

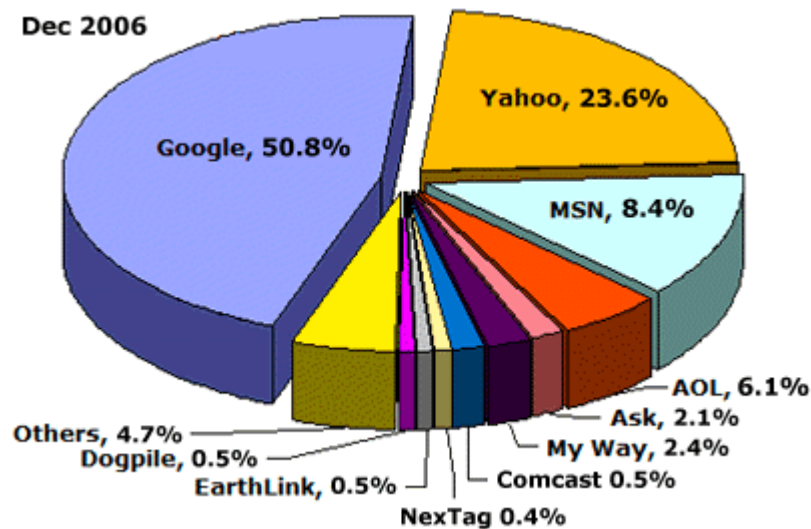
Reading 13: Search Engine Optimisation

Now that you have your site underway you would like people to visit. Most people using the Internet will look for sites by using a search engine.

Search engines are sites that are dedicated to providing information (lists) on web sites.

People will type in a word or a phrase into the search engine and press enter. Then the search engine will present a list of web sites that relate to that phrase.

Some of the most popular search engines are:



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As most people normally do not look past the first page of results in a search engine, it can be important to maximise your sites chances to appear on that **first** page. This process is called Search Engine Optimisation.

Source: http://www.allwebco-templates.com/support/S_optimizing.htm

But There is No Correct Way To Optimize for Search Engines

Search Engines companies do NOT want us knowing how their search engine works out which pages to list first. If we knew this we might be tempted to “fudge” the content on our page to get “up the list” when our pages may not actually deserve to be there. If this occurred people who use the search engine would be discouraged because they are getting “bad matches” when searching. So there is no publicly available thorough explanation on how to optimize your webpage.

Also not all search engines are built using the same programs or the same logic, or look at the same things about your site.

The following information will provide only general rules or guidelines as to how search engines “rank” their searches. While there are no 100% methods of guaranteeing a top place in a search engine some of the ideas in this reading will help to make your site more search engine friendly.

SOME COMMON THINGS SEARCH ENGINES LOOK FOR

Here are some guidelines to what most search engines look for.

- 1) Your page titles are clear and descriptive
The words “Home Page” tells people nothing about your site. Be descriptive with the titles for EACH of your pages.
- 2) Meta Description information
This is information specifically written for search engines to see – More on this later.
- 3) Meta Tag information
This is information specifically written for search engines to see – More on this later.
- 4) Alt information in images
All of your images can also have text associated with them – More on this later.
- 5) Consistency
Ensure that the content on your pages matches the content of your meta tags and Alt image text
- 6) Your site is registered / submitted to search engines.
There is a formal process of submitting or registering your site with each search engine.
Most search engines will eventually “find” your site. But registering is quicker
- 7) Your domain name
If your domain name includes words that are key words used in searches – this can impact some search engines
- 8) Your popularity
Your site usage is an important factor for many search engines

Note: “spamming” is the process of artificially changing your site too much to try and raise the level of your ranking. If you do spam then a search engine may BAN / BLOCK your site from their services.

Optimise your web page by putting in good descriptions that are accurate about what your site offers visitors.

1. YOUR PAGE TITLES ARE CLEAR AND DESCRIPTIVE

The words “Home Page” or “Index Page” tells people nothing about your site. Be descriptive with the titles for EACH of your pages.

As examined in an earlier workshop your page title will tell people about your site.

Here is the HTML code for a page title.

```
<title>Website Template</title>
```

Each page has its own title and each can be a unique way for you to be seen by a search engine.

Which do you think would be more descriptive for a search engine:

```
<title>Courses</title>
```

Or

```
<title>Courses at The Australian College – Training in Business, Finance, IT,  
Call Centres</title>
```

Certainly the second option has more detail; and from a practical point of view of matching a persons search ... If I was to type the words “Training and Business” into a search engine the second option would be a stronger match – with 2 keywords in the page title:

```
<title>Courses at The Australian College – Training in Business, Finance, IT, Call  
Centres</title>
```

Warning: If you put too much information the search engines will regard this as an attempt at “spamming” – which may get your page ignored altogether.

2. META DESCRIPTIONS

Meta Descriptions are code in your HTML that is invisible to the guests of your web site but are read search engines.

Open your htm files with notepad you will find the following code:

```
<META name="Description" content="Place your website description in this area.  
This is read by some search engines.">
```

The Meta Description may have some role in helping the search engine select and rank your site, and it will provide a description of your site that displays for people to read when a search engine shows its list of results.

This is a listing that shows from a Google Search:

[AllWebCo Website Hosting](#)
Web Hosting Providers. Professional web hosting and website templates for web sites that demand performance, professionalism, and speed.
[allwebco.com/](#) - 22k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#) - [Note this](#)

Here is the actual HTML meta description code from the AllWebCo site:

```
<meta name="description" content="Web Hosting Providers. Professional web hosting and website templates for web sites that demand performance, professionalism, and speed. We even provide hosting for other web hosts! Find out how affordable the best web hosting provider can be!">
```

Notice that not ALL of the text used is displayed by Google.

Updating Your Meta Descriptions

This tag is found in every page on your site.

```
<META name="Description" content="Place your website description in this area. ">
```

All you have to do is to provide a description that matches each page on your site. Use words that are descriptive and will encourage a person to visit you.

Simply open each page in notepad and make the changes.

3. META TAG INFORMATION

A meta keyword tag is a list of words that you believe users might place into a search engine when they are looking for your site. Some search engines still use these to help them to “rank” your site.

The following is the code in your template that you need to edit.

```
<META name="KeyWords" content="add, your, keywords and phrases in this area, separated, by, commas, this, is read by only a, few search, engines">
```

The Easy Way To Edit Your List

The easiest way to build up a list of words is to open a spreadsheet application like Excel. You can list ALL of the words you want. In excel you can sort alphabetically – which is helpful when later looking to see if a particular key word is in your list. Add a comma at the end of each word so you have the right formatting for HTML.

When you have your list complete then simply copy and paste them into each page.

Here are just some of the keywords on the Australian College site.

```
<meta name="KeyWords" content="
3dimension training,
3dimension,
accm,
accredited,
act government,
ACT,
advanced diploma,
advanced,
apprenticeship,
apprenticeships,
aqf,
aqtf,
ascm,
assessment,
..... Lots more words
train,
traineeship,
traineeships,
training awards,
training packages,
training,
wollongong,
workplace training,
">
```

As you can see it is a long list, and it is on every page.

It comes from the one Excel spreadsheet; and was simply copied and pasted into each page.

Tips & Tricks

In the early days of the Internet some people used to list the same keyword over and over again to get their site listed closer to the top of a web search. If you do this now it is regarded as spamming and your site can be ignored by search engines.

If there are common misspellings of specific words in your industry – include them in your Meta Tag.

4. ALT INFORMATION IN IMAGES

All of your images can also have text associated with them on your site.

The original idea behind this is to enable those people who are eye sight impaired to also be able to enjoy the Internet.

You can add text that a search engine will read.

This text should describe the image which should relate to your business.

It is believed that this alt text is used by some search engines to measure the consistency of your site.

Here is an example of an ALT tag in use from most of the templates:

```

```

All it says is “image”.

If it was to say the following:

```

```

then a search engine has more details to use.

Use full sentences and NOT just past your keywords, otherwise you may be penalised for spamming.

Once again – do NOT overdo the description size.

5. CONSISTENCY

Ensure that the content on your pages matches the content of your meta tags and alt image text.

Most search engines employ special programs called Robots or Spiders. It is the role of these programs to automatically “crawl” across the internet and to examine web sites.

One of the areas that they examine is how consistent your site is in regards to its content.

Amongst the areas they examine are:

- The page title
- The page meta description
- The Meta KeyWords
- Any ALT tags
- The ACTUAL page content – the text you have written

These factors are used by some search engines to either rate your site, or to examine it for spamming features.

So one of the keys to a successful site is to be consistent with your message in all parts of your web pages.

Here is an example of how to make your site more consistent.

Example Site:

Page Title:

```
<title> All Electrical Products – We have a huge range of Electrical Goods at Reasonable Prices </title>
```

Page Description:

```
<META name="Description" content=" All Electrical Products – Your one stop for Televisions, Radios, Digital Cameras, Ipods and MP3 Players ">
```

Page KeyWords:

```
<META name="KeyWords" content=" Televisions, Hi Fi, Radios, ipod, etc....">
```

Alt tags:

Each of the images is named for the product it is representing. Each image has appropriate alt images. Eg.

```

```

Page Text:

The text on the page is simply a small description under each of the images. This text also contains some of the words used as key words in the meta tags. For example:



White Video Ipod
20 MB
2000 Songs
200 Video Clips

Notice how all of the elements on the page compliment and support each other.

6. SUBMITTING YOUR WEBSITE TO SEARCH ENGINES

Most search engines will eventually “find” your site but registering is quicker.

There is a formal process of submitting or registering your site with each search engine.

Submit to Google: <http://www.google.com/addurl/?continue=/addurl>

Add your URL to Google

Share your place on the net with us.

We add and update new sites to our index each time we crawl the web, and we invite you to submit your URL here. We do not add all submitted URLs to our index, and we cannot make any predictions or guarantees about when or if they will appear.

Please enter your full URL, including the `http://` prefix. For example:

`http://www.google.com/`. You may also add comments or keywords that describe the content of your page. These are used only for our information and do not affect how your page is indexed or used by Google.

Please note: Only the top-level page from a host is necessary; you do not need to submit each individual page. Our crawler, Googlebot, will be able to find the rest. Google updates its index on a regular basis, so updated or outdated link submissions are not necessary. Dead links will “fade out” of our index on our next crawl when we update our entire index.

URL:

Comments:

So simply enter your url (domain name) to google eg www.austcollege.com.au

Other Search Engines:

The following links will allow you to submit your site to some of the most popular search engines. You can also find many services that will do this for you. Try some searches at Google for "website submission".

INeedHits.com. <http://www.ineedhits.com/>

Submit to Yahoo! <http://search.yahoo.com/info/submit.html>

Submit to MSN <http://search.msn.com/docs/submit.aspx?FORM=WSDD2>

7. DOMAIN NAMES

The “words” in your domain name will also impact some search engines.

However, most search engines will need the words to be clearly defined and not abbreviated, otherwise they will not recognise them as words.

In the following example, most search engines would not recognise the 2 words that make up the domain name: australian and college.

www.australiancollege.com.au

So this domain name might be more advantageous:

www.australian-college.com.au

However there is a “down side” in that people may find the second option less user friendly – and be confused about what type of dash or space to use ...

Note a dash (–) and underscore (_) are treated identically - as blank spaces in domain names. However most people don’t know this and names don’t have them – so you may find errors being made by people.

An option is to have both names – pointing to the same web site – and so get the best of both worlds.

8. LINKS AND USAGE

Your web site will also be higher ranked if other web sites have links on your web site to yours; and if you have lost of visitors.

So encourage people to put a link to your website on theirs (where it is consistent with your business) and when first starting your webpage – encourage everyone you know to go and have a look.

A SUMMARY

Review the two following tables from <http://www.searchengines.com/searchEnginesRankings.html> .

They contain a very useful overview of how search engines “rank” pages.

Table 1: Here's what the high-traffic search engines and directory sites say influence their relevancy rankings:

Search Engine	What's not indexed	Slow Pages play a role?	Content and location	HTML Title	Meta tags	Keyword Frequency	Link popularity	What it likes
AltaVista	Registration pages, text in graphics and multimedia files (use Alt tags), XML, Java applets, comment tags, Acrobat files, spammers	Yes	Very important, Top of the page	Very important, should be unique for every page	Not important, but should be included just in case	Not mentioned, but the best location is title and top of page	Important	Uncommon words, good navigation, plain HTML pages with text only, themes, inbound links and keywords in link text.
DMOZ Users: AOL, Netscape; AltaVista, HotBot, Google and Lycos directories	Spammers	Yes, considered poor design	Worthy of indexing as determined by editors, and in appropriate category	No, but the title filled in plays a role.	No, but the description and keywords filled in play a role.	No	Not important for DMOZ, but is Important, for some of its partners, who use Inktomi	Concise and accurate descriptions and keywords, choice of appropriate category
Google Search Engine	Not mentioned, see AltaVista for approximate guidelines; spammers	Not mentioned	Keywords should be close to each other. Content should include keywords in text or links	Not mentioned, but seems to be a factor	No	Not mentioned	Very important, especially from relevant pages	Link popularity, keywords near each other, keywords in URLs and link text, themes

Search Engine	What's not indexed	Slow Pages play a role?	Content and location	HTML Title	Meta tags	Keyword Frequency	Link popularity	What it likes
HotBot Search Engine	Frames, pages with cookie requirements, URLs with special characters (unless submitted through Inktomi's paid program) , spammers.	Yes, pages can be dropped if a server is too slow	Ranks on the length of the document and frequency of keywords.	Most important	Very important, both description (150 characters) and keywords (75 characters)	Very important (standard requirements are 3-7%)	Important, uses Inktomi	Lack of stop words, meta tags, HTML titles, lots of keywords, link popularity, and click popularity (HotBot uses DirectHit)
Lycos Search Engine	Spammers, URLs with special characters	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned, but seems to be a factor	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned, but seems to be a factor	Themes
MSN Search Engine	Spammers, frames - <noframes> tag needed	No	Not mentioned	Important, should contain keywords	Both are supported; description limited to 250, keywords to 1017	Important, 4-12 times	Important, uses Inktomi	Theme present throughout the site, site popularity
Yahoo Directory	Spammers	Yes, may be excluded	Worthy of indexing as determined by editors, and in appropriate category	No, but the title filled in plays a role. It should be concise	No, but the description and keywords filled in play a role.	No	Very important, uses Google	Concise and accurate descriptions and keywords, choice of appropriate category

Table 2: Specific requirements for top search engines

Search Engine	Keywords	Location of Keywords	Document Length	HTML Title	Meta tags	Themes	What's spam?	Other info
AltaVista Search Engine	Only the first two occurrences are indexed, use in <title> and top of the page	Top of the page, <h> tags Longer pages favored,	600-900 words Most important keywords here, 300 characters,	short titles preferred	Not very important, but use them just in case	Yes, consistent keywords throughout the site	Repetition of keywords one after the other, meta refresh tags, invisible text, identical pages, excessive submissions.	Repeat keywords in files names. Use keywords in text links
Google Search Engine	Weight and proximity matter most	<h> tags, bold text	Wide range, from 50-600 words	. Keywords here, up to 90 characters	No	Yes, consistent keywords throughout the site	Use of link farms, cloaking, excessive repetition	Link popularity is the most important factor
HotBot Search Engine	Frequency and weight in the body are most important	URL text and title	Short, 100-250 words	Most important, keywords here, up to 105 characters	Very important, both description (150 characters) and keywords (75 characters)	Yes, consistent keywords throughout the site.	Repetition of keywords one after the other, meta refresh tags, nearly identical pages, invisible text, irrelevant keywords, too many submissions	Use keywords when describing links, and naming files
Lycos Search Engine	Keywords spread throughout the page and in the title	Top of the page, <h> tags	Short, 100-250 words	Keywords here, second word, up to 1129 characters	Not indexed by Fast, but shows up in top rankings	Yes, consistent keywords throughout the site	Repetition of keywords one after the other, nearly identical pages, invisible text	Not recommended Use ALT tags