

Search Engine Optimisation Part 3

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

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

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

1. I've heard that “Meta Tags” are important - but what are they?

Meta tags are one of the criteria that search engines look for.

Meta tags are words that you place in the top section (header) of your HTML pages, i.e. the text you can view in the manner earlier described.

They aren't intended to be read by humans, so they don't appear anywhere on the visible web page; they exist solely for the benefit of search engine spiders.

When a spider visits your site, it reads your meta tags and associates your web pages with these keywords.

The keywords that have been used on the www.ebusinessclub.biz “home” page are:

“ebusiness club east midlands, ebusiness advice, internet advice, web site advice, internet marketing advice” etc

2. How do I choose which Meta Tags to add to each of my pages?

Firstly, there's no point in having a meta tag phrase that nobody searches for!

To find out what people are actually searching for, tied in with what you provide, there are web based tools you can use - the best one is probably Wordtracker.com - (which currently costs £15 for a weeks' use).

Firstly, though, you need to think about what your potential customers would be likely to search for if they were searching for your products.

They may well not think in the same way as you do about how they'd look for your products, so it might be useful to ask several. You could also ask friends and colleagues too.

If you target customers overseas, even if they are English speaking, they may use different words for things - e.g. the USA “sidewalk” = UK “pavement”. You need to take this into account.

If your site is designed to be read by speakers of other languages, meta tags phrases should obviously be in those languages.



Fact Sheet

You could also target commonly misspelled words like "accommodation" - (many people spell this without the 2 "m's" or the 2 "c's"). There are many others.

Although you could use single words, you are more likely to get good results from a phrase. Normally, phrases of 2-5 words seem to work best.

For example, on the www.ebusinessclub.biz web site, a meta tag phrase used is "online trading advice for businesses"

Once you've identified the phrases, you can then use Wordtracker. If you save up all the meta tag phrases you wish to experiment with, a single day of Wordtracker use is more than adequate.

You simply enter a phrase you're thinking about targeting, and Wordtracker will suggest lots of other similar phrases. When you've found the ones you like, you can then put them back into the Wordtracker programme.

It will then give a score based on how often that phrase has been searched for, and how many web sites target it as a phrase.

The trick is to find a phrase that lots of people search for - but one that not many web sites target.

This is what the Wordtracker score reflects - but it can take some time for you to identify.

Then, add the meta tags phrases you've identified as having a good score into your site.

You can - and should - have different meta tags on different web pages, reflecting what a visitor would find there.

This is because Search Engines work out the purpose of each page - as well as the site as a whole.

It is also good practice to have one main keyword phrase that you use on every page on your site - this would be the main descriptor of what your site, and business, is about.

As an aside, the client mentioned in Part 2 that sells sticky labels online also uses the phrase "sticky lables" in their meta tags, as people often misspell "labels".

You could do the same too, if a word that you have as part of one of your phrases is commonly misspelled.

It's also important that you have the meta tags at the top of the HTML code page we viewed earlier. Many web sites have a lot of coding before the meta tags: there is evidence that Search Engine spiders don't always read the entire page, so could miss the meta tags.

Finally - it is not advisable to use trademarked names, unless you own the trademark or with the owners permission, either in meta tags or keywords.

Lawsuits have succeeded against firms that have done this with the intent to deceive.

3. Use your identified key words within the content of your site

As Search Engines have started to go further than just using meta tags to index sites, this



Fact Sheet

technique has become more relevant.

This process involves putting human-readable content on your site that contains the relevant keywords phrases you've identified for your business.

The Search Engine spiders also read this text too, and use it to index, and hence weight, your site.

For example, if you sell widgets and are based in Leicester, the (key) word phrase "widget supplier in Leicester" will almost certainly appear throughout your site. The number of times it appears is called the "keyword density".

Keyword density is a percentage.

If the word "widget" appears 10 times on a page containing 250 words, your keyword density would be 4 percent. (10 divided by 250 then times 100 to give a %)

Different Search Engines vary regarding the keyword density they prefer for indexing. Most search engines are set to recognize keyword densities of between 2 and 9 percent.

Again, you should tie this into each separate page of your web site, and the keywords you've identified for each page should also reflect the hidden meta tags that we looked at earlier.

Getting this right can be somewhat tricky, though - keywords appear on the human readable element of the page, so although you need to keep the Search Engine spiders happy, you need to keep human readers happy too!

It's important that you don't sacrifice the quality

of your web page content by peppering it with keywords - it still needs to be readable by a human.

There is also some evidence that Search Engines don't always index pages with less than 200 words, as they struggle to identify what the page is about.

They may decide that a page with less than this amount of text is unlikely to have anything useful to say.

Overall, though, don't forget your main web site goals.

These are likely to be to get visitors to your site so they can either buy directly (if it is an e-commerce web site), or so that you can get them to contact you (if it is more designed to act as online marketing for your business).

A site high on keyword density, but hopeless for a human to read, won't achieve either of these aims.

4. What's next?

Only when you're happy that you've done all the above, you need to tell the different Search Engines that you are there.

Although their spiders do crawl across the Internet, as there are so many web sites it can take them quite a while to find you.

Telling them you're there cuts down the time it takes.



Fact Sheet

The way of submitting a site varies from Search Engine to Search Engine - but all make it easy, as they actively want you to do this.

On www.google.co.uk (or [.com](http://www.google.com)), go to the "About Google" link below the search box. The page then details what you have to do to submit your site to them.

On www.yahoo.co.uk (or [.com](http://www.yahoo.com)), go to the extreme bottom of the page, and click on "How to suggest a site".

Most other Search Engines have similar requirements.

The good news though is that many Search Engines share data - so you don't have to register your site with them all.

If you visit www.bruceclay.com, you will see a graphical representation of all the links between the Search Engines. This is the "Search Engine Relationship Chart"[®], and is an invaluable resource.

You will note from this chart that there is an organisation which seems to be a key element in providing information to many Search Engines - the Open Directory Project at www.dmoz.org.

This is a human-edited directory, which may or may not accept your listing - but should certainly be one you submit your completed site to.

If you are interested in markets in other countries, different Search Engines may well be more important there than the ones UK based web users are used to.

You can find a listing for Search Engines, literally from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe - at www.search-engine-index.co.uk

Even when you've reached this stage, there are potential pitfalls and errors you could make - we strongly suggest that you read the (non-technical) article at listed at the end of the Useful Links before you submit your web site.

5. Finally.....

Unfortunately, each search engine uses different criteria to index the web pages it finds.

This can make it extremely confusing to attempt to please them all.

By combining meta tags, page titles, domain names, files size and file names with keyword-enriched content, you can ensure that your site will be at least reasonably friendly to the vast majority of search engines.

This means that your site will be more likely to be listed early and often in search results, increasing your ability to attract new customers.

Finally, it's also vital that you measure the impact of any optimisation - you can do this by analysing your visitor patterns - (See Fact Sheet - "Web Site Analysis & Statistics" in this series)

6. Useful Links

See Parts 1 & 2 of this Fact Sheet.

See the Fact Sheet on "Free or cheap offline marketing for your web site"



Fact Sheet

See the Fact Sheet on "Pay per Click Advertising"

www.bruceclay.com -
Site with informative and useful tactics for Search Engine marketing your site

www.bruceclay.com/searchenginerelationshipchart.htm -
Invaluable relationship chart on the above site, showing how the different Search Engines inter-relate.

www.search-engine-index.co.uk -
Listing of Search Engines worldwide

www.searchenginewatch.com -
Lots of interesting and informative items about Search Engines and how to optimise your site for them

www.webmasterscene.com/article/6/ -
Direct link to a really useful article on the "Top 10 Search Engine Positioning Mistakes" - we strongly suggest you read this before submitting your site to Search Engines.