

Copywriting Strategies for Search Engine Optimization

By Paul J. Bruemmer

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Search engine optimization (SEO) is an important part of your online marketing strategy because it's trackable, measurable, and provides qualified leads and excellent ROI. Improve your online visibility by using SEO copywriting strategies when creating content.

SEO Copywriting Strategies

Start by ensuring that the content on every page in your site is written from the customer's viewpoint rather than your own. Why? Because customers think "What's in it for me?" and couldn't care less about puffy descriptions that are important to you but might be irrelevant to them. Below are the Web page copywriting guidelines that will make your site search engine friendly, improving your rankings and producing qualified traffic.

1. Content – Ensure that the content on every page in your site includes your strategic keywords and accurately describes your offerings. This helps you rank high in search-engine crawlers and also improves the user experience. Users will click to your site from search engine queries when you provide relevant descriptions and HTML tags containing your strategic keyword phrases.

2. Strategic Keyword Phrases – Determining your best keyword phrases for each page is a vital and time-consuming task. These keywords are used in your title, description, and keywords meta tags, as well as in your content, so it's important to get this right through careful research.

- Start by brainstorming a list of keywords describing your offerings. Try to imagine what users would type into the search engine box to find you. Check your Web logs for clues.
- Check your keywords out on WordTracker or the Overtute Suggestion Tool. These tools maintain a database of keywords revealing which words people actually use on search engines, and how popular these words are with competitors.
- Select two or three of your most relevant terms (high scores in WordTracker).
- Expand your keywords to include plurals and misspellings.
- Use several strategic keyword phrases to write your copy. Remember that search engines work with text, not graphics, so ensure that your homepage includes at least 200 to 250 words. Repeat your keyword phrases at least three times, possibly more if copy is lengthy. Use keywords in headlines and sub-heads. Hyperlink keywords so they stand out.

· Create a new page for each topic.

3. Title Tag – Write an HTML title tag for each page. This should be the first HTML tag on the page in the Head section. Use compelling words that will draw users to your site. Use questions if possible because it makes people think. Start with important keywords at the beginning of the title tag. Begin with a capital letter and use sentence case for easy readability. Good title tags read like a one-line ad that solves a problem and shows urgency. Don't use your keyword phrase more than once in a title tag.

4. Meta Description Tag – This HTML tag is important because it's often used by search engines as your site description in search results. It's also used to help summarize Web sites when the spider robots index pages. When writing your description, make it compelling and relevant so potential customers will click to your page. Copy should contain several strategic keywords from the page. Search engines supporting description tags sometimes limit copy (150 to 400 characters), so place essential copy in the first 150 characters.

5. Meta Keywords Tag – This tag contains the most important keywords for each page. It will be read by search engines supporting the keywords tag, which includes AltaVista, FAST AllTheWeb and Google. Engines that don't support keyword tags say they don't penalize for them (Lycos, for instance). Keyword tags help users find your pages in search engine queries. List as many keywords as possible, up to 1,000 characters including spaces. Place keywords in your tags with or without commas, it doesn't matter. Place your most important keywords first.

So there you have it, the basic guidelines for SEO copywriting. It's both an art and a science, one that takes time and requires attention to detail. If you're not a skilled writer, it could pay to hire a pro copywriter. In either case, rewards will be gratifying as your rankings and traffic increase with optimal copywriting strategies.

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