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How to Optimise Your Web Page

If you trade online, it's essential that you optimise your web page so that it ranks well in the search engines. Here are a few basic tips to help you boost your page's relevancy and increase your visibility in the organic listings.

How to use keywords
Keyword targeting

Many people believe that the power of keyword targeting lies in volume of traffic you can generate by ranking for them. But if that traffic is not relevant, and is therefore not bringing in any business, then your keyword targeting strategy is misled.

You would be forgiven for thinking that your 'golden egg' keywords are those that are searched hundreds, if not thousands, of times a month, but are these search terms really relevant, and will they bring you the kind of attention you want and need? For example, ranking highly for a broad match keyword could generate 100 calls a day to your business, but if callers are looking for a product you don't actually provide, or a service that you can't actually deliver, you're only wasting everyone's time by taking this targeting route.

It all comes down to this: you want to use keywords that will bring you business, even if they aren't the phrases that are going to bring you the most traffic.

Our accompanying guide titled how to choose the right keywords for your campaign explains how to not only find relevant keywords, but decide which keywords are going to bring the most relevant traffic to your website.

Keyword placement

To make sure the search engines understand what your page is about, it's important that you apply the right keywords to all of the elements of the page listed in this whitepaper. Be careful not to mention your targeted phrases too often, though. This technique, known in the industry as 'keyword stuffing', will affect the flow of the text and make it difficult to read, which will impress neither your readers nor the search engine crawlers!

Striking the right balance with keyword density

Years ago, the concept of keyword density was used religiously by SEO experts. Consultants from all over the world were eager to find the perfect calculation, and it was widely believed at one point that if 4-5% of the content on the page was comprised of targeted keywords, the page would rank well in the search engines. This is no longer the case.

Google's algorithm is moving with the times, and many other factors now contribute to the success of a page. Nowadays, it's still important that your keywords are used consistently within the page text, but they need to be used naturally and in the right context.

Meta tags

Meta tags are important because they describe some elements of your page. Although the tags won't necessarily affect how your site is displayed, they will affect how your site is read by search engines, and the way in which Google et al interpret the information on your site will ultimately determine who is able to find your page.

The meta data on each page should be unique.

Meta titles

The meta title is by far the most important tag on your page. It needs to accurately describe the page's contents, but also encourage users to click on your listing as opposed to all others. Ideally, it also needs to contain at least one of the targeted keywords for that particular page.

Here's an example. The team here at Freelance SEO Essex have created a blog that provides tips and news for our clients. Here's our meta title as it is currently displayed in Google search (highlighted in purple at the very top of the listing):

SEO Blog | SEO Advice, Tips & Tricks | - Freelance SEO Essex
www.freelanceseoessex.co.uk/blog/ ▼

As you can see, we've included our **primary targeted keyword** at the very start of the title. We've expanded on this with a variation of this keyword that describes **what we offer**, then mentioned the **company name** to make it clear that this page belongs to us.

The key is to keep your meta title short and to the point. Google recommends keeping the title below 70 characters, as there is a limit as to how many can be displayed alongside each search listing.

Meta keywords

Keyword meta tags allow you to list the best suited keywords that an individual might use in a search engine to find your page. Keyword meta is not displayed in the search engine listings, but sits behind each page ready to inform the search engine crawlers.

Bing is known to still consider keyword meta as a ranking factor, but Google no longer regards this tag when indexing the page. Regardless, paying attention to this tag will remind you to outline which keywords are relevant to the page for your overall targeting strategy. Your keywords should accurately describe the contents of the page and should be chosen carefully.

For example, a garden retailer specialising in hedging would want to list keywords such as 'hedge supplier' and 'hedges for sale', instead of ambiguous keywords such as 'hedging'. These broad, highly-searched keywords won't necessarily take searchers to your site; first of all, the phrase is non-specific, and secondly, it's likely that many other businesses are trying to rank for this keyword because a large number of people are searching for it on a monthly basis.

There are many SEO tools that can help you find the keywords that have already been used to find sites like yours. Google's own Keyword Planner tool is one of the most comprehensive, and best of all, it's free. To learn even more about keyword targeting, read our white paper on how to choose the right keywords for your SEO campaign.

Meta descriptions

Description tags are the fragments of text beneath the link of a site on a search engine that allow searchers to have an insight into the content on your page. Although Google has stated that the use of description meta tags is less important than the quality of the site content, these tags are still crucial when it comes to converting traffic into paying customers, and can be used to make your site stand out from its competitors.

Here's the meta description we have used on our blog page:

The text is descriptive, enticing and contains one of our targeted keywords, 'online marketing blog'.

Google recommends keeping the meta description below 155 characters, as there is a limit as to how many can be displayed alongside each search listing.

Although meta tags are helpful and should be consistently addressed, they have become the centre of debate in the SEO community, as some argue that they may not have as much significance as previously stated. Many of the major search engines have said that they do not use the meta tags to index pages, and if they do, they don't give them much credibility or weight.

This decision came after the major search engines realised that meta tags were increasingly being used incorrectly, and the system was being abused. People would use meta tags to add a long list of keywords to their page in order to achieve higher rankings.

Duane Forrester, Project Manager for Bing, summed up the current stance of the major search engines nicely, stating:

"Getting it right is a nice perk for us, but won't rock your world. Abusing the meta keywords can hurt you."

So to summarise, using meta tags correctly won't have the biggest impact, but using them incorrectly can still make it difficult for search engine crawlers to understand what your site is about, and could damage your rankings as a result.

Headers

HTML header tags can be used to break up the text on your web page. When displayed in the code, they look something like this example, which is taken from Freelance SEO Essex's Search Engine Optimisation service page:

On the page itself, the H1 appears like this:

You can control how your headers look by formatting them in your CSS stylesheet.

It is a misconception that the corresponding number of the header within the HTML code (e.g. <h1> or <h2>) correlates to the size of the text on your page. It's true that headers can be used as an aesthetic tool, but they should primarily be used to structure your content.

How to use headers

Header tags form a hierarchy from h1 to h6, with h1 being the most important tag. Keep in mind that the order of the headers should correlate to the importance of what is being said. For example, you would generally use h1 for headlines; h2 for the subheading for the first section; h3 for the sub-subheading of the first section; and so on. We would recommend using headers in consecutive order where possible.

Relevancy and consistency are two factors that must be acknowledged when making good use of header tags.

As a rule of thumb, you should mainly be using h1 and h2 in your code. h3s and below should be used sparingly, as these represent a lower level of significance on your page.

Getting the h1 right!

The h1 tag is crucial to any page. Search engine spiders use the information in the h1 tag to get a basic understanding of the page content. But this doesn't mean that you should fill your heading tags with keywords, or use more than one h1 tag on any page to try to cheat the system. If you do, this may indicate to the search engines that you are trying to manipulate the relevancy of the page in a bid to boost your rankings, and your underhand tactics may actually have the opposite effect.

Content

Search engine crawlers typically start at the top of the page and work their way down, so the content at the top of the page holds the most weight in terms of SEO value. The further you scroll, the less significant the text becomes.

If you really want Google to find something, put it at the top of your page. The same rule applies to links – if you want them to be highly visible, try to discreetly place them in the first or second paragraph of your content if you can.

Below is a screenshot of some of the text that sits at the top of one of our key service pages. The most relevant keyword to the page is 'SEO', but our team has used this primary keyword in a number of different contexts to create variations of the keyword. In these few lines alone, you'll find the keyword 'SEO' used to insert other relevant phrases into the content, including 'SEO services', 'SEO campaign', 'SEO consultants', 'SEO experts', and the highly localised key phrase 'SEO Essex', which is very relevant to our service.

Summary

Here's a summary of the main points to bear in mind when optimising your web pages.

- Before you begin, choose appropriate keywords for your page. Make sure your chosen keywords are highly relevant, otherwise you may receive irrelevant traffic.
- Be sure to place your keywords in all of the elements of the page, but use them naturally and in the right context.
- Use unique meta titles, descriptions and keywords to describe what the page is about.
- Structure your page content with headers.
- Place important content at the top of your page.
- Place your keywords naturally within the text to create keyword variations.

If you need help, though, remember that our onsite optimisation team are on hand to take on the job for you! Contact us here for more information.

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