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18 Effective Search Engine Optimization Techniques

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Proper Search Engine Optimization, otherwise known as SEO, has quickly become a popular topic of conversation among website owners and entrepreneurs. The difference between having a successful website, and hosting a flop, is often the difference between whether or not you've incorporated proper keywords and phrases into your webpages.

Learning proper SEO techniques can seem like a daunting task, especially to those who are not familiar with the concept. The following list offers 18 simple SEO techniques you should keep in mind when developing and marketing your website.

1. Make sure your website is initially designed with your search engine optimization needs in mind. Search engines look for text, not flashy graphics and cool layouts. The trendiest web designs will mean nothing if no one is able to find your site.
2. Every page of your website should have a title tag with text describing either your site or what is on the page. Be sure the text includes SEO-type keywords instead of the name of your website. Unless you're incredibly popular, no one is going to be looking for you by searching for your name. They'll most likely search for a product or service and the keywords you use will lead them to your site.
3. Consider canonicalization, or whether or not your website address includes or excludes the www prefix. If you choose to use the www version of your website, make sure the non-www version directs users back to the one you use. Make sure you use your preferred version (<http://www.mydomain.com> or <http://mydomain.com>) every time you place a link to your site on the web. Don't use both!
4. When designing your website, be sure to avoid too many drop-down menus, confusing image maps, and excessive images. If you must use any of these methods, be sure to include plenty of text links for the search engine spiders to find and identify. Without links, the search engines will not pick up your site information.
5. It does not matter what type of website extension you use (ie. .html, .htm, .asp, .php). Search engines do not look at the web extension and it will not have any impact at all on search results or ranking.
6. Every page on your website should include a link to your home page and your sitemap. Make sure every link is the same. Home page links should go directly to your domain (<http://www.mydomain.com>). Make sure your internal links do not include the additional /index.html or .php text as it is not needed (ie. <http://www.mydomain.com/index.html>).
7. Are you sharing a server with other websites? If so, you'll want to conduct a black-list check to make sure you are not sharing a proxy with someone who has been banned by search engines in the past. Being on the same server as a website with a poor reputation may damage yours.
8. You'll hear the same phrase over and over again: "Content is king". It is imperative that your website have fresh, unique, and quality content that is updated on a regular basis. Be sure to include your favorite keyword phrase within the body of the content!

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9. People are more likely to input a phrase instead of a single word when conducting internet searches. If your business has a physical location, incorporate the name of your city into the text as well. For example, you might use "our Philadelphia location" instead of "our location". Including your city name will improve the chances of your site being seen in location searches.
10. **If the information on your company website doesn't change regularly, or remains static, you might want to consider starting a blog. Search engine spiders are always looking for fresh content. Use your blog as an advertising tool and link back to your website within each and every post.**
11. Write naturally. The worst thing you can do is try to cram a zillion keywords into your article or blog entry, making it messy and difficult to read. Search engines are able to determine whether or not your text is logical and they will ignore content with ridiculously high keyword density.
12. Building links to your website is essential to its success. As a matter of fact, links are like the queen to complement your king's fresh content. Choose a keyword phrase and network with other websites, asking them to place links on their pages. Don't hurt your ranking by having non-related websites place haphazard links. While it may seem great to gather 100s of backlinks, you're better off limiting your links to related websites. Ten relevant links stand a better chance than 100 irrelevant links.
13. Links within your website should be built with keyword phrases as well. Try to avoid using generic anchor text such as, "click here".
14. Don't place a list of links on your website. Always place a link within at least two to three lines of related content. The better your description, the more likely it is someone will click on the link.
15. Don't limit your keyword or phrase to text links. You should also incorporate your keywords into your image alt tag and domain name, whether it is part of the name itself or contained within the description.
16. Try to avoid using frames, Ajax, and Flash as much as possible. None of these functions are keyword or search engine friendly and will hurt your SEO results.
17. Before your website can be found by the search engine spiders, it must be indexed. Search engines such as Google have regular submission forms, but it can take days or weeks for your form to be processed. Having a highly ranked website place a link to your site is a sure-fire way to have your site indexed quickly.
18. No matter what you hear, don't be overly concerned with the Google PageRank of your website. A website that is properly developed and contains good content can outrank a website with higher PageRank.

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