

Search Engine Optimization

A Free Basics Guide?

Welcome

Welcome to the Digital Pure primer on SEO best practices. This presentation is not meant to be an end all to learning SEO services, rather a primer for further study and understanding of the deeply complex and changing landscape of the SEO world.

As you are going through this presentation remember that SEO is one of the most important things you can do for your website. If you are looking to drive a lot of traffic to your site, and hopefully sell a lot of products or services, then you must optimize the site.

So get ready for a fun ride through the SEO world. Be prepared to take a lot of notes. Be prepared to make a choice to go deeper and learn more, or to hire a professional that can handle the ins and outs of SEO for you.

Most of all be prepared to have fun learning this ever changing landscape of “artful” science.

Key Terms

There are many terms that are unique to the SEO world. Many of these terms are born out of simple commands and best practices that have evolved over the years.

Here is a short list of some of the bigger terms. Many of these terms we will use throughout this presentation.

Organic = non-PPC results

LSI = Latent Symantec Indexing

SE = Search Engine

SERP = Search Engine Ranking Positions

OPO = On Page Optimization

Keyword Density

PR = Page Rank

Backlink

301 Redirect

Landing Page

.htaccess

Robots.txt

Image alt text

Anchor text

XHTML, XML, HTML, CSS

Heading Tags

What is SEO/SEM?

SEO = Search Engine
Optimization

Optimization is the process of modifying a web site/page for better indexing of the search engines based on the content of the page.

SEM = Search Engine
Marketing

Marketing, is the actions that allow people to find your site or pages in the various engines. This will include things like PPC ads. (more later)

As you can see the terms have an overlapping theme of trying to drive traffic and sales to your site, but they have very different functions. It is very common for people to confuse the two actions, and hinder both in the process. We will only be focusing on the SEO side of things in this session.

What Do You Think Of First

When you think of SEO one thing comes to mind right away

As we saw in the previous slide defining SEO it is ALL practices that are designed to improve a pages ability to rank for a specific set of content.

While keywords are a portion of the total picture. Keywords are only a small portion of that data we are optimizing for.

In the next slide, I am going to show you how this can get very confusing quickly.

Keywords

What Needs To Be Optimized

So, now that we are thinking about keywords, lets see how they fit into the overall plan for optimizing a website. When we are considering a websites optimization we need to look at a number of items.

Here is a **SMALL** checklist of items that will go into the optimization of a site. As you can see there is a lot of details that can go into the basics of starting to optimize a site.

Lets take a top down look at the following items on our checklist.

- Website Title
- Human Readable Addresses
- Address Length
- Address Separators
- Path Depth
- Meta Keywords
- Meta Description
- Proper Header Tags
- Proper usage of , ,
- Alt tags on images
- Anchor Text on links
- Interior Page Linking for page rank
- Latent Symantec Indexing
- Keyword dense content



The following may induce side effects such as increased knowledge, better website traffic, increased sales and overall owner happiness. In some cases headaches and frustration have been known to occur. Please proceed with an open mind.

Website Title

Design, Blog Geek | DavidMcDougal.com | Where GOD and a Geek Meet!

<http://www.davidmcdougal.com/>

When it comes to the website title a couple things are very important.

- Keywords for page
- Name of Page
- Part of Description (optional)

The order and size of the words is very valuable. In the wrong order and the SE's may have a hard time associating the meaning of the content on that page.

When creating titles here is the rule:

- 1.Keywords first
- 2.Description Second
- 3.Site Name Third
- 4.Keep it under 72 characters in total
- 5.Avoid stop words like “a, an, I, the”
- 6.Use “-” or “|” to separate the sections
- 7.Use commas to separate keywords in the title
- 8.Unique for every page

Addressing

When building your site you need to be sure to create website urls that are:

- ✓ Easy to Read and Remember
- ✓ Uses proper separation in the url
- ✓ Is not too many levels deep
- ✓ Is not too physically long

As long as you follow these simple steps you can ensure a highly targetable website url, that both humans and SE's will like

- Do not use dynamic or session variables in your urls if possible
- Use only “-” (dashes) and not “_” (underscores) in your urls
- Be sure your urls are not any more then 3-5 levels deep
- Be sure to keep your entire URL under 115 characters

Meta Keywords

Include any keywords you want here

Do not be a keyword “spammer”

Do not use the same term over and over

Use “,” (commas) to separate the keywords

Put the misspelling of your keywords in here

Capitalize the first letter of each keyword

Place them in order of the longest to shortest keyword terms

Remember that each page needs unique keywords so do not spend all your keywords on a single page.

The meta keywords section of your site is a special area where you can specify the keywords for the page.

Many people think that this section is one of the biggest section on the page, when in fact the SE’s have openly said that they do not use the meta keywords section in their search algorithms anymore.

This does not mean you want to ignore this section though.

Meta Description

The meta description field is probably one of the most overlooked fields, and that is a shame as it holds very good weight for a pages ranking.

When writing the meta description, you need to ensure that you are using a couple of simple rules.

Following these rules will assist greatly in allowing the SE's know the purpose of the page, and what they should rank it for.

In many circumstances, the SE's will use the meta description as the description on the search results pages.

- Unique for every page
- Should be a summary of content on page
- Should contain the primary page keywords
- Should be less then 250 characters
- Needs to be readable, and not a place to spam keywords in
- Usually used as the SERP description for the page by the SE's

Putting It all Together (so far)

So far we have learned about the title, address, keywords, description tags.

These tags are all very powerful together, and can have serious effects on your SERP and PR for the page you are optimizing

Used improperly, and you can have a very negative effect on your SERP and PR

- Titles must contain keywords for page
- Addresses need to be human readable, short and properly formatted
- Keyword tag needs to be completed even though major SE's do not use it
- Description tag is vital to tie the title, keywords, and content together for the SE spiders
- Order of the tags is important.
 - Title
 - Keywords
 - Description



Got a headache yet.... Now that the basics are done, lets get into the serious information

Heading Tags

Heading tags are some of the worst utilized tags today. Most people assume heading tags are only another way of stylizing the text on the website. This cannot be any farther from the truth. You need to start thinking like a SE.

When a SE sees a heading tag it takes note of the title, and expects that the content following that heading tag to be related to the heading. The h1 tag being the most powerful of all of these.

When you are writing heading tags, you need to think NEWSPAPER and not style. Remember that the spiders do not know that your using an h1 tag to make it look bigger then the other text. All style should be done in the css file for the page or site

- H1 tags at the top
- H2 through H6 follow
- It IS ok to use multiple H1 tags on a page
- Keep headings short
- Think newspaper

Bold, Strong, Emphasis

When you want to highlight text on your site to make sure that people see or read it what do you use. Many people used the bold tag to make people read it, and in the old days the SE's weighted this text heavy as it was important.

As soon as people learned this, everyone was using the bold tag to get the SE's to rank their pages for that text even though it was not the primary keyword, or content data. So the SE's adapted and multiple levels were devised.

Now the bold tag is a normal tag, and is seen just like text. The strong and emphasis tags were added to assist content writers in telling the SE's that the content was important, and to tell the human readers the same thing.

Now that there are rules to what you should use, you need to make sure you are following them. Here is the quick and fast rules.

1. Bold should be used as an inline style to create darker text that will get the attention of your user
2. Strong should be used similar to bold, but it also tells the SE that this is important text. You should NOT use strong as a replacement for bold
3. Emphasis should only be used when you are strongly trying to tell the SE that this is important text that they need to rank the content on the page against.

□ `` = style

□ `` = important

□ `` = highly emphasized

□ Do not use at will

Using the wrong tag could cause the content on that page to not be ranked as highly as possible. Be careful in your usage of these simple but powerful tags.

Image Alt Tags

Ever gone to a website and there appears a large blank space where it says "image1.jpg" in its place and you have no idea what it is. Frustrating huh!... Guess what it is illegal, and hurting your SEO.

All of the SE's have started to weigh your compliance with various compliance groups and using that in your weighting for the content on the page. One of the big areas are your images.

If someone with a visual disability, or with a text browser comes to your site, and your images have no alt tag, they get read the image name, with path as the image. The spiders cannot see pictures either, so they get the same thing.

Now the usage of images is great in a site, but you want to take advantage of all your images in a meaningful way. To do this, you need to use the alt=" " tag in your images. You will want to put a short description of the image in the alt tag. This is NOT where you stick keywords etc. If the picture is of a blue mustang, then a good alt tag would be alt="1956 Blue Mustang Fastback". The SE's will see this, and use that in the content of your page instead of hurting you.

W3C AAA

Section 508

Bobby

Watchfire

DDA

You will get hurt, for what they cannot see.

Anchor Text

When you are creating a link to anything you need to make sure you include the title=" " anchor text with the tag. If not, the SE's will not know what the page you are going to is about, and will use the actual text being linked, or the image description as the title tag.

Think of it this way. The most index term is "click here" why... that is what most people use for links. So, why would you want your site competing with the billions of other links on the planet for that term.

If you use the title tag in the anchor text you are able to pass keywords to the linked page or site, and therefore to effect the effectiveness of the page linked to. The opposite is also true, if you use text that has nothing to do with the page you are linking to then you will effect the quality of your link.

- Keywords
- Key Phrases
- Never use "click here"
- Leave it out, and loose the link power
- SE's except experts to link to experts

Interior Page Linking

When choosing to link pages in your site you need to follow some complex rules to ensure maximum PR flow, and relationship from page to page in your site.

When creating a link from a sub page to the homepage you need to use normal linking protocols.

When linking from the home page to specific pages you want to “no-follow” the links to prevent PR leaking to interior pages.

With all that said, there are times where it makes sense to pass the PR from the homepage to the sub-pages and so you will need to review your individual needs.

When linking from sub to sub pages, you want to make sure that you are only linking pages that are relevant to each other. If they do not have the same content family, then link them to the homepage to pass the PR to the homepage, and let your primary homepage linking do the work.

- Use no-follows from homepage to subpages
- Use proper anchor text keywords
- Use normal linking strategies from sub-pages to homepage
- Avoid cross linking subpages not in the same keyword/content family.

LSI & Keyword Density

LSI is the distribution of terms through out a page. Essentially it measures the usage of a keyword or key term from the start to finish of the content.

When reviewing the LSI of a page you need want to spread the content out as much as possible over the page.

Using the same keyword or keywords in the start, middle and bottom of the content is good LSI. Using it only in the start, and bottom or heavy the start, and not in the rest of the content is poor LSI.

The SE's look at the LSI of a site, as the index of importance of all the keywords you have chosen for the page vs the actual usage of those terms. Remember that usage outweighs desire.

The SE's weight the first 200 words of any page as the most crucial. This is where most people will hit a stop point if they are going to read further. Therefore the density of the keywords, and the LSI rating of the page will tend to weight more to the top of the page, then overall. This is not to mean that you should lessen the value of other content by stuffing it in the top 200 words.

If it is in the title, meta it needs to be in the content

The first 200 words are very important

Top, Middle, Bottom

Natural usage

Content must be unique

Alt and Anchor text count for keyword content (if done properly)

Wrapping it Up

BAD

- Not Doing SEO
 - If it is too hard, hire a professional
- Not using ALT and ANCHOR text
 - These are simple things that can have large optimization effects
- Not having unique titles on every page
 - All of the SE's will index the pages, and use the words in the title, so if it is the same for all your pages, you are diluting your pages effectiveness with your titles
- Not using all the meta fields
 - The SE's use these fields to help determine the content on the page, and what they should be ranking that page for
- Mis-using ``, ``, ``
 - Remember that bold is just a inline style look and does not tell the SE spiders that it is important, but you should not use strong and emphasis just to get the spiders attention unless you want it.

GOOD

- Proper usage of heading tags
 - Remember that the SE's see the heading tag as the start of what this section of content is about.
 - Remember that they are not for styling. If you need style, use CSS
- Keyword dense content
 - If it is in the title, meta, heading is MUST be in the main content also
- LSI
 - The SE's use the LSI of keywords to value them in the content. Stuffing them all in the first 200 words, and then not on the rest of the page is very bad.
- Continuing to learn SEO
 - This is not the end of the SEO road, and the road just changed while you were reading this. Remain a student, or hire a professional who.

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