

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

There is a myth going around that suggests optimizing your site is all about Meta tags. Once you have read this simplified SEO guide, you will realize it is NOT!

Our intention is to address some of the major SEO facts and take you briefly through the key elements you will want to look at in your site with an easy to use work guide.

Once you have finished reading this, you should be in a position to determine whether or not you are actually just as capable of working on the SEO for your site, as any budget (large or small) will obtain, with a 'specialized' SEO company.

Doing the SEO yourself, may not be as hard as you think and remember... we are here to help our clients business to succeed, should you use AwebZ sites or services, we can offer different levels of service to help get our clients SEO underway.

Firstly, you need to realise that there are no guarantees with SEO, as the search engines are constantly changing the methods they use to locate your site and the pages within it. Many companies offering SEO services promise great things, that quite frankly are not necessarily achievable, AwebZ do not profess to be SEO experts, but we do understand and respect the importance of SEO inclusion. We believe given the facts, our clients have the ability to understand and act on the latest recommendations themselves.

KEY FACTS – Understanding Search Engines

- **Most Search engines are 'crawler-based'. These 'crawlers' to go through your site and locate what they need.**
- The use of the recommendations below can help optimize your site and make your site more attractive to crawlers.
- Big money is involved in SEO and search engines keep their cards very close to their chests... Google even advises the public to be wary of companies suggesting they know more than others or have 'special relationships' with search engine companies enabling them to know how crawlers are working! The following link provides Google's thoughts on such companies.
<http://www.google.com/support/webmasters/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=35291>

THE ACTION PLAN

STEP 1 Understanding and writing your SEO Keywords

STEP 2 Understanding and using the 'Page Title' tag

STEP 3 Understanding and using the 'Body' Text Content

STEP 4 Understanding and using the benefits of Internal & External Links

STEP 5 Understanding and using the 'Description' Meta tag

STEP 6 Understanding and using the 'Keyword' Meta tag

STEP 7 Understanding and using the 'Image Alt' tag

STEP 8 Understanding what you need to maintain and why

STEP 9 Final Key Facts

More... Submissions, Directories & Paid Advertising

STEP 1.

Understanding and writing your SEO Keywords

Keywords are words the public would use to locate a site, offering services/goods such as your own. They come in the form of Direct and Indirect words and/or short phrases, which you want to ensure are included in many areas of your site (visible and non- visible areas), with the intention of attracting visitors (particularly the ‘crawlers’ we discussed earlier). In addition, you may find that keywords can help you to write a well informed yet brief text. Your human visitors will appreciate that!

1. Start with words/phrases appropriate to your business and the goods/services offered.
2. Direct Keywords are words that are appropriate to the services/goods offered on the site/page you are working on.
3. Indirect words are the words related to your direct keyword list or words that people might use to locate your field of business (similar to your ‘direct’ keywords). You might also want to look at ‘phrases’ appropriate to your business.
4. Niche keywords can make a whole lot of difference to your ranking, so consider these.
5. Look at geographical wording also, people can enter geographical locations.
6. Try to look at making your target keywords at least two or more words long. Too many sites use the same relevant single keyword, meaning the competition between similar sites is tougher. Look at stringing say two or three words together.
7. You can re-use the same word again, provided it is in a different context. It is not clear exactly how many times to limit a single word’s use, however we would suggest no more than 5 times.
8. Most importantly, remember who your target audience is and what they might ‘key in’ when looking for the services/goods you offer!

REMEMBER: Keywords for one page might not suit another page, so we advise you review every page to establish keywords for your site! You DO NOT need to stick with the same list of words forever. The whole idea is to increase your list and juggle it around sometimes then, watch to see any change in the impact of site hits.

STEP 2.

'Page Title' Tag

An important part of SEO and often overlooked. The page title tag is crucial to a majority of search engines and should be a brief yet, heavily 'key worded' piece of text. Try to ensure direct keywords are nearer the beginning of the title.

In addition, the 'page title' is used should a visitor 'bookmark' or mark as a 'favorite', a page within your site, so it is advisable to put relevant keywords nearer the beginning.

Some of the major crawlers will use a page's title tag as the text when listing your site. The number of words displayed on the top of a page will depend on the search engine (it can vary); search engines can also interpret the text to include their own details.

KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER:

1. Only use 'direct' keywords for the page title.
2. Use words most appropriate for the individual page.
3. You are looking at using around 50 characters and no more than 65 characters as it is widely understood that a site can be penalized for being 'over optimized' and containing too many characters. Some search engines have a filter that will trigger an *Over Optimized Penalty*. Like many, AwebZ use a comma as a character to space words/short phrases.
4. Once you have establish the key words you consider most appropriate, incorporate them into your 'title tag' in a short descriptive fashion.
5. Ensure the most relevant keywords are at the beginning of the text.

STEP 3.

Body Text Content

The text body of your site is crucial!

The secret to writing a good text body is to incorporate a mix of direct and indirect keywords into the text body of your site. It's not as hard as it sounds; simply make sure your text is informative and not too long.

Remember to use your 'keyword' list and make changes during maintenance should it be required.

Obviously there is no limit to the number of keywords you can use in your text. However, remember you need your 'human' visitors to understand and stay interested in what you have to offer them. Something that has always worked well for our clients and helps maintain a visitors interest, is to have 'snippets/teasers' to tempt and lead visitors into your site further. Simply add an internal link at the end of the 'snippet/teaser'. Internal links do not need to be limited to the front page only, nor do they need to be limited to the top of a page and can in fact be helpful lower down in the page as the crawlers can seek them out.

A well written piece of SEO text will contain keywords with internal links included, which as we mentioned earlier can assist search engines/crawlers to stay attached to your site. These links can be within the text or as separate short text lines.

KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER:

1. Incorporate into your text, many of your direct and indirect keywords.
2. Ensure the first paragraph in your text is a summary of the page, containing both direct and indirect keywords.
3. Include internal links to areas within your own site (ensure they are not broken links)
4. The most prominent words should be closer the beginning of the text

5. The number of keywords you can use is endless remember though, nobody likes to read endless text...so be creative!
6. Ensure as much of your text content as possible is added to the HTML code, rather than entered via an image of text. AwebZ strongly promote the inclusion of text within the HTML code.
7. Your visitors need to see 'with ease', what you have to offer. Reports have found you only have a number of seconds before they will tire and leave.

STEP 4.

Internal / External Links

Internal Links are links to areas within your own site.

They can be particularly useful to SEO, as they enable 'crawlers' to navigate around your site with ease.

External links are links to sites other than your own.

They can be extremely beneficial, particularly when they are related to a popular site.

HTML hyperlinks placed within the home page linking to major internal pages or sections of your web site is a good idea. You can also adopt this facility in the additional pages of your site.

AwebZ work hard to ensure linking is fully effective, by constantly seeking out broken links on its clients sites. A broken link means the link is going nowhere!

KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER:

1. Incorporate Internal and External Links to your site.
2. Be sure to use your keywords in your links.
3. Ensure any HTML Hyperlinks are placed lower down the page, to entice 'crawlers' who seek them out.
4. There is NO LIMIT to the number of links you can have. Just make sure they are not broken.
5. Monitor your links. Over time external links can disappear and leave you with a broken link.

STEP 5.

'Description' Tags

Most recommendations regarding the 'Description' tag suggest that many of the major search engines do not even use this tag anymore. In fact some reports suggest Google either limit the character maximum to 130 characters or ignore it altogether!

Search engines can in fact automatically generate their own description for your site, by extracting parts of your sites tags and body text.

Ensure the content of this tag is 100% relevant to the page content and is used to repeat or strengthen keywords already in the text body.

KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER:

1. You are looking at using no more than between 130-155 characters. Any more are generally not utilized.
2. Use both direct and indirect words for the description tag.
3. Remember the 'crawlers' can use their own interpretation for a description.
4. Should your first paragraph within a page be keyword rich (as recommended), consider using the first couple of lines for this tag
5. Search engines vary in the amount of text they display, so don't expect to see all of your description used.

STEP 6.

'Keywords' Meta Tag

Whilst many people believe this tag is the 'tag of all tags' and may overlook other tags, to incorporate this one, the fact is that many now suggest that this tag is becoming extinct! However, some search engines are still using the original SEO features and as such we feel to ignore the keyword tag could be foolhardy.

You are looking to include both your direct and indirect words for this tag, with the purpose of attracting different types of visitors. You want to accommodate the different ways people use the search engines to locate what they want.

The crawlers that use this tag will tend to work better when you repeat the main keywords used in the text body, this serves to strengthen them. Ensure this tag has 100% total relevance to the content of the page.

Use terms relating to the text content of each individual page. Many of your pages will be offering something different and that needs to be reflected in your choice of keywords used.

Try to look at making your target keywords at least two or more words long. We're not saying don't use single words, just be aware that to increase your SEO success, means being a little more 'creative' with your keywords.

KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER:

1. You are looking at using approx. 250 characters (approximately 20 words).
2. Do not expect to see all your keywords displayed and try and use target keywords of at least two or more words long.
3. Try targeting geographic or sector specific keywords
4. Don't rely on placing your major keywords in this tag alone. Ensure direct and indirect keywords are reflected in the text body also.
5. Strengthen the use of the keywords used by including them in your initial paragraph.
6. Remember to try and use keywords of two or more words.

STEP 7.

'Alt' Tags and Image Titles

When an image is added to a site, there is an option to insert an alternative name (this wording is actually used should the image not display for any reason). This of course is rare, however, more importantly to you; it means there is another way to insert a keyword into your sites code.

In addition, anywhere an 'alt' attribute (name) can be used is an ideal place to use one of those appropriate 'keywords' (e.g. mapping co-ordinates).

KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER:

1. Keep the tag brief, preferably one significant keyword.
2. Look at the file names of your images. Ensure they contain key relevant wording.

STEP 8.

Maintenance Requirements for Your Site

It is important to maintain your site and needn't take long.

You **don't** want client's pointing out any problems and you **do** want those search engines to remember you are there!

Depending on what you want from the SEO of your site, determines the level of time you might want to consider spending on maintenance. We advise that you monitor your site at least every one to two weeks as a minimum for maintenance and updates.

The time taken to find the right balance of SEO can vary greatly; maybe you hit it lucky and get just the right balance of SEO, meaning no need to spend further time and/or money getting to the number one listing!

Giving your site a 'face lift' often, reflects on your business and the services you offer.

Be on the lookout for broken links (it can happen over time and pages move)

Resubmit your top pages if you make significant changes to ensure you keep your site current.

Don't obsess over your ranking. Recognise that SEO is not the ONLY way of attracting traffic to your site. We believe you have to weigh up the millions you are competing with against plain and simple advertising of your site. If your site is exciting, informative and relevant, people tend to feel comfortable with it and bookmark it...they will return.

WEB ANALYTICS REPORTING:

These reports provide detailed information about the history of your site over a set calendar period.

The information can be used help make informed decisions when making SEO adjustments. The details can include such areas as, how many 'hits' (visits) your site received on any given day, which country the hits came from, the types of words used to access your site and much more. AwebZ offer its clients an initial report free of charge, so they can view the benefits of such reporting.

STEP 9.

EXTRA KEY FACTS YOU NEED TO BE AWARE OF:

1. Give SEO changes time to work through the system. It can take around 4-6 weeks for SEO changes to your site to filter through the search engines, so patience is required.
2. Ensure the navigation within your site is easy. This will help both the crawlers and human users to stay interested.
3. Consider including a 'site map' page detailing your site, include titles/keywords that can link to every page within your site. Once submitted, it can also help search engines locate pages within your web site.
4. Don't sit there 'hitting' your own site everyday...the search engines know it's you!
5. Make sure the most prominent words are at the beginning of text.
6. Ensure your sites code is well written and constructed!
AwebZ have provided IT services for over 20 years now and recognize the importance of ensuring code is well written and constructed in a way recommended internationally to prove reliable upon display and attractive to search engines.
7. Adding an icon (favicon) to your site cannot only look professional but provides the ability to add an 'image' tag to incorporate an SEO keyword.
8. Some people use 'cover pages' (a one page site) rich in keywords that link to their main site.

SO....there it is!.. Probably not has difficult as you thought it might be!

Remember....The sooner you get started the sooner you can expect results

Should you wish to learn a little more than the basics of SEO, please read further.

A Budget for SEO. Is it necessary for me?

It's up to you to establish whether or not there is a need for you to set up an SEO budget. As we have said before, we are here to help guide our clients through SEO, it's a constantly changing market and it is left to you to determine whether or not there is a need to include a higher budget in your business for site optimization. It is for you to determine whether or not you believe an SEO 'specialised' company can establish and maintain the high page rankings they might offer.

A majority of our clients feel that they are just as capable of determining their text themselves or hire a copywriter and inform them of the keywords.

ADDITIONAL SEO

- Submit Your Key Pages
- How Do Directories Work?
- How Do I Prepare A Submission?
- Submissions To The Open Directory
- Submissions To Search Engines (such as Google, Yahoo and ASK)
- Paid Search Engine Advertising

Search Engine Submission

ABOUT SEARCH ENGINE SUBMISSIONS

Submitting your site to a search engine is like 'waving a flag' to say 'I'm over here!' It doesn't make any promises to place you higher up the rankings....but it may strengthen your chances! This is because the possibility that crawler-based search engines locating your site are increased. This in turn can get your site listed with other search engines for no additional cost.

AwebZ recommend the submission to search engines of two or three pages that best summarize your web site (one must be your index/home page).

Getting your site listed with search engines does not necessarily mean your site will rank well or any higher for particular 'search terms' used, for this you would need to look at paid advertising.

We generally recommend to the majority of our clients, that they should wait two or three months after the launch of their site, to see how the keywords they have applied work first. This can be established by either the number of inquiries you may be receiving or with the use of a statistics report. AwebZ provide Geo Statistical Reports to their clients for a nominal fee. A report similar to the one we produce is pretty comprehensive, informing clients of many helpful areas including, words visitors use to locate your site, to the country visitors are in when they locate your site.

It is still possible to submit your site to search engines for free, however if after this you still aren't doing well with search engine 'crawlers' listing your site, then you would need to consider spending money submitting directly to such directories as the Yahoo or Google directory , to see if this would help you further.

KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER:

- Most search engines will locate other pages in your site, via the links within pages submitted.
- It can take a month or two to get "non-submitted" pages listed.
- Not all pages are guaranteed to get listed.
- Search engines can overlook sites/pages, so it can be a good idea to submit the top two or three pages.

HOW DO DIRECTORIES WORK?

Directories are search engines powered by human beings. Human 'editors' compile all the listings that directories have.

The advantages to being listed with the main directories is as stated previously, it highlights to the crawlers where you are.

A free directory does not generally supply confirmation that your site has been accepted, in addition there are no guarantees it would be accepted either. Should you not see your site listed after about 3 weeks, try resubmitting it.

A fee based submission does tend to acknowledge that your submission has been accepted (within approx. 7 business days).

NOTE: This is still not a guarantee that you will be listed

HOW DO I PREPARE A SUBMISSION?

Before submitting to any directories, you should be prepared with written text of approximately 25 words or less, describing the basis of your entire web site.

Using your keywords list, be sure to include key terms, that best describe what your site has to offer.

Should you be submitting to a free directory or a non-commercial directory, avoid obvious marketing terms.

SUBMISSIONS TO THE OPEN DIRECTORY

Listing with the Open Directory is straight forward. To submit, locate the category you want to be listed in. Then use the 'add URL' link that appears at the top of the category page. Fill out the form, and that's it -- you've submitted.

Because this is a free directory, you must remember the guidelines as stated above for free directories.

SUBMISSIONS TO SEARCH CRAWLERS (such as Google, Yahoo and ASK)

Aside from link building, Google offers an 'add URL page'. This enables you to submit URL's directly into its crawler. Again, there are no guarantees that Google will actually include a URL submitted to it this way.

We suggest you have your home page URL, in addition to perhaps one or two other URL's from 'inside' your Web site, submitted to the 'add URL' page.

The absolute best way to get listed with Google is to establish a good 'linking' system. As covered earlier, you might also want to consider the use of keyword rich, cover pages to assist in this.

PAID SEARCH ENGINE ADVERTISING

Examples of paid advertising are 'Google AdWords, Yahoo Search Marketing and the Microsoft AdCenter.

A majority of the major search engine key players accept paid listings. It is an acceptable way of ensuring the specific search engine will include your site in the top results listed within a day or so.

This can be a costly process and one to be investigated well. We recommend you fully investigate and understand the costs involved, before you get involved!

It is an option for clients who wish their sites to be quickly visible in a particular sector. Some businesses may like to use this option as part of their long term advertising plan. Paid search listings are also known as Pay per Click (PPC) or Sponsored listings.

Google AdWords involves 'bidding', whereby basically you agree to an amount you wish to pay every time someone clicks on your listing, known as Pay per Click (PPC) and Cost per Click (CPC).

Your listing will only appear in the terms you have requested and the listing appears near the top right hand side of the regular search results location.