

# Create a Website that Draws a Crowd

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Your website is your face to the world; it's unlike any other form of marketing or selling you'll ever do. If you want a website that people flock to, it needs to be rich in content and functionality.

## Website Do's

Whether you are working with a professional to design your Website, or going it on your own, you must understand and maximize the contribution you make to the success of your site. Here are some important things to consider:

### **Clarify your goals**

Years ago people built websites just to have a cyber-presence. Today's Websites can do much more. So first, determine what you want your site to do. Do you want it to be an online brochure? Will it be educational? Will it be a sales vehicle? Are you doing e-marketing or e-commerce?

### **Determine key words and phrases**

You must determine the words or phrases your audience will use to find your site. If an attorney uses "matrimonial attorney" and people search under "divorce lawyer," they won't find that attorney. If you're a money lender, for example, you may use "factoring," "asset-based loans," and "bridge loans."

### **Remember that first impressions are key**

Always put the good stuff first. Think of your home page as a giant magazine rack. Your audience scans the front cover of the magazine. Within 8 seconds, they'll decide to stay or look elsewhere, so make sure you capture their attention right away.

### **Write for your audiences**

Remember that your site should be about your audience, not just about you! You must understand and be able to convey "what's in it for them." Benefits and features work well. Look at the websites of your competitors to see how they tantalize (or frustrate).

### **Write for readability**

Web audiences want instant information. Therefore, you must keep the text concise-often much shorter than its print equivalent. Here's how to give your audience the information they want quickly.

- Write headlines that give key information. (Pattern your headlines after those you see in a newspaper.)
- Limit paragraphs to 8 lines of text.
- Use bulleted lists.

Make effective use of white space and appropriate graphics.

### **Go modular**

Think about the content and how the average person will access your pages. Keep the topic and content of each page focused, making each page one complete thought or idea. This means that each page should be able to stand-alone. People have different browsing styles, so they'll enter your website from different paths. Therefore, you should consider providing your key information on several pages of your site.

### **Link to other sites**

No matter how great your content is, don't waste the most valuable feature of the web-links. You've probably found that one of the best experiences you have on the web is the serendipity of stumbling upon a cool website you didn't know existed. When you provide useful links, your website becomes a valuable resource that your audience will return to, and recommend to others.

### **Build in tracking**

You must be able to quantify the return on investment (ROI) of your website by measuring the activity of visitors, e-marketing, e-mails, faxes, and phone calls. It is critical to know who visits your site and how often.

### **Publicize your site**

What good is your wonderful site if people don't know it exists or how to find it? Here are some ways to publicize your site after it's published:

- Include the URL on your letterhead, business cards, and e-newsletters (Some people print out e-newsletters and distribute them.)
- Add the URL to the signature portion of all your e-mail messages.
- Post it to appropriate newsgroups.
- Send out a press release, if that's appropriate for your business.

### **Keep your site current**

A static site is a boring site. A static site may work for some businesses, but you want to give people a reason to return. A good way to keep your site current is to include new links, industry tips and trends, and any other information your audience will find useful.

## **Website Taboos**

There are a number of reasons that websites aren't successful. Here are just a few:

- **Lack of key words:** You must have the key words people will use to search for your site. Otherwise, they won't know you're there. These words must be peppered throughout the site because you may not know where people enter.
- **Bleeding-edge technology:** Your site isn't New York City's Times Square. Don't use images that have an overpowering effect on the human peripheral vision just because you can. That's akin to generating documents that look like circus posters just because you have a word processor. Include only what you need and what's appropriate for your business.
- **Hard-to-read colors:** People still use black backgrounds with yellow lettering, or something equally awful. Use appropriate, readable colors.
- **Outdated information:** Keep your site current. You need a web gardener to weed your web garden and replant new flowers. An outdated site is the sign of an outdated company.
- **Long downloads:** Human factors guidelines show that audiences lose interest after 8 seconds. Many people still use dial-up modems, and download time may be a significant factor for your audience.

## International Websites

As Internet access grows across the globe, so do translation and download problems. Following are some guidelines to help meet the needs of a worldwide audience:

### **Work with a translator**

If the site is to be translated, identify the languages. Send text, menus, and entries to the translator to learn of potential problems. For example, in other languages nouns may not have similar conventions and many words and phrases we typically use may be offensive.

### **Be aware of download time**

There are many parts of the world that have slow modems with Internet access billed by the minute. Users in these regions (and many are right here in the United States) will visit sites that are quick to download.

### **Site must be printable**

There are also parts of the world where Internet access is very expensive and users often share computers. People print out websites and distribute hard copy pages.

Search engine optimization can be difficult and confusing. Knowing this we decided to put together some tips to help you with the process. The cover everything you need to know about optimizing your web pages for the search engines quickly and easily.

## Optimizing for the Correct Keywords

To get listed correctly in the search engines each page of your site that you want listed needs to be optimized to the best of your ability. Since the keywords that you decide to target will be used throughout the optimization process choosing the right keywords is essential. **If you choose the wrong keywords you will not be found in the search engines. If you are not found in the search engines how will anyone find your site?**

Since the keywords you choose to optimize your pages with are so important we have put together some tips to help you make sure that you make the right choices. You should utilize these tips when selecting keywords for each page that you plan to submit to the search engines.

1. Think "specific keyword phrases" not "keywords". Why? Due to the extreme amount of competition for general terms in the search engines, if your keyword phrases are too general it is very unlikely you will rank well in the search engines. You stand a far better chance to rank well for specific phrases where there is less competition. The resulting traffic, since it is more highly targeted, should also be much higher quality too!

### **Here's an example for a site selling shoes:**

Much Too General		Much Better!	
1.	shoes	4.	imported italian shoes
2.	men's shoes	5.	men's leather penny loafers
3.	women's shoes	6.	women's aerobic sneakers

2. Try to think like your target audience. What would they search for when looking for the page you are optimizing? BE CAREFUL! It is very easy to fall in the trap of coming up with a short list of

what YOU would search for, but what about everyone else? They will not necessarily use the same keywords as you. You should try to come up with as many keyword phrases as you can think of that relate to the page you are optimizing. Try asking a few friends and family what they would search for when searching for a site like yours.

3. Check out your competition for ideas. Do a search using keywords that you already know you want to target and click through on the top sites that come up. Once on the site view the source HTML code and view the keywords they have in their meta tags - this should give you many more ideas! Make sure to only use keywords that relate to YOUR site or page. To view the HTML code simply click the 'View' at the top of your web browser then select 'Source', or 'Page Source'.
4. You should develop a list of keyword phrases, following the tips on this page, for **each page** that you optimize for the search engines.

## What you should not do . . .

There are several things, considered "spamming", that you can do to try to get your page listed higher on a search engine results page. Basically, you should never try to trick a search engine in any way, or you risk being blacklisted by them. Since the majority of your traffic will come from search engines the risk far outweighs the benefits in the long run. Below is a list of the more common things we recommend that you never do when trying to achieve better listings.

### Do not:

- Do anything to trick the search engines into listing your site better. If what you are doing is not listed as one of our [search engine tips](#) the search engines will likely view it as spam and penalize you.
- List keywords anywhere except in your keywords meta tag. By "list" we mean something like - keyword 1, keyword 2, keyword 3, keyword 4, etc. There are very few legitimate reasons that a list of keywords would actually appear on a web page or within the page's HTML code and the search engines know this. While you may have a legitimate reason for doing this we would recommend avoiding it so that you do not risk being penalized by the search engines.
- Use the same color text on your page as the page's background color. This has often been used to keyword stuff a web page. Search engines can detect this and view it as spam.
- Use multiple instances of the same tag. For example, using more than one title tag. Search engines can detect this and view it as spam.
- Submit identical pages. For example, do not duplicate a page of your site, give the copies different file names, and submit each one. Search engines can detect this and view it as spam.
- Submit the same page to any engine more than once within 24hrs.
- Use any keywords in your keywords meta tag that do not directly relate to the content of your page.

## How Long Does it Take to Get Listed?

Here's the length of time it currently takes to get listed at each of the major search engines once you have submitted your web page.

<a href="#">MSN</a>	Up to 2 months
<a href="#">Google</a>	Up to 4 weeks
<a href="#">AltaVista</a>	Up to 1 week
<a href="#">Fast</a>	Up to 2 weeks
<a href="#">Excite</a>	Up to 6 weeks
<a href="#">Northern Light</a>	Up to 4 weeks
<a href="#">AOL</a>	Up to 2 months
<a href="#">HotBot</a>	Up to 2 months
<a href="#">iWon</a>	Up to 2 months

**Which search engine refers the most traffic to business websites?**

Google	44.5%
Yahoo	17.0%
MSN	10.9%
AOL	3.2%
Dogpile	0.8%
Ask Jeeves	0.9%

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