



SEO BEST PRACTICES





SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

In its simplest form, Search Engine Optimization is communicating to search engines the intentions of your website so that your website can be recommended for relevant searches.

When it comes to SEO, it's all about relevancy. Search engines want to know if the content on your webpage is relevant to the search term entered by the user. But, this doesn't magically happen. Websites do take work. Successful websites require ongoing attention, which, as a byproduct, increases your search engine exposure. There is no mysterious search engine formula or advantage. If it sounds too good to be true, it likely is. Short term tricks and gimmicks are not replacements for a long term strategy.



WHAT TO FOCUS ON

PAGE TITLES

Page titles are the first things search engines look at to interpret pages. These are shown on the browser tab as well as in the search engine results to describe the page.

Include a page title that is 70 characters or less and includes a keyword or short keyword phrase that describes the page content. Search engines look more favorably on front loaded keywords in page titles, so include the brand or company name last, if it's needed at all. Depending upon your company or brand, including the brand name in the title may be necessary on the homepage and other top level pages, but might not be needed on interior pages.

- ✓ Keep it short. This is not the place to put a page description, but a page title or headline.
- ✓ Keep it consistent. Use the same page title structure throughout the entire site.
- ✓ Avoid vague titles. A visitor should know what they will see when they click on the link with no surprises. Visitors access your website in all kinds of ways, and, in many cases, that is not through the homepage. So make the page title for every page specific to the content that is on the page. Simply putting your brand name as the page title for every page is ineffective.



URL STRUCTURE

Simple and easily readable URLs serve multiple purposes. With today's multi-tabbed browsers, users are more likely to see your URLs than they are your Page Titles. Additionally, when seen in the search engine results pages, readable URLs are more likely to get clicked on than nonsensical ones.

- ✓ Good Example:
<http://sitecrafting.com/blog/3-rs-web-content>
- ✓ Bad Example:
<http://sitecrafting.com/blog/news/?y=2013&m=8>



PAGE CONTENT

When it comes to page content, having a solid hierarchy is important. After a search engine looks at your page titles and URLs, it looks for a page's H1 tag, which is the headline on the page. This headline gives more information about what is contained within the page content. Search engines also give credit to the H1 tag using a keyword that is also present in the Page Title and Page URL.

- ✓ Every page within a website should have an H1 headline and **ONLY** one.
- ✓ Try to incorporate the same single keyword or short keyword phrase into the Page Title, Page URL, H1 tag and body content.

Use the inverted pyramid writing style when writing your content. This “top-loads” the page with the most important information. Search engines give better rankings to pages that include the keyword in the first part of the body content.

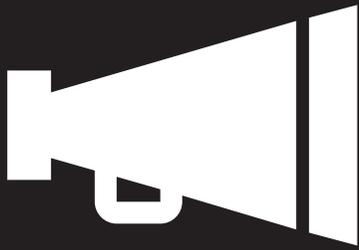
Finally, make sure the topic of each page is focused around a single thought that can be condensed into a keyword or short keyword phrase. This enables you to create consistency between the page content, the H1 Tag, the Page Title and the Page URL.



META DESCRIPTIONS

While search engines no longer look at page meta descriptions for rankings, it serves as advertising copy on the search engine results page. Crafting a readable, compelling description using important keywords can improve click-through rates. Search engines also bold keywords in the description when they match search queries. Think of your meta description as marketing copy that advertises what is on that specific page.

- ✓ Keep descriptions to 160 characters or less.
- ✓ Keep the description unique to every page and don't duplicate it on another page.
- ✓ Use site-level descriptions on the homepage and page-level descriptions everywhere else.
- ✓ Make sure every page has a meta description.



OTHER BEST PRACTICES TIPS & TRICKS

- ✔ Don't put the text that you want search engines to index inside images. For example, if you want your company name or address to be indexed, make sure it is text on the page and not displayed inside a company logo.
- ✔ Do use ALT tags for every image. These describe images for people using screen readers, which shows that your site is very accessible and organized to search engines. It also tells search engines more about the content on your page, helping them index your site better.
- ✔ Upload images using informative image names. For example, "blue-sky.jpg" instead of "thumb_3657.jpg".
- ✔ Work on your site's link building. Being linked to from sources of trust bring credibility to your site in the eyes of search engines. Linking to valued external sources from your site also shows you're adding to the web community which Google rewards as well.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

We are happy to discuss your specific SEO needs and evaluate the current SEO performance of your website. We offer SEO consulting services that can teach you and your staff how to implement best practices or we can manage it for you. If you'd like to learn more about how SiteCrafting can help, call 253-272-2248.