



My SEO e-Guide

The image shows a collection of search engine logos on the left: altavista, YAHOO!, WebCrawler, Google, looksmart, ninemsn, LYCOS, and excite. On the right, there is a screenshot of a Google search result for the term "eMarketing". A large red starburst graphic with the number "#1" is overlaid on the search results, indicating the top position. The search results include links to "eMarketing Association", "eMarketing Answers Free Marketing Tools", "SEM - E-Marketing", "Chartered eMarketing", and "Click Experts on eMarketing Strategy".

#1

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Introduction

What is a Search Engine?

Search engines are the primary tools of Internet users for finding products, services and information over the web. Search engines allow people to search the entire Web (or at least those pages of the Internet that are in the search engine's database.)

How Does a Search Engine Index Web Pages?

There are four parts to an engine that you need to know about for optimization purposes:

- The spider is a program that goes out across the internet, looks for and gathers up web pages.
- The database is where the spider will store the pages that it finds.
- The search engine website, e.g. google.com, is where searchers go to pull up information from the database.
- The algorithms are programs that determine which sites will come up when searchers type in a query at the search engine website.

There are two ways that your site can get into the database:

- The spider will automatically find your site from a link on someone else's site which is the path we recommend if you can get 1 or more quality inbound link(s).
- You submit your URL so that the spider will come out and find it.

What Happens When I Submit my URL to a Search Engine?

First, the search engine's spider visits your URL immediately and schedules your page for inclusion in the search engine's database.

Second, usually within a few weeks, the spider comes along and places your page(s) into its database. There is no telling how many pages deep the spider will crawl or how many pages it will place in the database. Usually, on the first time around, it will be only a few pages -possibly only the home page.

Third, the spider revisits your page(s) to grab any changes you've made. (The old term for this was "automatic update.") Once a page is in the database, the spider usually revisits every few weeks. The spider will also begin to crawl your site more deeply and place more and more of your pages into the database.

Fourth, when people use a search engine, they type keywords into a search box on the search engine's website. They are submitting a query. The search engine, depending on algorithms, will pull up all of the sites relevant to that query.

What is the Difference between a Search Engine and a Directory?

A search engine is a machine - or a robot. A human may program algorithms for a search engine, but humans have nothing to do with your site when the spider is visiting your site or when the engine is ranking your pages. Google.com is an example of a search engine.

For the most part, humans compile directories. Dmoz.org (Open Directory Project) is an example of a directory. When you submit your site to Dmoz, a human will review your site for consideration in the Dmoz directory of web sites.

A search engine has a very large database because it will store several pages of every web site it indexes. A directory will only store a link to the home page of each site and a description.

Search engines will take the description either from some of the sentences on the web page or from the description meta tag. A directory will take the description from your submission information.

Each major search engine is usually associated with a directory. For instance, when you go to Google and you type in a search, you are getting results from all the web sites stored in Google's database. It is believed that Google's algorithms are also programmed to place emphasis on sites that are also listed in the Dmoz directory. However many top SEO's argue this holds less weight today.

It is a good idea to get listed in as many directories as possible. This simple piece of software can save you a lot of time and effort: [Directory Inclusion](#).

What is Stemming?

Some engines use stemming technology. This means that sometimes a search engine will not only search for the words people type in, but also for words that are similar. For instance, if you type in "educational wooden toys," the engine might also look for "educational wood toy." The engine may do this if it cannot find good results for the terms that were queried.

Variables That Affect Ranks

This list includes most of the variables currently and previously known to affect search engine ranks. You should understand that some of these variables are more important than others.

Variables that affect ranks in a positive way (these factors probably will not change over time, these are some of the most important variables):

- Keywords in your copy.
- Link popularity.
- Keywords in the title tag.
- Listings in directories.

Variables that affect ranks in a negative way (these factors probably will not change over time):

- Spamming by using the same word or phrase several times in your title, meta tags, or text.
- Spamming by putting words or phrases into your meta tags or title that have nothing to do with the actual content people see on your web page.
- Using text the same color as the background.
- Using tiny text (font size "-1" or smaller) as a way to cram keywords into a page.
- Linking out to sites that have nothing to do with the focus or niche of your site.
- Linking out to link farms or free-for-all (FFA) link pages. (Sites that contain pages just for the purpose of exchanging links with other sites without concern for content. Generally link farms or FFA link pages have thousands of links and the links are added by means of a program not a human.)
- Links coming in from link farms or FFA link pages.

Variables that have been thought to affect ranks positively in the past (these factors may change over time depending on the way the algorithm is programmed):

- Keywords in the domain name
- Bolding keywords, e.g. `wooden boats`
- Using keywords in heading tags, e.g. `<H4>Wooden Boats</H4>`
- Keywords closest to the top of the page.
- Keywords in the description tag.
- Keywords in the keywords tag.
- Keywords in the names of linked pages and in the linked words, e.g. `wood-en boats`.
- Keywords in alt tags.
- Keywords as names of images, e.g. ``.
- Getting listings in Pay-Per-Click search engines like Google Adwords or Overture.

Since keywords are so important in SEO it is heavily recommended you get yourself a solid keyword

tool such as [KeyWord Elite](#). Not only will this save time, effort, and lots of guess work, but it will greatly increase your SEO efforts.

After a user searches on a set of keywords on Google they are presented with a page of search results composed of sponsored listings and in the main section of the page, the organic listings. Organic search engine optimization (SEO) is about increasing the number of visitors that your site gets from a search engine. This is achieved by getting more documents indexed on the search engine and by attaining a higher position in the organic results. The problem for many marketers and traditional advertising agencies lies in the technical nature of search engines and the difficulty in understanding the underlying algorithms that produce the rankings for particular keyword searches.

The most popular search engine is Google which accounts for the greatest number of search requests. This is not to say that other search engines are not important or that they use the same algorithm but that Google's success has ensured that many search engines are moving in the same direction and since Google has filed their search patent we do not have to rely on the typical conjecture in this field. Importantly, Google ensures that there is a level of feedback from users through the Google toolbar that enables Google to refine their search results over time. Also, a significant part of Google's algorithm is to protect its search engine against search SPAM which is the use of techniques to improve a site's rankings normally through the artificial creation of links, so we have outlined the main areas to watch out for.

We suggest an approach that focuses on continuous improvement in a structured way rather than anything that the search engines could interpret as trying to manipulate the results. We believe that the best way to reach the top spots is to align with the search engines' goal which is to deliver the best and most relevant results for their users, we call it 'alignment' strategy. This will ensure that you consistently rank highest amongst your competitors and do not get black-listed. In the following chapters, we are going to clarify the elements that are analyzed by Google. Using this information it starts to become clear what is needed for organic search engine success.

1. Document Inception Date

The document inception date is the date the document was created, first indexed or linked to or the first registration date of the domain. The inception date is used to determine the rate of growth of links to a document. For example, a document with yesterday's inception date with 10 links to it could be scored higher than a document with an inception date of 10 years ago and a 100 links to it. For some searches that are made on a search engine, an older document may be more favorable than a newer document therefore older documents may be ranked higher and vice-versa.

Additionally to this, proper navigation allows search engine spiders to follow your links and put your pages into their database. People need to find their way around your site, as well. Sometimes, organization is what distinguishes a high quality site from a loser. A well designed navigational system will have a positive impact on search engine optimization.

- Chart the link growth to see if there is a natural growth. A spiky growth could indicate SPAM.
- Have a structured link building program

2. Content Updates/Changes

Every document has parts that are more important to the search engine like the main piece of content on the page and elements that are much less important like JavaScript code, date/time information, adverts or boiler plate information. Using the relative importance of each element the search engine looks at the frequency and amount of changes over time. For example, changes to the content would have significantly more importance than changes to advertisements on a site. Google looks at whether fresher or staler documents are preferred by a search user and then ranks fresher or staler documents higher, accordingly. For example, people searching for 'Top of the league' would prefer a fresher document than perhaps people that were searching for information on 'Winner of 1982 World Cup'.

So, content is King. All search engines, directories, or otherwise, will index your web site based on CONTENT. ALL of them. Content is the key to developing an Internet presence.

You will build a good reputation with high-quality content. If you have interesting content other webmasters will want to link to your site. (Obtaining links into your site is a priority for SEO.)

Also, your content must be focused. Content that works around one theme will help you attract your target market. You will attract attention to your site if you can become a respected provider of information about your niche.

Look at whether Google favors fresh or stale documents by conducting a search and seeing if the top results are from fresher or staler documents. Once you have this information you will have an idea of how often or not to update the main content elements of your document.

Writing Strategy

So, as you can see content is very important in search engine optimization. Here you can find a useful and effective writing strategy.

Write in "chunks"

Don't overwhelm visitors with too much information in one paragraph. Present information in neat, readable chunks. If you chunk, your paragraphs will be about two to three sentences each.

Use headlines

Headlines are another way to make your pages more readable. In the past, using keywords in headlines or heading tags in the HTML was a recommended technique for optimizing your page. We still think it's a worthwhile technique.

Use lists

Lists allow visitors to scan your pages quickly, as well.

Do not use underlines for web text (oops...)

Underlines should be reserved only for hyperlinks. Underlining text may confuse your visitors. Does it annoy you when you try to click on underlined text that goes nowhere? Why would you want to annoy your visitors?

Write at an eighth grade reading level

You want to make a web page easy to read. That doesn't mean that it shouldn't be interesting. While you need to keep your visitors excited about your content, many people don't have time to read involved text. If you need to include detailed explanations of your product, save them for pages deeper in the linking structure. Even so, always explain things to people in as simple a way as possible. Your first priority is getting visitors interested. For an example of this type of writing, read a newspaper. Newspaper stories are generally written at an eighth grade reading level.

Use the Inverse Pyramid

Write your most important information first. Again, the newspaper story is a good example of this format. This format allows people to read only the first few paragraphs of a story to get the main facts. On the Web, you want to do the same thing: present the juiciest information first. This way, people can quickly scan the first few sentences of the page to see if it contains the information they are looking for.

Using the Inverse Pyramid style of writing has an advantage in search engines, as well. Some search engines will not "read" the entire page. Although this is changing and many search engines are now programmed to read the whole page.

Write it the way you say it

Write conversationally. Talk to yourself! Having trouble getting something on paper? Dictate, using a tape recorder. Verbalize what you want to say on your web page into the tape recorder - then transfer that to the web page.

Also, write as if you are talking to one person, not to a group of people. Use the word "you." For example, "Do you have trouble finding the time to read a good book?" Avoid phrases like, "Many people never have time to sit down and read a book." Make it personal.

Focus on your customers

Once you have figured out who your customers are, focus your writing on them. Write just for them. For instance, if your customers are webmasters, your writing may include words that webmasters understand - words like "server," "host," and "FTP." If, however, you are targeting people with no knowledge of the web, seriously think about your language. If you are writing to mechanics or gardeners or the hip-hop culture, use their lingo and discuss the benefits of your product in a way they would understand and relate to.

Other writing strategies to help your customers stay interested

- Use punctuation (- . , ! " % \$ & ~ : to name a few). The em dash (—) can be very powerful — leading people to the next bit of text. Get a little creative.
- Use colorful, positive language. Use words that evoke emotion or motivate people.
- Paint images with words. Use comparison and adjectives to create pictures in people's minds.

Tell stories

Telling stories can help people relate a concept to their real lives.

Is your page neat?

After you finish writing a page, walk away from it for a few minutes. When you come back to the page, does it look neat and orderly or messy and unreadable? Do certain words or phrases stand out? Are those the concepts that you want to stand out? Scan the headlines. Do they make sense? If people just read the headlines will they get the gist of the page?

Proofread

If you're not sure if you can proofread, hire someone. It's the best thing you'll ever do for your site. Nothing turns someone off faster than glaring spelling errors. If your copy is sloppy, people may think your company is sloppy. Also, if your readers are concentrating on your errors, they may miss your message completely.

Web copy is never finished

The advantage of the Web over "hard" media is that it's never written in stone. A click and a save and it's changed. Keep going over your web copy. There's always something you can improve.

3. Query Analysis

Google analyses the volume and kind of searches that users make through the search engine. It analyses these results over time and documents associated with the fastest growing keyword searches are ranked higher as they could indicate a hot topic or breaking news story. Google also looks at search terms and records whether a search term should produce a consistent set of results or whether searches like 'World Cup Winning Team' should produce a different set of results every year.

- If a document appears highly in the search results for a discordant set of search results, then it may be considered as SPAM and ranked lower as it is unlikely for one document to be a good source for a number of different topics.
- Each document should be optimized and contain information related to a few searched for keywords. If you try and put all the keywords into one document then you are unlikely to rank very highly and are much more likely to be considered as search engine SPAM.

So, before you begin to rewrite the content of your web page to increase or decrease keyword frequency, you must find the right keywords. Again this is where you're absolutely going to want a tool like [KeyWord Elite](#).

There are several ways to find keywords and you should strive to try all of these strategies:

- **Brainstorm.** Come up with at least 20 keywords or keyword phrases that you think people might type into a search engine in order to find your web pages. Use your knowledge about your industry, but try to remember to think like people that are looking for the types of products and services that you are offering.
- **Ask other people.** Ask business people and friends what they would type into a search if they were looking for your page or site. It is especially helpful to get the opinions of people outside of your industry, people that know little about your products and services.
- **Use the search engines.** Go to search engines and look for pages with content similar to your own. When you get to your competitor's sites, look at their source code. (Place your cursor on the page, click your right mouse button and choose "view source.") Check out the phrases they are using in the keyword meta tags (if they have them). If you find some new keywords, be sure to write them down.
- Use a "keyword suggestion tool" such as [this free one from Google](#).

4. Link Based Criteria

Google looks at the number of links to a document (back links) and the growth or disappearance of these links over time. A downward trend in the number of links to a document, decline in the rate of link growth or disappearance of links may indicate that a document is getting stale whilst an upward trend in links and rate of link growth may indicate that a document is fresh. In addition, detailed graphs of link growth over time can be used to show particular patterns for fresh documents, stale documents, those that may no longer be updated or that have been superseded. This software will help you analyze your links: [Link Analyzer](#). Also, a weight may be given to every link based on the freshness of the overall document in which it is contained. Links from authoritative sources, like Government pages are weighted higher.

- The dates that links appear can be used to detect if links are SPAM. A 'legitimate' document attracts back links slowly whilst a sudden growth in links particularly from documents without editorial discretion, like guest books, referrer logs, 'free for all' pages could indicate SPAM.
- Using a link generating program in the beginning could be beneficial. Services such as [Link-Submission.com](#) are worth examining. This is a great way to get your incoming link ball rolling. Then once your site gains popularity you'll see a lot more natural links coming your way.
- Make sure that you have a link building program in place that lets you grow your links organically by for example:
 1. Asking suppliers, customers and partners to link to you.
 2. Submitting to online discussion forums.
 3. Creating a blog.
 4. Submitting to shopping portals and industry sites.
 5. Offering something great like a free gift or service so other sites value linking to you.
 6. Creating your own affiliate program where all the links are direct to you.

Remember, you can always analyze your competitors to see who links to them. You can then contact these sites to see if you can get the same links to you, too. Normally, you just type into a search engine 'link:Site URL' to get a list of the links, where Site URL is your competitor's full URL (e.g. [www.competitorwebsite.com](#)).

So, developing a link structure that works for both visitors and search engines is a skill.

Internal Linking Strategy

Navigation is of utmost importance to the "crawlability" of your site. Search engine spiders need to be

able to crawl your site as easily as your visitors find their way around. Sometimes, what will work for your visitors, will not work for search engine spiders. The best advice we can give in this area is to keep your link structure as simple as possible. Simplicity may involve giving up certain ideas that you might have for the design of your site.

Flash, frames, CGI, or any dynamic pages (pages that bring in content on the fly) are some types of programming that may hinder the crawlability of your site. Although, workarounds can be made.

However, if you're a beginner, we recommend sticking to simpler programming methods for the navigation of your site. Plain old HTML text and image links are the best method.

Also, keep as much code off your pages as you can. Use relative links to your Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) and put your JavaScript in a separate js file. (It is not the intent of this guide to teach you these techniques, but you can learn about them through most HTML books or web tutorials.) Linking each page out to your scripts and styles will speed up the loading of each page. It will also allow the spider to get to your real text faster.

If you do plan on keeping your navigation fairly simple, here are some strategies that can help:

Your web copy needs to lead your visitors to the sale

It needs to pull them down the page, forcing them to scroll, because they want to read what comes next. And at the bottom, it must make them want to click to the next page or order.

Before you begin to think about your link structure, determine the goal of your site. In other words, what are you trying to achieve with your site? What information will you need in order to achieve these goals?

Organize the information. The link structure will emerge as you write your web copy. Develop individual pages that provide clear information.

Standard pages might include:

- Home - a welcome page explaining what people can find at your site, might show some featured products.
- Products and/or Services - these pages might be the entrance to your product catalog and may contain a categorized list of your offerings.

- Guarantee - your policy for guaranteeing your customer's satisfaction.
- Testimonials - good things other people are saying about your products or your company.
- FAQs - if you have a lot of interactivity on your site, you might need some FAQ pages (Frequently Asked Questions.)
- About Us - how your company was started, interesting facts about your company, possibly your mission statement, a little about different people in your company.
- Contact Us - how people can get in touch with your company. Give them many options including email, phone, postal address, and fax.
- Resources - links to other web sites and interesting articles that relate to your industry. This section is extremely important to building the content that will allow you to continue expanding your search engine promotion.
- Order Now - ordering system. Give people as many options as possible for payment including credit cards, check, cash or money order. Give them options for processing the order including online credit card and check processing, phone and fax ordering.

Link Structure Must Be Carefully Planned

First determine your Main Navigational Links. Using a template will help you ensure that you have your main navigational links on every page. These links will generally be graphical links made out of images, not text links. They should either go across the top of the page or down the left hand side. We recommend a maximum of 10 main navigational links. A few more won't hurt, but try to realize your visitors need to find what they need and find it quickly.

After your main links, you may need to break your site down into sub categories or Sub Navigational Links. Your site may be divided into several sections; each of these sections would be accessible by a main link. From the main link, the section would break down into its own set of navigational links. For instance, the "About Us" section may be composed of several sub pages including "Mission Statement," "President," "History," etc. This second-level list of pages is called sub navigation. Generally, if your Main navigation goes across the top of the page, then your Sub navigation would go down the left of the page. If your Main navigation goes down the left, then your Sub navigation would go across the top.

Your second-level directories may lead to third-level and even fourth-level directories, especially if you have a product catalog that you need to organize by categories. The main point to remember is that if your visitors can easily find what they are looking for, chances are that search engine spiders can also find their way to all your pages. When trying to achieve organic listings, you must try to get most of

your pages spidered and put into the search engine database. This is why navigation is so very important.

Site Maps

You will need to create an easy to follow site map which displays the internal linking structure of your site. This will in turn need to be posted on your site as a separate page. You'll need to submit this to Google as well. To get a site map and to submit it checkout [Google Webmaster Central](#).

Linkage of Independent Peers

It's very important to remember to try and only have relevant sites link to you. A sudden increase in the number of sites that link to you or links from unrelated sites (independent peers) would indicate SPAM, particularly, if the anchor text of the links is very similar or unusually different in an attempt to fool the search engine.

5. Anchor Text

Anchor text is the clickable text that is associated with a link. Google looks at the anchor text, freshness of the anchor text and changes to the anchor text over time.

- If there is a disparity between the anchor text and the document that it links to, possibly due to changes in domain ownership, Google could look at the time this occurred and ignore all the valuable links to your document prior to this event.
- Let people link to you with appropriate anchor text.

Unique Words, Bigrams, Phrases in Anchor Text

Google analyses the unique words, bigrams (pairs of letters, words or syllables) and phrases in anchor text for a document.

- Google analyzes graphs of unique words, bigrams, and phrases in anchor text to see if this information is real. Results that are created artificially would show spiky graphs whilst natural data would show organic graphs.
- Don't try and SPAM the search engine using unscrupulous link trading or search companies as you could get black-listed and not recover from a lowered ranking.

6. Traffic

Google will look at the traffic that a document gets and changes to that traffic over time. It will also consider seasonal, daily or other timely changes to see if a document receives more traffic at these times and is therefore more relevant at these times. Any significant drop in traffic may indicate that a document is stale. Google may also consider 'advertising traffic' separately.

Is your primary goal in a search engine promotion campaign to increase overall traffic or to increase sales? The determination of your success will depend on your goals.

You will need to have the following statistics or metrics available to analyze your success:

- How many unique visitors you get each week
- The specific search engines that are sending you traffic
- How many hits each search engine is sending you
- The keywords people use to find your site
- What your ranks are for certain keyword phrases
- Sales per week

In order to get the above information you will need a traffic analyzer that will report your site statistics. We recommend the free [Google Analytics](#).

You will also need to be able to integrate your site statistics with your sales/week. You can use Microsoft Excel for this purpose. You can transfer some of the information from Advanced Logger into an Excel file that also contains your average sales/day over a week. This will give you some revealing statistics about the relationships between search engines, visitors, and sales.

Over a period of time, you will be able to see the emerging relationships between keywords, search engines and sales. Analyzing these relationships will show you where you need to improve your site.

Track visitors with a traffic analyzer

A unique visitor is a person that visits your site for the first time. Some statistical reporting programs will tell you unique visitors per 24 hour period. This means, if the visitor returns the next day, they are counted again as a unique visitor, even if they have already been to your site.

When you start to analyze the data, you will be exposed to a lot of numbers. Make sure that you know the difference between the unique visitor and total hits on your site. Total hits can be anything

from hits on every page to hits on every page and every graphic (total accesses).

You will need to know the number of unique visitors in order to track your sales success.

Simple site statistics usually provided by your host will tell you how many unique visitors your site is getting.

Track Search Engines with a traffic analyzer

Depending on your site statistics program, you may also be able to see which search engines are referring traffic to your site. [Google Analytics](#) will provide graphical charts to represent site traffic.

Don't expect to get every page ranked in every engine. Some search engines just naturally pick up more pages than others. Search engines are always in a competition for who has the biggest database of web pages. You may find that one search engine may be picking up and ranking almost every page of your site, while another engine only likes your home page. It is also dependent on the popularity of the specific search engine.

We've dealt with the statistics for many web sites over many years. We believe that Google sends the most traffic. But that doesn't mean that Google always sends the most quality traffic. Quality traffic (traffic that produces sales) can vary by search engine. One important variable would be the product. For instance, traffic from MSN may bring many sales for your product, whereas traffic from Google may yield you less sales per unique visitor.

You will need to look at your statistics over many months to determine which engines are bringing you sales and which keywords are producing traffic and sales for your specific product.

Track keywords with a traffic analyzer and a ranking report

Again, an advanced program will be very useful to help you accurately track the ranks of specific keyword phrases in the engines. You'll need to get the free version of [WebCEO](#) which will provide you with plenty more analytical tools as well.

When you start getting a good amount of traffic (at least 500 unique visitors per week) you will start to understand that the keyword phrases people use are wide and varied. You will notice that you're getting traffic from search engines on phrases that you never thought of. The essence of a good search engine promotion campaign is that you see a nice spread of traffic from ALL engines and a nice spread of keyword phrases.

Some equations that may help you analyze traffic

Percent Increase of Unique Visitors:

- UVB = unique visitors before a promotion campaign. They should be over a specific period of time, like 4 weeks.
- UVA = unique visitors after or during a promotion campaign. This should be over the same period of time as UVB - 4 weeks.
- $UVA - UVB$ = difference
- $\text{Difference}/UVA$ = percent of visitor increase

Percent Increase of Hits from Search Engine(s):

- HB = hits from search engine(s) before a campaign over specific time
- HA = hits from search engines after a campaign over same time period as HB
- $HA - HB$ = difference
- $\text{Difference}/HA$ = percent increase of hits from search engine(s)

Percent increase in sales:

- $\text{Sales}/\text{Unique Visitors}$ = percent of sales/visitors

On the same day of each week (or month) you should calculate your sales/unique visitor ratio. This will tell you if your promotion campaigns are increasing sales, not just visitors. (We'll venture to say that 1% is a good ratio. That is one sale per 100 visitors. If you see anything over 1%, you should examine the campaign and try to replicate it in any way possible.)

7. User Behavior

Google analyses the amount of time that a user spends on a site after he/she has clicked a link from a search results page. If there is a significant decline in the time spent on the site then it could indicate that the document contains information that is out of date and has become stale. For instance, if after clicking from a Google search results link to a timetable, an average person spent 2 minutes on the site and now the average was under 30 seconds, it would indicate that the timetable was out of date. Google collects this information using the Google toolbar.

- Make your site the ideal source for your product/service people spend the longest time there. Any document that has become stale should easily link through to the fresher version e.g. a product that you no longer sell should link through to the replacement product.

Pages Per Visitor

Another statistic all programs provide is "Page Per Visitor" (PPG). This number tells you how many pages on your website the average visitor checks out while visiting your site. So if your PPG is 1 that means that people are exiting your site right after seeing your homepage and a good indication that you need to fix your homepage. Depending on the nature of your site the PPG will vary. The higher the PPG, the more interest visitors are taking in your site and the more time they are spending on it. Try to find the "exit" pages that visitors are using the most. This means which one of your webpages most people exit your site from. Knowing and fixing these pages will help you tremendously.

User Maintained/Generated Data

Google looks at the number of people and the growth in people that add a document to their internet browser's bookmarks/favorites. The basis of this is that people would only add a site to their bookmark/favorites, if the site would be useful in the long term and wanted to visit the site in the future. Google looks at the number of people that then use these bookmarks/favorites to rank a document higher. Conversely, a decline in the number of bookmarks, their usage or deletion of bookmarks could indicate that a document is out-dated and no longer relevant. Google gathers this information from the users of the Google toolbar.

- Add links on your site to encourage people to bookmark this site or add it to their favorites list.

8. Domain Related Information

Information that you used to register your domain name, including contact information, length of registration and nameservers (servers that resolve your domain name to IP address) is used to determine the legitimacy of domains. Google uses pattern matching between information about your domain with that of known illegitimate domains. Google also looks at whether this contact information, hosting company or nameservers has changed relatively often.

- A good nameserver is likely to host domains from a variety of domains and to have a history of hosting those domains, whilst a bad nameserver may be hosting domains for pornography sites, doorway pages or domains with commercial words (common indicator of SPAM) or primarily bulk domains from a single registrar or the nameserver may be brand new. Brand new nameservers are not necessarily bad unless having a combination of other negative factors.

- The cheapest domain registrar is likely to have registered a large number of doorway domains. Use someone reputable who registers domains for corporate companies.
 - Find ISPs by doing a WHOIS lookup on highly ranked sites.
 - Use nameservers from top level ISPs.
 - Use a reputable corporate ISP who does not deal with pornography domains.
 - Register your domain for as long as possible, ideally 10 years.

9. Ranking History

Google will look at the historical ranking of a document to help determine the current ranking. A historically highly ranked document will have an influence on the current ranking. A document that falls significantly in rank would be flagged as 'out of favor' and may be considered outdated.

- A document that jumps in ranking across a number of queries might be a topical document or could be SPAM. Commercial queries can be repeated and documents that are ranked highly can be nagged and checked for SPAM. The change in rank over time is considered to see if a document is SPAM. If there is a sudden spike and the document is not linked to or from an authoritative or trusted source, like a news article, then a document may be considered as SPAM.
- Try to get links from trusted news and authoritative sites.

10. Document Topic

Google attempts to extract the topic of a document using the URL, low frequency words contained in the document, categorization, content analysis, clustering or summarization.

- If Google sees a significant change in the number of topics associated with a document after a stable period of set topics or the disappearance of the original topic, Google may consider that the document has been taken over as a 'doorway page' and may consider the document and any links or anchor text associated with the document as SPAM.
- Ensure your site stays consistent with its original topic.

11. Localization

Pick regional search engines you want to appear on based upon the countries you trade in. If you sell to France and you want to appear on Google.fr, the French version of Google, you should either host your site in France or have a French domain that your site can be indexed under.

It is important to continue repeating these steps on a structured basis and planning in advance of seasonal trends like Holiday Season. Over a period of time the keywords will change in relevancy as search terms evolve and the relevancy of your product range changes.

With an analytics system you should be able to see what words are working for you, the traffic they are bringing in and the level of conversion you are getting for them. With this information, you can see how much of an improvement you have made and also if any changes you have made have improved your results.

12. Using Social Networks, Blogs and RSS to increase ranking and traffic

The rise of Social Networks, Blogs and RSS on the web has been driven by individuals feeling empowered to tell their story, communicate feelings, chronicle events or write anything that can think of. This is the age of self-publishing as never seen before and with it comes all the positives and negatives of personal opinion.

According to Metcalfe's law "the value of a network grows in proportion to the square of the number of users" which essentially means the larger the network the more connections/benefit the users get out of it.

You may love the comments or hate them but with 27% of internet users in the US having been involved, either reading or writing a blog, companies that ignore the messages posted may be doing so at their peril. Blogs are a valuable source of research to understand what consumers are thinking about your brand, latest advertising campaign or products/services.

A web log (blog) is a shared online journal where people can post diary entries about their personal experiences and interests. Blogs have become legitimate standard business practices and progressive marketers are building strategies around their use to influence a target audience. Many of these self-developed forums are generating significant revenue streams for their creators. Teen networks such as MySpace.com have become destinations of choice for an increasingly connected youth culture. Witness the success of Gawker.com in creating large audience pull and drawing advertisers' media dollars through the public interest in 'A' list celebrities and fashion icons. Yahoo! is also including blogs to the search criteria within news, further highlighting the increased interest of consumer opinion, unique insights or footage of events. In addition to using blogs for research, as a feature to your site, they can increase traffic, membership and your SEO ranking.

Video logs (VBlog), are proliferating as bloggers seek to enhance their messages. Mobile blogs (Moblogs, mBlogs) can be posted directly to from your mobile communication device. Podcasting enables anyone to create their own radio or television show for download to others. And it goes on and on.

At the heart of the technical revolution in the explosion of self-expression via the Web, is a family of standards called RSS and a rival specification called Atom. RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication and allows individuals or web sites to opt-in and receive content or recent changes from other web sites, the most common of which are news, blogs, entertainment, and ecommerce. The technology

behind RSS allows users to subscribe to web sites that provide RSS feeds or syndicated content. For the marketer, RSS will enable you to communicate and publish information that goes directly, avoiding SPAM filters, to users who choose to link to you, at a time that is convenient to them. You will be able to receive feedback on what the market would like to hear about from you and be able to widen your reach through portals like www.live.com.

Even if it's something as simple as putting press releases in an RSS feed, marketers will benefit from early exposure to distributing information via RSS and receive valuable feedback from key constituents on what types of content they would like to have.

Marketing and Social Networks

For marketers, do we need to know the latest on what is hot on the Social Scene and what is not? If you want to be where the audience is growing, social networks are an absolute. Public opinion is influenced there and your brand will get reviewed, praised, skewered or viral marketed to stardom. Several ways to get started now include:

Information Blogs

Develop an information blog on your company, product or service. With approval from company leadership, communicate the latest happenings at the company, experiment with ideas and become a Thought Leader on a topic. Remember that your posts will return as other bloggers link to you and what you say is quoted in various ways. For many private companies, this is not a problem but understand that your postings can be used to support everything from contrary opinions to legal proceedings.

The benefits of blogging include reaching an extended audience and in the links that will be added by other bloggers. This increases the relevancy of your site for search engine indexing. We recommend you can get your own blog for free from [WordPress](http://WordPress.com) or [Blogger](http://Blogger.com).

Personal Opinion Blogs

Many top-level executives are using blogs to gain higher visibility in the marketplace. If your strategy is to build key executives' credibility so that they can be more effective in influencing the media, being invited to speaking engagements and so forth, the use of blogs is complimentary to that.

Online Advertising

Advertising money is pouring into the self-publishing space. The audiences are highly segmented based on the focus of the blog. Cost for ad placement is generally lower than that of mainstream publishing sites due to the relatively new position of accepting media spends. Choosing to move your

ad spend to a blog or Social Network should come under the same type of analysis as that of any other site. You can cash in on all the advertising \$ being poured into blogs through programs such as [Blogvertise](#)

Build Linked Blog Communities

The American political machines have been at the forefront of developing communities of linked blogs. This allows the savvy politician to create an increasingly connected constituency to state their support and drive campaign donations. Enabling your employees to develop their own site is a good way to foster a progressive culture. Ownership even within the confines of company policy still creates positive connections.

Join Social Networks

Getting involved in Social Networks has several advantages. First, it helps you understand the space and allows you to meet people who have like interests. Secondly, it enables you to influence the participants when you post your views and positions. Friendster, YahooGroups.com or LinkedIn are just some of thousands of examples of Social Networks that you can get involved with.

Enhance Messages with Vlogs

Using video and enhanced multimedia can work like TV to communicate your message. There is no medium like video for communicating emotion to the masses. Vlogs will help drive your awareness and recall to a higher level than text and flat imagery.

With YouTube results getting ranked so highly now through Google, generating video can bring you great exposure. You don't need to make fancy videos to get these benefits either. Often times the simplest ones are the most popular. I just started using [Traffic Gyser](#) to distribute my videos to over 200 video sites. I make very simple videos and with that system I've already seen a considerable boost in traffic and rankings. Video is definitely the next big traffic generating strategy in my opinion.

Podcast

Anyone with content can set up a Podcast. Just load up audio files and let people subscribe to them through an RSS feed. Podcasts are great for regularly updated content. Many radio stations are already using or experimenting with Podcast, as are many news led web sites like News.com. Scott Paton's course on [Podcasting](#) is by far the best one for people interested in this area.

Set up RSS Feeds

RSS feeds provide an easy way for companies to syndicate your content and ultimately drive more traffic to your site and increase your brand awareness. You can even set up an RSS feed for the

products on your site.

The people over at AddThis.com setup these 2 cool widgets. The first allows you to setup a bookmark option on your site so people can quickly bookmark it. The second is an RSS button and allows people to get RSS feed from your site. Both are free and take seconds to create. Check them out [here](#).

Legal Issues on Publishing

Every country in the world addresses the legal issues involving public opinion. Ignorance is not a defense and when making comments publicly available, be aware that potential liability issues include among others:

- Defamation
- Intellectual Property (Copyright/Trademark)
- Trade Secret
- Publication of Private Facts

However, in the spirit of free speech across much of the world... Blog on!

Managing the Message

Is it possible to orchestrate a program aimed at influencing behavior with Social Networking and Blogging? Absolutely. Can we predict what the results will be? Probably not. Word of mouth is the most powerful factor in this medium. Bloggers are notorious for digging into the story until the truth comes out. They don't suffer lies and mistruths well and will band together to create a firestorm of unfavorable PR for those who misuse the space.

For a Website wanting to build awareness. Traffic and exposure, the opportunity to use these avenues of marketing is very promising. Remember that the individual rules and the power is in the hands of those who believe in your message.

13. The Most Important Tips Once Again

- Good content is essential - make sure you are providing the perfect source for the search engine by using 'alignment' strategy.
- Have a link building strategy that gets great sites to link to you.
- It has never been more important to have a good hosting company and ISP for your site.
- Never SPAM the search engine.
- Success doesn't happen over-night. Get the tools you need, put in the work and the results will follow.

14. Further Readings

[THE SEO BOOK](#): This is by far the most comprehensive step by step guide to SEO. Although this isn't a short or overly simple read- the effort and headaches you'll save by applying the lessons in this book are well worth studying it very carefully. This book is a must for anyone wanting to undertake SEO on their own the right way.

[THE 2007 SEO HANDBOOK](#): Up to date SEO strategies. Super easy to follow and apply. A shorter read than the SEO BOOK, this is the ideal quick reference. David Harry gets straight to the point and offers tactics that work today.

15. Recommended SEO Tools

Both the following programs offer far too many SEO benefits to name here. They've both helped countless website owners and are tried and tested. These are the Pepsi and Coca-Cola of SEO programs. Which one is better entirely depends on one's taste. Best of all you can use both free so you can test the two and stick with the one you like.

[WebCEO](#): The Pepsi; a slightly different feel from the original.

[SEO ELITE](#): This is the Coca-Cola; the one that started all SEO programs.

Conclusion

Search Engine Optimization is both an art and a science. It's ever changing as Search Engines progress. Read the books mentioned above and gain a solid foundation. Then keep learning. Participate in forums, read the latest SEO articles and talk with fellow webmasters. What worked today may hurt you tomorrow so keep up with it.

Remember that SEO success isn't achieved overnight. Within this eGuide I've suggested many tools, programs and pieces of information that have helped me achieve top rankings and increase my traffic exponentially. These can help you tremendously as well but they aren't magic. You still have to put in the effort.

So arm yourself with the right SEO knowledge and tools and get your site ready for waves of new traffic!

To Your Online Success!!!

Erick and your [OneSmartCart](#) Team

PS. For quick help with questions about SEO, design, programming or online marketing checkout the forums over at [Site-Reference](#). Can't beat free helpful, to the point advice.