

The Scoop About SEO

Seven Steps to Organic Search Engine Optimization

by Mary Gospe

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is a strategy to understand and leverage how search engines like Google and Yahoo! rank results. The goal is for your website to be listed at the top of relevant search results so prospects investigate your offerings before those of your competitors.

There are two types of search engine optimization strategies: organic and paid. Organic SEO involves building your website in such a way that search engine spiders find key words and links so that your site comes up at the top of search requests. Paid SEO involves placing pay-per-click (PPC) ads on Google AdWords, Yahoo Overture, or other search engines. PPC advertising is a fast and effective way to generate leads and boost website traffic. Unlike organic SEO, which may take weeks to generate results, you can have a PPC ad up and running within a matter of minutes. Together, organic and PPC advertising can result in immediate leads and a significant return on marketing investment.

Here are the typical steps involved in an SEO project:

Step 1: Analyze and Select Keywords

Keyword analysis is the process of determining which key words or phrases your prospects are most likely to type into search engines to find the solutions you offer. Use your internal staff, competitor's web site, web analytics tools and PPC ads to help you select the optimal words and phrases.

SEO vendors analyze log files and use web analytics technology to identify the words and phrases prospects are using to find your site and that of your competitors. A free utility such as the [Overture Search Term Suggestion Tool](#) suggests search terms and tells you how many times they are entered into the search engines in a given month.

Step 2: Enhance Content

Once you have a targeted list of keywords and phrases, you should begin the process of incorporating them into all parts of your website, including URLs, meta keywords and descriptions, titles, text and links. Not long ago, it was sufficient to only incorporate the keywords into your site's meta index. This is no longer the case. Search engines rank sites based on content and links, not just meta descriptions.

Step 3: Add Content

In addition to adding keywords to existing content, you should continually create new content. The more the content relates to your targeted keywords, the higher your ranking. One way to boost the amount of relevant content on your site is to publish white papers and articles in multiple formats such as HTML and PDFs and

include separate executive summaries.

Step 4: Modify Site Design

Some design tips to improve the visibility of your site to search engines include:

- Use clean HTML code
- Avoid incorporating key words or links in graphical images or Flash since they will not be identified or indexed by the search engines
- Eliminate frames since they also make it difficult for search engines to index your site

Step 5: Build Link Popularity

Search engines rank web pages based on the number and quality of links pointing to a site. To increase your link popularity, incorporate links to and from partners and affinity sites. Make sure that these sites relate directly to the products or services you sell. Frequently publish press releases and articles that point to your site.

Step 6: Submit the Site

When your site is optimized, you will want to submit your site to directories to improve your link popularity. Pick high quality general directories, such as dmoz.org and specialized vertical directories within your industry. Often submissions carry a minor price tag, but if the directory has good traffic (use www.alexacom.com to check) it will be worth it. As long as your site has good inbound links, search engines will find it.

Step 7: Monitor Results & Make Adjustments

SEO vendors such as Bloofusion (see Sidebar) have tools to monitor your search engine traffic and rankings. They can analyze downloads or purchases and determine how your customer came to your site and what pages they viewed prior to purchase. With this knowledge, you can then add additional content or make other changes to your site to maximize results.

Summary

Organic SEO is a business strategy that all companies should consider. Most SEO projects produce desired results within three to six months. It is advisable to hire an SEO expert who has the analytical tools, industry knowledge and web development skills to quickly and effectively optimize your site. Your competitors are doing this today.

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