

# Are You Targeting The Wrong Keywords?

By Kalena Jordan

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Kalena Jordan  
kalena@high-search-engine-ranking.com

High Search Engine Ranking

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A journalist asked me recently to name the most critical element of any search engine optimization campaign. I didn't hesitate to respond "keyword selection".

Like it or not, the keywords and phrases you select to describe your site within your META tags and body text can make or break your listings in the search engines. It's a sad fact that most companies are targeting the wrong keywords and losing traffic as a result.

Even sites that have excellent rankings will not benefit if those rankings are for unsuitable keywords. Let me give you an example:

A few months ago, we had an Australian client who wanted us to implement an optimization campaign to improve their search engine rankings, but without jeopardising existing rankings they had achieved for two particular search phrases: "Internet solutions Australia" and "online banking solutions".

Can you guess what products and services this company sells? The search phrases don't really give much away do they? In fact, this company is a distributor of web site design software that is specifically tailored for banks. Now ask yourself this: if you were a bank looking for this company's products, would you have typed in either of the phrases above to find their site? I doubt it. You would type in something more logical like "web site design software" or "web sites for banks" right?

This company was clearly targeting the wrong keywords and phrases. Their top ten rankings for these phrases were irrelevant, because nobody was searching for these phrases in relation to the products this company was offering. The phrases they had chosen are what I call "jargonised", that is, they are filled with industry jargon and buzz words. Take "Internet solutions" as an example. Such jargon has found its way into our language with the onset of the digital age and is bandied around boardrooms and marketing departments everywhere. However the definition of this phrase is very broad and could be used to describe anything from a dial-up connection to a web site itself. It's not a logical choice for searchers and is therefore useless as a key phrase to target.

To prove my point, I researched the client's chosen phrases using Wordtracker keyword software and then did comparison research using the more logical phrases above. The results were crystal clear: the logical, simplified phrases were many times more popular than the "jargonised" ones.

Once I demonstrated this to the client, they were more than happy for us to conduct more thorough keyword research and start their search engine optimization campaign with a clean slate.

When selecting the keywords and phrases for your site, remember to select search terms that describe your products and services in the most logical, simple and specific way. By doing so you'll not only increase the search engine traffic to your site, but you'll ensure your visitors are highly qualified to buy your products and services when they arrive.

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