

Search Engine Optimization

by martha gabriel

1. Strategic Analysis

Before starting the optimization, it is necessary to make a preliminary analysis about which pages must be optimized and also about the need of creating additional specific pages with relevant content to your website business.

- Determine the **objectives for the optimization** (traffic, subscriptions, sells, downloads, etc.)
- Check your **pages context, business area**, determining your **competitors websites rank** in the search engines
- Check your **pages and your competitors relevance**
- Make **comparative analysis**
- Check your **Landing Pages** – marketing and design analysis focusing in the business objectives

2. Keywords

Keywords are the most important part of a SEO strategy (in sponsored links strategy as well).

Search always starts with a person typing a keyword!

Marketing + Business + IT → need to research to find out which keywords are really used by the target audience to find you.

Quality keywords = quality traffic

Keywords x Ranking:

- Keyword frequency
- Where the keywords appear in the page (code, URL, body, domain name)
- Which tags use them (title, h1, img/alt, etc.)
- How they are positioned on the page compared with other words (top, middle, bottom)

Keywords x Conversion:

- Generic Keywords → tend to attract more traffic.
- Specific Keywords → tend to attract conversion.

3. On-page Optimization (simultaneously with off-page optimization)

Page Code

- URL

each page must be created with the **main keywords appearing in its URL**.

- Meta Tags

meta-tags are considered by several search engines, specially:

- meta-tag **Keywords** – the more words in the tag, the less each word is worthy.
- meta-tag **Description** – determine the text that is shown for your page in the search results.

- Title Tag

- must BE the keyword** or at least contain the main important keyword of the page.
- the **keyword must be in the beginning** of the title text.

- Sub-title Tags: <h1><h2><h3>...

- the **keywords must be in the sub-title tags** and as near of the beginning of the phrase as possible.
- Keywords in the tag **<h1> is more worthy than in <h2>**, that worth more than in **<h3>**, and so on.

- Img Tag

- texts in the **“alt” parameter is considered page content**.
- the **keywords must appear in the “alt” text** when possible.

- Top of the Page

- it is a privileged place and **considered important by the search engines**.
- most important **keywords must appear as near to the top** of the page as possible.

-Internal Links

- the **anchor text must include the keyword** related to the linked page.

- Keyword Frequency

- very important criteria** for page ranking.
- keywords must be **repeated the most possible, WITHOUT spamming** the search engines and **GUARANTEERING the text meaning**.
- frequencies between **3% and 8% are relatively safe**.

- Scripts in the Page

- use **external script files** (.js, for example)

- Navigation Menus

- avoid javascript or other code for creating navigation** that can not be understood by the search engine crawlers.

Page Content

- Relevance

- To be relevant, be relevant!**
- Bad content is poorly written, with no keywords, no update, no relevance.

-W3C Standards

- pages complying to **W3C standards usually are search engine friendly**

- Flash Content

- Google **“sees” all flash content**, therefore **Flash files must be optimized too**.

-Dynamic Content

- dynamic pages, created **on the fly**, usually can not be **searchable** by search engines.
- create strategies where **important pages don't get lost** inside the databases.

- CMS

- use CMSs that creates search engine friendly URLs, **individual pages meta-tags, compiles pages** (instead of creating them on the fly), **allows creating internal links and template pages manually**.

Website Structure

- Design & Structure

- page depth** - isolated pages are less worthy than pages that link to other pages (outbound links).
- navigation between pages **must favor crawlers visit**.
- heavy images** must be avoided.
- configure properly the **robots.txt file**.
- submit your sitemap** to the search engines.

- Age and Updating

- the older a page, the more trustable it tends to be → **time favors ranking**.
- the **page updating pace** affects the search engine crawlers visit pace.

- Website versus Individual Pages

- search engines classify each page individually but also use their **internal links and keywords to classify and categorize the whole website**.

4. Off-page Optimization (simultaneously with off-page optimization)

- Sponsored Links

- sponsored links go where SEO can not:
 - Testing the best keywords before SEO optimization
 - Optimizing for Mistyping and Misspelling
 - Temporary Advertisement / Campaigns
 - Optimizing for many keywords at once (millions)
 - Quickness – the results start just after starting the campaign
 - Highly demanded keywords

- Link Building

- The more **high ranked inbound links** are, the better.
- Legal methods for getting links **PONTING to your page** :
 - Press Releases
 - Affiliated Programs
 - Be listed in human managed directories- **Dmoz.org**, for example
 - WOMM** (Word of Mouth Mkt), **SMM** (Social Media Mkt) & **SMO** (Social Media Optimization) – increasing presence in social networks links Del.icio.us, Digg, YouTube, etc.
 - Link Baits (see frame on the right)

Link Baits are based on 5 types of hooks: a) news; b) opposition; c) attack; d) resources; e) humor.

Ideas for Link Baits

- Make a **valuable resource** (lists, special reports, history of, how to, etc.)
- Interview** (e-mail/phone) prominent people and publish it.
- Build an **useful tool**
- Write an **interesting article**
- Run a newsworthy ‘event’** such as a contest
- Test something new that has not been done before
- Be the first in doing something on the internet**
- Write something **controversial**
- Be the first to write the latest news** in your niche
- Be the first to expose a scammer**
- Disagree with an authority**
- Write some **funny humor**
- Make an **interesting picture**
- Be the first to research and document** something
- Make a **theme, plug-in or piece of software**
- Make a **tool** that others can put on their sites but that **links to you**
- Make a **joke about a known person**
- Make a **resource that is just in time** for a major event
- Write an **outrageous theory and back it up with logics**
- Write **useful comments on something** that is happening
- Give something valuable for free**
- Coin a new acronym** in your niche and get people to talk about it
- Become an expert in your niche** and write valuable information

Source: Jim Westergren (<http://www.jimwestergren.com/link-bait/>)

5. Measurement, Monitoring, Control & Adjustments

Measurement and monitoring of the following factors are essential for controlling the optimization process to get the desired results and also for adjusting the plan when needed. The main parameters for measuring are: a) page views x unique visits; b) rejection rate; c) which crawlers visited the pages and when; d) how many visits each search engine drove to your pages; e) which keywords brought access to your pages.

