the insight group

Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

Some thoughts on how you can improve your Google rankings

According to a survey by EDialog, marketers rank SEO as the top channel for getting a return on your investment. So doesn't it make sense to do as much as you can to make sure your website is doing everything possible to rank well in Google/Bing etc search results? Here are some tips, all of which you can do yourself, to improve your site's rankings.

The Top Tips

1. Keyphrases & Search Terms

What are the key search phrases a potential customer would type into Google if they were looking for the products and services you provide? Make a list of these and make sure you cover everything you provide. Then find out how you rank for these already by typing in some of the phrases into Google. Does your website come up on the first page of the results? If not, you've got a problem, because 75% of users never scroll past the first page of search results. Then go through each page of your website and assign one or two key phrases to each page. Make sure the copy for the page contains the key phrases once or twice. Don't assign the same keyphrase to more than one page otherwise Google won't know which is most important. And use phrases and not single keywords, because people typicall type phrases into Google, eg "marketing agency in Bracknell" and not just "marketing."

2. Site Structure/Revenue Pages

Do the pages on your site run into multi-levels? Are the pages that make the money buried deep within the site? If so, Google's robots may never find them. Consider having links directly from your home page to pages where people can buy or download information. This will help Google find those pages.

3. What's Important to Google?

Google don't publish their ranking algorithm, but they do talk about what's important and there are plenty of experts who spend all their time analysing this. Current opinion seems to be that domain trust, link popularity and anchor text are the most important factors in determining ranking. Next is on-page keyword usage.

This means that in order to get ranked higher, you need your site to have authority and be trusted. How do you do this? By creating regular fresh content that persuades other sites to link to your site. The authority of the sites that link to you also reflect on you, so if eg Microsoft links to your site, you'd get ranked highly for that. But if the people that link to you are not authoritative, or are not relevant, then you'll be penalised in the rankings. So don't beg for links from say a flower shop if you sell ski gear, it won't do you any good and may actually do you some harm!

4. How Content Can Help Your Rankings

As we've said, generating regular, fresh, compelling content is the best way to get your rankings improved. Blogs, how-to guides, top tips, free downloads, videos, articles, competitions, can all help. But you must promote these things too, so that people can find and link to them, either via social media, which counts in the rankings, or directly from their own websites. If you have images, pdfs or videos on your website, make sure you give these meaningful names eg "ladies-skinny-jeans" and not "312453-Z.jpg". PDFs can also be given meta properties to help search engines find them, so check all your PDFs and fill in the meta data.

5. What Can Hurt Your Rankings?

There are lots of things Google will penalise you for, and the list changes almost daily. Here are some definite no-no's: don't mention your product/service 75 times on one page; slow page download time, frequent server downtime; so make sure your hosting server performs well; links from your site to web spam sites; duplicate pages - you won't get penalised for this but if you have the same content in more than one location on your site, Google will only rank one of them; no meta tags - if you don't have meta titles and descriptions on your site, Google won't display proper descriptions in the search results page and won't know what your pages are about;

little or no content - is your web page full of images, and not much text? Google doesn't like this and prefers rich content to crawl; missing pages - make sure you use proper 301 redirects if you change the name of pages so that Google doesn't end up on a missing page and stops crawling your site.

6. Useful Resources

There are several free resources that will help you.
• **Google Analytics**: www.google.com/analytics/ is a must and will help you work out who is visiting your site, what search terms are bringing them there, and lots more. You can now even see who is on your website real time!
• Get a **Google WebMaster** account - it will help you work out what's right and wrong about your website from an SEO point of view: www.google.com/webmasters/
• **Your competitors' websites!** View their home page and click "View Source" to see what meta titles and meta descriptions they are using, especially useful if they are ranking higher than you in the searches.

Need some help?

A successful SEO program needs continuous effort. If you don't have the time to do it yourself, we can help. Contact us to discuss what you need.
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