

Search Engine Optimisation Part 1

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Is your web site not getting the number of visitors that you hoped for? Are you not appearing on the listings when you search on Google, MSN and the other major Search Engines?

As this topic is large, we have split it into 3 Fact Sheets:

In Part 1, our E-Business Advisers discuss why a good Search Engine ranking is important for your business, and how Search Engines work.

In Part 2, they discuss practical techniques you can use to improve your Search Engine rankings, and how you can view the coding your site is written in.

In Part 3, they continue the discussion with “meta tags” and “keywords”, and why these are vital to get your site found, as well as giving you the final elements that you need to make your site appear on those all-important Search Engine listings.

1. Why is it important to have a good “ranking” on the Search Engines?

When a Search Engine visitor types in an appropriate search phrase for the kind of business that you are, the result - i.e. where you rank on the listings of the Search Engine - is crucial.

You need to attract new customers to your web site, so you need to be listed, and listed towards the top - i.e. to have a good ranking

If your business web site doesn't appear in the first two pages or so of search results, the chance of searchers finding your web site in the rankings is unlikely.

Searchers simply don't bother looking any further down what might be hundreds of pages.

Your web site is a key part of your marketing strategy, so it pays to spend some time and thought on how you can get your site rankings improved.

There are straightforward things you and your web site designer can do to better your web site rankings on Search Engines.

These techniques are known as “Search Engine Optimisation” - with another three letter acronym - “SEO”.

2. What do Search Engines do?

The aim of any Search Engine is to answer in the most appropriate way the search query that a visitor types into their search query box.

If your web site answers that query in the most relevant way based on the criteria that particular Search Engine uses - you'll be listed at the start!

So why aren't you?

The answer lies in many firms not having a site that allows the Search Engines to really understand what they do.

Fact Sheet

Unless your web site has been “Search Engine Optimised”, they won’t be able to identify how your web site could address the needs of the person who has entered the search query. Your web site won’t be listed towards the top of a search - and you won’t get the visitors you need via this route.....

Straightforward Search Engine Optimisation techniques, when applied to your web site, assist Search Engines to understand what your web site is about.

If they understand how you meet their visitors’ needs, you are much more likely to get listed at the top of a search query.

3. So how do Search Engines find this out?

Search Engines such as Google use pieces of software (called “spiders”, “robots” or “web bots”) that constantly “crawl” the Internet to return search results i.e. they locate different web sites and web pages within them.

Once this data is collected, it’s indexed using a number of different criteria.

When a visitor to the Search Engine site enters a query, they look in their indexed database to find those web pages that are relevant.

However, different search engines prioritise relevance in different ways.

They display the listings in the order of most relevance, based on the weightings they give various criteria.

Search Engines generally keep how they weight different criteria a closely-guarded secret, for obvious reasons!

Just to further confuse the issue - the criteria change over time, as web site techniques develop.

4. What about linking from and to other web sites?

This ties in with other criteria used by some firms - for example, Google and Yahoo! put a value on the links going to your site - if the site linking to yours has a high weighting (e.g. the bbc.co.uk site), then this will also increase your ranking too.

Not all links to your site therefore are of equal value.

You can determine the importance for Google of any web page by downloading their Toolbar from the Google.com web site - there is a little “PageRank” meter which shows how “important” Google thinks that page to be.

You really want sites that are more “important” i.e. have higher PageRanks than yours to link to you to boost your ratings.

This “Linking Strategy” can be important in helping you to boost your site up the rankings.

You should also have links going from your site to related other sites - for example, you could link to an associated service that directly benefits your web site visitors, other sites with relevant articles etc.

You can find these sites by looking at the Search Engines - or by looking at your competitors’ web sites and seeing who they link to.

This is beneficial to you, because Search

