



# FACTSHEET

## Search Engine Optimisation



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## You need multiple skills to effectively optimise a website

- ▶ Marketing skills to research your most relevant Keywords, your market and competitors.
- ▶ Copywriting skills to provide relevant information that highlights your products or services and includes your Keywords.
- ▶ Technical skills to include page titles, meta descriptions and Keywords, alt tags on images and many other improvements that only a skilled developer is able to carry out.
- ▶ Research skills to find relevant partner sites to request back-links.

## Seven Key steps to Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

### *1. Page Names:*

Make sure your web pages are titled with descriptions that reflect the page's contents.

### *2. Images (including navigation images):*

Add 'alt tags' to all of your images. This provides a relevant description linked to the website page content. If your navigation buttons are images, add 'alt tags' that are the same as the page names.

### *3. Source code "Meta Description" and "Meta Keywords":*

A short paragraph that best describes your business and its activities that is inserted into the source code of your website. This is what people will read on your website listing in search engines. A list of your main Keywords can also be inserted at this point.

"Meta Descriptions" and "Meta Keywords" are not the most important factor to improve your ranking, but they can help search engines define the relevance of your business and content. It is more important to have unique, well-written copy that includes all of the relevant Keywords on every page of your website.

### *4. Keyword research*

Proper Keyword research is essential to establish what search terms people are actually using to find your products or services. Research tools are available to provide an accurate list of your relevant Keywords. It can sometimes be surprising to find out what Keywords are the most popular within your industry and also how many other related Keywords are being used.

You should establish what your Keywords are before you start writing the copy for your website, then sprinkle these words throughout your text taking care not to overload your text with Keywords. Your copy has to make sense to your readers and search engines could penalise you if you try to cram multiple Keywords into every sentence.

## ► Promises are not always what they seem...

There are a lot of SEO companies who will claim to be able to guarantee you rankings. These claims can be false, and the tricks used could ultimately lead to your site listing being removed or downgraded.

Some of these tricks include:

**Misleading content:** The practice of hiding common search terms on web pages that are not relevant to your business or products will bring the wrong sort of visitors to your website.

**Link Spoofing:** The practice of linking your site to other sites that have been created solely for the purpose of linking lots of other sites without any real purpose (Link farms).

These and other practices are actively discouraged by the search engines and can seriously damage your ranking.

### **5. Content (text on the pages):**

Copy should be factual and informative and broken down into short, easy to read sentences. People want to find what they are looking for quickly so bullet points are often an effective way of making an impact. You may need to get some help with this because copywriting for the web is a specialised skill.

### **6. Links (inbound and outbound):**

Links are important, particularly inbound, to drive traffic to your website. They are also viewed by search engines as a sign of a good website and will therefore improve your page rank.

Getting your website listed on directory websites is one way of getting free inbound links. However, make sure they are relevant and from well-known sites, not just link farms. Any links from other websites need to relate to the content of your website. The better the quality of the sites that are linking to you the higher the value will be put on the link.

### **7. Updating:**

Make sure that your site content is constantly changing. This will let the search robots know that your site is providing fresh information for visitors. New content will keep your visitors coming back too.

## **Continuous improvement**

SEO requires regular and ongoing attention. If you are serious about staying at the top of search engine lists, then you need to do SEO on a regular basis. It is not just about your own website, it is about the websites listed above and around you and what they are doing. As with offline marketing, you need to understand what your competitors are doing at all times.

## **Continual assessment**

There are no time guarantees with SEO and it is often a case of gradual improvement and continual assessment and measurement. If you are looking for immediate results then the quickest way to achieve the first page of your chosen search engine is Pay Per Click advertising. These are the sponsored listings, for example, on the right hand side of the Google page listings.

 See the PPC Fact Sheet on our website for more information.

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