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What the heck is Search Engine Optimization anyway?

Bottom line --- it means ensuring that Search Engines can find and read through your entire site! The concept is that simple.

What exactly do I mean by reading through your site? Search engines these days are getting smarter. That's really great news because that means they are actually reading the text (the content) on your website pages. It also means that what you write on your pages is extremely valuable. It is how you tell the search engines the topic of your site.

Let's say you have a site that is geared to sell your home made organic fresh salad dressing. Take a whole afternoon and look at your site from a different point of view --- the point of view of a search engine.

Does your site use a title? This is a critical piece of information is the first clue that you give to Search Engines. To find your site's title look at the very top left hand side of your browser. Does it say 'Internet Explorer? You don't have a site title. You will need to look at your HTML code and include a HTML Title tag. And here's a SEO hint – put the most important piece of information about your site first. For our fresh organic salad dressing site we need to say "Organic salad dressing made fresh.'. Don't bother with "We make a great flavorful fresh organic low carb salad dressing". Keep the title short and sweet. Most search engines will only read the first 120 characters anyway.

Are you using your company logo on the site? Did a graphic designer create a great graphic with your company name? Fantastic! Okay, so include the company logo and graphic version of the company name. But here's the rub, search engines can not read a graphic so you must write out the company name somewhere on the web page. Put it somewhere near the top of the web site page to indicate importance. Your company name must be included in an HTML Header tag. Work with the content of your website to include your company name in other places on your website.

Are you using other images on your site? Remember that search engines do not understand them unless you tell them so be sure and use the HTML tags to help describe the image. Using descriptions on images will emphasize the different topics of your web site.

Equally important is to be specific when describing your company and your product. You've probably heard a lot about the phrase 'keywords'. They are critical to the successful conversion of a website visitor into a new website client. You must use keywords that your potential clients will use. Here's a hint --- don't use just keywords – people search on keyword phrases. For our website example, don't use 'dressing' use 'fresh organic salad dressing'. If our company had an individual flavored salad dressing we would want to be sure and say 'Italian gourmet organic salad dressing'.



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This is where a great SEO can really help you. They will have access to the different phrases that people actually use to find a web site --- and it's usually NOT what you think. Specialized reports are tracking each search performed on a web site. The goal is match your website up with the way your potential customers are searching. And that is an evolving target. Most search engine users have learned that if they are looking for 'dressing' or even 'salad dressing' they will find lots of results. More and more searches are being performed with keyword phrases such as 'Italian organic salad dressing'. The bottom line is know your target intended audience is and gear your site to them.

Another aspect that a great SEO that can help you is they understand what each different search engines expects. They understand the mechanics of the HTML that must be used in each page on your website. They will work with you to fine tune each individual web site page to the best page content possible.

Finally one other key area to consider is ensuring that your site is linked by other sites. This is a key piece of the search engine optimization for Google; other search engines do not place such a high importance on links.

Be sure and ask yourself the question why would someone visit my website over my competition? What do I have that they don't? For our salad dressing company, let's include recipes on how to use our salad dressing for a great family dinner. Include a picture of the great finished dish --- and make it easy for the website visitor to download the recipe. Remember to make that dish; they have to buy your salad dressing. If they love the dish, they will buy and make more! Be constantly looking for new ways to use your product --- your website visitor has to have a reason to return!

What NOT to do.

Avoid any SEO person who knows a great trick to make your web site show up number one the rankings. There is no 'trick' -- it's a lot of work. You are not the only one who wants to have that top spot. Everyone does. That means you must revise your website on a regular basis. Bottom line, you may have the number one position today, but next week that can change. It's critical to have that fresh content

Don't go straight to using Google or Yahoo paid ads or even sponsored ads. If the search engines can't read your site -- or if the site is unappealing to your target market -- no one will stay on your site for long. You're wasting your time and money.

There is another benefit to revising your website. Search engines will love you. They are always looking for new content. Here's a SEO tip, change your content. If you change it regularly, the search engine will visit your site again and again. If you leave your site stagnant, search engines will not visit regularly.



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It's amazing to me today but I still hear 'SEO experts' talk about Keyword stuffing. It's an old trick where a keyword would be repeated many times in a row. Don't do it. Search engines look for this ---- and now they are penalizing sites that engage in these practices.

Don't expect to NOT spend money. Remember that all of the search engines have two main purposes – to provide you with relevant results for your search and to make money. And because their goal is to make money that means they will be changing.

Don't expect to NOT spend money. Sorry for the repeat but it's also important in getting the right links to your website for Google. The links should be related to your site in some way. Many of the links which will help with your own ranking charge fees, so a good SEO will have a plan to get you in relevant directories and portal listings.

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