

Search Engine Optimisation – Getting Google to love your site!

The process of Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is to get search engines to 'prefer' your website over those of your competitors.

There are very few rules to SEO, as the major search engine providers do not publish how their engines work, but there are guidelines and recommendations that can be applied to a website to make it more easy for your customers to find.

Here are the basic guidelines recommended by Prestbury Digital Services for getting your website up the rankings.

1: Use best practice and write valid html Search engines only read the html code of web pages. Many web designers and developers use other languages to enhance the visual appeal of a web site or provide functionality that html is incapable of. If this is overdone it can render the website invisible to search engines. There are international standards for the use of html and search engines check for compliance with these standards. You should ensure that your website complies with the standards, see <http://www.w3.org/standards/>.

2: Page Rank The position of a website in the natural listings of search engines depends on its Page Rank. The higher the page rank the higher the closer to the top of the listings. The major search engines do not publish how they calculate the page rank but, and the algorithms they use are constantly changing to improve the search experience for users and foil bad practice, but using the tips given here will help to improve your page rank.

3: The importance of Keywords These are the words or phrases that people use when searching to find your site. You should think very carefully about this and draw up a list of appropriate keywords. They should be what people use to search, which is not necessarily what you do. If you provide a service in a particular geographical area that should be included. You should also choose keywords that are not likely to be optimised by your competitors. You should also use different keywords for different pages and build this into the design of your website. Ideally your domain name (website address) and page names will include keywords.

4: Keywords in your Content The words on your website are the most important method of communicating what products and/or services you provide. Unsurprisingly, the search engines now place more importance on the relevance of the copy than anything else. You should ensure that your copy not only communicates clearly to your visitors but also includes your selected keywords. The page title and headers should also include keywords. One word of warning, the search engines will at best ignore lists of keywords that appear irrelevant and they may penalise you with a lower ranking.

5: Keywords in Meta Tags Within the html code of a website page there are special lines of code that are not displayed in the browser but are used to provide information about the page. These lines of code are known as Meta Tags. There are two types that are especially important for SEO, these are the 'keywords' and 'description' tags. The keywords you would like to target should be included as a list within the keywords meta tag and a brief description of the page should be included within the description meta tag.

6: Best use of Images Search engines cannot 'see' images, therefore, you have to provide other information to let the search engine know what is in that space. All images should have a description and alternative tag included within the html. This should be done, regardless of SEO, to make sure that your website can be understood by visitors with impaired vision using a screenreader. If possible, use a meaningful keyword within the description.

7: Outgoing and Internal Links The internet is all about links. It is important to write links in a search friendly way to contribute to the page ranking of your website.

Bad

Click [here](#) for information about our new keyword service.

Good

Find out more about our [new keyword service](#).

In the second example the keyword is included within the link and this will contribute to the ranking. In the first example the word 'here' is the link which is not a keyword and will make no contribution to the ranking.

8: Inbound Links One of the basic principles behind the page rank calculations is that the more links a page has to it the better it must be. Therefore, you should aim to get as many other websites linking to your website as possible. It is more sophisticated than this. It is about both the quantity and quality of links. Links from high ranking pages give you a better score and conversely links from sites that Google does not like can reduce your ranking. Therefore, it is not generally a good idea to use the linking services that are widely advertised. You do not know what sites will be used and they may be using outlawed practices, such as "link farming".

9: Use Social Networking The most effective way of generating inbound links is to contribute to the social networking community, for instance write a regular blog or post to Twitter, Facebook and Linked-In. You can include your website address in your posts and if you can get people forwarding your links to their networks your website quickly becomes popular and favoured by the search engines.

10: SEO is a continuous process You cannot perform SEO once! It is a continuous process of making modifications – monitoring – reviewing – making more modifications. By following the simple guidelines above you should see more visitors to your website but you need to regularly monitor the traffic to your website and regularly make modifications.

Sometimes you have to experiment using educated guesses and monitor the results. For many small businesses one update per month is sufficient but if you can you should update your website more regularly than this. Link updates to your website with contributions to the social networking sites. The search engines like to see that a website is being used, updated and growing.

You can write about what products and services you offer, and also write about what you do not offer. For instance if you produce green widgets but not red ones, you can write about why you do not produce red widgets. People searching for red widgets may find your site and decide that they would prefer a green widget.

Finally, there is no need to panic. There are many web designers and developers that can help you. Prestbury Digital Services offers a range of services from creating a new website to helping overhaul an existing one or helping with improving your search rankings. Please contact us for a straightforward, no obligation discussion on info@prestburydigital.co.uk or 07929 003037.