine Roundtable ([www.seroundtable.com](http://www.seroundtable.com))
- Search Engine Journal ([www.searchenginejournal.com](http://www.searchenginejournal.com))
- Link Building Blog ([www.linkbuildingblog.com](http://www.linkbuildingblog.com))
- Google Blogoscoped ([blog.outercourt.com](http://blog.outercourt.com))
- A Day in the Live of a Persuasion Architect ([persuasion.typepad.com](http://persuasion.typepad.com))

#### **Forums**

- Small Business Ideas Forum ([www.smallbusinessbrief.com/forum/](http://www.smallbusinessbrief.com/forum/))
- Search Engine Watch ([forums.searchenginewatch.com](http://forums.searchenginewatch.com))
- High Rankings Forum ([www.highrankings.com/forum/](http://www.highrankings.com/forum/))
- Webmaster World ([www.webmasterworld.com/](http://www.webmasterworld.com/))
- I Help You ([www.ihelptouservices.com/forums/](http://www.ihelptouservices.com/forums/))

#### **Books**

- [Nitty Gritty of Writing for the Search Engines](#) by Jill Whalen
- [SEO Book](#) by Aaron Wall
- [Call to Action](#) by Bryan Eisenberg and Jeffery Eisenberg
- [ABCs of SEO](#) by David George
- [Search Engine Visibility](#) by Shari Thurow
- [Search Engine Marketing Guide](#) by Jennifer Laycock

# Definitions:

## Common SEM Industry Terms

Written and compiled by [Jennifer Laycock](#).

**Adult words:** Certain words of an adult nature that are censored by some search engines. These phrases often cause a search engine to limit the inclusion of a web page to the adult area of the search engine. These pages are then excluded from the general search.

**Agent:** A piece of software, such as a browser or spider that interprets the content on a web server and presents it to the user as a web page. Examples include Internet Explorer, Opera, Netscape and various search engine spiders.

*Examples:* MS Internet Explorer, Netscape Navigator, Googlebot, Slurp, T-Rex

**Agent name delivery:** The act of presenting one set of content to search engine spiders based on the name of that spider and another set of content to human web users. This is done to present content that has been specifically optimized to rank well at each search engine while still presenting the same content to each human visitor to the web site.

This technology is easily detected as web surfers are able to use an agent name faking program to appear as if they are the named spider and view the cloaked content.

**Algorithm:** The defined sets of rules put in place by a search engine to measure and sort the web page listings that will be displayed in response to a search query.

**Backlink:** A hypertext link on a web site other than your own that points to your web site. Inbound links are an important part of web site marketing as they can deliver targeted visitors directly from another web site, and can help to improve the ranking position of your web site on engines that use link popularity as a part of their algorithm. (also known as inbound link.)

**Blog:** A style of Internet publishing that uses content management software to allow for quick and easy posting of articles, personal journals and news stories. Also known as "web log."

**Bookmark:** A method of saving a link with a personal notation for a web site that you wish to visit again. Most browsers have some form of storage system that allows for sites to be catalogued in folders. Also known as "favorites."

**Boolean search:** A search function that allows a user to include or exclude documents containing certain words by using the words "AND," "NOT," and "OR."

*Pronunciation:* boo-leen search (noun)

**CGI:** The standard interface between software on a web server and any other programs running on the same machine.

*Also Known As:* Common Gateway Interface

**CGI Program:** A program that handles data input or output according to CGI standards. These types of programs are used to handle database queries, forms and dynamic web content.

**CPA:** An advertising deal in which the purchaser agrees to pay a set price for each action that is taken by the viewer of the advertisement.

*Also Known As:* Cost Per Action

*Examples:* An advertising deal that has a newsletter signup of \$0.25 CPA would cost the site owner \$0.25 for every user that signed up for the newsletter through that program.

**CPC:** An advertising deal in which the purchaser agrees to pay a set price for each click through that results from the advertisement.

*Also Known As:* Cost Per Click

*Examples:* An advertising deal that has a \$0.25 CPC would cost the site owner \$1.00 for every four clicks that their site receives.

**CPM:** An advertising deal in which the purchaser agrees to pay a set price to purchase blocks of 1000 page views.

*Also Known As:* Cost Per Thousand (think M=1000 in Roman Numerals)

*Examples:* An advertising deal that has a \$5.00 CPM and received 6000 views would cost the site owner \$30.00.

**CSS:** Coding option that allows webmasters to apply simple display styles to each page of a web site by setting up templates.

*Also Known As:* Cascading Style Sheets

*Examples:* CSS can be used to redefine the look of standard HTML tags. For instance, search engines place higher value on text contained within the tags, but the default size for these tags is generally too large for modern web design. CSS can be used to redefine the size, color, font and emphasis of these tags so that webmasters can properly utilize them in search engine optimization.

**Cache:** The act of storing of a web site on either a computer's hard drive, or in a search engine's index. On personal computers, cache is used to save a copy of web sites images, text and code to help speed up download upon future visits to the site. On search engines, cache serves as a record of the content of a web page when a search engine last visited and indexed it.

**Click thru:** The act of a visitor clicking on a link displayed within a set of search engine results in order to reach the web page represented by that link. Click thru amounts related to each keyword search can be tracked as a method of determining if a particular keyword will entice visitors to a web site.

**Cloaking:** The act of hiding true page content from either a human or robot visitor. This technique is used both to camouflage actual page content from page thieves and to artificially present a more search engine friendly web site to visiting spiders.

**Clustering:** The process of listing a single page from a web site within a search engine or directory's search results. This is a common practice in order to provide a wider variety of relevant results and is aimed to keep one company from occupying all of the top positions.

**Comment tag:** HTML tag that is used to hide text from browsers. Often used to hide java script code from browsers that are unable to accommodate it. Although some engines will read and index the content contained within these tags, most engines ignore it.

**Conceptual Search:** The act of searching for a document based on words that are related to a concept rather than a document that contains the actual search word or phrase.

**Content rich:** Refers to a web page that contains relevant content to the topic at hand. Usually used to refer to the need to repeat keyword phrases within the body copy of a web site. Search engine algorithms give higher ranking to a site that contains the keyword phrases that a user is searching for.

**Conversion rate:** The mathematical equation that determines what percentage of visitors to a site completes a specified action.

*Examples:* If 4 out of 100 individuals signs up for an online newsletter, the conversion rate for that site is 4%.

**Crawler:** An automated robot program that follows links to visit web sites on behalf of search engines or directories. Crawlers then process and index the code and content of a web page to be stored in the search engine's database.

*Examples:* Googlebot is the crawler that travels the web finding and indexing pages for the Google search engine.

**Cross browser:** A reference to the need to test and adjust web site code, java script and CSS so that it displays properly on multiple browsers.

*Examples:* Some CSS will not display properly on both Internet Explorer and Netscape. In order to be cross browser compatible, a webmaster must design a work around that is tailored to each browser so that the site always displays properly.

**Cross linking:** The act of linking to content contained on a web site from elsewhere in that web site.

*Examples:* Linking each page of your web site back to the home page is an example of cross linking.

**De-listing:** The removal of a web page from a search engine or directory's index. Removal can occur as a result of a cleanup of dead links, as a penalty for spamming, or because of server issues at a site's host.

**Dead link:** The name given to a link that leads to a web page or site that has either moved or no longer exists. Search engines and directories continually work to remove dead links from their indexes in order to improve the overall quality of search results.

*Examples:* When a web site is redesigned to include new pages and remove old pages, the old pages that remain in search engine listings lead nowhere and are referred to as "dead links."

**Deep link:** The act of linking to a page (deep) within a web site rather than linking to the main URL. Directories discourage the submission of deep links as a way to keep their indexes clean and organized.

**Description:** The descriptive text associated with a web site or page's listing on a search engine results page.

*Examples:* Descriptions that appear in results pages from search engines usually consist of the text of the Meta Description tag, or a snippet of relevant text taken from the web page.

Descriptions that appear in results pages from directories usually consist of an assigned snippet of text created by the editor who has reviewed the web site or page in question.

**Directory:** Searchable subject guide organized by topical subject or geographical region and consisting of web sites that have been reviewed and compiled by human editors. Directories are often provided as a browsable alternative to the searchable indexes of search engines.

*Examples:* Yahoo!, The Open Directory Project and Looksmart are some of the most popular directories on the web.

**Dns lookup:** A process which converts a unique IP address into a domain name. Often used by webmasters to research listings contained in server log files.

**Domain:** The name given to the address of a web site. Domains are written in a hierarchical manner with lower-level domains referring to sub-sections of the base web site. Domains are available with a variety of extensions, the most popular of which are .com, .edu, .gov, and .org. Domains are unique and must be registered and assigned to a web host to become effective.

*Example:* <http://www.searchengineguide.com> is the domain of the Search Engine Guide web site.

**Domain name registration:** The act of registering a domain name with an approved registrar.

**Doorway domain:** A domain that has been specifically created to be highly ranked for particular keywords in search engine results pages, but that directs visitors toward the actual domain of a web site.

**Doorway page:** A specially created web page that is designed to rank highly on a particular search engine by utilizing the methods that are known to produce the best results on that engine. These pages are most often designed to be visible to a search engine spider, but to be hidden from a human visitor. Doorway pages are currently considered a recognized spam tactic and are banned by most of the major engines and directories.

**Dynamic IP address:** An IP address that changes with each connection to the Internet.

**Dynamic content:** Web content that is generated out of a database to create dynamic web pages.

**FFA link pages:** Web pages specifically designed to allow anyone to submit a link to their site. FFA sites tend to rotate new links in and old links out. They have little use in search engine optimization and provide minimal traffic.

*Also Known As:* Free For All Link Pages

**FTP:** The protocol used to upload and download content from web servers.

*Also Known As:* File Transfer Protocol

**Favorites:** A method of saving a link with a personal notation for a web site that you wish to visit again. Most browsers have some form of storage system that allows for sites to be catalogued in folders. Also known as "bookmarks."

**Fields:** The act of specifying which location of a page a search term should appear on. For example, users can specify that the search term should appear in the URL or in the incoming link text.

**Filter words:** Common words such that search engines remove from web pages before they add them to their index in order to save space. These words tend to have very little impact on search engine ranking and are usually discounted from search phrases as well.

*Examples:* of, is, the, and, for, it

**Frames:** A coding style that is used to combine multiple HTML documents into a single web page. Frames are often used to allow certain areas of a web site to remain in place (i.e. navigation, header graphic) while other areas of the site are scrollable.

Framed web sites are more difficult to optimize for high search engine rankings because most spiders are unable to read and index the content within a < FRAMESET > tag. Sites

that are designed using frames need to place optimized content in the < NOFRAMES > in order to provide the search engine spiders with something to index.

**Gateway domain:** A domain that has been specifically created to be highly ranked for particular keywords in search engine results pages, but that directs visitors toward the actual domain of a web site.

**Gateway page:** A specially created web page that is designed to rank highly on a particular search engine by utilizing the methods that are known to produce the best results on that engine. These pages are most often designed to be visible to a search engine spider, but to be hidden from a human visitor. Doorway pages are currently considered a recognized spam tactic and are banned by most of the major engines and directories.

**HTML:** The scripting language used to define the content and appearance of a web page.

*Also Known As:* Hypertext Markup Language

**HTTP:** The main protocol used to communicate between web servers and Internet browsers.

*Also Known As:* HyperText Transfer Protocol

**Heading tag:** An HTML tag that designates headlines in the body copy of a website. These tags use the format and are designated in importance by the numbers 1 through 6. (1 being the largest headline.) Heading tags are important to SEO efforts because most engines will give extra weight to keywords contained within these tags.

**Hidden text:** Content on a web site that is coded in a manner that makes it invisible to human visitors, but readable by search engine spiders. This is done in order to artificially inflate the keyword density of a web site without affecting the visual appearance of it. Hidden text is a recognized spam tactic and nearly all of the major search engines recognize and penalize sites that use this tactic.

**IP address:** Unique numerical identifier given to each Internet connection. The IP address is how data finds its way from a web site back to your computer.

IP addresses that are attached to dialup ISP accounts usually dynamic and change with each connection.

IP addresses that are attached to a permanent Internet connection like a T1 line or a cable modem are static and stay the same all the time.

**IP delivery:** The act of presenting one set of content to search engine spiders and another set of content to human web users. This is accomplished by presenting different sets of content based on the IP address of a visitor. IP Delivery is a form of cloaking that is used to present content that has been specifically optimized to rank well at each search engine while still presenting the same content to each human visitor to the web site.

This technology is difficult to detect, as it requires that a user present the IP address of a search engine spider in order to view the hidden web site content. (see also: agent name delivery, cloaking.)

**IP spoofing:** A method of connecting to the Internet or a particular web site and reporting a different IP Address than your assigned one. IP Spoofing is used in SEO in order to trick a spider into indexing one site, while actually presenting another site to the end user. This tactic can also be used to redirect a user to a site other than the one they have clicked on.

This tactic is considered highly unethical and is illegal in some areas.

**ISP:** The designation given to companies that provide access to the Internet.

*Also Known As:* Internet Service Provider

*Examples:* AOL, Earthlink, Juno

**Inbound link:** A hypertext link on a web site other than your own that points to your web site. Inbound links are an important part of web site marketing as they can deliver targeted visitors directly from another web site, and can help to improve the ranking position of your web site on engines that use link popularity as a part of their algorithm. (also known as a backlink)

**Index:** The database of web pages that is maintained by a search engine or directory.

This phrase can also refer to the main page (the index page) of a web site.

**Indexed:** The act of being reviewed and stored in a database by a visiting spider from a search engine.

**Invisible text:** Content on a web site that is coded in a manner that makes it invisible to human visitors, but readable by search engine spiders. This is done in order to artificially inflate the keyword density of a web site without affecting the visual appearance of it. Hidden text is a recognized spam tactic and nearly all of the major search engines recognize and penalize sites that use this tactic.

**Invisible web:** The name given to the content of dynamic or database driven sites that are unable to be indexed by search engines.

**Keyword:** A word or phrase that is used in a search engine query. Optimizing a site entails researching the keyword or keyword phrases that users enter in order to find web sites, and optimizing a web site around those terms.

**Keyword buys:** A type of advertising that entails paying for high placement in search engine results for pre-selected keywords and keyword phrases.

**Keyword density:** Refers to a web page that contains relevant content to the topic at hand. Usually used to refer to the need to repeat keyword phrases within the body copy of

a web site. Search engine algorithms give higher ranking to a site that contains the keyword phrases that a user is searching for.

*Also Known As:* keyword rich, keyword dense

**Keyword domain name:** The act of purchasing a domain name that contains the main keyword or keyword phrase that a site is being optimized for. Traditionally this entails placing a hyphen between each word in the domain. This is done because most search engines read hyphens as a space, thus allowing the domain to contribute to increased positioning for that keyword.

*Examples:* If the main keyword for your web site was "blue widgets," and keyword domain name would be [www.blue-widgets.com](http://www.blue-widgets.com).

**Keyword research:** The act of researching what particular words and phrases are used to search for web sites. This is one of the most important aspects of SEO as it allows a webmaster to write the content of their site in a manner that will help them rank highly on these particular phrases.

**Keyword stuffing:** The act of repeating keywords or keyword phrases excessively in body copy, hidden text, meta tags, or any other code on the site. Originally done in order to increase rankings in search engines, this tactic is now recognized and penalized by most of the major search engines.

**Link farm:** A set of web pages that have been built for the sole purpose of increasing the number of incoming links to a web site. This is done in order to increase link popularity and search engine rankings. Link farms usually require a reciprocal link from sites seeking listings.

Link farms are a known spam tactic and sites that participate in them are likely to be penalized or banned from the major search engines.

**Link popularity:** The act of a search engine counting the number of inbound links to a web site. Many search engines now use this information as part of their ranking system.

Link Popularity is measured by a combination of factors that are designed to weigh the importance of each incoming link. Links from sites with high link popularity will have more weight in a search engine algorithm than links from unpopular sites. In addition, links from sites with complimentary content count as more than links from sites that have no relevance.

**Link rot:** The name given to a link that leads to a web page or site that has either moved or no longer exists. Search engines and directories continually work to remove dead links from their indexes in order to improve the overall quality of search results.

**Meta data:** The information that is contained within the meta tags of a web site.

**Meta search engine:** A search engine that collects results from other search engines and directories and then presents a summary of that information as the results of a search.

*Examples:* Dogpile, Metacrawler

**Meta tag:** An HTML tag placed within the header area of code for a web site. This information is visible only to spiders and does not appear as a visual part of the web site. These tags were originally used by webmasters to provide information about the content of a web site in order to assist search engines in indexing the content. Because these tags were so easy to abuse, few search engines still read the content within these tags.

**Mirror sites:** Sites that are designed to be duplicates of an original site, but are hosted at a separate domain. Mirror sites are often used in SEO to allow for the use of keyword rich domain names. This is a recognized spam tactic and is penalized by many of the major search engines.

**Optimization:** The changes that are made to the content and code of a web site in order to increase its rankings in the results pages of search engines and directories.

*Examples:* These changes may involve rewriting body copy, altering Title or Meta tags, removal of Frames or Flash content, and the seeking of incoming links.

**Outbound link:** A link from a web site that leads the user to a page on another web site.

**PFI:** The act of paying a search engine or directory to include your web site in their index. Paying this fee does not affect the placement of a web site in search results, it simply assures that the web site will be visited and indexed within a specified time frame.

*Also Known As:* Pay for Inclusion

**PPC engine:** A search engine that allows webmasters to purchase their positions within the search results based on the amount of money they are willing to pay for each click through their site's listing receives.

*Also Known As:* Pay Per Click Engine

**PR:** The name given to Google's link popularity measuring system. PR is determined by measuring both the quantity and quality of incoming links to a web site and is a major factor in the Google ranking algorithm.

*Also Known As:* Page Rank

**PR0:** A site that has been penalized for spamming Google will be given a Page Rank of 0. The PR0 acts to lower the placement of a web site or page in Google's search results pages.

**Page jacking:** The act of stealing content, code or images from a web site to place on your own.

**Page popularity:** Determined by measuring the quality and amount of incoming links to a specific web site or web page. This information is often used by search engines to help determine the proper placement for a web site in its search engine results.

**Precision:** How well a search engine is able to list documents that match a specific keyword or phrase query. Precision is calculated by dividing the number of returned documents that contain the search words by the number of documents returned.

**Proximity search:** A type of search in which the user specifies which words should be near each other on the pages that are returned in the search results.

**Qualified traffic:** This term describes traffic that is produced by users that find a web site by searching for a product or concept that is offered on that web site. These visitors are thought to be more likely to interact with or purchase from your web site and are therefore of higher quality than other visitors.

**Query:** A word, a phrase or a group of words, possibly combined with other syntax used to pass instructions to a search engine or a directory in order to locate web pages.

**Ranking:** The placement of a web site within a particular search engine's results pages.

*Examples:* A ranking within the top 20 listings is generally considered to be a strong ranking.

**Re-submission:** The repeated submission of a web site to search engines or directories.

**Recall:** The degree to which a search engine is able to return all possible matching documents in their index.

*Examples:* If a search engine has 1000 pages indexed that contain the phrase "car sales" and it produces 8500 of them in response to a search for that phrase, it is said to have 85% recall.

**Reciprocal link:** An exchange where two sites agree to link to each other.

**Referrer:** The URL of the web site that a visitor has come from. This information is stored in the server's referrer log file and can be used to discover which search engines or web sites are delivering traffic to your web site.

**Registration:** The process of selecting and reserving a domain name.

*or:* The process of submitting your web site to a search engine or directory in order for it to be indexed.

**Relevancy:** How well a search engine result matches the intention of the searcher.

**Robot:** An automated program that follows links to visit web sites on behalf of search engines or directories. Robots then process and index the code and content of a web page to be stored in the search engine's database.

*Examples:* Googlebot, Slurp, T-Rex

**Robots.txt:** A text file that is stored in the top-level directory of a web site to be accessed by robots or spiders that might visit the site. Robots that comply with the "Robots Exclusion Standard" will read the commands in this file and will obey them.

The primary purpose of the robots.txt file is to direct spiders to ignore directories that may contain private or unnecessary information.

*Examples:* The example below attempts to prevent all robots from visiting the /test files directory:

User-agent: \*  
Disallow: /testfiles

**SEM:** The changes that are made to the content and code of a web site in order to increase its rankings in the results pages of search engines and directories. These changes may involve rewriting body copy, altering Title or Meta tags, removal of Frames or Flash content, and the seeking of incoming links.

Search Engine Marketing also entails non-optimization methods of drawing traffic through search engines, including management of paid advertising listings on search engines.

*Also Known As:* search engine marketing

**SEMPO:** Acronym for the Search Engine Marketing Professional Organization, an international industry group.

**SEO:** The changes that are made to the content and code of a web site in order to increase its rankings in the results pages of search engines and directories. These changes may involve rewriting body copy, altering Title or Meta tags, removal of Frames or Flash content, and the seeking of incoming links.

*Also Known As:* search engine optimization

**SEP:** The changes that are made to the content and code of a web site in order to increase its rankings in the results pages of search engines and directories. These changes may involve rewriting body copy, altering Title or Meta tags, removal of Frames or Flash content, and the seeking of incoming links.

*Also Known As:* search engine placement

**SERP:** The list of search results that are returned by a search engine or directory in response to a search query.

*Also Known As:* Search Engine Results Page

**Scooter:** Alta Vista's search engine spider.

**Search:** The act of using an online directory or database of web sites to locate a web page on a specific topic.

**Search Term:** The word or words that a search engine user types into the search box in order to find web page results. Also known as a query.

**Search engines:** A searchable index of web sites that is traditionally compiled by a spider that visits web pages and stores the information from each page in a database.

*Examples:* Google, Inktomi, Alta Vista

**Siphoning:** The act of "stealing" another site's traffic by copying content, tags or trademarked names and phrases.

**Slurp:** Inktomi's search engine spider.

**Spam:** The act of using optimization techniques that are designed to artificially increase the rank of a web site or web page.

**Spider:** An automated program that follows links to visit web sites on behalf of search engines or directories. Robots then process and index the code and content of a web page to be stored in the search engine's database.

*Examples:* Googlebot, Slurp, T-Rex

**Stemming:** The ability of a search engine to recognize word roots and match them with multiple endings. (i.e. run, running, runs) Also known as "truncation."

**Stop word:** Words that are so commonly used that they have no impact on the relevancy of a search query. These words are rarely indexed by search engines and are often ignored in query strings.

*Examples:* the, of, is, an, a, and, if

**Submission:** The process of submitting your web site to a search engine or directory in order for it to be indexed.

**Submit:** The process of submitting your web site to a search engine or directory in order for it to be indexed.

**Truncation:** The ability of a search engine to recognize word roots and match them with multiple endings. (i.e. run, running, runs) Also known as "stemming."

**Web Log:** A style of Internet publishing that uses content management software to allow for quick and easy posting of articles, personal journals and news stories. Also known as "blog."

**WYSIWYG:** An acronym meaning “what you see is what you get.” Refers to programs that allow a user to drag and drop content like page copy and images without having to write or edit code.