

SEO: Social Media Optimization and More

The SEO arena has acquired a tremendous boost from the growing popularity of social networking sites and various improvements in search technology. Following are some SEO trends that you can look forward to.

Social Media Optimization

Close on the heels of Search Engine Optimization, comes Social Media Optimization, the newest incarnation of SEO. Webmasters should not consider Social Media Optimization as a distraction from their normal SEO efforts; but this new activity should be deployed to boost a site's SEO prospects. Social Media Optimization activities may include back links from individual social media sites, development of a credible profile on these sites, and targeting towards real time searching. The greater impact you can have on the social networking sites, the more your SEO prospects will improve in the coming year.

Website Speed and On-Page SEO Activities

There are some webmasters who rely on off-page optimization rather than on-page optimization but you really should give equal, if not more, attention to on-page optimization. Most importantly, the site load time is going to be the litmus test. Google, in its effort to improve website performance, has decided to penalize those sites that have a longer load time. Also, improper use of Meta tags in website coding will have a negative effect on site rankings in the major search engines in the coming year.

The Web Is Going Mobile

Smartphones are getting more and more ubiquitous and people have started surfing websites on their mobiles more than ever. The number of mobile Internet users has touched 90 million already. The need for optimizing your site for mobile users will naturally be more pressing. Your site needs to be optimized for relevant mobile applications, such as Google's Mobile Search Services and mobile keyword tool in AdWords. Google itself has stated that mobile search results take precedence over desktop search results when it comes to mobile searching.

Online Videos

Video is the buzzword today. Your site needs to be powered with YouTube video clips, one of the most popular media on the web today. If you upload a video on YouTube for a particular keyword, your site gets a better chance to be "visible" by leading search engines like Google for that keyword. One cannot ignore the growing popularity of YouTube. It has surpassed Yahoo! to become the second largest search engine in the U.S. Therefore, putting up a relevant video on YouTube not only enhances your site's SEO prospects in Google, but boosts its SEO prospects in YouTube itself.

Personalized Search

One of the important trends in online search features is personalized searching. Google, the global search leader, has in fact made personalized search the default option. Unless users drop out of this default option, they are likely to experience only personalized search features from Google. Personalized search results are based on the user's web surfing habits. The probability of your website showing up in the search results is going to diminish unless your site is one that is frequently accessed by users. If your site is widely popular and users access it frequently, you are likely to enjoy better search positioning in the days ahead. Otherwise, you need to build up your site's branding (by other means) and entice users to access the site.

Local Search

Leading search engines like Google have started depending on local search listings. As a webmaster, you should focus more on improving your site's ranking in local search engines. Dominating the local listings is much easier since there are a lesser number of players. Then when the major search engines incorporate the top local listings into their search results, you'll receive automatic positioning. The outcome is debatable if you have hosted your site in a different country.

Generally, it is advisable to host your site in the same country where your business operates in order to take full advantage of local search listings. - *Danielle Sage*

