



SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION: AN INTRODUCTION

Navigating The Search Engine Minefield

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Search Engine Optimization (SEO) has been around for only the past few years. However, it has quickly established itself as a multi-million dollar revenue generator for Search Engines such as [Google](#) and [Yahoo](#), and is becoming the leading way people search for new business. But were getting ahead of ourselves, let's start at the beginning...

What is Search Engine Optimization?

SEO is online advertising for your website pure and simple; much like a newspaper or magazine ad but with multiple channels you can take advantage of. Powerful as it is though, it can create a danger-zone of confusion and misuse for those uneducated in its functions and abilities.

The four main channels of focus available for driving traffic to your website through online sources are:

1. **Organic Listings**

Also called free listings, these are usually compiled on the left hand side of the Search Engine and are placed in order by rules set by each specific Search Engine, including a combination of your website's description listed in your source code, keyword density within your html text, and your website's popularity, etc. Organic Listings are much like a beauty pageant, just not as visually impressive.

2. **Pay-Per Click Listings**

These are usually listed on the right hand side of Search Engines, and are known as Pay-Per-Click (PPC) Ads. You give a list of keywords to the Search Engine along with an allocated monthly or daily budget for each or all of the keywords. Your budget then acts like a gas tank for the Search Engines in a bidding or auction type structure. Higher bids usually yield the best positions.

3. **Directory Submissions**

Like Search Engines these are websites or web-portals, which specialize in specific industries, providing an additional channel of exposure. This route immediately narrows your potential audience down to your targeted market. Search Engines look at directories to see if your site is listed in certain areas, which contributes to how well you are ranked within a search. An end-user may also find your site while browsing/searching an industry-related directory.

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4. Website Link Exchange

Links connect you to other websites, either as an ad or as a forwarding link. Search Engines also want to know which sites on the Internet are linking to you. The more quality sites that are linking to you, the higher your position will be on organic listings.

A balance of all four of these areas will obtain the highest results possible for your investment. An analogy would be that you have an island, and the more bridges you connect to this island the more people will find it and travel to it. Think of your budget in terms of how many lanes are on the bridge to your island.

The web is a continually growing tool, used as an alternative to traditional marketing. *SEO* has many advantages over traditional marketing such as:

1. There is no resource costs e.g.) printing.
2. Unlimited worldwide distribution.
3. More accurately measured returns.
4. Flexibility to change, alter, adjust and grow your plan to best fit the needs of your company.

Your *SEO* plan should be as organic as your website, growing and changing as your business does. Traditional marketing doesn't have this flexibility and measurable returns of *SEO*. Many of my clients who take advantage of our [SEO packages](#) increase their online advertising budget every year, allocating money previously invested in more traditional forms of marketing into their *SEO* budgets. However, *SEO* is designed to compliment and reinforce your additional forms of marketing rather than replace it entirely.

How do you get started?

This is where the waters get muddy as *SEO* has an element of subjectivity to it. Some will present a one-dimensional, purely technical approach; while others may incorporate illegal and unethical elements in their approach. You could do it yourself, but that would take time; time to learn and use the various channels available, time to maintain your investment, and valuable time otherwise focused on your business and clients.

My suggestion is find someone you trust

Research professionals who offer *SEO* services – we're a dime a dozen – and introduce yourself, your company and your website. Ask for options (See [Aholattafun Creative Solutions SEO](#) options here) and explanations of plans. How would they suggest you best optimize your website? How would

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they go about it? What are their philosophies? We are the professionals; ask us what we bring to the table. Listen and incorporate what makes sense in to each proceeding conversation for confirmation. Weigh your choice on whom you trust to make the most of your marketing dollars.

What's my philosophy?

Based on the following questions...

What kind of return are you getting from your traditional marketing efforts?

What is your company's market, service, product and location?

How much exposure do you want – immediate and long term?

How do you feel about, and what is your experience, (if any) with SEO?

...Based on your budget restraints I will suggest one of our [SEO platforms](#), outlining a balanced plan of execution on how we will implement and grow your Pay-Per Click campaign, casting an initially broad net and slowly narrowing the scope while building organic listings and momentum over time. Consider your *SEO* package like a snowball rolling down a hill; accumulating relevancy, while building Directory Submissions and Website Link Exchanges as you expand your platform.

I have a client who refers to this process as a plate of spaghetti that you throw against the wall, keeping what sticks. This same client is now turning business away because he can't keep up with demand. Nice problem to have.



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