

SEO Overview

How can you ensure the viability of your SEO program well into the future? How can you reduce the impact of search engine algorithm changes and enjoy long-term visibility and ranking?

The answer to both questions involves having a well-rounded SEO program.

Website owners who put too much emphasis on a single element of SEO are more vulnerable to changes in search engine algorithms. If you look at the history of search engine optimization, you'll see a pattern of this:

Back in the day, a lot of webmasters relied heavily on keyword tags to drive their visibility and ranking. But the search engines demoted the importance of the keyword tag, and many websites suffered as a result.

Link exchange networks are a more recent version of this scenario. Search engines are now devaluing links that are part of link farms and obvious reciprocation schemes. And once again, some websites are suffering from it.

But how is it that some websites coast right along, largely unaffected by search engine updates? What's the difference between these unaffected websites and those that are negatively impacted?

Sure, the age of the domain plays a part. But another key difference is the well-rounded nature of a website's SEO program. Instead of focusing on the hottest SEO "trend," websites with long-term SEO success focus on a variety of strategies with equal emphasis.

In that sense, SEO is similar to financial investments. The more you diversify, the less likely you are to suffer across the board when uncontrollable factors fluctuate.

So how do you diversify your search engine optimization? By using a variety of tactics in conjunction with each other. Here are some of the tactics you might use.

Create Quality Content

Good, original content helps your SEO efforts in three ways. First, quality content will make your link-building efforts much easier. Think about the kinds of websites you would link to. I'm willing bet they all have one thing in common -- relevant and useful content.

Quality content will also increase the number of page views you get per visitor. Again, consider your own behavior for a moment. What do you do when you come across a site that might be relevant to your needs but offers very little content? You probably bail out, don't you? Well guess what. Search engines can track that if you find the site through their results pages.

When you conduct a Google search and click through one of the listings on the results page, Google can track your immediate actions upon reaching the site. Did you immediately back out, or did you stay a while? "Sticky" websites make your readers happy, increase your sales, and improve your search engine performance.

The third way content helps you is by telling the search engine what your site is about in the first place. The more content you have, the more you can use titles, links and page copy to educate readers and search engines alike.

Create Web-Based Resources or Tools

Web-based resources and tools are an extension of the last point, quality content. But now we're taking the content idea to a higher level. The goal here is three-fold. We want to give our visitors useful information, we want to increase our website's "buzz" factor, and we want to pave the way for our linking campaign.

Some SEO websites are really good at this strategy. Look at the variety of useful tools to make people more

inclined to (A) stay on the site longer, (B) recommend it to others, and (C) link to it from their own sites.

The key here is to create content and resources that are truly useful (not just marginally useful). For instance, let's consider a mortgage-related website. Having a mortgage calculator onsite is helpful, but it's not going to generate much buzz or linking. Those calculators are everywhere. But if the site builds a mortgage learning center with step-by-step instructions for first-time home buyers, it will more easily acquire links and retain visitors.

Start a Blog

You may already know this, but if not here it goes. A blog is not a magical SEO device like some people seem to think. Blogs are chronological content-management tools that convert normal text into HTML. That's all.

With that said, blogs can play a major role in search engine optimization because they make web publishing quick and easy. Because they're so easy to use, site owners are more likely to create new content on a regular basis. Blogs also add an element of freshness to a website -- always a good thing for SEO.

Blogs also help your SEO program by social means. The most popular blogs in a given industry usually have a strong sense of personality. Don't use your blog as another channel for dull corporate speak. Use it to have a frank discussion with your audience. Share your true ideas in your true voice, and other bloggers in your niche community will link to you soon enough (especially if you're an authority).

Publish Press Releases Online

Do you have news about your business? If so, publish it online through a site. A good news release will go far online, often being picked up by respectable news sites, RSS feeds, blogs and more. If you upgrade your release, you'll be able to hyperlink some of your key phrases. Suddenly, all those sites and blogs are pointing toward you with key phrase hyperlinks!

I've published press releases online for clients and had them picked up by highly ranked authority sites. Sometimes, these sites will use the release to write a story of their own (linking to the source website). In fact, I had a press release spawn a story on a popular website that drove 30% of my client's website traffic for that week! This direct traffic is *in addition to* the long-term SEO benefits of having the story archived.

Publish Articles Online

Ah yes, the power of articles. Now we're getting to one of my favorite web marketing strategies. The benefits of article marketing are so great that I've written an entire book on the subject (and made it part of my real estate SEO learning kit). But for now, let's summarize these benefits.

By publishing articles over the web, you extend your communication reach and increase your search engine ranking (by way of relevant backlinks to your website). Using websites like EzineArticles.com and SearchWarp.com, you can tap into a large distribution network. You can also find dozens of niche websites who are hungry for quality content and would gladly publish your articles.

Here's a shortcut to finding these niche websites. Do a search for your key phrase plus the words "submit article." For me, this might be: "real estate marketing +submit article." I can also find niche directories this way by using "real estate marketing +add URL."

And speaking of directories...

Add Your Site to Quality Directories

As a matter of course, I always recommend to clients that they add their websites to one or two general directories and as many niche directories as they can find. Such directories strengthen your link popularity and make you less susceptible to wild ranking fluctuations caused by search engine updates.

Acquire Links From Relevant Websites

I saved link-building for last for a couple of reasons. First, you want to make sure your website is worth linking to in the first place. That's why quality content, resources and blogs were steps 1, 2 and 3. Having a "link-worthy" website will make your link-building efforts much easier. Trust me on this one.

Secondly, I put link-building last because I want you to think bigger than just going out and harvesting links. By illustrating the benefits of press release, articles and directories (all key components of a link-building campaign), I hope to open your eyes to the broader benefits of web publishing in general.

Remember, it 's not just about people finding your site. It's about how they find your site, and what they find when they get there. If somebody finds you through a trusted source (like a news site), and they find quality content and interesting resources when they arrive, you've earned their trust right from the start.

Don't think of link-building as an isolated component of your SEO program. Think of it as an inseparable part of everything you do online.

Conclusion

Each of these topics deserves an article of its own (and then some). But I hope this prompts you to take the next step -- learning about each facet of a well-rounded search engine optimization program.

Does this approach work? I can say it does from firsthand experience. I have sites that rank well for highly competitive phrases, and they have sailed smoothly through all search engine updates over the last few years. They were all built using well-rounded SEO practices. - *Brandon Cornett*

