HOW TO
HELP NEW CUSTOMERS FIND YOU ONLINE

OPTIMIZE YOUR WEB SITE CONTENT FOR SEARCH ENGINES

Potential customers often use search engines like Google, Yahoo, and Bing to look for a product or service. You want to make sure your site is one of the first ones they come across in search results.

Understanding a bit about how search engines work can vastly improve the chances that your site will turn up (and turn up high) in the listings returned when someone searches for the types of products or services you sell.

This is known as search engine optimization, or SEO. Optimizing your Web site might seem difficult, but there are some fundamental steps you can take to make your Web site better known to search engines. Here are some tips to help you get started:

FIND THE RIGHT KEYWORDS

To get your site and products to rise to the top of search engine results, you must pepper your content with the words your customers actually use to describe (and search for) what you're selling. For example, a dog walking service might use the phrase "dog walking" instead of "canine exercise" for one of its targeted keyword search terms. Both phrases essentially mean the same thing, but most people would probably search for dog walking simply because it's a more common term. Keep this in mind when you're writing the content on your site.

If you need help choosing the right keywords for your site, there are many free keyword suggestion tools available on the Web that either analyze your site's content and suggest keywords, or show the popularity of keywords that you enter on their site. Google's Keyword Tool is a good place to start.

PICK YOUR KEYWORDS AND STICK WITH THEM

When it comes to keywords, repetition is okay. In fact, the higher the keyword frequency, the greater the likelihood of a higher ranking in search results.

The measure of how many times a keyword is repeated compared to the overall content of a Web page is called keyword density. For example, if a keyword was used five times out of a word count of 50, the keyword density would be 10 percent.

But try not to go overboard with your keywords. Remember that people will be reading your content—not just search engines—so making your content interesting and readable is still important. As long as you write with your target audience and keywords in mind, your Web content should be optimized. If you want to learn more, visit the free density tool at SEOchat.com to help you get on track.
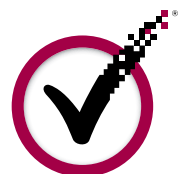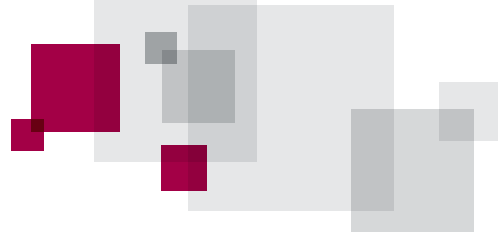
GET THE RIGHT WEB ADDRESS

Start with a Web address (URL) that's descriptive and relevant to your business, but isn't too long or confusing. Be sure to spend time picking your URL, and get some outside opinions. If you're already stuck with a Web address that just isn't working for you, you might consider getting a new one. You can redirect (ask your Web host) from your old URL to your new one so your existing customers will know where to find you.

Using keywords within the subdirectories of the domain name can also help your site's ranking. For example, if a dog grooming business called the Dazzling Dog Salon also offers a dog walking service, that company would want to create a directory called www.dazzlingdogsalon.com/dog-walking-service.

PAY ATTENTION TO THE TITLES AND <H1> TAGS OF YOUR WEB PAGES

Okay, so this seems technical, but it's easy. Just work with whoever is creating your Web site to make sure the Web pages have descriptive titles that really say what your site and the content is about. Remember your keywords that you picked out earlier but forget cute names or plays on words—they just confuse search engines. For example, a Web site that offers swimming pool supplies and parts may have a page that lists current coupons and other money-saving specials. Instead of titling the page "Dive Into Our Deals"—a play on taking a dive into a pool—it would be a better idea to name the page something more descriptive that both people and search engines can understand, such as "Discounts on Swimming Pool Supplies and Accessories."

Search engines also pay attention to a Web page's <H1> tags. "H1" is short for "Header 1," and these tags change the font size on the page, similar to creating document headings in word processing programs like Microsoft Word. Using keywords in your <H1> tags gives search engines even more information about the topic of the Web page. You can ask your web developer to modify this information on your Web pages, or you can do it yourself if you know a little HTML.

KEEP YOUR SITE STRUCTURE SIMPLE

Again you'll probably want to work with your Web developer on this, but it pays to give some thought to how your Web site is organized. Web crawlers—robot-like applications that search the Web for pages containing keywords—don't scour the entire Web. Instead they limit their search to high-level pages. This means that if a section of your site includes a dozen subsections (or subpages), the lower-level pages are unlikely to show up in users' search results. It's also important to include a site map, a Web page that acts like a table of contents for your site.

Optimizing your Web site is an important step, but making sure that people know your site is trustworthy is also essential. VeriSign Trust Seal can help you establish that trust and help you set yourself apart from your competitors. To learn more, visit the VeriSign Trust Seal Web site at www.verisign.com/trust-seal.

LEARN MORE

For more information about how VeriSign Trust™ Seal can bring trust to your business online, please call: 866-878-7847, 650-426-5333 or email: trustteam@verisign.com. Visit us at www.verisign.com/trust-seal for more information.

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