

Search Engine Optimization - An Overview

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The term "Search Engine Optimization," or SEO, has become a pronounced buzz term in Internet commerce. SEO is simply the process of improving the amount of volume, also known as traffic, to a website by placing it as high as possible in search results through a search engine such as Google, MSN, or Yahoo!.

Content:

The term "Search Engine Optimization," or SEO, has become a pronounced buzz term in Internet commerce. SEO is simply the process of improving the amount of volume, also known as traffic, to a website by placing it as high as possible in search results through a search engine such as Google, MSN, or Yahoo!. Better search engine placement means a greater likelihood your website will be found and viewed by potential customers. Searches can be industry-specific, location-specific, or image-specific. The search engine results process involves a "spider" crawling the web page, downloading it, and storing it on the search engine's own server. A second program indexes specific information from the web page, such as words and phrases on the page and links

contained in the page. This is how the importance of keywords came to be. Unfortunately, webmasters would manipulate page rankings by stuffing the page full of keywords. The pages may have made it to the top of search engine lists, but many times the websites contained information irrelevant to the customer, or the webpage was so difficult to read the customer would ignore the content. To combat this problem, search engines now have a much more complex method of scanning a web page for relevance, making it more difficult for webmasters to manipulate search results.

Getting Indexed There are two methods of marketing your website so it can be indexed by search engines. The first is the 'natural' method, where search algorithms scan a complex number of factors such as relevance of keywords, relevance to the customer, and inbound links to determine indexing and placement. Search engines such as Google offer methods of submitting your web page to guarantee indexing. Pages that are indexed should automatically be discovered by other search engine crawlers. The other method of indexing is paid indexing. Yahoo! Is one search engine that offers either flat-fee or pay-per-click options of listing your website. Paying for indexing does not guarantee the website's standing in search results, only that it will be included.

SEO Techniques Techniques used for search engine optimization fall into two categories, white hat and black hat. White hat techniques are those that search engines recommend and that conform to the search engine's guidelines. It is generally explained as creating content for users, then making that content easy for spiders to access. One important aspect of white hat techniques is that the web page indexed by the search engine is the same content the user will see. Black hat techniques involve methods that attempt to trick the search engine into better rankings, or that involve deception. Hidden text, cloaking (delivering a different page to search engine crawlers than the one delivered to human website visitors), and loading a page with paid links are all examples of tricks that can get you into trouble with search engines.

Improving Your Odds of Discovery There are over 200 factors that search engines take into account to rate web pages. You must take a balanced approach when determining how to best get your website discovered and indexed by search engines. Keywords are important, but be certain your content is well-balanced and the keywords are used sparingly. Make your content easy to read, with your key word or phrase included at least once on the page. Heavy keyword repetition is known as spamming and could get you into trouble. Adding links from trusted sites, supported by relevant text and page content and that are relevant to your industry, are the ones that will help your site. When submitting to article directories, create useful, meaningful content that is informative and will encourage readers to link to. Videos, blogs, product reviews, and so forth are other informative ways of encouraging reader links to your page. When developing your web content, keep the above factors in mind and ensure you are catering to the best interests of your clients and not to the search engines.

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