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## The SEO Starter Kit

A free resource provided by freshpromo for the newbie SEO

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### 1. DEFINITIONS

#### *Keyword:*

A word that a search engine user might use to find relevant web page(s). If a keyword doesn't appear anywhere in the text of your web page, it's highly unlikely your page will appear in the organic search results (organic means the main list of results - not the paid/sponsored results in the margins of the result pages)

#### *URL (or Web Address):*

The address given to a web site, page or file on the web. Generally, a URL starts with http:// and appears in your web browser's address bar.

#### *Organic Rankings:*

Website listings that appear in the main section of search results on Google and other search engines. You may also see narrow listings along the right side of the page or Sponsored Listings at the top - these are not organic as they are part of Google's Pay-per-click (PPC) program. Organic rankings are generated by a search engine algorithm designed to find the most applicable results for a given search query. Rankings can be achieved by optimizing content to reflect applicable search terms (ie. keywords). Building inbound links (definition below) to improve link popularity (definition below) also helps achieve organic rankings.

#### *Pay-Per-Click (PPC):*

Advertising programs such as Google AdWords allow web site owners to have their site listed in search results for a cost per click. These results are seen on the right side and top of result pages in addition to organic listings. Over time, organic SEO brings a higher return on investment because with PPC, you never stop paying for traffic.

#### *Inbound Links:*

Links that point to your website from another domain. These are sometimes referred to as

External Links or Incoming Links.

*Internal Links:*

Links that point to pages of your site from other pages of your site. Ex. If your home page links to your About page, that is considered an internal link.

*Link Popularity (or Link Juice):*

A score given to a web page based on the quantity and quality of links it receives. The higher the score, the better chance it has of ranking well for relevant keywords. If a page links out to several poor quality sites, this can actually lower the link popularity of the page. This is sometimes referred to as bleeding link juice.

*PageRank:*

Google's trademarked measure of link popularity (defined above). A scale of 0 to 10 is given to web pages based on the links pointing to and from that web page. PageRank values can be seen by downloading the Google Toolbar and installing it on your web browser. See <http://toolbar.google.com>

*Link Exchange (or Reciprocal Linking):*

The act of you linking to a site and that same site linking back to you. Link trading can help boost the link popularity of each site but its effectiveness is weak compared to receiving one-way inbound links instead.

*Google Analytics:*

A free tool that offers website and visitor statistics, trends and data. Analytics can track data such as page views, unique visits, bounce rates, average time on site, as well as offer stats on referrals, search engine hits and direct clicks to your site. See <http://www.google.com/analytics/>

*Referrer:*

This refers to the site that delivered a visitor to your web page. If you have a listing in the Yahoo! Directory, someone who clicks your website link to get to your site is the *referral* while Yahoo! is considered the *referrer*.

*White Hat and Black Hat SEO:*

White hat refers to ethical SEO practices within the guidelines set by search engines. There are certain rules that should be followed that apply to content optimization and link building. If these rules are not followed - referred to as Black Hat - search engines reserve the right to penalize or ban the offending web site. People use Black hat techniques with the hope of tricking search engines and acquiring high rankings quickly. However, any rankings that are achieved using spam or Black hat methods are almost always caught by search engines and removed. There is a long-term negative effect of Black Hat SEO.

*Keyword Stuffing:*

Considered Black Hat by search engines, keyword stuffing occurs when, either

accidentally or purposefully, keywords are used in close proximity to one another and in large amounts on a web page. Excessively repeating keywords in meta tags or page titles thinking that it will increase your search engine rankings is false and can get your site penalized.

*Weblog (or Blog):*

An online journal. The author can share text, images, video/audio and links with others by posting in his or her blog. Popular blog services include Blogger, Wordpress, Typepad, or LiveJournal. An author of a blog is referred to as a "blogger" and can write on a particular topic they wish to share with their readers. Many companies keep blogs on their web site as a marketing tool - they can share testimonials, expertise, commentary or tips on their business topic.

*Page Titles:*

The title that appears at the very top bar of your web browser window. The page title is NOT a meta tag. It is a unique HTML tag that gives users and search engines a brief description of what your page is about. It should be an accurate representation of the content on that specific page, written more as a statement and not a full sentence.

*Meta Tags:*

The main meta tags that apply to SEO are the Keyword meta tag and the Description meta tag. However, Google ignores both these tags as they have been abused over the years. Yahoo still uses meta tags as part of its ranking algorithm but there are far more important areas of a web page today than meta tags.

*Image ALT tags:*

The ALT tag exists so that users who disable images from loading in their browsers see a small snippet of text describing the image that would otherwise appear. Search engines may consider the text included in the ALT tag as part of their algorithm to determine relevancy of that web page to a particular search query.

*Anchor Text:*

When you link to a page, HTML code is created that changes normal plain text to clickable text that is usually blue in color and is underlined. This is called Anchor Text.

Additional definitions found at: <http://www.seoglossary.com/>

## 2. HOW TO OPTIMIZE CONTENT

The two main components of SEO are Content Optimization and Link Building. Content optimization involves creating or updating text to reflect the keywords that your potential site visitors are searching for on Google, Yahoo and other search engines. In order to rank well for a search query, your web page must be relevant to the term(s) used.

The main page copy that people read is the most important area of a web page for search engines, as well as human eyes. The first step in optimizing your content is to figure out what search terms people use to find sites just like yours. This process is called **Keyword Research**. Type some words that relate to your web site topic at <http://freekeywords.wordtracker.com/> and see what comes up! Wordtracker is a free service that ranks phrases based on the volume of use. Generally, the words that are most frequently used are the hardest to rank well for. You could be competing with thousands or millions of other sites.

Thorough keyword research and analysis is done best by a **qualified SEO expert**. But you can start to see the type of phrase variations that your target market might use by taking the Wordtracker service for a spin yourself.

Once the right keywords are identified, you must make sure your web page copy reflects them. There are certain areas of a page that search engine algorithms specifically look at when determining what page to rank higher. **Important areas include:**

- Main body/paragraph text
- Anchor text
- Page titles
- Image ALT tags
- Meta tags
- Page file names (the names of your pages that show up in the URL)
- Domain name

If you aren't sure what these terms mean, have a look at the definition list in the previous section.

A few points to keep in mind:

Never repeat keywords in excess to try and fool search engines. Not only could you be penalized but your content will start to look silly to web site visitors. Always write your content for humans before search engines! (**Golden rule**)

You don't always have to use the exact phrasing to have it "count" for relevancy. The phrases "Hawaii Adventure Tourism" and "Adventure tours HI" refer to the same topic and search engines are smart enough to know this. Again, write for your customers first while keeping in mind the phrases that Wordtracker said are popular.

Don't spend too much time on **meta tags**. They don't count for a whole lot anymore, and Google's ranking algorithm ignores them. However, your description meta tag can still show up as the listing description in Google result pages. Therefore, it's important to make sure each description meta tag accurately reflects the content of the web page.

**Anchor text** is thought of by search engines to be a short description of the page you are linking to. It is important to use something other than "click here" when pointing to another page. Use the main keywords as anchor text of the page you are linking to whenever possible.

Content embedded in **Flash files** may not be as effective as good old plain text. Search engine spiders cannot read text that is **embedded in images** at all.

### 3. HOW TO BUILD LINKS

Search engines consider **inbound links** as "votes" from one website to another. Each link, depending on the quality and relevancy of the site to your own, counts towards your site's **link popularity**.

Getting other webmasters to link to your site is no easy task. But there are some guidelines to follow and tricks to use that can help out.

Ask yourself this question: Why would anyone want to link to my site's content? If you can't think of a good reason then link building will be very difficult for you. The trick is to offer something unique. Free online tools can be popular; keep a blog and write about current events in your industry or offer insight others will want to read; create a comprehensive F.A.Q. section to inform your visitors. There are a number of ways to distance yourself from stale competitors or other web sites just like yours.

Once you feel like you have good content, explore the following methods of **generating inbound links**:

- Directory submissions
- Press releases
- Write and distribute articles
- Link exchanges
- Write testimonials for companies you have dealt with in exchange for links to your site (and other creative ways of trading something for a link)
- Actively participate in discussion forums and blogs in your industry while mentioning your site. Word of mouth can generate links over time.

As noted already, **anchor text** is very important for your **inbound links**. Make sure they contain the keywords that reflect the page content the link is pointing to.

## **4. LONG TERM BENEFITS OF SEO**

Steady link building may be necessary in some competitive markets in order to hang on to high rankings. But in many cases, a one-time investment into content optimization and an initial increase to inbound links can have lasting effects for many months or even years. This is especially true if your content is unique enough that people naturally link to it on their own.

If your site sells products or services, ensuring that your content and link building tactics fall within search engine guidelines can have long-term positive effects. The investment into SEO goes far beyond immediate gain if done by a reputable SEO expert.

If your site is not commercial, SEO can still offer great value. Doing keyword research allows you to see what phrases your target market uses. Ensuring your content reflects this language can improve the content's focus for existing visitors. If you have a web site, it's a good bet you're looking for traffic of some kind. SEO can help boost local recognition and get others talking about your site or organization.

The Internet is the fastest growing advertising medium in the world and SEO has proven to be a method that offers one of the highest returns on investment (ROI).

## **5. ADDITIONAL READING**

*Search Engine Commentary* by FreshPromo  
[http://www.freshpromo.ca/seo\\_blog.html](http://www.freshpromo.ca/seo_blog.html)

*SEO 101 – Basic Optimization Techniques* by Jim Hedger  
<http://www.searchengineguide.com/jim-hedger/seo-101-basic.php>

*Jill Whalen's SEO Newsletter*  
<http://www.highrankings.com/newsletter/subscription.php>

*SEO Chat Resources and Free Tools*  
<http://www.seochat.com/>