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Best Practices for Designing a Search Engine Friendly Website

It is extremely important to design your Website for optimum search engine and directory visibility in order to increase your presence on the Web. Below are some tips on how to design a site that is search engine friendly and assists in driving highly targeted traffic to your site.

Tip 1- Select Relevant Keywords

The most important thing to keep in mind when selecting keywords for search engine optimization is to select keywords you believe your potential customers will use to find you. It is important to be sure that the users finding your site are also a potential sales lead. In order to select the appropriate highly targeted keywords, a little bit of research is necessary. Consider what keywords your target audience would be searching on by studying existing company online and offline materials for keyword frequency or inquiring with existing customers on how they might find you on the Internet. Develop a list of potential keywords and then visit major search engines and directories and types in the list of keywords you want to test. Next, visit the top twenty resulting Websites to find out what keywords your competition is using to drive traffic to their site. Do this by viewing the source code of the competition's Websites and then adjusting your keyword list accordingly to include additional relevant keywords. The final list of keywords should be included within the copy of your site as well as the meta-tags in your source code.

Tip 2- Consider Keyword Frequency, Prominence, & Placement

Keyword frequency, prominence, and placement are another determining factor in how your site will result in the search engines and directories. When designing and coding your site, there are a few things to consider about how to place keywords with the right frequency and in the right locations. Not all search engines spider meta-tags, so it is important to place keywords in both meta-tags and site copy. Most search engines index the full text of each Web page, so it's vital to place keywords throughout your page content with relative frequency. Conversely, if keywords are appearing too frequently, your site may be accused of spamming and may be removed permanently from the index. Recently, search engines have also begun to prioritize the use of keywords in a site's URL in their

ranking formulas; consequently each Web page should have its own unique URL with keywords included.

Keyword placement on individual pages is equally important. For the most favorable search engine positioning, keywords should be placed towards the top of each individual Web page. Be sure when designing the site that keywords have been placed in the title tag, meta-tags, headlines or top graphical images, and the first paragraph of body copy. The title tag is the first thing a search engine's spider sees on your page, so make sure that it appropriately describes the contents of that Web page in one sentence.

Tip 3- Beware of Certain Design Technologies

There are specific design technologies to beware of when designing your site that could affect your search engine rankings. Many Website designers utilize frames when designing a site, but frames act as a barrier between a search engines spiders and your optimized text. We recommend avoiding frames because search engines are unable to effectively crawl and index the site for relevant keywords when they are used.

Another design technology to be aware of is excessive JavaScript. JavaScript can create problems when trying to get your pages properly indexed by the search engines because it often appears in the code at the top of the page, pushing your real content further down the page. Search engines pay more attention to the text at the beginning of each Web page meaning the real content, further down the page, may get neglected because it is less important to the search engine. One way to avoid this from happening is to place all JavaScript in external text files to make your pages more easily indexed by the search engines.

Also, avoid heavy files that are going to lengthen download time. The download time on large images, Flash files, or audio files can cause the search engines to leave your Website un-indexed. Always test the load time of your homepage on a 56k connection to be sure it loads fast enough and won't affect your search engine rankings.