

# Is Your Website Optimized for Search Engines?

By Scott Buresh

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For the technically inclined, there are numerous places on the web to get detailed, in-depth information on how to properly optimize a web site for the best possible search engine rankings. However, many people don't care about the technical aspects of search engine optimization- they just want to know what is wrong with their site (and how to fix it). What follows is a practical guide that covers some of the most basic search engine issues. It is in no way intended to be comprehensive, but it should help the average site owner determine whether their site is optimized, and if not, how to make some simple changes to improve their search engine rankings.

## Issue #1- The Title Bar.

On your homepage, what does the title bar say? If you use Internet Explorer, this is the blue bar at the extreme top of the window that displays your page (it may include the words "Microsoft Internet Explorer" at the end). Does your company name appear here by itself, when you have more important keywords to emphasize? Worse yet, does it say "untitled"? This area should contain the most important keywords you see on your homepage (Don't have any text on your homepage? See issue #2). To check the rest of your site, click on any link from your homepage and see if the words in this title bar change for each page in your site. They should- and each title bar should contain the most important keywords from their corresponding page. Note: Very long keyword strings in the title bar should be avoided- six words or less is optimal. Also, words in the title bar should not repeat more than once, and identical words should not appear next to one another.

## Issue #2- Content.

Search engines all try to list sites that contain good content. Translation- you need words on your pages, not flashy graphics. This text should contain the most important keywords that your potential customers would use to find you on a search engine. If you have very few or no words on your pages, it is a good idea to add some, ideally around 250 per page. For aesthetic reasons, this is not always practical, but even 100 well-written words can have an impact on rank. It is also important that you make certain that the words are written in a language the search engines can read. Using your mouse, bring your cursor down to the text on one of your web pages. Clicking and holding down the left mouse button (make sure you aren't near a link) see if you can highlight just one or two words of the text. If you can, everything is most likely fine. If nothing happens, or you can only highlight a large block, it is most likely in graphic form. Graphic text needs to be replaced by standard html text to allow the search engines to read it. Your web expert should have no problem understanding what you require, and the transition should be fairly simple and affordable.

## Issue #3- Meta Tags.

Some people believe that meta tags are the Holy Grail of search engine optimization. Unfortunately, their effectiveness is limited (many engines ignore them completely), but they can play a limited role in determining rank on some engines. To see if your site has meta tags, go to your home page. Click the "view" command at the top of the browser window. From the pull-down menu, select "source". This should open up another window that shows your code. Much of this may seem indecipherable, but there should be two commands there (usually near the top of the code). One of these says meta name="description" content= and will go on to describe your company and products, and one says meta name="keywords" content= and goes on to list applicable keywords for your site. If these tags are missing, have your web expert insert them.

#### Issue #4- Links.

Link popularity has become increasingly important to search engine rankings, with 19 of the top 20 engines using it in their ranking algorithm. Simply put, search engines give a ranking boost to sites that have links from quality, related sites. There are numerous free tools on the web that will allow you to see what sites link to yours (just type "free link popularity check" in your favorite search engine). If you don't have many sites linking to yours, it may be time to start a link building campaign. This is where you find quality, non-competing sites in your industry and ask them if they would like to exchange links. An additional benefit of link exchanges is that these links can bring you additional, highly targeted traffic.

#### Conclusion

Although following the above guidelines will by no means guarantee you top page rankings for your keywords, fixing one or more of the problems should have a very positive impact on your search engine rankings. For the volumes of potential customers that a search engine can send to your site, it's certainly worth the effort.

Scott Buresh is co-founder and principal of Medium Blue Internet Marketing. For more helpful tips, visit <http://www.mediumblue.com> . For a free search engine analysis, please visit <http://www.mediumblue.com/analysis.html> .

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