



# Search Engine Optimization

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# Search Engine Optimization Book

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Chapter 3 covers many nonsearch related internet topics. I included this because if you do well with many of the “nonsearch” related topics it becomes far easier to build a linking campaign and achieve top search engine placement. **For competitive phrases link popularity and the words in those links are the single most important part of SEO.**

With most websites conversion and profit are more important than the sheer amount of traffic you get. Making small changes within your site can double or triple your conversion rate. If you do everything else correctly you do not need to put as much effort into SEO.

If you already know the topics covered in chapter 3 then feel free to skip over the sections you already know. More than trying to answer all questions about the web, chapter 3 is there to help point you toward answers to other internet business related questions you may have.

Before getting too heavy into SEO think if the idea you have is one that will be easy to spread. If it is not think of how you can transform that idea into an idea that is easier to spread.

**It is usually far easier to create an idea worth spreading than it is to spread an idea not worth spreading.**

Disclaimer: Since search engines keep their algorithms as closely guarded secrets, there is no way to know the exact algorithms at any given time. This information was compiled from my observations of search engines over the past few years.

With enough experience and observation one can deduce patterns and figure out pieces of the puzzle. This guide was created to help you solve that puzzle in much the same way others have.

While following this guide should help improve your rankings, the author of this book shall not be held responsible for damages because of the use (or misuse) of this information.

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## Why Search?

**S**earch engines take advantage of reverse broadcast networks to help save you time and money. Search allows you to "sell what your customers want, when they want it!"

### Finding Prospects

I had just finished reading Permission Marketing when I exchanged in one of the most interesting chat sessions of my life. A random kid from California instant messaged me to say hello. In much the same way as other marketers do, he scouted the web to find his ideal client. This guy searched through Yahoo! profiles and found that on my profile I wrote that I collected baseball cards.

He wanted to know if Barry Bonds was my favorite player. He told me he had over 16,000 Barry Bonds cards. I told him that I had an autographed serial numbered Barry Bonds rookie, but baseball cards did not mean much to me anymore.

I asked if he did business over the internet. He, of course, said no. It was clear to me why. He had no way to display any of his cards, and he was using spam to contact people. I asked him if he wanted to have a website on which to sell his cards.

He told me he couldn't afford it. He said that it was too expensive. **What is a fair price for limitless distribution?**

Baseball cards usually drop in value rather sharply once a player retires. Not only does the price drop, but demand plummets. It's a logarithmic loss of value. I have picked up Robin Yount and Dave Windfield rookies for \$5 and \$8 each (both cards went for \$100 or more in their heyday.)

This kid wanted to buy my autographed Barry Bonds rookie card to add to his 16,000 Bonds cards that he will never sell, thinking he was doing business. I sold baseball cards back in high school, and I knew how to do it well. I did not learn it well the first day either. I was trying to sell expensive cards to people who did not want to spend much money. What solution did I learn? "Sell what your customers want, when they want it!"

I still displayed some of my \$400 and up baseball cards, just to get the oos and ahhs. Once you have a crowd many people follow just to see what is going on then you can make sales. I knew I would not sell these cards. So what did I change?

With search you do not hunt for your customers. While they are actively interested in your products or services they hunt for you.

I created a display case with stacks of all the major stars and local popular players. Each card was \$1. It did not matter if the card was worth 25 cents or \$4, I just put \$1 on each of them. I kept up with whom was doing well and would buy up all the singles of people that were about to become popular. Buy price ranged from 3 cents to a quarter a card. Most of them I bought sold within a month or two.

By taking the time to go through their junk and making ordering simple I made money. That \$1 display case was a gold mine. Usually that case sold more than my good cases did and I had small investment (other than taking the time to organize the cards).

I decided I would do this kid a favor and send him a free book on marketing from my favorite author. When I asked him if he wanted a free marketing book he spouted off Eminem lyrics. He got angry when I was trying to help him. He stated a few of the lines around

I'd rather put out a mother \*\*\*\* gospel record

All of his frustration he felt, all of his anger, and all the time he wasted were unnecessary. That is why search is powerful. You do not hunt for your customers, they hunt for you. You pick the keywords and the customer picks you. You not only "sell what your customers want," but you also sell it "while they are actively looking for it."

## Interactive Elements

Resources cited:

Permission Marketing (by Seth Godin) is a book about how to make many micro sales gaining permission with each sale.

(<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0684856360/>)

- List 5 problems your products solve. Which of these problems are most important to your target audience? Is there a problem your product solves that no other products do?
- List 10 terms or phrases your target audience would search for to find your products.
- Calculate the time you spend prospecting clients and the value of that time.
- Calculate the money you will save if you cut that time in half by ranking well for a few of the terms you listed.

## Brief History of the Web

**T**he web has become a direct marketers dream. In its infancy the web was based around the core idea of sharing knowledge for free. The closer your ideas are in some way aligned with this idea the easier it will be to promote your site.

### The Goal of a Search Engine

#### Search Engine Relevancy:

Many people think search engines have a hidden agenda, or that they just do not like them. This simply is not true. The goal of the search engine is to provide high quality content to people searching the internet.

Search engines with the broadest distribution network **sell the most advertising space**. As I write this, Yahoo! and Google are considered the search engines with the best relevancy. Their technologies power the bulk of web search.

#### The Problem Listing a New Site:

The biggest problem new web sites have is that search engines have no idea they exist. Even when a search engine finds a new document it has a hard time determining its quality. Search engines rely on links to help determine the quality of a document.

#### Parts of a Search Engine:

While there are different ways to organize web content, every crawling search engine has the same basic parts. Each consists of:

- a crawler
- an index (or catalog)
- and a search interface

#### Crawler (or Spider):

The crawler does just what its name implies. It scours the web following links, updating pages, and adding new pages when it comes across them. Each search engine has periods of deep crawling and periods of shallow crawling. Rapidly changing or highly important documents are more likely to get crawled frequently. The frequency of crawl has no effect on search relevancy; it simply helps the search engines keep fresh content in their index. The best benefit of having a frequently

crawled page is that you can get your new sites, pages, or projects crawled quickly by linking to them from a powerful or frequently changing page.

### The Index:

The index is where the spider collected data is stored. When you perform a search on a major search engine, you are not searching the web, but the cache of the web provided by that search engine (its index).

Search engines organize their content in what is called a “reverse index.” It sorts web documents by words in a language. When you search Google and it displays 1-10 out of 143,000 website it means that there are 143,000 web pages which either have the words in your keyword phrase on them, or have inbound links containing the words in the phrase.

### Search Interface:

The search algorithm and search interface are used to find the most relevant document in the index based on the user search. First the search engine tries to determine user intent by looking at the words the searcher typed in. The search engine breaks this down via keyword vectors and compares this to their database to find the most relevant results.

In most major search engines a portion of the relevancy calculations are stored ahead of time and some of them are calculated in real time.

### Search Algorithm Shifts:

Search engines such as Google and Yahoo! often update their algorithm dozens of times per month. Often times when you see changes in your rankings it is due to an algorithmic shift or something else outside of your control. Usually if you change something on a page it is not reflected in the search results that same day or the next day.

### Relevancy wins distribution!

The more times a search leads to desired content, the more likely a person is to use that search engine again. If a search engine works well, a person does not just come back, they also tell their friends about it, and they may even download the associated toolbar. The goal of all major search engines is to be relevant. If they are not they will fade (as many already have).

## Origins of the Web

The web started off behind the idea of the free flow of information as envisioned by Tim Berners-Lee. He was working at CERN in Europe. CERN had a somewhat web-like environment in that many people were coming and going and worked on many different projects. This helped lead some of the ideas behind his eventual World Wide Web creation.

Tim created a site which described how the web worked and placed it live on the first server at info.cern.ch. Europe had very little backing or interest in the web



back then, so US colleges were the first groups to set up servers. Tim added links to their server locations to his directory known as the Virtual Library.

Current link popularity measurements usually show college web pages typically have higher assumed value than most other pages do. This is simply a function of the fact that the roots of the WWW started in lab rooms at colleges. It was not until the mid to late 1990's that the web became commercialized.

## Early Search Engines

The web did not have sophisticated search engines when it began. The most advanced information gathers of the day primitively matched file names. You had to know the name of the file you were looking for to find anything. The first file that matched was returned. There was no such thing as search relevancy. The lack of relevancy is what lead to the early popularity of directories such as Yahoo!.

Overture was launched as a pay per click search engine in 1998. While the Overture system was profitable most portals were still losing money. The targeted ads they (as well as Google AdWords) delivered grew in popularity and finally created a functional profit generating business model which powered large scale general search engines.

Many search engines such as AltaVista and later Inktomi were industry leaders for a period of time, but the rush to market and lack of sophistication associated with online marketing prevented these primitive machines from having functional business models.

## Commercialized Cat and Mouse

### Web = Cheap Marketing:

As the internet grew in popularity, people realized it as an incredibly cheap marketing platform. Compare the price of spam (virtually free) to direct mail (~ \$1 each). Spam fills your inbox and wastes your time. Information retrieval systems (search engines) must also fight off aggressive marketing techniques to keep their search results relevant.

### Becoming a Resource:

Though I hate to quote a source I do not remember, I once read that 1 in 3 people believe the top search result is the most relevant document relating to their search. Imagine the power associated with people finding your view of the world first. Whatever you are selling, someone is buying!

I have been quoted as a source of information on Islam simply because I spoke of a conversation I had with a person from Kuwait who called me for help on the web. I know nothing about Islam, but someone found my post in a search engine...so I was quoted in their term paper.

### Business Links:

As easy as it is to get syndicated with useful interesting and unique ideas, it is much harder to get syndicated with commercial ideas. Often times links associated with commercial sites are business partnerships. Many people do well to give information away and then attach a product to their business model. You probably would have never read this ebook if I did not have a blog associated with it.

### Primitive Search Technology:

As the web grew, content grew faster than technology did. The primitive nature of search engines promoted the creation of content, but not the creation of quality content. Search engines had to rely on the documents themselves to state their purpose. Most search engines did not even use the full page content either.

### Meta Tags:

Meta tags were used to help search engines organize the web. Documents listed keywords and descriptions that were used to match user queries. Initially these tags were somewhat effective, but over time they lost their relevancy.

People began to stuff incredibly large amounts of highly focused data (which was often times off topic) in these tags to achieve high search engine rankings. Some porn and other high margin type websites would have strings in their meta tags like “free, free, free, free, free.” Getting a better ranking simply meant you repeated your keywords a few more times in the meta tags.

### Advancing Search Technology:

Technology has now gotten to the point where search engines can do a full index of page copy. Since search engines have been able to view entire pages, the hidden inputs (such as meta tags) have lost much of their importance in relevancy algorithms.

The best way to provide relevant results is to emulate a user and rank the page based on the same things the user see, and what other people are saying about the document. Meta tags are no longer the primary ranking criteria in major search engines, though I still recommend using them (we will get into meta tags a bit later on though).

### What is Search Engine Spam?

Search engines make billions of dollars each year selling ads. Most search engine traffic goes to the free organic listed sites. Some sites rank well on merit, while others are there due exclusively to ranking manipulation.

In many situations a **proper SEO campaign can provide a much greater ROI than the paid ads do**. This means that while SEOs and search engines do have business models which may overlap they may also compete with one another for ad dollars. Sometimes SEOs and search engines are friends with each other and unfortunately sometimes they are enemies.

When search engines return relevant results they get to deliver more ads. When their results are not relevant they lose market share. I have had a single page that I have not actively promoted randomly send me a commission check for over \$1,000. There is a ton of money in manipulating search results. There are ways to improve search engine placement that go with the goals of the search engines and there are also ways that go against them. Quality SEOs aim to be relevant.

**Many effective SEO techniques may be considered somewhat spammy.** Like anything in life you should make an informed decision about what SEO techniques you want to use and which you should not. You may choose to use highly aggressive crash and burn or slower more predictable and less risky techniques. Most industries will not require extremely aggressive promotional techniques. Later on I will try to point out which is which.

### Using Overtly Manipulative Techniques:

While there will always be ways to manipulate the search engines, there is no telling if you will eventually get caught and lose your rankings if you optimize your site using overtly deceptive techniques. In any business such as SEO there will be different risk levels.

Search engines try hard not to flag false positives (return good sites as spam), so there is a bunch of slack to play with, but many people also make common mistakes like incorrectly using a 302 redirect. If you are ever in doubt if you are going too far or making technical errors feel free to ask me and ask at multiple SEO forums.

The search engines aim to emulate users. If you design good content for users and **build a smart linking campaign**, eventually it will pay off.

New aggressive techniques pop up all the time. As long as they are available then people will exploit them. People will force the issue until search engines close the loophole and then people will find a new one. The competitive nature of web marketing forces search engines to continuously improve their algorithms and filters.

In my opinion the ongoing effort of keeping up with the latest SEO tricks is usually not worth for most webmasters. Some relational database programmers or people with creative or analytical minds may always be one step ahead, but the average business owner probably does not have the time to dedicate to keeping up with the latest tricks.

### SEO Feedback Loop:

The effects of SEO do take time to kick in. At any given time with how dynamically the web changes there will be some holes in search algorithms which make certain SEO techniques exceptionally effective.

I have spoken with current search engine engineers working at major search engines in regard to this ebook. I also have spoken with database programmers who later became some of the world's best "Black Hat" SEOs.

Some of those programmers have told me what some would consider tricks that work really well, but only work really well because few people know about them. Some of my friends have advanced blog spam scripts.

I do not try to promote the latest “Black Hat” techniques in this ebook because:

- They are the most likely to quickly change. Some things that are cutting edge and effective today can become ineffective and actually hurt you tomorrow.
- Some of them can be damaging to your brand.
- Aggressive techniques are some of the most likely techniques to get your site banned.
- Some things are told to me as a secret and if they are made openly available to anyone (including search engine engineers – who have read this ebook) then they lose their value and I lose my resources.
- I do not have a ton of experience with exceptionally aggressive promotional techniques.
- People who use aggressive techniques are not evil or bad, but I can’t possibly put accurate, current, useful, and risky information out to everyone in an ebook format and expect it to not cause problems for some people.
- To me effective web promotion is balancing risk vs reward. This site got on the first page of Google for “SEO” within 9 months of making this site with less than \$5,000 spent on promotion. Most sites do not need to use overtly aggressive and risky promotional techniques. SEO works so well because most sites on the web do not actively practice effective SEO.

## Choosing a Domain Name

### Before You Begin:

Often times many web based businesses fail because they do not have a functional business model. Before you even chose a name for your site you should know your target audience, what you intend to sell to them, and what will make your business idea unique or different than everything else that is already on the market.

### A Horrible Domain Idea:

Many people think it is super important to have keywords in a domain. People purchase domains like look-4-buy-cheap-discount-viagra-online-pharmacy.com. This is a horrible domain name!

Keywords in the domain name are usually important, but it usually can be done while keeping the domain short, memorable, and free of hyphens.

Before you pick a domain name you should know your target audience, what you intend to sell to them, and what makes your business idea unique or different than everything else that is already on the market.

### Dashed Domain Names:

Search engines do not read the words in your URL if they are ran together. Many webmasters separate the words in their domain names using dashes. In the past the domain name itself was a significant ranking factor. As search engines have advanced it is not very significant factor anymore.

Many shoppers look around. If you want them to come back you want to have a domain name which will stick in their heads. It can (and often should) have keywords in it, but the thing you want more than anything else is a name that sticks.

If the option between having the dash in the domain and not having a dash exist you are probably better off going without the dash as it looks more professional and would most likely be more memorable.

It is branding suicide to only have users find your site via search engines. If you are hoping to make sales on the first view in search engines you will need very strong copywriting and usability which is second to none.

If you are just using quick buck lead generation type websites then you may want to use a dashed domain for the small benefit it may offer, but in most cases I do not recommend a dashed domain name.

### Long vs Short URLs:

People often forget the words in a domain if you have an exceptionally long domain name. Another problem with exceptionally long URL's is that they get cut off in emails and some other data transmission types. If you make the idea hard to spread then your site will most likely limit its potential income.

### TLD Domain Selection:

Some regional based search engines or indexes will only list sites which are registered in their country code. If your site caters to a specific country then you will most likely want to register a domain using the local country code.

Some search engines will still show your site in regional based search results if your site is hosted within that country or have your address and phone number in the page text, but many directories are extremely picky and will only list regional domains.

As search progresses localization of results will become more common. Some of the major search engines already give sites a regional ranking boost based upon where the site is hosted and the domain extension.

If you place your site on your regional domain (.co.uk for example), I also suggest buying the .com version of your domain if it is available and forwarding it to the regional domain you registered.

By buying the .com version and forwarding it your site you help retain traffic you may have lost by people forgetting to put your region specific domain extension in their address bar when they type the website address directly into the address bar.

I also prefer to use a .com version of a URL over other generic TLDs. Often times people will just assume your site is a .com even if it is .biz, .org, or .info. Using a .com makes it easier to advertise your website off the web.

I also believe it is a good idea to place your business location on your web pages. If you are in a country where the search technology is primitive frequently local searchers will add the country or city name to their searches, and if you have them on your pages you stand to be returned as a relevant result for more searches.

### Have a Site for Each Language:

Many hucksters sell some translational cross submission type products that are complete bunk. Essentially you pay them money to accept your check and nothing more. Search engines do not translate text on the fly when people search (though page translation is an option after the search).

If you use automated software to copy your text into a different language it is likely to read clumsily and turn people off. You are better off not having the text visible on the web if you did not have a person fluent in that language proof the final product.

If you have target audiences in different languages then usually you will want to have a different site for each language. This will make it easier to get links from the different geographic or ethnic communities you are interested in without losing focus of your site.

I went to the UK and noticed the English there is way different than English in the United States. Even within the same language you may need multiple versions to cater to different dialects and customs.

### Branding Your Name:

You may want to get a keyword or two in your name. By having a keyword in your domain, it will be an easier sale to directories that in fact you are “Discount Viagra Online.” It only goes so far though!

Any more than about two or three words in the domain name and it becomes less memorable. Some of the most memorable websites do a great job of branding by creating their own word. eBay, Yahoo!, Expedia, Slashdot, Fark, Travelocity, Google...

Most successful businesses are soft innovations though; they may not be able to afford the time, money, and effort required to create and brand a new word to our language. Often times you can create a name which is well related to something people already know. It is easier to market “corn sugar” than it is to market fructose.

Using your keywords in your domain name can increase click through rates on search engine listings and paid ads as well as make it easier to get keyword rich inbound links.

Using keywords in your domain name give you a strong competitive advantage over your competitors. Having your keywords in your domain name can increase click through rates on search engine listings and paid ads as well as make it easier to get keyword rich descriptive inbound links.

I wrote an article which explains how important [the effect domain name has on inbound link text](#).

### Branding Your Site:

Your keyword rich domain name will make it easy to get inbound link text with your primary keywords in them, but don't forget that your domain name also plays a role into your branding. Your domain name should have your branding in mind as it can help reinforce the ideals of your brand.

On the web there are many different business ideas or business models. If low cost is your idea or then you will find people who are willing to work for half your wage that will slash throats to get by on razor thin margins. It is not a way to enjoy life.

Branding is one of the most important parts of building any website and it is what allows you to establish healthy profit margins. Every Monday Rob Frankel holds [free branding clinics](#) on his website. I recommend going to at least one of them.

### The Right Domain Name:

I either make my domain names define themselves exactly or I think of a creative way to state its purpose – either way I try hard to get their primary keywords in the domain name. At less than \$10 each, you can have multiple domains directed to the same site.

Your best bet is to think of a name that is an extension of who you are.

Another reason to make a domain smaller and easier to remember is word of mouth marketing. Would you feel better referring a friend to seobook.com or seo-search-engine-optimization-marketing-ebook-book.com? Which would be easier to remember and say? If you make a message hard to spread then it will probably spread at a slower rate.

### Buying Multiple Names:

Often times it is worth it to buy multiple domain names, even if you do not use them all. By securing multiple domain names you can decide to use some of your secondary domains to cover similar thematically related topics AND prevent competitors from purchasing the name.

Within 6 months of me starting the SEO Book.com website someone was already spamming me trying to sell me SEO Books.com. I should have spent the additional \$8 to register that domain from the start. You also may want to buy a generic name and the domain name that matches your business and direct them both to the same location.

### Example of Breaking Ideas Down into Niche Sites:

I do not recommend buying multiple domain names exclusively for deceptive practices. Most of my sites are about SEO, but you can break ideas down to their core and make useful sites in less competitive markets.

- Search Marketing Info – this site is similar to the contents of this ebook (although the site might sometimes get slightly outdated). The site is not a well branded name. I had many concepts on that site which later were extracted and made as their own sites.
- I had a blog on Search Marketing Info. The blog was not successful. I moved the blog from that site to SEO Book.com and it has likely become one of the top half dozen most popular blogs in the SEO industry.
- I had a directory list on Search Marketing Info. I decided to turn that list into a directory of directories and created that idea at Directory Archives.com.
- I listed some bad SEO practices on my Search Marketing Info site. I decided to turn that idea into Black Hat SEO.com.
- Each of the last three sites occasionally spikes in popularity and helps give me a multi brand approach. I would not be anywhere near as successful if I kept all of those ideas inside my first site.

### Generic VS Unique Names:

Some businesses will require brand development to become successful. Being a branded SEO makes it far easier to charge a fair rate for my services than if I was unbranded. My original website [www.search-marketing.info](http://www.search-marketing.info) is really a weak brand in my opinion and was a huge mistake.

There is more than one way to skin a cat and the same idea can be said for picking a domain name. If you aim to extract long term profits and want to make the site you are working on become your career then you want to pick a name that is not overly generic.

If you are going to make a generic travel site and are just looking to extract short term profits then an extremely generic keyword rich domain name is the way to go.

I like the idea of creating things that I think add long term value to the web so I usually opt for branded names over generic names, but either way it is a big help in SEO to get your keywords in your domain name.

**Before you pick a name or start building sites you should decide what your goals are with the site.**



## Creating a Topical Website Network:

\*-- This is an advanced SEO technique most webmasters do not need to do. --\*

With how many pages there are on the web quality will usually win over quantity. With that being said, sometimes it will make sense to have multiple similar websites covering slightly different topics. Doing this can help you create topically authoritative inbound links to different sites in your network and give you a multi-branded approach to marketing.

You want to make sure your sites are all different and unique though. If your sites are extremely similar then your sites may receive a spam penalty. Even worse is that if you interlink them all then all of your sites could get penalized at the same time.

Those using strong brands and good ideas can usually do well without creating a topical network. **If you create a topical network expressly to deceive search engines then you are taking a risk and your sites may get removed from the search indexes.**

Many of the more aggressive techniques are used by people who create crash and burn domain names. They use a site until it gets penalized and then use a new one. They actually start building up multiple other sites and networks before the first even gets penalized. If your brand and domain name are important to you then make sure you use caution to protect them.

Most sites will not need to do this to be successful, but if you do this there are a few tips or guidelines I would suggest using to maximize the benefit of creating a small link network.

- **Make unique sites:** Make sure each site is unique enough that it can stand on its own merit.
- Only cross link the sites where it is logical.
- **Use various hosts:** This way if any of your sites go down not all of your sites are down. Also some search algorithms can devalue links that come from sites hosted on the same C block IP address. Some hosts also provide random C block IP addresses for each of your sites for a rather reasonable price on a single account.
- **Get inbound links from external sources:** Register your sites with directories and other topical sites to make sure you have plenty of inbound links into your link network. This will help prevent your sites from looking like an island or link farm.
- Do not interlink hundreds of domains together unless you are actively trying to get penalized.

- If you are creating and interlinking sites exclusively for the reason to manipulate search results then you stand a good chance to eventually be penalized.
- You probably do not want to use the same WHOIS data on a large number of sites if the sites are made with deceptive intent. Additionally you may want to register sites at a variety of registrars so there is no discernable pattern. Also if you register a ton of your domains via proxy that too can look somewhat suspicious.

### Registering Domains:

I usually register my domains at <http://www.GoDaddy.com> because they have exceptionally reasonable prices.

### Domain Registration VS Hosting:

Whenever you **register** a domain make sure you register it at an [ICANN](#) accredited **registrar**. Whenever you **host** a domain use a **reliable host**. It is usually a bad idea to cross the two.

When people register a site at a host it may be hard to renew registration if you want to change who your host is. Buy hosting from a host and not a registrar. Many registrars do not have good technical support and do not place enough value on their hosted clients.

## Hosting

### Problems With Bad Hosting:

There are a ton of unreliable hosts on the web. Hosting is one thing I recommend spending good money on. If your site is down you may lose customers and spiders may not be able to spider your site.

Some extremely low quality hosts will place hundreds or thousands of domains on a single IP address on a single server. This may cause system lag and overload the server.

### Bad Hosting Real Life Example:

Like most webmasters I learned about bad hosting the wrong way. My very first host sucked. Hosting that is down often is absolutely useless.

### Recommended Hosts:

Most of my good sites are hosted by [Dreamhost](#) or [Pair](#). Both have provided me with reliable hosting and responsive customer service.

### Dedicated VS Shared Hosting:

I have found shared hosting to work well for me, though some people recommend using dedicated hosting (which is more expensive). Shared hosting places many

domain names on the same IP address & same server, whereas dedicated servers allow you to place just your stuff on a server.

Search engines such as Google usually place spam penalties on domain names and not IP addresses. Rarely does a hosting network get penalized. I believe the SearchKing network is one example where a whole hosting network got penalized, but this is extremely rare.

If you are going to be making major investments into the web then it may be worth it to buy a reliable dedicated server.

### Free Hosting:

I do not recommend free hosting. With the plague of garbage on the web many people may not be willing to link to sites that reside on a free host.

A commercially oriented website needs to show significantly greater quality for me to want to link to it if it resides on a free host. In addition free hosts usually put some ugly banners on your site which ruin the page flow and make it look exceptionally unprofessional.

I have seen some blogs do ok which were hosted at Blogspot, (Blogger's free host) but that exception is based on the fact that blogs are generally more personal in nature and not so commercially driven.

Additionally if you create a subdomain and eventually want to move your site it may be hard to move some of that link popularity to the new location.

### Cheap Hosting:

There are many risks with bad cheap hosting, but decent cheap hosting of secondary type sites can help diversify your business model and lessen the risk if your main site goes down. Each site you create should be focused on a certain idea or question. One cheap host I have used is [3.75 hosting](#).

Once I renewed my credit card and forgot to give them my details and **my sites immediately went down without warning**. That is just one example of the type of things you can expect from cheap hosting providers, but other than that they have done a good job so far.

### Host in Your Country:

Many major search engines give sites a relevancy boost if it is hosted in the same location as the local search market. In some locations local hosting may not be economical, but if you are promoting a site primarily geared toward the UK you would want to host that site in the UK.

## Interactive Elements

### Resources cited:

- The effect of domain name on anchor text: (<http://www.search-marketing.info/newsletter/articles/domain-name.htm>)
- Rob Frankel's free branding clinic (<http://frankelbiz.com/conf/CNFcalendar.php?m=conf>)
- GoDaddy domain registrar (<http://www.godaddy.com>)
- ICANN domain registration information (<http://www.icann.org/>)
- Internet Hosting Report (<http://www.internet-hosting-report.com/>)
- Dreamhost hosting (<http://www.dreamhost.com>)
- Pair (<http://www.pair.com>)
- \$3.75 hosting (<http://www.3.75-hosting.com>)

## Some Notes

1. Why do you want to build your website? Why should people buy off your site and not Salesman Steve's Super Site? What makes you different?
2. Who is your target audience?
3. Is your goal to play cat and mouse to extract quick profits, or are you investing for the long term? Neither is wrong, it just makes sense to chose one or the other and act accordingly.
4. List 5 websites you think are amazing? Why are they amazing?
5. Create 5 different domain names. Make at least 1 of them funny. Tell them to a half dozen people and see which ones are the most memorable. You will get more honest feedback if the people do not know you well.
6. Buy your own name. As you change you can change this site to be whatever you want.

## General Internet Topics

**T**here is a bunch more work to creating a successful web based business than just SEO. Focusing exclusively on SEO is a BAD CALL. Most sites can become more successful from using SEO, but most sites will not become successful based exclusively on SEO.

This chapter is dedicated to some of the tips I learned from my personal experiences and many of the books people recommended I read.

### Learning Your Subject

Good is bad on the web. To be successful you should do something that has not been done before or do it in a way that is better than what anyone else is doing.

#### Quantity VS Quality:

##### Most Internet Businesses Fail:

Many people are in a rush to build, thinking they are ready to cash in on the next gold mine. A ton of money changes hands on the internet, yet **most internet businesses fail**, why? People think they can make something rather large that is pretty good. Logic like "if I make a dollar a day off each page and have 200 pages I would not need to work."

The low cost of content creation can lead to poor document quality. If you say one incorrect thing you may lose the trust of a prospective customer, sometimes for life.

Making information which just turns out to be more clutter rarely makes a long term successful website. If you don't have passion for what you do it is much harder to be successful in a completely open environment.

##### Long Term Investment Strategy:

Bambi Francisco asked Mike Moritz (of Sequoia Capital) how he chooses what companies to invest in. His reply was "It's the idea that the founders are doing something that they think is useful for themselves, And, then, eventually perhaps, coincidentally, perhaps accidentally, they discover that the product or service that they have built because they wanted to use something like this is that of great interest to lots of other people."

If you create something that you enjoy which is exceptionally useful you stand a good chance of being successful.

### Cutting through Clutter:

Numerous people have asked me to promote their clutter sites. The correct answer has been no, no, & no. The whole reason search has become such a successful market is because it helps people **cut through the clutter**.

Each page on a website already has billions of alternatives a click or two away. Each page is important. The most important thing to do is focus on a specific niche...something you are truly interested in.

### Be Useful

Many successful websites are successful because they are syndicated. There are tons of ways you can work to get your site syndicated, but an often overlooked trick is to simply be the most useful site in your niche.

Amazon is successful because they built in features that make it more useful than most other book stores. They added value to their product or service by allowing user feedback, related suggestions, used book sales, and “so you want to” book collection guides to their pages.

### Why did I Make Search Engine Sites?

I am fascinated by search engines. I can build a site about search engines only because I am extremely interested in them. Reflecting back upon my decisions I would probably be more successful today if I would have picked just a specific engine (most likely Google) or a specific type, and then expand from there.

My general rule of thumb is to search for what you want to promote, using your favorite search engine. Click on the first listing. If it is not good enough then you should be there. If they know more than you, learn from them. If you devote yourself to becoming a guru on a topic that you already love there is no reason that you can't eventually be there. You are only limited by your own courage, creativity, and efforts.

### Tragedy of the Commons & Being Worthy of a Subscription

[Nothing can be universally accessible and free without destroying itself](#). Some places will host sites for free with the hopes of making revenue off ads. Since it costs virtually nothing to create information (or have a machine generate code for you) a ton is lost on the web.

As more and more information is created more and more unoriginal information is duplicated. It gets to be where sorting through the mess becomes more than most desire to do (this is part of the reason why people use and trust search engines so much). In most industries most people will fail or barely get by while there are a few hyper successful voices.

The solution to the information overload problem is to be so remarkable and interesting that you capture the attention of the audience. RSS and newsreaders

(such as Bloglines or FeedDemon) make it easy for people to subscribe to select news channels or websites while blocking out redundant or useless noise.

If you cover a news topic which is saturated you may want to use a news reader to help you organize your news and get the scoop on the latest news as it happens.

The people who are subscribing to RSS feeds are also the most likely to be people who comment on the contents of those sites. If you can figure out a way to get these people to desire to give you their attention you quickly and cheaply reach the most influential voices.

Yahoo! is hoping to take RSS mainstream. Between them and many of the other technology upstarts more and more people are going to be accessing information away from conventional search engines.

If you did not own your site is there any reason you would want to visit it multiple times each week? If you figure out how to make that answer yes then you are ahead of over 95% of competing webmasters.

## Changing Your Site

### My Trial and Error:

I was a hack and go sort of person off the start. I have remade thousands of web pages though, most of them by inefficient means. Some of my worst mistakes are: using frames, trying to become an affiliate of over 1,000 websites, free money scams, and generally creating garbage without learning about the web.

### Business and Change:

The internet is a highly responsive, trackable medium. You should want to change to evaluate consumer response. Successful businesses evolve. Few sites stay on top forever by being stagnant. It's kind of hard for you to think of change before you even start building your site, but right now I have hundreds of pages which are reminding me of change.

### Creating a Site Design:

[Seth Godin](#) offered me some great advice for site design. The best way to make a web page is to steal an outlay idea from another website **that is not directly competing with you**. When you go to make your first web page, do so as a sketch. After you have a good idea (which is at least slightly different than the site you got your idea from), recreate your home page as a picture in an editor such as [Adobe Photoshop](#). From there you can pay a design firm to create your page or create it yourself using a program such as [Macromedia Dreamweaver](#) or Adobe GoLive. Evrsoft also created a free website editor by the name of [FirstPage](#).

If you do not mind using an already existing template [OSWD](#) is a website which has a bunch of free web designs you can chose from. You can start with one of the designs and slightly modify it to make it look unique.

## Crafting Easy Site Wide Changes:

### Cascading Style Sheets:

How do you make it easy to change your site? One simple solution is to use cascading style sheets to control the display of your information. When the web was created the idea was to keep layout and information separate from one another. Using external style sheets allows you to change virtually every aspect of your site by making changes to one file. What you do is put the layout in a sheet called yourchosenfilename.css and reference it in your other web pages. A code similar to the following would go in the head section of your pages.

```
<link href="/style.css" rel="stylesheet" type="text/css">
```

For an example of how powerful CSS is take a look at the [CSS house](#). A couple of the more popular resources on the web about cascading style sheets are the [CSS Zen Garden](#), and [W3 school's CSS tutorial page](#). You may also want to view the official [W3C CSS guidance page](#).

### Effects of Change on Branding:

On a daily, weekly, or monthly basis you can choose to change your font type, layout, colors...just about anything. You can do it in minutes and track the results. Some branding experts (such as [Rob Frankel](#)) believe that changing too frequently will hurt your brand though.

Make sure you have a distinct idea of why and how you want to change before you change things randomly. It is best to change and test only one thing at a time so you know **the exact effects** of any change.

Using CSS and SSI or dynamic programming languages is not necessary if you aim to have a small website. If you are making a large site, these technologies can save you many hours in site maintenance.

### How CSS Saves Time:

You can link each page of your site into an external style sheet to control the display. Many of the repetitive changes that would be made on every page can be done simply by changing that one file. This may not seem like a big deal while creating page five or six, but after changing file # 200 you would be glad that you used CSS.

Cascading Style Sheets are not necessary for smaller sites, but are a great idea if you are going to have a large content based site. They also can help to improve the content to code ratio.

### Server Side Includes:

Server Side Include is an Apache server technology which allows you to include pages or parts of a page within another page without the negative side effects of using a framed based navigation system. To include another page inside a page you would include the following code where you wanted the included page to appear.

```
<!--#include virtual="/includedfile.htm" -->
```

Frequently the use of server side includes for common elements such as navigation work well to allow you to control your entire site making simple changes to a single



file. Between CSS and SSI you can save literally hundreds or thousands of hours in your site design or redesign.

Server Side Includes also let you include the date last modified or current date in the page. This is often how many of those generic one page sites have the current date in their sales letters.

On my [Search Marketing Info](#) site I use server side includes for the top banner, page footer, navigational tabs, local left column navigation, and right side page ads.

You can learn more about SSI by viewing the [Apache SSI Tutorial](#).

#### SSI Without Breaking Filepaths:

Often times webmasters start out with a smaller site and later decide that they should start using Server Side Includes or a content management system. To use Server Side Includes many people change their filepaths from .html or .htm to .shtml or .shtm. The problem with doing this is that it can cause inbound links to be broken. You can get around this by modifying your .htaccess file. To learn more about .htaccess files view the [Comprehensive Guide to .htaccess](#).

#### Content Management Systems:

Another site changing technique is to use content management systems to control the look and design of a site. There are many dynamic languages people use such as Coldfusion and PHP. Most people do not need an expensive content management system though. Before you invest heavily in a content management system or design you should know what the goals of the website are. Make sure any content management system you would consider using produces search engine friendly pages.

Keeping an updated blog ensures you have fresh content available which keeps traffic coming back to your site. In addition blog software can be used as an exceptionally cheap content management system.

#### Blogs as Content Management Systems:

In my future site designs I will be organizing content with a weblog program such as [Movable Type](#) or Web Crimson. Movable Type costs \$199 (as of writing this) for a commercial license and provides many of the features of expensive content management systems. Movable Type also offers a free one month trial of their web based software by the name of TypePad. If you like [TypePad](#) you can host your blog there for a low monthly fee. [Blogger](#) is a 100% free blogging software platform.

If you want to give blogging a try to see what it is about I suggest going to Blogger.com and signing up for a free account. If your site is personal in nature or you like the blog content management system you may not even need to pay for design beyond a site logo. My SEO Book website is primarily a default Movable Type template with a logo on top.

I wrote a couple articles on why I think [using blog software is often an outstanding idea](#) for both search engine placement and ease of site design.

### Professional Looking Design:

It is worth it to pay someone to make a professional looking design for your site. It is very affordable easy to use a default blog template and pay a logo designer \$50 - \$200 to design a logo for you. My SEO Book site is not overly simplistic because I am a minimalist; it is overly simplistic because I am a bad designer. It is a default MovableType template with a \$99 logo at the top.

It is very easy to find shoddy logo design, but there are some good ones. Recently I purchased many logos I am very happy with off of [The Logo Company](#) for only \$75 each. Buying a good original logo is an exceptionally cheap one time investment. I also recently purchased [AAA logo design software](#) for \$50. I think it is fun to play with, but if you are not graphically inclined you probably will want to pay someone else to design your logo.

## Copywriting

### Humans do the Buying:

Inevitably it will be human eyes that see your web page. If my first six sections had no good advice, you would not read section seven.

I am currently unaware of any automated buying bots which just surf the web to buy things. (There are automated clicking agents which fraud people, and the people who create them should be shot.)

### Copywriting Books:

How do you write for human eyes? I recommend investing into a copywriting book as I am not the best source for this information. Some of the books I have read are [Net Words](#), [The Online Copywriter's Handbook](#), and [Persuasive Online Copywriting](#). Of the three I most highly recommend the third. [Persuasive Online Copywriting](#) contains a ton of information packed into small convenient chapters which will work out well if you ever need to look back at the information again.

### Copywriting Bible:

The above books are great intro to copywriting type books, but if you are looking for a thorough copywriting and advertising book I could recommend no book more than [Tested Advertising Methods](#) by John Caples. It is more like an encyclopedia of advertising knowledge from one of the world's best copywriters. It is a bit dated and speaks primarily of print ads, but if you are primarily writing sales copy this is a great book to read.

### Horrible Copywriting:

I hoped to have learned something from the hundreds of thousands of pages I have viewed and the books I have read. Here is an example of BAD copywriting:

We here at XYZ Corporation know what it means to be successful. In fact sometimes we forget that at one point a long long long time ago we weren't the premiere information distribution technology enhancement resource agency facilitator. Times have change though, and we are. We are....

When you create your pages make sure they read well to people versus writing them for robots.

You will need good copy to have a decent conversion rate and to encourage natural linking into your site.

## Basics of Online Copywriting:

- Use varying style. Lose corporate speak.
- Be yourself.
- Make it a conversation.
- Make your point up front.
- Don't use jargon.
- Use shorter text.
- Break up text using headers, subheaders, bulleted lists, and other text breaking devices.
- Stress benefits before features (unless it is a tech heavy product).
- The above books will also enlighten you with coverage of subjects such as the sales process, and the different personality types.

## An Audience of One:

It is a great idea to sell information. If your copy can connect with a person and get them to see someone inside the screen, the sale process is much easier. You do not know who is on the other end of the computer.

People are generally distrusting toward the unknown. If site visitors sense a person is writing **just for them** they will not want to click away.

## Include a Call to Action:

Many beautiful websites have no call to action. It is a great idea to guide the user. Some people use flashing text, **excessive red coloring or highlighting**, or other over the top techniques which distract the user away from what you want them to do. Sales pages may want to play off of the emotions certain colors bring out, but with informational or general product pages the focus should be on ease of use. I recommend usually avoiding using random misplaced bright colors on most web pages, but **make it obvious what you want the user to do**.

The one green thing on the page... that's it, that's what I want you to do. Users should be able to do the action you want them to **without even thinking!** Both [The Big Red Fez](#) and [Don't Make Me Think](#) are books largely devoted to this simple concept.

## Page Layout Error:

When I first started the SEO Book site I only promoted this ebook off to the side. I switched to promoting this ebook on every page right below the page content posts and overnight the sales more than tripled.

During Howard Dean's 2004 presidential campaign they used their blog to cast a vote on whether or not their campaign should accept matching funds. After people vote they were sent to a landing page. The first day saw 100,000 voters and raised **\$248,000**.

They looked at the vote return landing page and noticed that the donate button was at the bottom of the page. They moved it to the top of the page. On the second day another 100,000 people voted, but they raised **\$4,500,000**.

### Make it Flow:

Small sentences and paragraphs with common words make writing flow easily. In addition you can make the text easy on the eyes by setting a line height (area of a line of text and the space above or below it) to at least 120% of the text height, and by using the maximum contrast between your text and background.

The text is the sales person since you have no sales person on your site. It needs to answer questions and arouse appeal toward your products.

### Sell Upward:

When at McDonald's they ask "would you like fries with that." Most major corporations know it is easier to sell again to a person than it is to find a new prospect. After a person contacts you or orders something send them to a thank you page.

Give them small free gifts, strengthen their bond with you, make them feel good about their decision, or try to sell them something else. It does not need to bring in money to be a gain. If they subscribe to your mailing list, you have increased your exposure FREE. Perhaps you can give them options to read other journals which are cross promoting you.

Maybe you give them links to companies you are an affiliate of. These links can hold discounts which appear as gifts when they can make you money. I recently purchased ink cartridges and got 5% off for adding their site to my favorites list. The possibilities are endless.

### Focus on The User:

The user focus must be on benefits offered to them. Writing the word "you" instead of "we" is a must. The simpler and easier it is for the user to see benefits from his action, the better off they are, and the more conversions you make.

Some techies might like features, but to general audiences it is usually best to place:

1. the audience first
2. benefits second
3. features third (if you are selling to a techie audience they may want the features before the benefits)

### Make it a Conversation:

All the above tips pale in comparison to the following tip. Write in a conversational tone as a person, not a company. Fake fluffery does not go well on the web. People can smell it a mile away. Since the web started as non commercial there are certain etiquettes (or netiquettes) which dictate how we should act. When we go outside these basic ideas we not only avoid conversion, but also likely find that our users are offended.

Many of the people who have bought this ebook have told me that they bought it because I sounded honest and real. That is a large portion of the reason why many of my blog posts are somewhat random or humorous and it is why I have feedback turned on. It makes it easier to be personal and make my site a conversation.

[GapingVoid](#) is a weblog – that some might find offensive for cursing and being blunt – which talks about creating smarter conversations.

### Rapid Feedback Loops:

Websites such as Epinions and Planet Feedback make it easy for customers to see what others have to say about you. Google Groups, MSN Groups, and weblogs are additional heavens for service and product complaints. A large portion of the value of the Amazon experience is user reviews and the "X people recommended bla instead of this" area. I have had multiple customers contact me from reviews I did of other books on Amazon.com

Just be honest. If you are not the best, work to improve! You should look and see what others have to say about your service too by checking search results.

Customer interaction should be personal and not corporate speak driven. Sometimes you will fall short (as I have many times), but honesty goes a long way. If you find your way into the conversation and are human about it you will end the rants and raves, and may even spurn on a few people who believe in you. An amazing book on how markets are conversations is called [The ClueTrain Manifesto \(read the book online free\)](#). Often it is a great idea to hire a professional copywriter if you are really bad at writing.

### Quality Content:

Lots of people will tell you to create lots of quality content without ever giving a legitimate definition of [what quality content is](#). The web is a big social network and the trick is to get your messages to spread further and faster than your competitors. Usually creating a ton more pages does not do this as well as creating a way better idea.

The web was designed to give away useful information. The closer you can align a portion of your business model with that, the better a chance you have at achieving extreme success.

Many SEOs hold back their secrets so they can profit from them. I give this ebook away free to charities. I not only help people, but my syndicated network grows. I have been found by prospective customers from word of mouth in forums I have

never heard of. It usually helps you to help other people and you usually can feel good about knowing you helped other people.

### Working From Your Strengths:

I am typically a bit goofy in the things I say or do. It is why I have created many funny or fun type websites. It is far easier to be myself than to pull off some sort of act.

I am not the best copywriter and I do not write the best sales letter pages. If you read the 33 Days to Online Profits book that comes as a bonus it will include lots of content about copywriting. Many of the things he links to are going to be not worth buying for most people. Much of his information in his report about search engines is inadequate or incorrect.

I still link to his document though because it shows some copywriting techniques that may be helpful. You only need to be great at one thing to be extremely successful on the web. Yanik Silver is good at selling people stuff with compelling copywriting. I do not suggest that you buy most of the stuff he links to in 33 Days to Online Profits, but I do recommend you glance at how he writes copy.

## Usability

### Real Life Example:

Memorial Day weekend of 2003 I was a little risky. I drove my car until the gas was just about gone. I was sputtering. I pulled off at a gas station near no others and went to fill up. I pulled up to the first pump and it had a “credit cards do not work” sign on it.

I went into pay cash and the cashier explained it was full service. There was no service man out there. I got rather angry seeing the long line of cars waiting to use the few pumps that worked.

I drove off to find another gas station. I then realized there were no other close gas stations. I went back. I almost got into a wreck on my way back to the gas station. Now I was even more angry.

I arrived at the gas station. I waited in line again. The car in front of me would not back up and let the person who just finished pumping out. I had to wait until the van on the other side was done. I then had to wait for the guy who would not move to finish.

### Negative Advertising:

I was finally ready to pump my gas. I tried to use my credit card...after about a minute of processing: "please see cashier... system down." On the pump it stated “pump then pay.” So I tried to pump. It did not work.

I went inside and asked the cashier what was up. While snacking on his food he said, "crunch...Sorry I had not got around to turning your pump on yet." Mind you it said pump THEN pay. I had been trying for a few minutes at this point.

I went back outside. I pumped my gas. I left never again to visit that gas station. It was a Mobile in Mystic Connecticut (just off the interstate) and I still vividly remember the sign in my head as well as the cashier who was snacking while he should have authorized my pump.

### If that Gas Station was a Website:

That was a big tangent...that occurred while I was reading the book "[Designing Web Usability](#)" by Jakob Nielson ([sign up for is free newsletter](#)). If that gas station was a web site I would have left. There is no page that is so important that I can't go elsewhere.

Many people find your website through search engines. Other sites may link to your inner pages. There is no way to tell where traffic will come from.

I never see the shopping cart on many sites because they make it a challenge just to get there. I have abandoned many shopping carts. Most websites have miserable usability. I must admit some of my sites needs some work in this area too...it is one of the most neglected aspects of web design.

### Web Example:

This comes from a usability / design example story found on page 69 of [Taking Your Talent to the Web](#).

"I left my baby daughter in the car while I went to buy dope. Then I drove away. I'd gone about five blocks when I realized my daughter wasn't in the car anymore."

That was in the main content area of the Narcotics Anonymous website. At the end of it there was another linear link to more stories. The site also had a passive navigation menu.

A large part of usability is quickly connecting with people and then making it easy for them to do whatever you want them to. In this example it would be to perhaps read more stories, to see there were other people like them, to find hope, and seek treatment.

### Good Usability:

As far as usability goes [Amazon](#) is quoted time and time again as far as how to do it right. Some of the tips which help for site design are

- Allow users to control their experience.
- Do not place excessive text inside images.
- Keep a consistent site design.

- Have clear navigation.
- Use alternative text tags with images.
- Use standards where applicable.
- Keep file sizes small.
- Have search or a link to site level search on every page. On smaller sites a link to a sitemap will work better than site level search.

### Allow the User to Control Their Experience:

While creating text elements, it is important to remember the various people and the means which they will use to view your site. Some people are looking at the web through a phone, some can hardly see, others have text read to them.

Some of the best opportunities to improve your bottom line are done by improving conversion rates by making your site easier to use.

When specifying the text size or pallet size use relative, **not exact values**. If you set the text at 8 pixels and a guy has large text turned on, he will see your site at 8 pixels (which can be hard to see on larger monitors, especially by a blind guy). He will not see your site.

Setting the page width to 800 pixels might make a PDA user immediately switch to another site. Set width using percentages or keep the page narrow. When you design for different types of users you not only avoid offending these people, but you also are given extra consideration since you are one of the few who addressed their needs.

Placing text in images is a bad idea since it may appear illegible or overly large when the user sees the page on a different platform than it was designed on. It is okay for some aspects though, as there is some content which makes sense to place in images.

Your site name may be an ok thing to place in an image. Placing text in images should generally be the exception and not the rule though. Search engines do not scan images and have no idea what is in them.

### Consistent Site Design:

People expect to see things in certain places. The upper left corner usually has a logo, and a link to your home page. (Often times the logo is the link.) Search is either right beneath it or in the upper right hand corner. The most important thing is that people like to feel comfortable.

Usually most successful ideas are just repackaged successful ideas from the past. Clear navigation also makes it easier for the user to develop comfort and go where you want him to go. Even if you try something risky, at least be consistent with it.



### Site Level Search:

There are hoards of people who love to search out the information they want when they come to your website. It is well worth it to include a small search box on every page **if you have a larger content web site**. If you do not know anything about dynamic coding you can get a third party search engine from [Atomz](#) or [FreeFind](#). Many popular blog software providers also have free built in site level search.

On small sites you **should not** have a site level search though, as many of the searches will fail to find the desired information and frustrate the searcher. It is **far easier** to actively guide site visitors than to let them enter random text in a search box.

### Use Standards Where Applicable:

People know blue underline means it's a hyperlink. Whenever possible it is a good idea to follow standards. Sometimes deviations may be necessary for site design, but use them sparingly. It makes it easier for people to do what you want them to without needing to think.

Additionally some sites will be more likely to link into a standards compliant site. If your site is focused toward a geek or techy market you will likely want to make sure it validates and is standards compliant. Many sites do neither.

### JavaScript & Active Client Side (Browser Based)

#### Scripting:

Approximately 10% of web browsers are not JavaScript enabled for one reason or another. I recommend minimizing the number of pages using JavaScript whenever possible. In addition you may want to make your JavaScript it's own external .js file and link to it from within your pages. This can decrease page load time and improve usability. You can link to the external .js file by placing the following code in your page head.

```
<script language="JavaScript" src="filename.js"> </script>
```

If your entire page is in a JavaScript some people will not see it. If your entire page is JavaScript many search engines may not index it properly either. Ensure you use NoScript tags to define what was in the JavaScript to users with that feature disabled. NoScript tags look like this, and should be placed just after a scripts location:

```
<noscript> java description and or links </noscript>
```

### Keep File Size Small:

The back button is one of the most used buttons on web browsers. If your file takes a long time to load you may be kissing your user goodbye before he even gets to see your full hello.

Many sites fail because they do not create substantial value and appeal prior to trying to extract profits.

Many non commercial sites make greater profits than commercial sites because it is far easier and cheaper to build links into non commercial sites.

### Specify Image Details:

To allow quick loading it is a good idea to specify image sizes on the page so the text can load before the image is rendered. It may be a necessity to minimize the number of images, image quality, or image size to have an appropriate page load time.

```
<img src ="/images/bla.gif" alt="Bla picture." height="300"
      width="200">
```

### Using CSS to Minimize Page Load Time:

Using an external style sheet will keep many of your design elements on a single common page. This prevents pages from looking jagged due to slightly altering layout specifications from one page to the next. In addition keeping layout code separate from content will decrease page load time.

When users navigate from one page to another they will not need to reload the design elements of the page again since the stylesheet will already be in their cache. Most typical web users expect pages to download within 8 to 10 seconds at the max. The longer a person waits for a page to download, the more likely they are to have their stream of thought interrupted.

### Flash is Evil:

Huge flash images are usually a waste for a few reasons.

- They take a while to load, while the user may be hitting the back button (kiss, kiss, good bye).
- Those who view a flash intro are usually not interested in seeing it every time they come to your site.
- Flash development is an expense which is rarely justified and is rarely focused on the needs of the site visitor.
- Search engines struggle to index, navigate, and classify flash.

## Generating Revenue

### Create Value and then Extract Profits:

You want to earn money from your site, right? It's easy if it is a hobby and not the goal. Many sites fail because they place a ton of ads on their site before they even get a loyal following.

### Non Commercial Profits:

Even if you are only trying to sell your opinion, you can still earn money from it if you work hard or are creative or outspoken. If you are selling advertising space you first need to win great distribution. You do not win that distribution by throwing too many ads up too early! Offer something worthwhile, and then try to extract value, in that order.

I made a personal blog about losing weight which was accepted into DMOZ and the Yahoo! Directory both absolutely free. After I get top rankings I can throw ads on the site and generate money from it's traffic. (It is easier to get links into a non commercial site than a commercial site. After the links are in place you can use that link popularity to do whatever you want to do with it.)

### Banners vs Contextual Ads:

Many web surfers have become banner blind and ignore the top part of a page. Banners have horrible conversion rates. I do not usually use the default banner size unless I feel it fits well with the site design. The best revenue options are usually context based text ads. Good advertising does not look like advertising.

### Reviewing Products:

If you read a book you like, tell people about it. Give them the opportunity to buy the book from your web site. Review products you like, for example view some of the [literature I have thoroughly enjoyed](#). Successful affiliate marketers know it is much easier to sell products if you provide what appears to be **personal unbiased reviews**.

Mike's Marketing Tools is a site which sells a ton of software which I know to be really good **and** also a ton of software that is complete crap. No matter what Mike thinks of the product he gives the appearance of an honest positive review which usually highlights more benefits than downsides.

### Point of Action Marketing:

If you are trying to sell your service, drive people toward it. A good technique for improving subscriptions, for example, is to place a "We Value Privacy" statement near the signup form. This is called Point of Action Marketing. Assure people that it is safe for them to do what you want. Recently [Bryan Eisenberg](#) (author of Persuasive Online Copywriting) made the statement that placing a secure checkout symbol near the checkout typically improved conversion rates between 5 and 15%.

### Establishing Trust:

Unbiased reviews and "We Value Privacy" help to build a strong trust element to your relationship with your site visitors. In addition logos from companies such as the Better Business Bureau, Truste, and the Public Eye can help build trust.

If you have a secure part of your site in frames the lock (secured) symbol may not show in the browser. When you are performing online transactions it is a good idea not to use frames and to also display the VeriSign or Thawte secure symbols (as applicable).

### Revenue Generating Programs:

Some popular revenue programs are [Google AdSense](#) , [Amazon associates program](#), [other major affiliate program networks](#), and perhaps [CafePress](#) for smaller personal websites.

[ClickBank](#) is an affiliate program which works well for selling electronic information. [PayPal](#) is also a good third party payment processor. AdSense is rather selective about what partners it will accept, yet another reason you want to focus on creating quality content.

If you can create an idea that generates a decent amount of syndication and attracts a few good links you may be able to make money selling text link ads.

### Value Added Packaging:

In any arena there will only be a few people who make tons of money packaging or repackaging information. Coming up with value added packaging ideas will help you guarantee the success of your product. I sold way more ebooks than I ever thought I would have based primarily on the fact that the ebook was attached to my blog. Most other SEOs selling an ebook do not have a search engine news blog.

## Interactive Elements

### Resources Cited:

#### Literature:

- Literature I thoroughly enjoyed. Directory with more in depth information on the below listed books (and many others). (<http://www.search-marketing.info/literature.htm>)
- Net Words - Nick Usborne's online copywriting book. (<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0071380396/>)
- The Online Copywriter's Handbook - Robert W Bly's online copywriting book. (<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0658020994/>)
- Persuasive Online Copywriting - Bryan Eisenberg's conversion based copywriting book. (<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0971476993/>)
- Tested Advertising Methods – advertising & copywriting bible by John Caples (<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0130957011/>)
- Taking Your Talent to the Web (<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0735710732/104-7658529-2666358>)
- The Big Red Fez - Seth Godin's quick web design tip book. (<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0743227905/>)
- Don't Make Me Think - Steve Krug's call to action based usability book. (<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0789723107/>)

- The Cluetrain Manifesto - Anti corporate speak copywriting book. (<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0738204315/>) You may also wish to read it free. (<http://www.cluetrain.com/book/index.html>)
- Designing Web Usability - Jakob Nielson's usability book. (<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/156205810X/>)
- UseIt Alertbox - Jakob Nielson's usability newsletter. (<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/>)
- What is Quality Content – an article I wrote for my buddy John (<http://www.v7n.com/quality-content.php>)

#### Software:

- Adobe Photoshop – awesome image software. (<http://www.adobe.com/products/photoshop/main.html>)
- Macromedia Dreamweaver - top of the line web page editor. (<http://www.macromedia.com/cfusion/tdrc/index.cfm?product=dreamweaver>)
- First Page - free web editor by EvrSoft. (<http://evrsoft.com/1stpage2.shtml>)
- AAA Logo – logo design software. (<http://www.aaa-logo.com/>)
- Movable Type - my favorite blog software. (<http://www.movabletype.org>)
- TypePad - Movable Type's web based blog software. (<http://www.typepad.com/>)
- Blogger - 100% free, easy to use blog software. (<http://www.blogger.com>)
- The Logo Company (<http://thelogocompany.net>)
- Atomz - free site level search. (<http://www.atomz.com>)
- FreeFind - free site level search. (<http://www.freefind.com>)

#### Websites:

- Tragedy of the Commons (<http://dieoff.org/page95.htm>)
- Seth Godin - blog by one of the more creative marketers on the web. (<http://sethgodin.typepad.com/>)
- OSDW – free website designs (<http://www.oswd.org/>)
- GapingVoid – free weblog talking about the concept of “smarter conversations” (<http://www.gapingvoid.com/>)

- Why I think using blogs is a great idea for many websites (<http://www.search-marketing.info/newsletter/articles/articles.htm#blogs>)
- CSS House - online demonstration showing how powerful CSS is. (<http://www.designdetector.com/tips/3DBorderDemo2.html>)
- CSS Zen Garden (<http://www.csszengarden.com>)
- CSS @ W3 Schools (<http://www.w3schools.com/css/default.asp>)
- W3C CSS Guidance (<http://www.w3.org/Style/CSS/>)
- Rob Frankel - one of the best branding experts in the world. (<http://www.robfrankel.com/>)
- Apache SSI Tutorial (<http://httpd.apache.org/docs/howto/ssi.html>)
- Sample SSI website. Search Marketing Info. (<http://www.search-marketing.info/>)
- Comprehensive Guide to .htaccess (<http://www.wsabstract.com/howto/htaccess.shtml>)
- GrokDotCom - conversion marketing tips. (<http://www.grokdotcom.com/>)
- Google AdSense (<http://www.google.com/adsense>)
- Amazon Associate Program (<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/subst/associates/join/associates.html>)
- ClickBank – affiliate program and payment processor for electronic goods and services. (<http://www.clickbank.com>)
- PayPal - nearly universal payment processor. (<http://www.paypal.com>)
- CafePress - sells Tshirts, clothing, and other small material which is good for sites with a cult following. (<http://www.cafepress.com/>)
- Other Affiliate Programs - my list of top affiliate directories. (<http://www.search-marketing.info/business/affiliate-programs.htm>)

## Some Notes

1. Search for your topic. Find the #1 result on your favorite search engine. If you know more than them you will eventually replace them. If not, consider further focus of your topic or buying books and reading websites to better learn your topic. Eventually you will be #1.

2. Decide what type of editor would be logical to use for your site. I strongly encourage the use of blog software if it makes sense.
3. If you believe you are weak in the topics of Copywriting or Usability buy a book which covers that topic.
4. Think of how you can generate revenue off of your site without making it look like the sole purpose of the site.

## Writing for Search Engines

**P**resumably man's spirit should be elevated if he can better review his shady past and analyze more completely and objectively his present problems. - from [As We May Think](#) by Vannevar Bush.

Finally...What was all that other junk? What do the spiders want to see? What are the best words to use? Where do I place them? ... Don't worry, the above chapters are not a complete wash. The more you learn about the web, the more you will learn how ideas overlap. Good usability is usually good search engine optimization.

In the [Tipping Point](#) Malcolm Gladwell shows how **small changes can bear amazing results**. If you can learn to include some of those little extras which make your site better than your competition you will find that others will do your marketing for you. That is why I think it is more important to understand the concepts of the web and the goals of search engines versus just learning flavor of the moment optimization. If everything else is good then you do not need to worry as much about optimization.

Plus knowing the above in addition to doing search engine optimization will allow you to draw lots of visitors and have a higher conversion rate. On the web, when you lose a customer, it is usually forever. The last thing you want to do is draw prospective customers into a minefield they are sure to regret.

Each and every page is a chance to capture or lose customers.

### Focusing a Site & Combining Site Ideas:

One time a person contacted me asking for a bit of help with their site. They wanted me to submit their site to directories. When I looked at their site it sold handmade hemp jewelry and SEO services.

In the real world you would never see people do something like this, but many people think it is fine on the web.

On the web there are even more alternatives to your business than in the real world. **You need to focus on the consumer that much more.**

It is fine to have many unique ideas, but each site should cover its own specific niche. If you cross industries within your site you weaken your brand and offend many people. What are the odds that you were looking for SEO services while you were shopping for hemp?



Even within the specific niche of SEO I can have a site for linking, one for keyword research, one for pay per click...the list goes on. Most websites fail because they fail to properly focus, not because they are too focused.

## Keywords

### What are Keywords?

Keywords are phrases you want your website to be found under. Often corporate climates force people to refer to things using special phrases. Keywords are not about what you call your stuff. Keywords are what you think Joe average surfer (or your prospective site visitors) may type in a search box.

#### Focusing a Keyword:

When people tell you to target the word "free" they are out of their minds. The single word is too general and has too much competition. I just did a search on Yahoo! for "free" and it returned 749,000,000 results. That is over 10% of the web trying to use free as a sales pitch.

I am not saying that free should not be on your page, it is on most of mine. I am saying that keywords should define the product or idea. Free alone just does not get this done.

#### Keyword Phrases:

If free isn't a keyword, then what is? Keywords are typically two to five word phrases you expect people to search for to find your website. What would you expect people to type in the browser to find your site? If you were looking for your product, what would you type? What type of problems does your product or service solve? Those answers are likely good keyword phrases.

#### Keyword Length:

A longer search phrase is also associated with better targeting and increased consumer desire. Some people say shorter keyword searchers are shoppers and longer keyword searchers are buyers. As you add various copy to pages you are more likely to appear in search results similar to your keywords which do not exactly match your more general keywords. Most good keyword phrases are generally 2 to 5 words.

#### Keyword Density:

Keyword density analyzers end up focusing people on something that is not overtly important. This causes some people to write content that looks like a robot wrote it. That type of content will not inspire people to link at it and will not convert well.

In March of 2005 Dr. Garcia, an information retrieval scientist, [wrote an article about keyword density](#).

His conclusion was "this overall ratio [keyword density] tells us nothing about:

1. the relative distance between keywords in documents (proximity)
2. where in a document the terms occur (distribution)

Single word keywords are usually not well targeted and hard to obtain.

Longer keywords are easier to rank well for and typically have better conversion rates.

3. the co-citation frequency between terms (co-occurrence)
4. the main theme, topic, and sub-topics (on-topic issues) of the documents

Thus, KD is divorced from content quality, semantics and relevancy.”

Later on in the ebook I will discuss how to structure page content, but it is important to know that exact keyword density is not an important or useful measure of quality.

### Finding Keywords:

There are many different ways to find keywords for your website. Some good keyword ideas are:

- Words people would search for to find your product
- Problems your prospective customers may be trying to solve with your product or service (even if they do not know you exist)
- Keyword tags on competitors websites
- Visible page copy on competitors websites
- Related search suggestions on top search engines (such as Teoma or Yahoo!)
- Related term suggestion at smaller engines such as [Gigablast](#) and [Vivisimo](#)
- Keyword groupings via tools such as [Google Sets](#)
- Keyword suggestion tools (which are covered in the next section)

### Keyword Selection Tips:

The goal of keywords is to choose terms that will bring well targeted traffic to your web site. Each page on your site can be targeted for a few different keyword phrases. Typically I like to just do about 1 to 2 primary and 2 to 3 secondary phrases.

I frequently optimize for overlapping terms so I can rank well for multiple terms without losing the focus of the page.

### Overlapping Keyword Phrases:

It makes sense to optimize the same page for keyword phrases that share some of the same keywords. A page that ranks well for search engine marketing should easily be able to rank well for professional search engine marketing or search engine marketing services.

### Only Use a Few Keyword Phrases per Page:

A note of caution is that you can not optimize a page for 20 different keywords. As you add more keywords to the mix, you lessen the keyword density and change the focus of the page. The page can start to sound robot created if you are optimized

for too many terms. Remember that converting eyeballs is what matters. People are not likely to link to or buy from a page that reads like rubbish.

#### Misspelled Keywords:

You usually do not want to use misspelled keywords in your body copy or page title as they will look somewhat unprofessional. It can however help you to add misspelled keywords to the meta keywords tag (which is explained in further detail in the meta keywords section).

Some sites use “Did you mean...” pages, focusing the page title and heading tag on the misspelled versions of the keyword and then underneath it say “often times internet searchers searching for xxx misspell the word as bla or bla.” If you are looking for xxx you are in the right place. Learn more about our bla bla bla...

Search spelling correction will get more sophisticated over time. Search engines want to correct for misspellings in the search results pages before the users get to your site. I spoke with a search engine product manager who stated that misspellings can flag pages for relevancy reviews and usually misspellings for SEO are not recommended for most websites.

If you are using throw away domains then misspellings might help you get some targeted traffic without using as much effort. Also if you have a community driven site it will naturally include many misspellings from various bad spelling authors.

#### Plural Keyword Versions:

Some search engines do use stemming, but usually the search results for singular and plural search phrases are different. It is recommended that you optimize for common versions of your popular keywords.

#### Capitalized Keywords:

Most major search engines are not case sensitive. Cars is the same thing as cars.

#### Hyphenated Keywords:

Most search engines treat hyphens as a space. E-mail is different than email. If a word is split in half by a hyphen then you should check to see which version is used more frequently and optimize for whatever versions are commonly searched for. If a hyphen is sometimes placed between two words then using either version (with or without a hyphen) will cause your page to rank better for both versions.

#### Localized Keyword Research:

People use different terminology in different countries. In the US we want taxi cabs. In London they look for a car hire. Make sure if you are not from the country of your target market you know what common words they use to describe the products or services you are promoting there.

#### Common Keyword Problems:

There are a few common problems with keyword selection.

- Some people use their internal corporate catch phrases versus focusing on what people actually search for.
- Sometimes words have a more commonly used different meaning which elevates the estimated traffic and competition level without actually bringing in any more sales. This especially holds true for acronyms (examples: pics, cams).
- Some people use really generic words that are not very relevant and are extremely competitive. Optimizing my site for “search engine” would be a good example of this. Lots of competition to attain traffic disinterested with my services.

### Keyword Selection is a Balancing Act:

You want the words to be descriptive enough for you to qualify the person and describe your product. You also want the search term to be general enough to be something that is frequently searched for. The definition of frequently changes depending upon industry, but common sense should help guide you in finding what keywords are the right ones to target. Sales usually are far more important than just the quantity of traffic you get. The power of keywords is in their targeting.

Sure you can list well for a really long search term that is only present on your site, but you want it to be something your prospects are searching for. On the flip side of the coin it is also often rather hard to list for a single word such as “outsourcing.” Selecting keywords is a balancing act. Most good keywords are between 2 to 5 words long.

Use your home page to target your primary keyword and use the other pages to target other keyword phrases.

### Keyword Suggestion Tools:

There are a couple tools on the web which do a good job of helping you find which keywords get searched for and how frequently they are search for.

Overture Search Term Suggestion Tool:

<http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/>

Free tool based on prior months Overture ad distribution. Please note the Overture tool combines singular and plural versions of a word and only can track those terms which already have ads in place. Since Overture makes money by selling ads and many automated bots search through their distribution network their results may run high (some highly competitive commercial terms are off by a factor greater than 10 fold).

Google Suggest:

Near the end of 2004 Google launched [Google Suggest](#), which attempts to auto-complete your search queries. The results are influenced by search popularity so

you can use the tool to help you find many of your deeper keyword phrases after you find some of your broad keywords. DaveN also created a [scraper tool which queries Google Suggest](#).

Google Keyword Sandbox:

<https://adwords.google.com/select/main?cmd=KeywordSandbox>

Free tool from Google AdWords. Offers likely synonyms to the word you type in, but does not approximate traffic. To approximate traffic you would need to set up a Google AdWords campaign and track the number of times your ad displays. Be careful in doing this because it can get rather expensive if you create random ads for the wrong words and / or bid highly for your keywords.

WordTracker:

Using the above two tools you can get a good idea what words would be good to target. In addition, there is a tool called WordTracker which is slightly more robust. [WordTracker](#) takes sampled data from a couple meta search engines and projects future search rates for different words.

The data pool WordTracker uses offers better data since it separates plural listings from singular versions and also tracks meta search clickthroughs, versus tracking search engine ads.

Since WordTracker makes money by providing accurate statistics versus selling keywords their traffic tends to be a more fair representation of actual web traffic. Keep in mind that their meta search user breakdown might be different than the cross section of normal web surfers and very low search counts will likely have many anomalies.

WordTracker is a tool well worth trying if you plan to do in depth keyword analysis. You can buy a year subscription for a few hundred dollars or use it for a day for under \$10. They also offer a variety of subscription options between those two time frames.

WordTracker also has a competition feature which aims to determine how competitive a phrase is, but the tool is no longer very useful in my opinion. On the next page I will give you my tips on how to determine how competitive a phrase is.

Keyword Discovery:

[Keyword Discovery](#) is a similar product to WordTracker with a few more features and a deeper database. WordTracker is believed to have a cleaner database, but Keyword Discovery has historical search data and a deeper database.

Ontology Tool:

Finds related words using the Google ~ search.

<http://www.gorank.com/scotools/ontology/>

The Overture keyword tool can show high search volume due to automated bots. WordTracker also will be off on certain searches.

The free Digital Point tool shows both of their results side by side so you can see a couple different search volume “opinions.”

Google Suggest results may also be organized in order of search volume.

Lexical Database:

[Wordnet](#) - a lexical keyword database for the English language.

The Best Free Keyword Research Tool:

Digital Point created a [free tool](#) which combines the Overture tool and the free version WordTracker tool. I recommend trying the free tool before spending money on WordTracker. I usually use Digital Point's tool to do most of my keyword research. The Digital Point tool can also estimate localized keyword traffic at the national level.

Downloadable Keyword Software:

I usually do not recommend many downloadable software tools, but [Good Keywords](#) is free and offers some useful features. I do not use it often, but it saves you keyword searches and can be well worth the free download for doing preliminary keyword research.

Checking Keyword Competition:

Many people will look at the number of pages listed for a phrase and think that is a fair estimate of competition level. **It is not.** That is just a measure of how many pages have those words somewhere in the content or in links that are pointing at their pages.

The best way to look at the competitive nature of a keyword is to look at the link profiles of the top listed sites.

A better measure of competition is to search for "keyword A keyword B," as that will at least give you the number of pages which have that phrase on it. You also can further target your competition estimation by using allintitle: and allinanchor: search functions. Pages which have your keyword phrases in their title may be optimized, and pages which have them in their inbound links stand a good chance of being fairly well optimized.

The best way to know what your competition level is though is to look at the link profiles of the top few sites. Are they using keywords in their anchor text? How many unique domains are linking into their site?

Google primarily relies upon link reputation to determine relevancy for competitive terms. [Post Trades](#) is a new SEO forum which has a free tool in the upper right corner which tells you how many unique linking domains are pointing links into a site. That tool will not tell you whether or not they are using keyword rich anchor text, but it is another good way to estimate how competitive a keyword is. The Post Trades tool only analyzes the first 1,000 backlinks in Yahoo!, so if your competitors have more than 1,000 backlinks it may not be accurate.

Jim Boykin also created a free tool which [lists all unique linking sites](#) (of course this tool is also be limited by the search engines search depth limits). Jim also created a tool which quickly [shows the number of unique C block IP addresses](#) linking at a website.

Other Rough Indications of Perceived Value & Competiton: PageRank, Top Bid Price & Search Volume



A free tool by the name of [Prog](#) shows Google PageRank in search results. Most industries usually have pages around PageRank 5 or so filling up the first page or two of results. If you see many PageRank 7 and PageRank 8 sites on the first page then likely you are trying to compete in a fairly competitive marketplace. Most of the best SEO marketers (heavy link buying examples excluded) usually have a home page PageRank of 5, 6, or 7 at the highest.

### **PageRank by itself is only one rough measure of link popularity.**

Other signs of a competitive marketplace is when you notice many lead generation type websites, many exceptionally smooth websites, or high bid prices on those keywords in the top pay per click search engines.

You can get an (extremely) rough approximation of the value of a top listing on major search engines for a keyword by looking at the top listings using the Overture view bid tool and looking at their search frequencies with WordTracker.

### **The Tail of Search**

Many people feel the need to rank for a broad generic term and optimize exclusively for that term. The problem with this is that around half of all search queries are unique each day. If you were trying to rank well for “used books” you should cater to a variety of terms around that idea, such as: used book store, buy used books, used book search, etc.

### **Need Help with Keyword Selection?**

If you still need more help understanding keywords feel free to ask me. In addition Dan Thies of [SEO Research Labs](#) specializes in doing keyword research reports for SEOs, web designers, and webmasters.

## **Meta Tags**

When people refer to meta tags they are talking about the meta description and meta keyword tags. Some search engines may display the meta description as part of the search results, but the meta keywords tags should not appear in search results.

### **What do the Meta Tags Look Like?**

```
<meta name="keywords" content="seo book, seo tutorial, seo
tutorial book, search engine optimisation, search engine
optimisation tutorial">
```

The meta keywords tag is used for misspellings or synonyms not occurring in page copy.

The meta description tag should be a few sentences to a paragraph of text which use various versions of your keywords and describe the purpose of a given page.

Meta tags are only one small element of current search engine ranking algorithms.

```
<META NAME="Description" CONTENT="Search Engine Optimization
Book is a SEO blog which provides daily search engine news.
SEO Book keeps up with the latest trends in search engine
algorithm changes and provides daily search engine
optimization tips.">
```

### Meta Keywords Tag:

The meta keywords tag is not supported by many major search engines. While it is important to choose the correct keywords for your page, the meta keywords tag itself is not used by many top SEO experts.

[Mike Grehan interviewed Jon Glick](#) (of Yahoo! Search) and asked him about the meta keyword tag. Jon stated that the meta keyword tag is used to include a page among a subset of search results, but is not used in determining the relevancy of that page for the given search term.

If a word does not exist on a page and is not in any of its inbound linkage data then search engines such as Yahoo! may not know to include the page in search results unless it exists in the keyword tag. I usually do not use the meta keywords tag on my pages (as it is not usually very important), but it can help you out some if there are many different ways to say your product names.

If you use the meta keywords tag it should be unique for each page you place it on. The keywords tag is a good place to put common misspellings, synonyms, and alternate versions of a word.

### Sample Uses of the Meta Keywords Tag:

- If you optimized a page for the keyword phrase “drop shipping” you may want to include the word “dropshipping” in your keywords tag.
- Notice how in my above example meta keyword tag I spelled the word optimization with an s. I targeted the phrase with a z and am placing s versions in my keywords tag. The term is likely going to be too competitive to compete for using just a meta tag, but most phrases are not going to be as competitive as search engine optimisation.
- Some items are model 15-M or 15M or Cannon 15-M or Cannon 15M.
- Prescription is often mistyped as perscription.

### Meta Description Tag:

The meta description tag has varying levels of relevancy in different search engines. Many search engines still support it and display it in their page description snippets in their search results. I suggest trying to get multiple versions of your main keywords, and your main keywords themselves in this tag a few times.



This tag should be between a sentence to a paragraph and not visually appear keyword stuffed. The sentences **should read well to the human eye** since this tag is still used in many search results pages.

Many search engines will use the meta description as part of the page abstract if the exact search term that was searched for is found in the meta description tag. Additionally it sometimes appears in search results if the search engine can not extract meaningful content from the page copy or if the algorithm feels the meta description will provide a more useful presentation.

Some people fail to realize that a good presentation within the search results could mean that a number two or three listing could get more traffic than a number one listing. The meta description tag can often be used to help craft a good search presentation for your most popular phrases.

### Meta Tags Art Not Art:

Some people try and make meta tags sound like an art form. They are not. There are multiple tags which tell a search engine when to revisit or what language it is in. These tags are usually irrelevant and ignored.

The only useful meta tags other than the description and keywords tags are those tags used to **PREVENT** search engines from indexing your content. Since we usually want our content seen, I have spoke of the only tags I typically use.

### The Truth about Meta Tags:

Meta tags are only one small part of search engine algorithms. In major search engines each of the following is typically far more important than meta tags.

- Link Popularity & Link Reputation
- Page Title
- Page Copy

### Robots Exclusion Standard:

When primitive robots were first created some of them would crash servers. A robots exclusion standard was crafted to allow you to tell any robot (or all of them) that you do not want some of your pages indexed or that you do not want your links followed. You can do this via a meta tag on the page copy

```
<meta name="robots" content="noindex,nofollow">
```

or create a robots.txt file which tells the robots where NOT to go. [Click here](#) for the official robots exclusion protocol document.

### Free Meta Tag Generator:

I also created a [free meta tag generator here](#). I wrote general tips on that tools page to help you create your title and meta tags.

## Page Title Done Wrong

### Why Page Title is so Important:

When the web was created, it was created around the idea of **the page and the link being the fundamental units of data**. The page title is one of the most important attributes on the page. For some non competitive terms a good page title alone can land a page atop search results. First of all we will cover bad ways to make a page title.

1. "paxil, prozac, Zoloft buy now, internet pharmacy, Viagra, pills on wholesales, antidepressants, weight loss, phentamine..." this is absolutely not the goal of the page title
2. "untitled document" this is absolutely not the goal of a page title
3. "Welcome to fred's store" this is absolutely not the goal of a page title
4. "Welcome to fred's store" this is absolutely not the goal of a page title

The goal of the page title is to give search engines and readers a brief description of what that page is exactly about.

### Problems with the Examples:

1. It is true that the page can be about any specific topic (even prescription drugs or casino stuff or pornography), but the title should not be a loose array of selected somewhat similar terms. You could pick any topic and focus on it, but not on a topic range.
2. Many pages on the web do not even have a title. Unless one was trying to list well for "untitled document" this title makes it hard to generate any traffic. In the Yahoo! Search index there are over twenty million pages sporting the "untitled document" title. If only they knew...

### [Yahoo! Search: allintitle:untitled document](#)

3. First of all people probably have no idea what Fred's store is. Is Fred's store a hardware store? A discount shoe store? A Viagra store (going with the pharmacy theme)? You just don't know. Neither do search engines.

Placing salutations or unnecessary document references in the title kills the keyword density of the title. I always say "Welcome to...low rankings". Just for fun I did a search on Yahoo! to show how many sites had the following in their page title:

- a. welcome to (close to 30 million)
  - b. home page (over 15 million)
  - c. wecome & welcom had thousands of entries each. The misspelled words are even sort of competitive.
4. Notice there is no difference between example #3 and example #4. The title is a **page title** or document title. The title is **not the site title**. If, for branding purposes, you feel you should place the site title in the title of every page it is advisable that you place it at the end of the title. That is, unless you are so big

that people are likely to search for your name already (Nike, Pepsi, Coke...)!  
**The page itself is a fundamental unit of data, not the web site!**

## Page Title Done Right

The page title is a page by page thing, not a site by site thing.

Usually you want to lead your page title with your primary keywords for that given page.

We saw how to do it wrong, so how do you do it right? Well your title should have your keywords in them. Each page should have its own title. First I will say that there is no such thing as a perfect title. Let's pretend this ebook is a page and we needed to title the document. Using the keyword suggestion tools above I would look up some relevant terms.

All searches performed on Overture search term suggestion tool and results are for September 2003.

- seo 101,543
- search engine optimization 56,947
- search engine marketing 14,448
- search engine marketing news 267
- seo book 0 (update: within a few months of creating this domain Overture started serving hundreds of ads a month for this name due in part to me heavily branding the site name.)
- seo tutorial 70
- search engine optimization tutorial 59

### Chose Multiple Keywords:

I am not actually in much of a rush with this site to achieve top rankings, as I already have other well ranking sites. I am going to think big with the title. Eventually I will want to rank well for "search engine optimization" and "SEO." I know that will take a while though. I should almost immediately be able to rank well for "SEO book." (By the time I was done writing this book I already did.)

### A Good Title for This Page:

A good page title for this book would then be "Search Engine Optimization Tutorial ebook by SEO Book.com." This ebook will never rank well in search results though since I do not want search engines to spider it. I used a robots exclusion tag on it.

This site is going to cover news topics daily too. The page title of my home page will be "SEO Book.com - SEO ebook, Search Engine Optimization Tips, & Search Engine Marketing News Blog"

In that title I am actually trying to do a good bit of branding. I know earlier I said the domain name didn't really matter, but this domain name matched exactly what

I wanted and I am going to spend thousands and thousands of dollars branding that name.

The domain name also matches exactly my keywords without being repulsively long and dash ridden. It is easy and simple enough to remember, plus if this book does well enough more and more people will search for SEO Book.

### Chose Terms of Different Difficulty Levels:

My general rule for the page title is to include at least one competitive and one non competitive term. In less than a month the home page of this site was listed [#1 on Yahoo!](#) (Inktomi back then) and [#1 on Google](#) for "seo book." Ranking for "Search Engine Optimization" or "SEO" is a much harder task, but maybe I can hope to do well for them within a year.

Another good trick for the title might be to use two similar overlaying ideas. If it's hard to list well for either of the components of the whole, you typically can still get top rankings for the searches which mix the terms together. Eventually as you build your linking campaign you can hope to pick up one or both of the original terms.

A good example of this might be a site that is selling Dragon Naturally Speaking. Dragon Naturally Speaking is a type of medical transcription software. If you use a title such as "Dragon Naturally Speaking Medical Transcription Software" it can help you rank well for the oddball mixed up searches such as "Dragon Medical Software."

### Think Along the Buying Cycle:

While it might be good for me to rank at # 1 for "search marketing," it is doubtful that people searching for that term are immediately interested in buying. When a person searches for "search engine marketing service company in San Diego" there is much more express intent implied in that search.

**These longer terms will usually have less competition and do a better job of converting. This is the real secret to effective on-the-page SEO. Use different pages to optimize for many different terms.**

If you are using pay per click advertising long specific keyword phrases will usually be far cheaper than some of the generic untargeted terms. That is why it is important to focus different pages on different terms versus focusing your site on one generic term. Not only is there less competition, but also higher conversion rates.

### Page Title and Click Through Rate:

Often times a good page title or URL can double or triple your click through rate. You want to make sure your page title is especially made for human consumption, and not just some random ugly keyword stuffed string. Certainly get your primary keywords in there, but make sure the title is readable too.

## Internal Linking

### Anchor Text:

When linking between your documents you should use the words you want to list well for in the anchor text.

```
<a href="bla.htm">Anchor text</a>
```

If you can not use descriptive anchor text it is known that some search engines still place some weighting on link titles (although Google does not). Even if you use descriptive link text you may also want to use a link title too.

```
<a href="bla.htm" title="descriptive text">Click here</a>
```

You also can make up for slightly under descriptive site navigation links by providing **descriptive footer text link navigation**.

A large criteria in search engine rankings is the text used to link to a document. Sometimes it is hard to control how others link to you, but you can always do a good job of providing great links to yourself using internal site linking.

### Use Descriptive Anchor Text:

When possible you want to refer to your documents using similar word that are expressed in the title. Let's say I have a page about 5 HTP that is linking to a page about the History of 5 HTP. I would not use the word "history" to create the link. I would use the phrase "5 HTP history" or "History of 5 HTP" in the link as it would help the relevancy of both pages.

Descriptive internal text links can help search engines understand what your site is about.

I usually link to the home page of my sites from all internal pages using descriptive text links.

### Click Here:

Sometimes it is necessary to use a "click here" link, but most times you can get around it. You cannot always write a link that helps the relevancy of the page that it's on, but almost always you can write a good descriptive link that contains a keyword or keyword phrase which will help the page the link is going to.

### Images as Links:

It is better to use text as links than images, but if you use an image ensure you place a **descriptive** image alt tag on it.

```

```

If you use image navigation links it is advisable to place **descriptive text links** at the bottom of the page to help search engines figure out the relevancy of your pages.

### Spamming Alt Tags:

Image links are likely not weighted as heavily as text links because they are more susceptible to spam.

```
<... alt="5HTP 5-HTP 5 Hydroxytryptophan
5hydroxytryptophan 5 HYDROXYTRYPTOPHAN">.
```

Using an alt tag incorrectly, as done above can hurt more than help. The search engines are generally rather liberal, but it also does not look appealing to the eye to see that long string on a rollover. What's even worse is some browsers will read that random string to the computer user and your site will confuse the hell out of them.

Yahoo! actively edits their search results. If they see signs of artificial ranking manipulation they may remove your site from their index. Some competitors can turn you in and get you delisted as well.

### Linking to Page Anchors:

On longer pages you can use text to link within the same document. Frequently FAQ pages have links at the top of the page which link to the answers of the associated questions. These links look like:

```
<a href="#anchor1">FAQ Anchor Text</a>
```

You then place the anchor you are linking to somewhere else on that same page.

```
<a name="anchor1"></a>
```

### Broken Links in Your Site:

Many directory editors and site visitors will quickly grow disinterested with your site if it is full of broken links. Some directory editors will run a link checker on your site in the background while they review the content. The internet is dynamic and ever changing, and some of your links may break from month to month. I recommend checking your site for broken links before submitting it to any of the major directories. [Xenu Link Sluth](#) is a free downloadable link checking program which can even help you quickly build a site map.

I try to look through my site for broken links at least once a month.

### When Broken Links are OK:

A good thing about the blog format of this site is that I do not need to go back and fix broken links as they fall into the archives. If your site is a clearly dated news site then you do not need to go back to edit all of your links as sites around the web change.

### Linking Out to Quality Sites:

Many people are afraid to link out to related resources throughout their copy. Many search engines grade pages not only based upon their copy and inbound links, but also upon the pages that they link to. All of your outbound links should not be link trades in one corner of your site. Try to naturally mix them in your site architecture wherever it makes sense.

Linking out to good sites is nowhere near as beneficial toward directly improving your search rankings as getting links from great sites is, but it does help you in multiple ways:

- Linking out to other related sites throughout your copy makes your site look like a more natural part of the web. It will give you a ranking boost in clustering search engines (such as Teoma).
- Linking out to related quality sites or pages offers your users additional useful information. If you refer them to good information they will be more inclined to to associate you with that good information and many of them will remember where they came from.
- Your site visitors and people you link to will be more inclined to link into your site if you provide a wealth of good information and also link out to additional relevant information.

## Navigation

**Effective navigation** should let a user know:

- What site they are on.
- Where they are in that site.
- Where they have been.

### Navigation and Search Engines:

Good navigation helps the search engines better understand the site structure as well as helping site users. Typically your most important documents will have the greatest number of inbound links.

Often people will use tabs or images for their links which have a minimal amount of descriptive text in them. You can offset this by using descriptive text links in the page footer. You can see an example of this technique at <http://www.search-marketing.info>. It is common to have one set of navigation that is used by site visitors and another that is used by search engine spiders.

Effective navigation can also increase your keyword density by placing relevant optimized link streams on the page. Proper navigation also gives you exceptionally keyword rich internal links. A popular technique for doing this is called using bread crumbs.

If I broke this book into online pages the navigation for what you are reading now would look as follows: Search Engine Optimization (SEO Book) > Writing for Search Engines Chapters > Web Site Navigation

- The first link would be a link to the home page.
- The second link would be to the chapter on search engine optimization. These links would be optimized text links which help define the purpose of my pages.
- The third piece of text would not be a link, but would just be text saying the page where the user is. This text would help improve the keyword density of the current page.

Setting up navigation looks professional, helps the user, and improves your rankings. You can't beat that with a stick!

## Dynamic Navigation

Some sites use JavaScript and other client side navigation. Search engines struggle to follow things that happen on the client side (or in the browser). You can tell if a sites navigation is client side by viewing the source or turning off JavaScript and active scripting then reloading your document.

I generally recommend staying away from JavaScript and client side navigation. If you feel you must use it make sure you add static text links to the bottom of your pages.

## Site Map:

It is also a good idea to have a site map, linked to from the home page, which links to all major internal pages. The idea is to give search engine spiders another route through your site, **and** to give users a basic way to flow through your site if your navigation is broken or confusing. The site map should be:

- quick loading
- light on graphics
- & overly simplistic

I usually title my site map as "site map." Sometimes when people optimize their site map it lists above the other pages in their site since it has so many keyword dense text links on it. The site map is not the ideal entry place into a web site. [Xenu Link Sluth](#) (free download) checks for broken links and can also help you quickly build a site map.

## Optimizing Your Page Copy

### Optimize Each Page:

One of the most important things to get across is that **each page is its own unit and has its own ranking potential and its own relevant keywords**. Usually a home page has more value than the other pages since it is where most other sites will link into your site at. Home pages should generally be optimized for the most



competitive keyword phrases in your market. Interior pages should be optimized for other relevant phrases.

There are a ton of things to optimize on each page. Above we already spoke of how to choose your keywords, page titles, and meta tags. Within each page there is also a ton of content that can be optimized.

I usually do not worry too much about keyword density. I just use keyword rich descriptive headers, sub headers, page titles, and descriptive internal linking to help search engines define what my pages are about.

### On the Page Optimization Only Goes So Far:

When optimizing a page for competitive terms the bulk of the ranking algorithm will be based upon link analysis. **Effective link building has no limit to how much it can help your rankings.**

Some people think that more is better and more is better and more is better. This is usually true with inbound linking, but is not true with on the page keyword density.

The algorithms for grading page copy are based on a bell curve. After your keyword density goes to a certain point adding more words does not improve your rankings any further and can eventually start to erode your rankings. Each search engine has it's own bell curves and they do not all align with one another. Thus the most effective way to improve your rankings on all search engines will be via link building, but proper page structure and on the page optimization does still play an important role in gaining targeted inbound traffic (especially for uncompetitive keyword phrases or in search engines that rely heavily on page contents).

### Text is Important:

Almost every page is going to have navigation and decoration. It's impossible to have just one thing (usability, copywriting, SEO). Building a page and a site is a balancing act. The portions of the page that matters most and you have the most control over is the text. Some places practice so much SEO that the copy reads like rubbish. Obviously, that is no good. Traffic means nothing if people do not convert.

### Use Keywords in Headings:

Use the keywords in headings and subheadings throughout the page - this heading should capture the person's attention and tell them they are in the right place. `<H1>Optimize Web Pages - SEO Copywriting</H1>` would be a classic straight SEO approach. Depending on competition levels you may wish to use something with a call to action as well. Off the start I recommend using the direct approach until you start getting solid rankings.

Heading tags go from H1 to H6 with the biggest tags being the smallest #. You can also change how the text appears using CSS. Typically think of these headings like you would a heading in a newspaper.

I usually try to get my keyword phrases and similar phrases in my page heading as well as subheadings. The rest of the page copy is usually written with sales conversion in mind and I do not pay too much attention to optimizing it for search engines. Natural writing will cause you to use your keywords throughout the text.

I only recommend using a single H1 tag on each page. I also try to use many H2 or H3 tags to break up the page copy and help structure the data.

Break the page into subgroups:

h1 (consisting of primary keywords) **Only use one h1 tag /page & do not bold it.**

h2 (similar subtopic phrase or idea with some keyword phrases in it)

paragraph bla bla bla

h2 (another subtopic with some similar or overlapping keywords in it)

paragraph bla bla

paragraph bla bla bla

h2 (sometimes some of my subtopics do not have keywords, but most do)

paragraph bla bla bla bla

Usually the subheadings will focus on a keyword phrase that is slightly more specific than the main heading, but will also contain some of the same words as the main heading.

In addition descriptive sub headings improve the scanability and usability of your website.

I only recommend using one H1 tag per page. The headings help structure the information and give the words in their tags a ranking boost. If you start doing things like:

- Placing all your content in an H1 tag.
- Bolding the H1 tags.
- Bolding all occurrences of your keywords.

then you are doing things that could possibly appear unnatural to a search engine and / or site visitors. Thus the combined effect will be more likely to hurt your rankings on multiple fronts since your content may look less appealing to search engines and site visitors will be less likely to link into it.

Place Your Keywords Where it Makes Sense:

- Place keywords in the paragraphs.
- Place keywords in the heading tags.
- Place keywords in img alt tags.
- When the word is part of a small statement making a specific point, you may bold it or italicize it.
- You may also want to include your keywords a few times in bulleted lists.

- When possible place the keywords in links, and don't forget navigation.
- The key focus of the page should be on readability. If the page does not make sense to human eyes then it is no good for a search engine **and it will not make sales**. You want to use keywords often, but not to the point where it sounds like you are writing for the search engine and not the user.

### Don't Be Generic:

If your keyword is "eat cheddar". You can look for the word cheese and try to replace it with cheddar. A good idea in Jill Whalen's "[The Nitty-gritty of Writing for the Search Engines](#)" report is to play detective. Ask who what where when and how. Try to avoid stuff which is generic.

A great example I can remember is the guy who was #1 in Google for "xyz tips." He had words across the top of his page like "forums" "new" and "strategy". I told him adding the word xyz in front of these would help him out. Sure enough he quickly got to #1 for xyz tips, and he probably even gets some good traffic from similar terms.

### Be Creative:

There are so many creative ways to increase keyword density. Again, assuming we wanted to target "eat cheddar" we could write the following:

Cheddar is one of my favorite foods to eat. Cheddar is ...

Notice how the keywords overlap and are in different sentences. There are many different ways to get your keywords in the content.

### Spread Your Keywords Throughout The Page:

Some of the more recent algorithms may have the ability to look for natural language patterns. In natural language often times the different keywords in a keyword phrase will often appear far apart from one another.

To boost your rankings in these algorithms you will want to use the word eat in some spots and cheddar in other spots. Often your keywords will appear next to each other naturally. Some phrases like "peanut butter" often occur together, but in general all of your occurrences of the keywords should not be together.

### Keywords at the Top of The Page:

Some people strongly believe that keywords at the top of the page and before your navigation enhance search engine rankings. I honestly have never worried much about this as I assume the effect would be somewhat trivial in most cases.

It can easily be accomplished by writing a sentence above your branding images or through using a floating DIV or other CSS techniques. When using tables some people use a blank cell technique to make the search engines see the body content before navigation. If search engines place weighting on where the keywords are on

the page then they most likely use the order of the words **in the actual page source code** and **not the visual display of the pages**.

### Naming Filepaths:

Usually you want to use short file names and folder names so that the data is easy to transmit using various means such as email. Long file paths may look a bit spammy to search engine editors or searchers looking through search results.

Generally you want to use one to a few keywords in each filename or folder. Use lower cased filepaths because some directories do not handle upper cased filenames. Separate words with a – symbol between each word. If you leave blank spaces it will look weird in the address bar and if you use \_ search engines will not be able to parse apart the individual words in each file name.

File names are not hugely important for SEO. If your site is already built there is probably little reason to change filenames, but if you are making a new site it is worth the 5 seconds it takes to use keyword rich filenames.

## Building Content

### Same Old Stuff

Creating an extremely useful web based tool or paying a programmer to create one for you is one of the most effective ways to build content which will help you build a linking campaign. Writing articles will also help you build up your link popularity.

Many websites blindly add large sums of content to their site because they think it is free so it should help them and has low cost. The problems with adding exact copies of low quality articles are:

- since the articles exist elsewhere yours probably will not rank as well as the one of the other copies on the web.
- low quality content reflects poorly upon you.
- Many people add unfocused garbage to their site which loses the interest of their visitors.
- Some unscrupulous parties copy the contents of other websites without asking. Tools such as [CopyScape](#) make this easy to detect.

Some people also clutter up the internet with search result screen scrapers and other auto content generation crap. I am generally against generating low quality automated content as I feel it lowers the quality and functionality of the web as a whole, though I suppose some people may find it effective for generating a bunch of keyword dense pages.

### Free Decent Content

There is a ton of good free content out there, but you need to do a bit of research to find it. Quality is usually more important than quantity. Creative reintegration of other content with some fresh new content or other features can make your site much more useful to your site visitors.

- If you sell products make sure you grab the official specifications from the manufacturers.
- Incorporate user feedback into the pages.
- When you write articles remember to quote and link into websites of topical authorities.
- Incorporate related / compatible items into the pages.
- If you have a web related idea or are researching the history of something that may have appeared on the web you can view what a site looked like in the past from the [Internet Archives](#). You may not be able to use the old web copy, but it certainly makes for good article information. (please note: some sites block spiders from indexing certain pages).
- Integrate topic specific RSS feeds into your website.
- Ask a friend to write an article for you.
- Search for articles on your topic in search engines. In addition you may want to look at article / ezine directories and glance at industry hub sites to see if the authors allow you to repost their articles. Most people who know a decent amount about marketing will let you post their articles in exchange for a link back to their site.
- Sometimes it is worth the cost to hire a professional writer. Some of my friends hire people to write press releases and articles to promote each new site they create.
- [Common Content](#) and [Copyleft](#) are two projects which aim to help allow the free flow of information by allowing people to reuse various registered content. Yahoo! created a free [Creative Commons search](#).
- Content from prior to 1921 should usually be usable. From 1921 to 1963 may be usable, depending on whether or not it was registered.
- The US Government has a bunch of free copy on a variety of topics. When in doubt check with [Copyright.gov](#) .
  - [FedWorld](#)
  - Government Printing Offices: [Catalog of US Government Publications](#)

[New Electronic Titles](#) (contains content which is not yet properly indexed and sorted)

- [Library of Congress](#)
- [CIA](#)
- [US Department of State](#)
- [US Historical Documents](#)
- [FBI](#)

## Other Content Creation

- Sometimes it is worth it to spend a little money to help build your site up. Many people can find college students and pay them about \$10 - \$12 an hour to create content for their sites. I live in State College, PA so I am sure this will work well for me here in the next few months.
- Find a copywriter for hire at a site such as [Elance](#) or have a more expensive copywriter ghost write an article for you. Make sure you get the exclusive rights to the article if you do not want them to use it on other sites or newsletters later.
- You can buy content from various sites that specifically create content for sale by finding out who creates news in your industry or by searching for syndicated content providers from a search engine or directory.

## Automated Content Creation

**Improper use of any of the following mentioned tools can drastically increase the chances your site will be removed from search indexes.** If you are new to the web and are running a limited number of websites it is recommended that you avoid using these types of tools – especially on any site that is a main source of income.

Most automated content creation tools create content which reads like rubbish. Some tools such as Traffic Equalizer scrape search results and publish the results as web pages on your site.

RSS Equalizer can be used to create pages from related RSS feeds. Some people mix this data to create well themed and useful web pages. In some regions the web pages created by RSS Equalizer and Traffic Equalizer may be illegal.

ArticleBot is a tool which creates many semantically sound articles from a single article. Some sites which have exceptionally similar contents in large database driven websites which is only slightly altered by location may get some of their pages filtered by duplicant content filters. Using a tool such as ArticleBot and then dynamically inserting the locations into the different page contents should help some sites avoid duplicate content filters.

I have not yet used any of the automated content creation tools, but some of my friends have stated positive things about them.

## Interactive Elements

### Resources Cited:

#### Literature:

- As We May Think - Vannevar Bush's Memex manifesto from around the end of the second world war  
(<http://www.theatlantic.com/unbound/flashbks/computer/bushf.htm>)
- Tipping Point - Malcolm Gladwell's book about how small changes can make a big difference.  
(<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0316346624/>)
- The Nitty-gritty of Writing for the Search Engines - Jill Whalen's copy editing ebook (<http://www.highrankings.com/seo-writing.htm>)

#### Software:

- Google Sets (<http://labs.google.com/sets>)
- Overture Search Term Suggestion Tool  
(<http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/>)
- Google Suggest  
(<http://www.google.com/webhp?complete=1&hl=en>)
- DaveN's Google Suggest Scraper Tool  
(<http://www.davidnaylor.co.uk/innosense/sugscape.php>)
- Google Keyword Sandbox  
(<https://adwords.google.com/select/main?cmd=KeywordSandbox>)
- WordTracker (<http://www.wordtracker.com>)
- Keyword Discovery (<http://www.keyworddiscovery.com>)
- Digital Point keyword suggestion tool  
(<http://www.digitalpoint.com/tools/suggestion/>)
- Good Keywords – downloadable keyword software  
(<http://www.goodkeywords.com/>)
- Wordnet - a lexical keyword database for the English language.  
(<http://www.cogsci.princeton.edu/~wn/>)
- GoRank Ontology Tool  
(<http://www.gorank.com/seotools/ontology/>)

- Prog – Google search with PageRank (<http://seochat.com/seo-tools/pagerank-search>)
- Unique inbound linking domains tool (<http://www.555webtemplates.com/backlinks-tool.asp>)
- Unique C class inbound links tool (<http://www.webuildpages.com/cclass/>)
- Free Meta Tag Generator (<http://www.search-marketing.info/meta-tags/make-meta.htm>)
- Xenu Link Sluth – finds broken links on your site (<http://home.snafu.de/tilman/xenulink.html>)
- CopyScape – find people who are copying your website. (<http://www.copyscape.com>)

#### Websites:

- Post Trades forum – has a free tool which tells you how many unique domains are linking into a site. (<http://www.posttrades.com>)
- SEO Research Labs keyword reports (<http://www.seoresearchlabs.com/>)
- Mike Grehan's interview of Jon Glick (<http://www.seobook.com/archives/000292.shtml>)
- Article about keyword density not meaning much (<http://www.e-marketing-news.co.uk/Mar05/garcia.html>)
- Yahoo! Search: Untitled Document - shows many people are failing to name their documents correctly. (<http://search.yahoo.com/search?p=allintitle%3Auntitled+document>)
- Robots Exclusion Protocol (<http://www.robotstxt.org/wc/exclusion.html>)
- Yahoo! Search: SEO Book <http://search.yahoo.com/search?fr=slv1-&ei=UTF-8&p=seo+book>
- Google Search: SEO Book <http://www.google.com/search?sourceid=navclient&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&q=seo+book>
- Common Content (<http://www.commoncontent.org/>)
- Copyleft (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/copyleft.html>)
- Internet Archives (<http://www.archive.org/>)



- Elance (<http://www.elance.com>)
- FedWorld (<http://www.fedworld.com/>)
- Copyright.gov (<http://www.copyright.gov>)

Government Printing Offices:

- Catalog of US Government Publications (<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/cgp>)
- New Electronic Titles (contains content which is not yet properly indexed and sorted) ([http://www.access.gpo.gov/su\\_docs/locators/](http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/locators/))
- Library of Congress (<http://lcweb.loc.gov/rr/news/extgovd.html>)
- CIA (<http://foia.cia.gov/>)
- US Department of State (<http://foia.state.gov/>)
- US Historical Documents (<http://www.ushda.org/>)
- FBI (<http://foia.fbi.gov/>)

## Some Notes

1. Try out a few of the keyword suggestion tools to find your favorite. You'll probably use these tools often.
2. Look at your top ranking competitor websites to see what terms they are optimized for.
3. Do home page keyword research. Optimize your home page.
4. Ask for review of your page at the SearchGuild SEO forum. (<http://www.searchguild.com>)
5. Optimize another page of your website and ask to have it reviewed if you are still uncomfortable.

## Interacting with Search Engines

**M**ost pages that get submitted to search engines are spam. There is no guarantee that your site will get included for free just by submitting it. The best way to get listed is to build relevant inbound linkage data pointing at your site.

Yahoo! is currently the only major search engine to offer a paid inclusion program through [Overture](#). The Overture paid service powers all of the Yahoo search properties. In addition to a \$49 inclusion fee, they also charge a category based price per click. **Usually paid inclusion is not worth it for most sites.**

**The best way to submit your site to search engines is by having them find links into your site from other sites. There is no need to submit or resubmit your site to search engines.**

### Directories vs. Search Engines

Search engines are operated by scripts and machine code. Directories are human compiled lists of sites organized by categories. Since directories are entirely human edited they take a ton of time and effort to maintain. Whenever I create a new site and I am happy with it I submit it to many of the directories. A few of the larger directories are listed in the next section. In addition here is a [relationship chart](#) to show how the largest search engines and directories interact.

When submitting to directories it is worth it to spend the extra time to ensure you are in the correct category and are following the directory guidelines. Here are the [DMOZ guidelines](#).

### Submitting Your Site

#### Submitting to Search Engines:

You may want to pay to submit your site, but most search engines will list your site free. The best way to get your site indexed **is through having a search engine follow a link from another site.** Toward the end of this book I will also address another option called paid inclusion.

### Where to Get Links:

- Directories may list your site after you submit it.
- You can exchange links with similar web sites.
- Writing articles about your topic and placing them on other websites can give you inbound links via the article signature.
- Writing press releases can give you inbound links.
- People interested in your site may eventually link to you without you asking.
- You can participate in forums which provide signature links.
- A somewhat recent move which has been exploited is posting comments directed toward your website in weblogs.

### How often do Search Engines Crawl?

Search engines constantly crawl the web. Pages that frequently update with strong link popularity may get crawled many times each day. Pages that do not change that often and / or have little link popularity may get crawled only once or twice a month. Since search engines are constantly adding content to their index they are in a constant state of flux.

### How Search Engines Evaluate Links:

In the eyes of a search engine, you usually can not control who links to you, but you can control who you link to. In most cases if bad sites link to you it **does not** hurt you. If you link back, **it does**. So in essence it usually does not hurt you to get inbound links from anywhere. **You should be rather selective with who you are willing to link out to though.**

### Blogs and Weblog Comment Spam:

I recommend finding a weblog with posts about a recent news item you are interested in and posting a comment linking to your site with your real name in it. The whole point of weblogs is community discussion, so it is not spam to add something useful and link to your web site from it.

What people talk about when they say comment spam is when people post crap like "nice site" with "BUY VIAGRA" in the link. Already software has been made to slow the effectiveness of this technique.

Some weblogs have inline comments (or comments which appear on the same page as the original post). Posting comments on Movable type weblogs can get your website indexed in no time so long as the links are static links. Static links are links that do not go through redirects.

Again I am not stating that I suggest spamming weblogs, but you can get your site quickly indexed by leaving relevant comments and participating in the web as a community. That is what the web is about anyway, right?

#### Rel="NoFollow":

Many of the major search engines and blog software vendors came together to make a nofollow tag. The nofollow tag allows people to leave static links in the comments and trackbacks which search engines will not count for relevancy.

Essentially the tag is designed to be used when allowing others to post unverified links into your site. You also can use it if you are linking out to shady stuff as an example but do not want to parse any link credit to the destination URL.

Many webmasters will likely be a bit sneaky and create fake blogs and then spam their own blog with links off to high margin website affiliate programs.

The nofollow feature looks as follows:

```
<a href="http://www.fgfgsggf.com" rel="nofollow">Link Text</a>
```

People will still continue to run spam bots to spam blog comments. Many blog owners will see their rankings drop hard since many of their old comment links will no longer help boost their own search relevancy scores.

The rel="nofollow" tag may make it easier for many webmasters to cheat out reciprocal link partners.

The WikiPedia was the first major non blog site to adopt the nofollow tag and search engines may find in due time that the tag has many unintended negative consequences.

#### Chat Forums:

In chat forums people asking and answering questions create free content for the person who owns the site. This automated page creation allows the forum owner to sell a ton of advertising space.

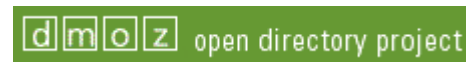
In exchange for the posts many SEO forums allow signature links that point at your website. Since forums change rapidly they often get indexed frequently. This will help your site get indexed quickly if you ask a few questions at a few of the various SEO forums.

Of course the goal of chat forums is to have meaningful conversations, but if you are reading this ebook odds are that you may still have some questions.

Forums have many links on the pages though, so the links probably do not have a large effect on SEO. Forum sig links may have more direct value in driving sales than in effecting search results.

## Directories worth Getting Links In:

In general I think it is worth submitting your site to directories, but submitting your site to search engines is a waste of time. The two most popular directories are DMOZ and the Yahoo! Directory.



The Open Directory Project:

The Open Directory Project ([DMOZ](#)) is free, but sometimes it can take a while to get listed. DMOZ editors work free of charge and are under no obligation to list your website.

Ensure you take the time to submit your site to the right category and follow their directory guidelines. If your site is not in English make sure you submit it to the world category. Regional sites should be submitted to their respective regional category.

With the ODP you do not need to keep resubmitting over and over. If for some reason your site can not get listed after 30 days ask at the [Resource Zone](#) and inquire about your site every 6 months thereafter. You may want to apply to become an editor if you really enjoy your category. As with your site submissions you should take your time when applying to become an editor.

The Value of a DMOZ Listing:

The Open Directory Project is syndicated by many other sites and inclusion into it often provides your site with dozens of inbound links. Many people are quick to state that the Open Directory is worthless or that it is super important.

The fact is that it is fairly important for some sites and fairly unimportant for others. There are a ton of variables that go into the value of a listing. I usually just submit and forget about it. I do not find that it helps a bunch to be preoccupied with a DMOZ listing. Many high ranking sites are listed in DMOZ, and many high ranking sites are not.



The Yahoo! Directory:

You will still list in Yahoo! powered search results even if you do not submit your site to their [directory](#). Yahoo! charges a \$299 recurring annual fee for commercial sites (double that for adult sites), which is a bit expensive for many newer smaller sites. Generally I recommend paying for placement in many second tier directories **before** paying for placement in the Yahoo! Directory since most of the second tier directories only charge a one time site submission fee.

Unlike most directories, Yahoo! recently shifted their directory to list sites in order of popularity instead of alphabetical.

Non commercial sites can list in the Yahoo! Directory free, and I can attest to the fact that they have listed multiple sites I own for free.

When a site gets submitted to the Yahoo! Directory an editor quality checks the site. Since Yahoo! controls their own directory it would be logical for them to place extra weighting on a Yahoo! Directory listed site. Some top SEOs have told me they have seen significant increases in their Yahoo! Search rankings after submitting a site to the Yahoo! Directory.

#### Regional Yahoo! Directories:

Some of the regional Yahoo! directories only charge a one time fee. Some of them charge no fee at all. If you site is specific to only one region you may want to check the local prices and see if it is a better deal to submit to the local directory instead of the global one.

#### Second Tier Directories:

Directories such as [Gimpsy](#), [GoGuides](#), [RubberStamped](#), [Uncover the Net](#), [SevenSeek](#), [JoeANT](#), [Web Beacon](#), [MSN Small Business Directory](#), and [Skaffe](#) all cost less than \$50 to submit to.

JoeANT is free if you become an editor, and it only takes a couple minutes to sign up. Gimpsy is free if you are willing to wait a few months. Skaffe is free for editors. GoGuides has a bulk submission discount program. [Wow Directory](#) is another directory which has been providing free site submission.

If you are going to list your sites in many directories you may be able to save time by using [Roboform](#) to save some of your submission details.

#### Mix Things Up!

When links and citations occur naturally there is no 100% easily definable pattern. If something is easy for a search engine to do and it will improve search quality they probably will do it.

Make sure you mix up your anchor text and your site descriptions so that there is no easily identifiable unnatural pattern.

If you start directories yourself and you use common default directory software you may want to look to remove common footprints the script leaves so that other sites which may be abusing said script do not cause your site to be filtered as well if a search engine decides to penalize sites which are using a commonly abused script.

#### Industry Specific Directories:



[Business.com](#) is a business directory which costs \$299 annually to list your site. Many search engines may not follow the Business.com links, but it might still be a good buy for B2B type businesses.

MicroSoft also has a [small business directory](#) which is a bargain at under \$50 per year. There are also many industry specific directories you can find by searching for

terms such as “my keywords + add url,” “my keywords + submit,” or “my keywords + directory.”

I usually try to find directories which have one time submission fees or directories which look as though they are going to be longstanding directories.

#### Tips to Pick Directory Categories:

Often times a site will fit many different categories. When choosing a category to submit to in a directory I look at a few different ideas.

- Is my site likely to be accepted if I submit to this category?
- Are there reasons this organization or other sites outside of this organization are likely to place extra emphasis on (or otherwise link into) this category?
- How many links are listed in this category?
- Where does this category fit in the directory structure?

#### Reasons I Like Second Tier Directories (Great Value):

Since smaller directories are smaller usually your link is closer to the root page and usually most pages have less outbound links in smaller directories than in large directories. Thus you may gain greater link popularity in a smaller directory if your categories in a larger are full of hundreds of sites or are many levels deep into the directory structure.

#### Directory Traffic:

Directories rarely provide much direct traffic. The bulk of the value of a directory listing is in how search engines will evaluate the links. Occasionally you will find a directory that does provide good traffic – that is the exception more than it is the rule.

#### Reciprocal Link Required:

Some directories require reciprocal links to be listed in them. I do not recommend swapping links with most of these types of directories. Directories are intended to list sites. Sites are not intended to list directories. If you like something then feel free to link to it, if not then don't.

Link popularity is a currency and if you are lacking money (as I was when I started on the web) you may need to reciprocate a few links off the start. Make sure the directory you want to swap with is not shady before swapping links.

The exceptions to this rule are that I am usually willing to reciprocate links with:

- extremely powerful sites that I do not believe are going to get penalized for aggressive link exchange

- directories which are well focused and are defined as an industry hub in my topic

#### Directory Warnings:

Some sites that pose as directories do not provide static text links and / or their pages do not get indexed. Many of these databases will never provide any direct traffic or link popularity. Additionally many directories require reciprocal linking and use their sites to promote aggressive high margin products. If you link into sites that primarily promote high margin items then you are sharing the business risk that site owner is taking.

If you are to spend money on directory submission you should ensure that the directory provides direct traffic or link popularity. You can ensure it helps your link popularity by ensuring their directory pages have some PageRank on them, are in Google's cache (search for `cache:www.whateverpage.com` in Google), and check the links of listed sites to ensure they are static text links. When you scroll over a link in the directory the status bar at the bottom should indicate the domain that the link is pointing to and not some sort of redirect.

- You can check PageRank by downloading the free [Google Toolbar](#).
- To ensure a page is not showing phantom PageRank you can check to make sure the page is in Google's cache. [Search Google for cache:www.whateversite.com/whateverpage.com](#).
- To ensure the links are indexed by search engines you want to make sure that when you scroll over a listing in the directory that the status bar at the bottom of the browser shows `www.whateverlisting.com`. A few good directories happen to show some funky characters (Yahoo! Directory & Business.com). Yahoo and Business.com are about the only two directories that I know of that show funky characters and still provide static text links.  
Most directories that show some **funky tracking characters are not providing static spiderable links**. If in doubt ask questions at SEO forums before spending any money.
- Some redirect links do get indexed, but there is no simple litmus test to ensure that they do get indexed. You can do right click on and copy links from within the directory and do a [server header check](#) on them. If they show a 301 redirect they will probably add to your link popularity. If they show a 302 redirect they may add to your link popularity. If they show a Java redirect then they do not count. When in doubt if a link counts ask in a couple various SEO forums.
- If you use the Safari browser you can use [this tool](#) to view PageRank. For other browsers try the free extensions offered by [Mozdev](#).



The value of a single directory link is usually not very great.

Directories add lots of value after you list in many of them, especially if you use various descriptive anchor text combinations.

## Places to Find Directories:



I created the [Directory Archives](#) which primarily should only list directories which parse link popularity to sites listed in them or directories which look like they might drive traffic to listed sites. In addition [SearchEngineGuide](#) and [ISEDB](#) each have a large directory of directories (though many of the directories listed in those may not parse link value).

Ensure that the pages links are on are in Google's cache and that the address bar show the location of the site the link is going to before paying for placement in any directory.

I also created a [Microsoft Excel Directory Checklist](#) sheet so you can track your submissions to many general directories. Some of them are a bit sketchy, but many of them are decent and most of them provide links for free or for a one time fee.

## The Value of Directory Listings:

Most directory listings do not provide a ton of value by themselves. What makes directories powerful is when you list your site in many independent directories.

If you have a keyword rich domain name it will help you get descriptive inbound links from directories. Most sites on the web only have links from a few dozen sites. By listing your site in a few dozen directories and also getting links from other sites you can quickly build up a great linking campaign at minimal cost.

## Google Ignoring Some Directories:

Some directories have recently been removed from Google's cache. Additionally some of them have not had their cache dates updated in a great deal of time. Google might be trying to slow the growth of directories by not counting the links from many of them. Make sure you check the cache before paying for a listing.

Some of the directories will have a greater effect on relevancy in MSN or Yahoo! than they do on Google so even if a directory is not counted by Google the link price might still be cheap for its effects on other search relevancy algorithms.

Many directory owners are building multiple related directories. Some search algorithms such as Google Hilltop will likely automatically filter out some of the relevancy score from a second directory which is identifiable as being related to the first directory.

The one time listing fees make directories exceptionally appealing, but do expect that some of the directories will eventually get hit by some of the search engines.

## Search Engines

The following search engines are reviewed in order of search distribution from the best of my knowledge.

Some of the first listed search engines may appear to have more content and more information than the later listed search engines. The reasons that the top couple search engines have much more data listed in their sections is that much of the data from one section would carry over to the next section.

The order of these listings has nothing to do with the relevancy or quality of the search results. They all provide quality results using similar algorithms.

### Google



#### Google Search Distribution:

Currently Google is powering [around 50% of US search](#) (Google, AOL, Earthlink, Go, Netscape, and many others). More worldwide search statistics [are available here](#).

Google shows up to 10 AdWords ads on their search results, but they keep them separate from the regular (or organic) listings. There is no direct way to pay Google money to list in their organic search results.

#### So how does Google work?

Google takes an empirical view of the linking structure of the web and rates pages on a logarithmic scale based on what pages link to them. The Google Toolbar provides a 0 to 10 scale to mimic the link popularity of listed sites. This helps you determine how important Google thinks a site is.

Many webmasters hear a statement like this and want to run and exchange as many links with as many people as they can. This is a form of spam which search engines know all too well.

Sometimes these rings gain popularity, but once they are found out they may get penalized and delisted. **When you link to into the wrong circles you run the risk of being associated with them.** It is important to note that this PageRank value is **only one component** of the Google search engine algorithm. Many times a PR 4 site will list above a PR 6 site because it was optimized better and has a well defined descriptive inbound link profile (which means better keyword rich links from more sites and more related sites).

## Many Myths about Google:

There are many myths about Google that are represented as fact by marketers trying to make money. Misinformation spreads like wildfire because everyone wants to sound like the smart person with all the answers. One example of the many myths about Google is that you are limited to 100 links per page.

Google threw out that guidance based upon usability ideas. On pages with no link popularity they will not want to follow many links. On pages with a large amount of link popularity Google will scour thousands of links. Google's page indexing limit is 101k, though most pages should be smaller than that from a usability standpoint.

If you ever have questions SearchGuild and V7N.com are two of the most straightforward SEO forums on the web.

## What Pages of My Site are Indexed by Google?

You can check to see what pages of your site are indexed by searching Google for `site:www.mysite.com mysite`.

## How do I Submit My Site to Google?

While Google also offers a [free site submit](#) option the best way to submit your site is by having Google's spider follow links from other web pages.

## Where do I Rank in Google for My Keywords?

I use the free [Digital Point keyword ranking tool](#) to determine where I rank in Google. Tracking various sites helps me determine some of the ways Google may be changing their algorithm. If you sign up for the Google API service and are doing lots of sketchy stuff then it makes it easy for Google to cross connect your websites. The Digital Point keyword ranking tool also supports Yahoo! and MSN.

## Google Backlink Check:

Backlinks is another way of saying "links into a page."

When you check backlinks in Google (`link:www.whateversite.com`) it only shows a **small sampling** of your total backlinks. Many links that do not show up when you use the `link:` function in Google still count for your relevancy scoring. In addition there is a time delay between when links are made and when they will show up in search results.

To get a more accurate picture of links you will also want to check backlinks in Yahoo!. Yahoo! often shows many backlinks that the Google search will not show. The code to check Yahoo! backlinks is `linkdomain:www.site.com`.

Digital Point has a [free tool](#) which will track your Google position by keyword, PageRank, and number of backlinks. Rusty Brick also recently created a free tool which does [Google backlink analysis](#).

## How do I know what sites are good?

First off, **common sense usually goes pretty far** in this category. Secondly, Google has a toolbar which shows how it currently views a web page or website.

The Google toolbar is one of the top search engine optimization tool for a person new to search engine marketing. It works on windows and is downloadable at <http://toolbar.google.com/>. Finally, if you have doubts you probably do not want to link to the site. You can also feel free to ask me or ask in various SEO forums.

PageRank is a measure of link popularity which can come and go. It's not hard for a successful business to rent a few high PageRank links into their site and then leverage that link popularity for link exchanges. A site with decent PageRank can get penalized just the same as a site with low PageRank. Usually you will want to error on the side of caution off the start.

If you are using techniques that fall far outside of Google's recommended guidelines I would not recommend using their toolbar since the feedback the toolbar provides may make it easy for them to link you to all of your websites.

### Google Toolbar Broken?

1. Sometimes the Google Toolbar gets stuck at 0 when searching the web. If you are unsure of the PageRank of a page go to a high PageRank site (like <http://www.w3c.org>) and then type the address of where you were just at in the address bar of internet explorer. Usually this technique will unstick the PageRank.

Keep in mind that Google has only been updating toolbar display PageRank quarterly, so if a site is only a few months old it will not be uncommon for it to show a PageRank 0 in the toolbar. The last toolbar PageRank update occurred at 1130 pm on the last day of 2004.

2. Using this toolbar you can see the PageRank of your top competitors and who links to them. You may be able to get links from people who are linking to your competitors. You need to enable the site information button from the options menu. When it is turned on you should see a big blue circle with a white letter I inside of it.
3. To find out who is linking to your competitors you can type `link:www.evilcompetitor.com` in the Google search box. This will show most of the inbound links to the given page from pages with a PageRank of 4 or greater.
4. The toolbar is just an aid though, and should be combined with common sense. If you see sites linking into awful websites or a site looks bad then do not exchange links with them. If their site is highly unrelated to yours then it might not be a good idea to link from a user experience angle.
5. If you use the Safari browser you can use [this tool](#) to view PageRank. For other browsers try the free extensions offered by [Mozdev](#).

### Recent Algorithm Shifts:

In November of 2003 Google performed a major algorithm change. The goal of the change was to make it harder to manipulate their search results. It is believed

that Google may have significantly incorporated Hilltop, Topic Specific PageRank, and latent semantic indexing into their algorithm. It seems as though they have since tuned down much of the change that occurred back then.

Over time it will become increasingly important to get links from **the right community** and not just to perform random link exchange. For example, to a search engine marketer a link from SearchEngineWatch (a search engine information resource hub) may be worth much more than many random off topic links.

I still have seen significant evidence that **off topic inbound links can improve your Google rankings significantly**, but likely this will eventually change.

In early 2004 Google also began to block the ability of certain sites to sell PageRank. In addition Google seems to have set up a portion of their algorithm to delay the effects of some links or to only allow them to parse partial link credit off the start. These are all moves which are aimed at making manipulating the Google index through link buying a much more expensive and much more unpredictable process.

**It may take up to three or so months for the full effect of a link rentals or new links to kick in.**

#### Google Sandbox:

Many new sites or sites which have not been significantly developed have a hard time ranking right away on Google. Many well known SEOs have stated that a good way to get around this problem is to place a site on a subdomain of a developed site and after the site is developed and well indexed 301 redirect the site to the new location.

#### About PageRank:

[PageRank](#) is not everything. PageRank is as much a Google marketing item as it is anything else. By them making the concept easy to see and understand it allows more people to talk about them and makes it easier for more people to explain how search engines work **using Google and PageRank as the vocabulary**. Google's technology is not necessarily better / more effective than the technologies owned by Yahoo!, MSN, or Ask Jeeves / Teoma.

#### Hilltop:

[Hilltop](#) is an algorithm which reorganizes search results based on an expert rating system.

In the Hilltop white paper they talk about how they can use expert documents to help compute relevancy. An expert document is a **non affiliated** page which links to many related resources. If page A is related to page B and page B is related to page C then a connection between A & C are assumed.

Additionally Hilltop states that it strongly considers page title and page headings in relevancy scores (in fact these elements can be considered more important than link text). Likely Hilltop also considers the links pointing into the page and site which your links come from.

The benefit of Hilltop over raw PageRank (Google) is that it is topic sensitive - and is thus generally harder to manipulate than buying some random high power off topic link would be. The benefits of Hilltop over topic distillation (Teoma) are that Hilltop is quicker & cheaper to calculate, and that it tends to have more broad coverage.

When Hilltop does not have enough expert sites the feature can be turned off. It is believed that Google might be using Hilltop to help sort the relevancy for some of their search results.

### Topic Sensitive PageRank:

[Topic Sensitive PageRank](#) biases both the query and the relevancy of returned documents based upon the perceived topical context of the query.

The query context can be determined based on search history, user defined input (such as search personalization – try [Google Labs Search Personalization](#) if you are interested), or related information in the document from which the query came from.

Topic Specific PageRank for each page can be calculated offline. Using an exceptionally coarse topic set (for example, the top level Open Directory Project categories) still allows Topic Sensitive PageRank to significantly enhance relevancy over using PageRank alone, however TSPR can be applied more specifically as well.

Since much of it is calculated offline Topic Specific PageRank can also be rolled into other relevancy algorithms which are calculated in near real time.

I do not think it is exceptionally important for most webmasters to deeply understand TSPR and Hilltop, other than to understand the intent of these algorithms, which is to move away from grading the web on the whole. Evaluating it based upon local topical communities.

### Latent Semantic Indexing:

Latent semantic indexing allows machines to understand language by looking at it from a purely mathematical viewpoint.

Latent semantic indexing adds an important step to the document indexing process. In addition to recording which keywords a document contains, the method examines the document collection as a whole, to see which other documents contain some of those same words. LSI

considers documents that have many words in common to be semantically close, and ones with few words in common to be semantically distant. This simple method correlates surprisingly well with how a human being, looking at content, might classify a document collection. Although the LSI algorithm doesn't understand anything about what the words *mean*, the patterns it notices can make it seem astonishingly intelligent. [Source](#)

Latent semantic indexing is a rather expensive process and many SEO experts debate to what extent major search engines may be using the technology. If they are not using it much yet in time they surely will.

Most webmasters do not need to know much about LSI other than knowing using a variety of inbound anchor text is important, and LSI will inherently rank natural writing better than content which is clumsy and written with keyword density in mind.

### Temporal Analysis:

Search engines can track how long things (sites, pages, links) have been in existence and how quickly they change. They can track how long a domain has been in existence, how often page copy changes, how page copy changes, how large a site is, how quickly link popularity builds, how long any particular link exists, how similar the link text is, how a site changes in rank over time, how related linking sites are, and how natural linkage data looks.

In some cases it makes sense for resources to acquire a bunch of linkage data in a burst. When news stories about a topic and search volumes on a particular term are high it would also make sense that some sites may acquire a large amount of linkage data. Most the time if links build naturally they build more slowly and evenly.

If links build in huge spikes then search engines may discount – or even apply a penalty – to the domain receiving that linkage data if those links do not build in a somewhat regular pattern.

Stale pages may also be lowered in relevancy. A page may be considered fresh if it changes somewhat frequently or if it continues to acquire linkage data as time passes.

Google may also look at how often your site is bookmarked, who your advertisers are, and other various feedback they can get from their toolbar.

Google was [awarded a patent](#) on March 31, 2005 covering these types of topics (but in much more detail).

While I do not think they are already necessarily doing all the things they mention in the patent I think they eventually may. The patent is interesting and



worth reading if you are deeply interested in SEO and information retrieval. If you do not want to read it you may want to look at the [ThreadWatch post](#) that mentioned it and the [follow up thread](#).

### How to Succeed in Google:

Google usually lists a site within a few days to a month. During the first month or two it is common for your site to go into and out of their database many times until you have built up sufficient link popularity. Comprehensive directory registration and a variety of forum sig links can help keep you in the search index.

**Google primarily focuses its algorithm on linkage data.** On page criteria is weighted exceptionally lowly for shorter and highly competitive search phrases. To do well in Google you will need to target less competitive phrases using many different pages, or think of ways to get others within your community to want to link to your site using your primary keywords in the link text. Some of the more common ideas for improving your link count are to:

- Join trade organizations.
- List your site in directories.
- Submit press releases via sites such as <http://www.prweb.com>. You can look at a few current press releases for formatting examples. Don Crowther has good PDF reports offering templates and press release tips at <http://www.101publicrelations.com/>.
- Create a quality topical directory one level above your category.
- Write compelling articles and get them syndicated.
- Sponsor 501C organizations (or buy/rent other links), or sponsor other sites.
- Reciprocate links with other quality sites.
- Place advertisements on relevant related sites.

**Many mixed anchor text keyword rich inbound links from many different sites (from various IP ranges) is the single best way to improve your rankings across all search engines.**

You will still want to structure your page properly using heading tags, page titles, and the other page elements to help you rank well in all search engines, but currently links are what matter most with Google.

Also it is important to note that PageRank is a logarithmic value, and one **related** PR7 or PR8 link is worth much more than 3 or 4 PR2 or PR3 links. This is why it is super important to think of ways to get the best topical hubs to want to link to you.

Off topic links still count toward link popularity and PageRank. If you can get a few links from within your community then you may receive a great ranking boost by sponsoring a few non profits or renting a few strong inbound links from other



websites. If you are in a competitive field you will probably want to build many on topic links.

**Anchor text:** (inbound link text) is the **single most important** element in Google's current algorithm and is worth far more than PageRank alone. Good anchor text combined with decent PageRank will eventually yield strong search engine rankings.

Since most directories tend to list sites by their official names it is much easier to get favorable anchor text if your domain has your keywords in it.

Since Google began delaying the effect of inbound links to new sites it can take up to 3 months from when your inbound links begin to age for it to pay off big in the Google search results for competitive terms. You may want to build linkage data over time to minimize the chances of it appearing unnatural.

If Google believes your site to be a trusted authority the delay time is not as noticeable and may not even exist.

### Advanced Google Tips:

The most time consuming part of SEO is building a linking campaign. Tools or ideas which help us save time doing this are extremely invaluable.

- When looking at a competitors backlinks (link:www.evilcompetitor.com) **add &num=100 at the end of the address bar.** By doing this Google will cluster the backlinks by site and make it quicker and easier to look through them. Google only shows a small sample of backlinks though.
- **Boolean search operators and different page elements can make finding backlinks far easier.** Instead of only searching for links by looking at competitors backlinks it may be easier to use the AND function and search page titles or URLs and keywords at the same time.
- **You can also classify domain extension or specific site ideas in your backlink search.** Inurl:+" .edu" AND (intitle:links OR intitle:partners OR intitle:resources OR intitle:engines) AND ("searchenginewatch" OR "search engine watch").
- **Sometimes there are more than a 1,000 results.** The Google search index will only let you go through the first 1,000 results at the most for any search. If you are getting too many matching results you can specify filepath. An example search like this might be "search engine marketing" intitle:"link partners" (\*.htm OR \*.html).
- **Filtering out a site.** If there is a specific site which keeps clouding up your link search you can filter them out by placing -site:www.whateverevilsite.com in your search string.

- In Google you are not able to use the link: function with other search operators. In Yahoo! you can.
- As you filter the data with more and more filters you will be able to deeply see different parts of the web. If you add too many filters then much of the results will seem random or otherwise useless.

### Special Google SEO Tools:

In section 9 of this chapter I will cover some of the more advanced linking tools I use for most of my link research. There are a couple free tools I recommend using which were made just for Google.

- **Top25Web PageRank lookup tool:** if you are unsure if your toolbar is broken (or if you are not using a Windows computer with the toolbar installed) you can use this [free PageRank lookup tool](#) to get the PageRank of any page.
- **Proogle / Prog:** [Prog](#) is a search interface which looks like Google with the exception that it displays PageRank underneath each of the pages listed in the search results. You can do a backlink check and set the number of page results to 100 per page to quickly scour backlinks to a competitors site. This will help give you an idea as to what are the most important backlinks into their site without needing to purchase any link software. You also can use Prog to do a quick analysis of the competitive landscape of a search phrase.
- **GoogleBar:** Using the [GoogleBar](#) with [this downloadable hack](#) (which may have privacy issues) will allow you to view PageRank even on a Mac.
- **Google TouchGraph:** Not really an exciting SEO tool, but it is a very [cool looking tool](#) which graphs out the sites related to whatever site you enter.

### Google and Spam:

Google is primarily a mathematical company and they usually state that they try to handle spam via algorithms. While the term algorithm can be used loosely and there is human intervention, but I am told that they do not specifically respond to most spam reports. You can [report spam](#) to help them improve their algorithms if you want to, but do not expect it to have much immediate effect on search results. Generally time spent reporting spam to Google would be better spent making a better site.

If your site is kicked out of the index for an automated spam penalty it will usually come back after 60 days if the thing that triggered the spam penalty has been removed. You also can send them a re inclusion request email to [help@google.com](mailto:help@google.com) or [webmaster@google.com](mailto:webmaster@google.com) after you have cleaned up your site explaining a sob story of how some SEO company ripped you off. If you are still having problems after emailing them a few times you can call them at 650-330-0100.

While they do not openly and publicly advertise it, big spenders on Google AdWords can get one on one ranking consultations.

Google's webmaster guidelines are located at  
<http://www.google.com/webmasters/guidelines.html>

### Problems with Google's Technology:

Since Google has the broadest distribution people also work the hardest to game their system.

Google tends to take the view that any relevancy manipulation is inherently wrong and the SEOs are the enemy. In doing this Google often prevents many quality resources from ranking and ends up occasionally having relevancy which is substandard.

### Froogle:



[Froogle](#) is Google's shopping search engine. It searches the web to find products and match them up with their associated images. In addition to scouring the web for information Froogle also accepts free data feeds. Information provided through a data feed will list above the information found via the web crawl.

To optimize your site for great Froogle listings you will either want to make sure that your site is designed to make it obvious which pictures go with what prices and descriptions, or submit a data feed. Data feeds are free to submit and expire after 30 days (so it is a good idea to submit a feed every few weeks). There are many automated tools which will automatically submit your data feeds once a day to ensure your Froogle data is current. It is a good idea to use descriptive image names and titles as well as use your keywords in the data you submit to get top Froogle placement.

For more information on Froogle see [Froogle Information for Webmasters](#).

## Yahoo! Search



### What is Yahoo! Search?

The Yahoo! Directory and Yahoo! Search are two entirely separate things. The directory is a manually reviewed collection of websites. Yahoo! Search is powered through various search technologies purchased by Yahoo!. Yahoo! Search probably serves over 100 million searches each day. The directory would likely be lucky to serve more than a few million searches a day.

Yahoo! Search is powered through the combination of different pieces of what was once AltaVista, AllTheWeb, and Inktomi. As they launched the new Yahoo! Search product they rewrote the Inktomi core to make it easier to update and improve its relevancy on longer search queries. Yahoo! Search also is leveraging the power of spam filters which are refined by Yahoo! email processing.

### The Yahoo! Search Index is Shared:

The Yahoo! Search index is also used by AltaVista and AllTheWeb and other search properties that were recently powered by any of these indexes. Each of the engine websites may still use their own algorithm to organize search results from the common search index.

### Yahoo! Search Distribution:

Yahoo! technology now powers [around 27% of US search](#) including Yahoo!, AllTheWeb, AltaVista, and many other sites that syndicate or use portions of these search indexes.

Yahoo! places Overture ads at the top and bottom of Yahoo! search results, and also places ads on the right side of search results. On some of their partner sites these ads are blended so that they look very similar to regular search results. In Yahoo! the top and bottom ads are in a blue colored box.

Yahoo! also has a paid inclusion program which allows them to generate revenue from the regular (or organic) listings.

### Editorial Approach to Search:

Yahoo! believes that a hybrid of human review and mathematics works better than just math alone. Sites included in the Yahoo! Directory or in the Overture Site Match paid inclusion program are given an editorial review. Yahoo! has also stated that some of their editors randomly review portions of the web. It is believed that sites which receive a review may eventually be given a small ranking boost, though Yahoo! has stated that review does not affect relevancy. Yahoo! grants 501C charity and many educational websites free inclusion into the free side of their Content Acquisition Program.

### What Pages of My Site are Indexed by Yahoo!?

You can check to see what pages of your site are indexed by searching Yahoo! for [www.mysite.com](#). While Yahoo! also offers a [free site submit](#) option (you must be logged in to use it), the best way to submit your site is by having Yahoo!'s spider follow links from other web pages.

### Where do I Rank for My Keyword in Yahoo!?

[Yahoo! Search Rankings](#) is a way to quickly check where your site ranks for any given term in Yahoo!. Shawn Hogan recently also started allowing people to track their Yahoo! and MSN ranking positions on the [Digital Point keyword tracker](#), although it will require you to place a php page on your server.

Also if you want to enter your data and have it automatically tracked you can use [Yahoo! Tracker](#). Keep in mind that if you do sketchy stuff and make it easy to cross connect your sites that it can come back to hurt you.

You can also look for other Yahoo! SEO Tools at the [Yahoo! Developer Network](#).

### Yahoo! Backlink Check:

Backlinks is another way of saying “links into a page.”

When you check backlinks in Yahoo! (`linkdomain:www.whateversite.com`) it usually shows most of the known links into a site. Often times Yahoo! counts many links that may not be counted by other search engines. Yahoo! has also had some trouble with 301 redirects and may show the wrong URL locations for some of the backlinks.

You can check the backlink into the home page specifically by specifying the full URL of the home page (`linkdomain:www.whateversite.com/index.php`)

You can check the links pointing into any specific page on a site using their individual page link check command (`link:http://www.site.com/folder/page.html`). Ensure you include the http: part when checking links pointing into individual pages.

Yahoo! will also let you look through a competitors backlinks and specify a domain type. This makes it easy to see if they have any .gov, .edu, or similar backlinks which would be well trusted based upon their extension.

Yahoo! puts heavy weighting on page copy. Using keyword rich page titles, headers, and subheaders can go a long way to improve your rankings in Yahoo!.

### Yahoo! and Meta Tags:

Most major search engines ignore the Meta Keywords tag and place low weighting on the Meta Description tag. Yahoo! specifically asks webmasters for this data. Yahoo! believes the more information they know about a page, the better they can evaluate it.

Mike Grehan interviewed Jon Glick (of Yahoo! Search) and he stated that the meta description tag is treated similar to page content. He also stated that the meta keywords tag is used for inclusion into a subset of search results, but has no effect on relevancy. I also covered the meta tags above in the meta tag section earlier in this ebook.

### How to do Well in Yahoo!:

Yahoo! usually lists a site within about a month. The best way to get your site submitted is by building a strong linking campaign. If you need to get your site indexed quickly Yahoo! does have a paid inclusion program which I generally do not recommend using for most websites. Site Match is recommended for large databases that are hard to crawl, sites with rapidly rotating stock, or sites which need the tracking provided by the Site Match program.

While also factoring in linkage data, Yahoo! Search places a bit more weight on “on the page” factors than Google does. Yahoo! Search results seem to be a bit easier to manipulate than Google’s search results.

To do well in Yahoo! Search your pages should have a decent keyword density and be properly structured using keyword rich heading tags, subheadings, descriptive linking and navigation (as mentioned above in the “how to optimize your pages” part of this ebook).

High rankings for more competitive terms will require you to build a linking campaign. Yahoo! Search may not be as discriminatory as Google is with scrubbing out bad links. Off topic inbound links are still somewhat powerful in help you improve your Yahoo! rankings, though it is usually best to get links from similar sites when possible.

At the 2004 Las Vegas WMW World of Search Conference Yahoo! stated that they preferred if you have somewhat shallow directory paths of 3 or so levels deep or less.

(example: [www.mysite.com/cheese/cheddar/sharp/yummie.html](http://www.mysite.com/cheese/cheddar/sharp/yummie.html) = good)

(example: [www.mysite.com/chs/chd/shrp/eat/now/today/yummie.html](http://www.mysite.com/chs/chd/shrp/eat/now/today/yummie.html) = bad)

At the 2004 Chicago SES conference Jon Glick stated that Yahoo! looks at both the links to a page and the links to the site to help determine the relevancy scores of a particular page.

## Why Yahoo! is Somewhat Focused on “On The Page”

### Criteria:

Yahoo! has a paid inclusion program which allows them to generate revenue from people who join their paid inclusion program. By relying upon page content Yahoo! makes it easier for it’s paid inclusion members (or other editorial reviewed content participants) to improve their rankings.

There are some rumors in the SEO community that Yahoo! may eventually alter the paid inclusion program to include a flat fee version. I cover paid inclusion in depth near the end of this ebook (in a section called “paid inclusion”).

### Yahoo! and Spam:

Yahoo! actively edits spam out of their search results. If someone you are competing with is not complying with Yahoo!’s guidelines you may want to [point that out to Yahoo!](#). There is a chance that Yahoo! will remove your competitor’s site if they deem it as spam.

Since it is easy to get delisted via a manual review it is suggested that you not use overly aggressive spammy techniques to achieve top Yahoo! placement. Also, do not submit your site to their paid inclusion program if it does not have original and unique content or your site may be rejected and removed from their search index.

If your site gets deindexed from Yahoo! and you think it was due to spam then clean up the spammy stuff and submit your site to the Overture Site Match program. Submitting your site will get it reviewed and recrawled by Yahoo! Slurp if the editors see your site has been fixed.

If your page was removed and you can not afford Overture Site Match read the Yahoo! spam guidelines (<http://help.yahoo.com/help/us/ysearch/letions-05.html>) and request a site review at [ystfeedback@yahoo.com](mailto:ystfeedback@yahoo.com).

Additionally Yahoo! has a search help page which may help answer some of your questions about their search technology  
<http://help.yahoo.com/help/us/ysearch/index.html>.

### Yahoo! and Affiliate Websites:

Yahoo! tries to edit out many of the "site in a box" type affiliate sites as well as any content which does not add value to their search experience. Yahoo! does not hate affiliate websites, they hate unoriginal replicated content as it degrades the quality of their search results if a searcher sees the same things over and over again.

It does not hurt you to have affiliate links on your website as long as you also have some original content.

### The Problems With Yahoo!'s Technology:

Since Yahoo! actively edits their search results they will be forced to edit them over and over.

After they remove a site for spam it is very easy for someone to reduplicate that site (and maybe even use a slightly altered version) at another location.

## MSN



MSN is one of the top 4 search properties on the web. [MSN Search](#) switched from Yahoo! to MSN's technology February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005. MSN has about 13% market share.

MSN has a search near me feature. Sites can gain a relevancy boost in local search results if they use their address on their site using the following format:

1 Microsoft Way Redmond, WA, 98052

Some of their search results show pages based primarily on page content. The MSN Search technology is also somewhat easy to manipulate with bulk non themed low quality links and other old basic level SEO strategies (such as spammy domain names and keyword rich content). One friend told me that it reminded him of Yahoo! Search from 3 years ago.

In February 2005 I started a new site and through about \$2,000 worth of directory submission and link building I had the site ranked top 10 in MSN for a somewhat competitive single word query.

Their search will likely evolve rapidly throughout the remainder of the year. You can learn more about the MSN Search beta product by reading their blog located here: <http://blogs.msdn.com/msnsearch>, and their site owner suggestion guidelines are located at <http://search.msn.com/docs/siteowner.aspx>.

MSN also released their own ad service in France and Singapore. They intend to roll out their own ad sales service to dump Overture sometime near the end of the year.

## Teoma / Ask Jeeves



### Teoma Search Distribution:

Ask Jeeves and Teoma have a distribution of [around 5% of US search](#). Ask bought out Excite, MyWay, and Iwon. This purchase doubled their distribution and may allow them to gain further distribution by cross branding these search sites. InterActive corporation made a bid for Ask Jeeves. If the sales goes through InterActive will likely cross promote Ask on their other properties such as Expedia.com, Ticketmaster.com, and Match.com.

On the Ask Jeeves site they show many Google AdWords ads at the beginning of search results on highly commercial terms. These ads look very similar to other listings on the page. Ask Jeeves also sells banner based advertising and Kelkoo product ads for some of their more expensive words.

On the Teoma site they only list two ads and keep them separate from the regular results, but most of their traffic comes from their other search properties.

### What is Teoma and How Does it Work?

[Teoma](#) is the search engine which powers [Ask Jeeves](#). The core of the Teoma search technology is based upon the idea that society and the internet consist of tiny communities which self organize themselves into hubs and authorities.

#### Hubs and Authorities:

An authority is a site which is linked to by many sites covering that topic. A hub links to many sites on a particular topic. It is said that a good authority has links from many good hubs, and good hubs link to many good authorities.



If you read advanced search engine papers and information mining topics such as latent semantic indexing and multi dimensional scaling you can learn how some of those technologies are similar to what Teoma does.

#### Term Vector Space Model:

Search engines create a reverse index of all the terms in their index. For example, maybe 10,000,000 pages have the word cheese in them. After a user searches Teoma will look at the local term space to find similar terms and the local communities. Teoma takes a snapshot of the area and bases most of its rankings off of local interconnectivity of that subset of search results.

#### When Teoma is Most Effective:

Teoma works more effectively at organizing data in larger developed categories where there are many links pointing back and forth to reinforce the structure of a community.

#### Effect of Links on Teoma:

Teoma does most of its link work after the user searches, and primarily focuses on local communities, so:

- It is hard to measure link popularity in Teoma.
- Off topic links have extremely little effect on search results.
- On topic links are exceptionally important.

#### How to do Well in Teoma:

Teoma is usually one of the slower engines at picking up new websites. The average time for picking up new sites is about a month and a half. They have a paid inclusion program which will speed up the process, but it is hard to rank well for competitive terms in Teoma until you are strongly embedded in the local community link structure.

Teoma is focused on local communities. The best way to rank well in Teoma is to link out to related sites and get many related sites to link to your site.

Since the primary focus of Teoma is on local communities it can take a long time to rank well in Teoma. You will need to find ways to embed yourself in the correct local communities to list well for competitive terms.

Teoma has three sections to its search engine results pages. The results section is filled with the sites that are considered the authority websites. They also provide refine and resources sections. Refine is a list of other terms in the local associated term space. For example, cheese may have phrases like cheddar in the refine section. Resources are the sites are considered topical hubs.

#### Teoma and Spam:

I actually do not know a bunch about their spam policies as it rarely comes up in discussion. They have some of their policies listed when you apply for paid inclusion and you can report spam to [help@teoma.com](mailto:help@teoma.com).

### The Problems with Teoma's Technology:

Since Teoma is so focused on local communities it is easy for people to spoof false topical authority onto a site by creating many sites within a specific theme that commonly link to the spoof site and other randomized authoritative sites on that topic.

Since Teoma does not provide a ton of traffic and Ask Jeeves throws a ton of ads on the top of their search results there is less of a strain on their algorithm by people manipulating search results to gain profit than there is on Google or Yahoo!.

## Comparing Search Results

Since different search engines weigh different parts of their algorithms differently they can all have similarly relevancy while having significantly different search results.

Some people are quick to ask how they are being penalized by one search engine because they rank well in one search engine and not another. While many sites do get penalized for aggressive spamming techniques, most sites that do not rank well usually just fail to satisfy the specific ranking algorithm for that specific engine in question.

- Google is primarily focused on anchor text and link popularity.
- Yahoo! focuses a bit more on “on the page” content (while still relying a decent amount on link popularity).
- Teoma is focused on local communities.

This is probably the single most important concept in this whole ebook.

Many people look for links just thinking “link,” but often this is not the most effective way to do link building. If you think of the web as a huge social network and think of links as relationships you have a huge advantage over many competitors.

It is far easier to spend a good bit of time learning how to get links versus constantly tweaking pages over and over again. I do not worry much about exact keyword density. I know that Yahoo! usually likes it a bit higher and Google usually likes it a bit lower.

While the on page criteria can vary from engine to engine the ability of off page factors to raise your rankings is limitless. Different search engines will evaluate different links in different ways. In general they all like links pointing at your website, especially links related to your field. Some search engines (such as Teoma) may also boost your rankings if you link out to related resources.

Thumbshots has a [cool ranking tool](#) (often down / broken due to high traffic) which shows you how sites rank in different search engines so you can glance at how well different algorithms overlap one another. Due to heavy load this tool is not available all the time.

## Text in Incoming Links

## What Link Text is Good to Use?

If you link to this site, a link with the words "Search Engine Optimization" or "SEO" is more valuable than a link that says "other site." Evaluating the text in the links, along with who links where, is the way search engines get feedback from external sources.

Search engines can look for noun verb patterns in text, but link analysis is the most effective way to determine document quality.

## How Powerful is Link Text?

Many bloggers are politically outspoken and view George Bush in a less than favorable light. Hundreds of people have linked to his biography page using the phrase "miserable failure" as the link text. [This Google search](#) should show how powerful the internet is, and **how powerful link text is**.

Part of why it is so expensive to build a current search engine is that all of this feedback and linking takes time to measure and collect. The whole time you are collecting it, everything is changing. The text used in links is going to be very important in the foreseeable future.

## Why are Links so Powerful?

When we write stuff about ourselves we have a tendency to lie. It is human nature to boost your own site. This is why meta tags and page copy are nowhere near as powerful as they once were.

Links from other webmasters are viewed by search engines as unbiased third party votes. While Yahoo! tends to put more weight on page copy than most other major search engines do, **who links to you** and **with what words** are the #1 ranking criteria for competitive phrases in all major search engines.

Many people look for links just thinking "link," but often this is not the most effective way to do link building. If you think of the web as a huge social network and think of links as relationships you have a huge advantage over your competition.

You can do many manipulative things to make your ideas appear better than they are, but if you can find more natural ways to embed yourself in the social structure of the web you will likely become extremely successful.

## Links from Directories:

Some directories will only list your real site name. When submitting to the major directories you want to get the best listing you can, but many of the workers work free. You must realize that they are helping you (often for free). To make their job easy ensure you:

- Submit your site to the right category.
- Read the directory submission tips.
- Check to see how other sites in that category are listed. If they primarily are listed by site title make sure you submit your actual site title. If they seem to

be a bit liberal (allowing keyword stuffed listings) you may want to submit with a more liberal and keyword dense title.

- Use a suitable description.
- View the other entries in the category so you can see the style of the other listings.
- Emulate the style of other listings, but provide your own original factual details in the description. Try your best to state what sets you apart or what is your unique selling proposition.
- This is another reason why it is important to pick a site name which has your primary keywords in the URL. Keyword rich domain names lead to keyword rich links from directories.

### Links from Other Resources:

Usually when getting links in many places other than directories, they are more liberal and will list your site as you please. Again, view how they have their other links and emulate them.

If a site is requesting a super optimized link back they should have no problem with giving you a great link. When getting optimized links a good way of doing it is to have the link be your keywords and have the description be something like "site A offers bla bla bla..."

### Vary Link Text:

All the links should not have the same exact text in them as it could be a sure sign of rank manipulation. You want to mix it up and use different text links from different sites. This will make it appear as natural linking to search engines.

There are no set rules, but mixing it up will prevent you from flagging spam filters which currently exist or may soon be added to search engines.

When I get links into my SEO Book site I frequently use the following anchor text:

- SEO Book
- Search Engine Optimization Book
- SEO Book: Search Engine Optimization
- sometimes I may use a few other variations such as: SEO Ebook, SEO Blog, or SEO News

You want to use a few semantically similar phrases and many anchor text variations to make your anchor text look as natural as it can.

### Using Links to Capture the Tail End of Search:

Many people optimize their sites for stuff like “purple widgets” and forget to optimize for more specific or related terms. You can’t always optimize your page for all the terms you like, but you can add some modifier or descriptive words in some of the inbound link text to try to rank well in a slightly broader keyword basket. Some example link text might be

- Buy Purple Widgets
- Purple Widget Store
- Purple Widget Sale
- etc.

Doing this will mean that it may take longer to rank well for purple widgets, but it means you will likely rank for many more specific queries around that keyword termspace in a quicker time period.

### Giving away Tools or Knowledge for Linkage Data:

Many sites build a ton of free linkage data by creating industry standard tools. I paid a friend only \$400 to create the Hub Finder tool and in its first month of existence it probably got at least \$1,000 worth of free links. Digital Point has a ton of free links from the tools they give away.

Paul Graham is a classic example of a writer who gains a ton of free linkage data by giving away knowledge. His [How to Start a Startup](#) article is a classic example of an article that built a ton of linkage data.

In a large social network as long as you think about scalability it is hard to give too much away. The more you give away the more you get back.

## Exchanging Links

### Be Personal:

The best way to go about exchanging links is to be as personal about it as you can. Look around their website and try to find personal information. The more you find the better you are.

When submitting your site, try to submit it to the person, not a general info submission. If you can state where your link should go on their site and how it would improve their users experience then you stand a good chance of getting a link. Off topic somewhat personal statements showing you share similar interests as some of their past experiences on their site may make you seem more human like and more connected with their interests. It thus becomes easier to get links.

### Proper Link Request Buyline:

When asking people to link to your site, the most important factors are to be personal about the link request and appeal to their motivators.

Another good idea is to make the buy line of the email something like "SEO Book website suggestion." Odds are that I am going to open that. **Feedback is a fundamental part of any successful business so I have to open it.**

I like using the word suggestion versus feedback. If you use feedback they may feel like you are tricking them when they see a link suggestion. If you use the word suggesting it is harder for them to think that way and they are highly inclined to open the email. Getting them to open the email is at least half of the battle.

### Scouting Out Potential Link Partners:

A good way to find candidates for link exchange is to use the Google toolbar. Do a search and find your top few competitors. Go down the list, and one at a time perform a backward link check. See the sites that link to them and see if you can trade links with those same sites.

Also, look at the category those sites are in and use the Google directory to get the best sites from those categories to link to you. (To do a backwards link check of a competitors website you type link:www.evilmcompetitor.com in the search box.)

Some of the link tools listed in on the next page will also make it easy to find link partners rather quickly.

### Finding Niche Directories:

You can do a search for "your keyword + directory" "your keyword + add url" "your keyword + submit site", any of them. Start thinking of ideas like that and finding link exchange partners or sources of inbound links should be no problem. You can search across multiple different search engines and even search for various file extensions. If you have a resource about the ASP language it may be a good idea to search for ASP filetypes.

### Affiliate Program Links:

Most affiliate programs redirect your links through a third party websites, which prevents the link from parsing PageRank or link popularity.

In addition many other websites use query strings on the links, these will not parse PageRank to the destination page. A query string is something like ?affil=34565 at the end of the link. This identifies the affiliate for tracking purposes.

Even if affiliate programs do not provide static text links they still help raise your brand awareness and build trust in the eyes of your prospective customers. A well run affiliate program can also help mean that some of your affiliates are crowding some of your competitors out of the search results.

### Problems with SEO Friendly Affiliate Programs (how they can hurt Affiliates):

If you build enough link popularity pointing at an affiliate page it can outrank the regular version, but if many good affiliates are promoting a product and those pages link back to the home page of the site they are promoting then you can end

up pushing a ton of PageRank to the home page of the merchant site. That PageRank can filter down to the regular (or non affiliate) version of the page, which may eventually outrank all the affiliates. More information is available on the [OverTheMark blog](#).

### You Do Not Need To Reciprocate Every Link:

If you have a great resource you do not need to give a link back every time you ask for a link. The keys to getting the link are to be personal and explain how linking to your resource could help improve their site.

One of the world's most well known linking experts is [Eric Ward](#). At my first search engine conference in Boston he stated that often times he does not offer to reciprocate links. If you write compelling content people may want to link to it free, and that is the best way to get links.

I often group my sites with a couple other similar resources when I ask for free links. This gives me a better chance of getting my site listed because it seems like I am trying to help them versus just helping myself. In addition this helps clustering search engines such as Teoma know what sites are similar to mine.

You can't be afraid to ask or get rejected. Most link requests are rejected, but if you show that you put a good amount of time and effort in and that you are actually a human who visited their site then you stand a much better chance of getting a link.

Some people also 301 redirect their new site to an established site to have it show the PageRank of the other site. Since the PageRank only updates every 3 months they can make many link trades based on fooling webmasters with the toolbar PageRank from the other site.

### More Advanced Link Exchange Tools:

**Automation is an extremely bad thing during the human interaction portion of link exchange.** There is a program by the name of Arelis which will automate nearly 100% of the link exchange process and it may be useful to use for most portions EXCEPT the human interaction.

You stand a far better chance to get links if you are **extremely personal** in your link requests. I try to automate many of the non human interaction portions of the link exchange process, but do not automate messages.

There are a few linking tools I occasionally use, but keep in mind that anything that sends automated queries to search engines is usually going to be against their terms of service.

OptiLink:

[OptiLink](#) (\$224) is link analysis software which can scour up to 1000 different backlinks of a website and return the results in the order of PageRank. You then have the ability to go through and try to become link partners with the sites.

SEO Elite and Optilink are great link analysis tools.

I often still use Prog based on its simplicity and ease of use.

OptiLink also lets you know what words are in the different links so you can get an accurate picture of total link reputation and not just link popularity. Link reputation is the combination of link popularity and link text. OptiLink will let you check the backlinks through many different search engines and not just Google.

SEO Elite:

[SEO Elite](#) (was formerly named Link Proctor) (\$167) is newer software which is extremely similar to OptiLink. It surveys backlinks to find what anchor text is used and linking page PageRank. In addition SEO Elite will spider the links on your site or page and check that reciprocal link partners are linking back to your site.

Brad Callen continually upgrades this software to add more features. If you can only afford to buy SEO Elite or OptiLink I would probably buy SEO Elite. Both have money back guarantees though, so you may want to try them both and keep the one you like better.

Prog:

[Prog](#) is a Google screen scrapping search engine which also displays PageRank near listed sites. It is a handy tool for doing backlink research if you can not afford Link Proctor or OptiLink.

Prog makes it easy to scan where a competitor's most powerful links come from and shows you where they are buying links from if they are buying them on a large scale.

Hub Finder:

[Hub Finder](#) is a free web based link analysis tool I created. The sole goal of Hub Finder is to help webmasters find co occurring link locations. This means you can enter in the URL of 2 to 10 competing websites, and wherever their inbound link overlap it will return in the search results.

Pages which are on topic and link to multiple competing websites are likely to link to your site. On topic links may carry more weight than off topic links in some search algorithms.

Hub Finder uses the Yahoo! API. It is free to use and you also can place the tool on your site.

Bonus Linking Tip:

One of the best ways to use these linking tools is to use them on a website you know has moved. Alert webmasters to broken links on their sites, and let them know that you have a similar site. Many webmasters will likely link to your site.

Being Smooth:

Sometimes it helps to be a bit smooth. Sometimes I suggest a few resources other than my own as well. Sometimes I just put my URL under my name as if its part of my signature. Both techniques have worked to get me many quality inbound links in a short period of time.



A “non link request” link request may actually have a higher conversion rate than an active link request with some webmasters.

The use of the above listed tools allows me to automate most of the link request work while still allowing me to remaining personal in the link request emails I send out.

Example Email (sent to a personal email if they have one available):

hello <actual person>

I have been browsing around photography sites for hours now and just ran across yours...its awesome (**stroke their ego**)

wow your picture of that dove, bla bla bla...bird photography is one of my bla bla bla  
(**be specific & show you visited their site**)

I took this pic or a flying mongoose here: (**look we are the same**)

<optional>I have already added a link to your site on my cool sites page</optional> (/ **pay them if you feel you need to... link or cash or whatever other offer. if you feel a phone call is necessary then you may want to give them your number or call them up versus send an email.**)

your site visitors may well be interested in bla bla bla at my site bla bla (**show them how linking to you benefits them**)

if you like my site please consider linking to it however you like (**let them know they have choices - don't come across as ordering them to do something**)

or with this code (**make it easy for them**)

I think my site matches well with the theme on this page

either way thanks for reading this and keep posting the awesome photos (**reminder ego stroke**)

thanks  
me  
me at myemail.com  
http://www.mywhateversite.com  
my number

Want to Trade Links?

## How Did They Get Their Link Popularity?

You can tell a lot about a website by the other sites that link to it. Typically good sites are registered in some of the top directories and have links from other good sites in their same industry.

To determine if a site is worthy of a link you should evaluate their content. In addition you may want to do a backlink check and see how they acquired their current link popularity.

If they have a decent PageRank because they have been link exchanging with Viagra, casino, or other high margin off topic websites then they are probably not a legitimate resource and trading links with a good number of these types of sites may end up getting your site banned.

## Does Their Site Offer Any Quality Content?

It is a good idea to review the site that wants to exchange links. If you link to the site you are sending your faithful web site traffic into their domain.

Is it a risk, or do they have good content? If there wasn't PageRank involved, would you still trade links with them? Do you enjoy their site? If the answer to these sort of questions is yes then feel free to link to their site. If the answer is no after no after no then it is not a logical link exchange opportunity.

## Avoid the Sure Downfalls:

Off the start you may be a little more desperate for links as you are learning SEO. A good tip is to stay away from drug, gambling, and porn sites as they obviously destroy your credibility. Other sites that link to those types of networks may also hurt your site as well (since they may eventually be penalized).

Always use your own judgment as you will be the one footing the bill if the idea is wrong. A single link from this website (posting a comment on SEO Book.com) will likely give you a PageRank of three or four within about a month. (Please note I do not like links to debt reduction, credit, adult, gambling, porn, or drug websites.) There is no reason to compromise your site to exchange links with garbage websites.

## Using Common Sense:

That hemp / SEO store I mentioned earlier is a good example of not using common sense. If the site you are linking to has nothing to do with the topic of your site and no relation to what may interest your viewers then you probably do not want to link to them.

Carpet bomb linking strategies may be successful in the short term, but over time they will grow less and less useful to the point of eventual ineffectiveness.

There is also an indirect linking effect to linking. If you link to really weird sites then it lowers the odds that other industry resources will want to link to your site.

### Example of a Junk Link Request:

If you send junk link exchange requests like this they will usually be deleted as spam. On the same token if you receive a message like this you should delete your spam.

Hello Sir / Ma'am

I was at your site today. Great site I was wondering if you would want to exchange links.

I already have a link to you located at <http://www.spamsite.com/links/reciprical-links-exchange2/other-sites37.htm>

As you well know search engines look at links and give sites credit for their incoming links. By linking together we make both of our sites stronger.

Please link to me with the following information

[Buy Viagra Cheap Phentamine No Prescription Paxil Prozac Online](http://www.spamsite.com)

### Eventually Aggressive Promotion Techniques get Penalized:

Even if a site like that has decent link popularity you can usually bet that they will be losing it soon if they exchange links with all kinds of random sites. Link exchange works up until a point and then eventually it become link farm. A link farm is a site with a bunch of completely unrelated links scattered about in no logical order.

Eventually overly aggressive sites get penalized, but webmasters using those techniques will usually have already started another site, and you may end up suffering for their greed if you link exchange with incredibly aggressive sites.

Another trick they may use is to have you link into their good site and have them link to you from a different domain of essentially no value. Since their good site is not going to get penalized (because it does not link out to anyone) it does not matter much to them if their bad site and your site receive a spam penalty for being part of a link farm.

## Free Links & Buying Links

### Garbage Links:

While many low quality links may still help over time their value goes down. Guestbooks and the like are losing their relevancy in search results. Many of the holes in blog software which permitted heavy spamming are also being taken care

of. Some people have stated that Google is even filtering out pages with the file extension of links.htm or other page filepaths that would obviously indicate the page was created for link exchange. There are many legitimate long term free link opportunities available, though they may take a good bit of work to find.

### Have a Good Idea:

The web is a big social network where good ideas will want to spread naturally. It is far easier to spread an idea worth spreading than it is to push a bad idea. A link is a vote for a site. It is a citation. It is a remark. Oh hey, I found this over here. By being remarkable or different it far easier to build a linking campaign without a large sum of money or effort.

It is worth it to take the extra time to think of a good idea that will naturally want to spread itself.

### Give Something Away:

One of the best ways to build link popularity is to make something useful and valuable and give it away. [PHPBB](#) is a free bulletin board which has a PageRank of 9 or 10. [Open Office](#) is another great open source software project.

Some popular things to give away are: software, games, designs, and valuable information.

### Submitting Articles:

There are tons of places on the web where you can submit articles. In addition to submitting them, if you provide an extremely compelling article with reprint rights you will find that it may just end up all over the web. I started writing articles when Google changed it's algorithm in Nov 2003. Within a month or two I had articles appear on:

- SearchGuild (<http://www.searchguild.com/>)
- SEO Journal (<http://www.seojournal.com>)
- Sticky Sauce (<http://www.stickysauce.com/>)
- LilEngine (<http://www.lilengine.com/>)
- Internet Search Engine Database (<http://www.isedb.com/>)
- and many many other search specific websites.

### Becoming an Authority:

In addition to the above links I have received links from sites I have never even heard of, and I got linked to by the #1 search engine resource ([SearchEngineWatch.com](#)). A link from Search Engine Watch is not something I could have bought with piles of cash, and it validates me as a search engine resource in the eyes of many SEOs (as well as in the eyes of search engines). Danny

Sullivan (editor of Search Engine Watch) is a great search engine information source who offers a [free daily newsletter](#).

### Becoming the Resource:

Danny Sullivan is known as one of the world's greatest search engine resources. I could try to become the same thing, but I would likely fail time and time again. That spot in the web is already occupied.

I can however become one of the better blogs on the subject. I also can have one of the better ebooks on the subject. It is worth focusing in on an idea until you can find one that has not already been taken or something you will enjoy competing at.

It usually is much cheaper to position yourself in a new field or a niche field than a broad field that already has a dominant player in it.

### What Information Sells?

Original content such as:

- Tips and articles. How to and creative articles work really well.
- News stories.
- Resource directories.

### Where do I Submit My Articles?

You may find that people link to you just because they like your site. Being a success on the internet is much easier if people want to syndicate you for free. Off the start it will require some active effort to spread your name though. A couple good places to submit articles:

- Buzzle (<http://www.buzzle.com>)
- Idea Marketers (<http://www.ideamarketers.com/>)
- Ebooks N Bytes (<http://www.ebooksnbytes.com/>)
- Article Central (<http://thewhir.com/find/articlecentral/>)

### Additional Bonus Article Submission Ideas:

Understanding where and how to find information will help you become successful on the web. After you find a few authors from the above sites you should search for their names to see where else they are published. You may also want to look through major directories and search for sites covering your topic which accept articles.

You should know who the experts in your field of study are. I also wrote a good brief article with other article submission locations on my blog (<http://www.seobook.com/archives/000099.shtml>).

Another trick is to search for the names of sites that are using automated spam software to submit articles. If people accept their automated request then likely they will want to list your quality article if you use a personalized inquiry. Two sites who sent automated spam articles to me are MarketingBlaster & SearchEngineGeek.

## Writing Testimonials for Links

I can not tell you how effective this technique is! A good testimonial almost requires they post a link to your site. There are two main tips about writing testimonials: who to write a testimonial for and how to write that testimonial.

### Who to Write a Testimonial for:

The web has a bunch of garbage on it. The web also has a bunch of good people on it. It is just as easy to say good things about people who do a really good job as it is about people who do a shoddy job.

If you tell people how a bad thing is good then those people will think you suck (this is extremely common in affiliate marketing). Only promote stuff that you would be glad to throw your name and reputation on.

Often testimonials are reciprocal promotion techniques. On the web many links are business relations. The easiest spot to get help from is the people you are helping. It only makes sense to promote and say good things about the people you do business with.

If you look around my site and John Scott's sites you will notice that we both say good things about one another. This relationship is founded on the fact that we both believe in each other. He and I combined are far more powerful than either of us are alone. This occurs all over the web. He promotes me because I do good SEO & I promote him because he has a good forum.

Not every testimonial is a strong business relationship, but you should write testimonials only for people you would like to promote. Directly or indirectly that is what you are doing.

### How to Write a Testimonial:

Words like "good" are actually rather bad. When possible you want to use concrete phrases and terms that make the service sound exceptional. An example testimonial I wrote was "There are few places on the web where you can place an ad and have it pay for itself in the first day. SearchEngineGuide is one of those places." The first two day of me running an ad on his site I sold over \$600 worth of ebooks.

Many of the people on the web who are considered "marketing experts" are selling get rich quick scams. Most internet marketers selling internet marketing products only make money off selling the idea to someone else who will probably lose money on the deal.

These people usually have crafted the art of writing testimonials because their livelihood is completely dependant upon selling the products to members of their newsletters. If you glance through that 33 Days to Online Profits I would **not** recommend buying most of the stuff they are selling, but you can learn a bunch from reading how Yanik Silver recommend other products.

#### Other Free Linking Resources:

- [Linking Matters](#)
- [Linking 101](#)
- [Eric Ward](#)

#### Outsourcing Linking Programs:

Frequently many people find link building frustrating. You may want to outsource your link building to a link building firm.

#### Renting / Buying Links:

\*-- This is an advanced SEO technique most webmasters do not need to do. I would learn and practice SEO for at least a month or two before I jumped right into any type of link rental advertisements. --\*

#### Make Sure Your Site Works Well First:

Many people aggressively advertise on other sites without fixing internal conversion problems. If you can double your conversion rate without much additional expense it does not make sense to concentrate on more exposure first.

With that being said you can boost your link popularity by renting a few strong inbound links. I usually prefer to rent links from related sites as they may also send direct traffic as well as provide a direct boost to link popularity.

#### Register with Directories First:

By registering your sites at many different directories it makes your link popularity look like a natural part of the web. If you only have one or two sources of links the linkage pattern may seem unnatural to search engine algorithms.

Renting links is extremely expensive if you do it incorrectly. Registering your sites with many second tier directories costs a one time fee of \$20 - \$40 each which continues to pay for itself month after month.

When links develop naturally it is likely that a site has many low power links pointing into it as compared to number of high power links. You usually want to build a broad base of low power inbound links before trying to build any exceptionally powerful inbound links.

If you are reliant upon just a few powerful links then if something happens to those links you could be in the hurt locker. If you have a ton of low power inbound links then your rankings will be more stable if you lose a few links or when large algorithm shifts occur.

#### Importance of Anchor Text:

When renting links ensure you use the best anchor text possible and do not rent links based exclusively on PageRank. When I rent links I make sure I am renting extremely descriptive anchor text as well (as anchor text is the single most important part of link reputation in Google or Yahoo!).

#### Renting Banners:

I prefer to rent static text links versus renting image links. Sometimes certain sites sell banner space cheap. If they are going to sell you a banner ask if it needs to be an image or if it just needs to be a banner in shape. One of my good friends ordered a banner filled with a ton of text links from college newspapers dirt cheap.

If you do use an image banner make sure you use descriptive ALT text on it so search engines will have some idea what the link is about.

#### Single Link vs Run of Site Links:

If it is a useful on topic site I get run of the site links. Some sites will rent you a single link for \$75 or let you have a link on every page of their site for \$100. Frequently the prices are exceptionally close to one another. Most of the link renting I have done is sitewide sponsorship from relevant sites, but I also have many individual inbound links.

If you are renting links from off topic sites it would be advisable to not get run of site links as that could stick out as abnormal link pattern. Many times Google and other search engines tend to penalize the sites renting the links and not the sites the links are on. Many of the major search engines do not give a site much additional relevancy for sitewide links over a single link.

In February of 2005 Google did an update where many sites which had a bunch of sitewide inbound links no longer ranked well. When doing sitewide ads I usually recommend doing pre sell pages instead of placing sitewide ads.

#### Pre Sell Pages:

Within a site PageRank and link popularity flow naturally. If a site links to another site from every page many search engines may only take the most powerful link into account within their relevancy algorithm. Thus if you are paying for ad space you should try to get the best links you can get.

You can ask the advertising site to point sitewide links in an internal page on their site. On that page send multiple deep links into various points of your site using proper link text. You may also want to place links in the middle of paragraphs and use semantically similar page titles, headers, and subheaders on your pre sell pages.

Some people also link off to a few related resource pages on their pre sell pages to better help clustering search engines understand what their site is about.

#### Importance of Number of Links on the Page:

Any page only has a certain amount of link popularity (Google calls this PageRank and Yahoo! calls this WebRank) which it can redistribute to other pages. Each



additional link on a page takes away from how much voting power the other links on that same page get.

A page does not lose link popularity for linking out to other sites, it just splits what link popularity it can give amongst all pages it is linking to. The link popularity of a page is split up amongst the pages internal and external links.

When evaluating a potential link buy it is important to consider how many links are on the page. If you see north of 80 links on a page then you need to consider that you will only be getting a small amount of link popularity from that page. You can make up for this a bit by getting run of site links versus renting individual links.

#### Ease into Link Renting:

Renting links should be a controlled process. By doing it in a somewhat controlled manner you guarantee you know what links are working and how many you need.

#### Location of Links on the Page:

A friend of mine is a database programmer / SEO who has friends who work for Google. He stated that Google is trying to look to change their link algorithm to where they can provide both positive and negative linkage credit for link location on the page and site link patterns (most likely discounting footer banners full of links and other common link rental locations). While I do not believe this technology is active yet it may be coming in the future.

Ideas like these are what make building lots of natural link popularity important. Many internet marketing experts are shifting portions of their business models to creating content they control so that people can get contextually relevant ads within the main content area of the pages.

The link renting business will evolve as the algorithms do, but quality link renting will increase in price as the cost of selling links gets more expensive.

#### Link Brokers:

There are many link brokers on the market which jack up the prices considerably as middle men. You may want to look around to find one of the main link brokers or websites selling links directly.

Many sites pose as link brokers by marking up the prices of other link brokers inventory. When you buy links from a link broker you want to go to the source and not pay middle men. If you want to use a link broker directly I do know who the most prominent link brokers are. Send me an email and I will let you know who I recommend.

#### If Something Seems Like too Good of a Deal:

Google has blocked some websites from being able to parse their PageRank (or link popularity) to other websites.

The PageRank parsing penalties prevent a page from transferring PageRank even though the site itself may show PageRank. These penalties have typically been

applied to sites with a high PageRank & especially those that are linking to high margin sites which are extremely off topic.

If a site has a high PageRank and pharmacy or casino ads then there stands a good chance that it will not parse link popularity.

#### Shop Around:

You may want to look at a few link brokers to view prices for various linking opportunities. Prices fluctuate in the link market from person to person and site to site. I believe link prices are more volatile than the commodities or futures market. It is worth taking the time to shop around.

#### Getting Links from Various Sites:

Getting a ton of links from any given site can only pass a finite amount of link popularity. To improve the effectiveness of renting links it is recommended that you get links from multiple different websites. This is part of the reason I recommend registering your site with many different directories. Some search algorithms may also provide additional weighting on links which have aged.

#### Cheap Linking Opportunities:

Often times you would be surprised how cheap related sites are renting links for. I have rented links from a few of the search engine marketing industry hubs at exceptionally reasonable prices.

In addition blogs and 501 C charity sites are havens for low cost links. Some blog type sites will give you a link for a minimum \$5 to \$10 one time donation. Some powerful 501 C sites will give you year long links for as low as a few hundred dollars.

[NetworkForGood](#) can help you find a worthy cause located in your area which may be worth sponsoring which can also help you build link popularity. I view sponsoring charities as one of the rare true win / win situations.

Some blogs are out to lunch on their price. Some blogs are exceptionally link heavy and provide almost no value on a per link basis. Many bloggers are just having fun and are not out to make a ton of money though. For this reason you might be able to find some exceptionally cheap blog links. An additional bonus with blog advertising is that blogs are viral in nature, meaning if you have a viral type product then you may get many ongoing secondary links for free.

Just to give you an idea of how cool BlogAds are (especially for cause driven or fun type sites), I got tons of bonuses for my first ad set I ran. Over half of the sites I ran my first ad on extended my ad longer than I ran it for, completely free. In addition one site provided me a permanent static text link and another site placed my ad on multiple sites free.

If you have a message worth spreading bloggers will help it spread. A couple of the more popular blog ad selling networks are [BlogAds](#) and [AdBright](#). Some of the links

provided by these blog networks may not be static in nature, but the viral nature of blogs make them an ideal marketing channel for many messages.

#### Rent Static Links:

When renting links to improve search engine placement ensure they are static descriptive links versus links with a tracking code or links that get redirected through some sort of ad server. Search engines usually do not evaluate most links which are redirected or sent through an ad server.

Also think of creative ways you can induce free inbound links before spending a ton of money every month on renting links. The best ideas tend to find ways to spread themselves. Money spent improving the idea behind your site is better spent than money spent on renting links since improving your idea or site does not usually have expensive recurring fees associated with it.

#### Linking Networks:

Currently I do not use any linking network to boost the rankings of my sites, but there are a few innovative new linking networks which are worth mentioning.

Digital Point created a free [cooperative advertising network](#) where text links are randomly rotated across thousands of sites in the network. The advertising network does not focus on relevancy yet so currently it amounts to a big link farm, but since it is so well integrated into the web and spans so many sites it is rather powerful. Eventually search engines may find a way to negate those links but currently they are rather powerful.

LinkItForward is a link exchange site where you link out to sites to get credits and others will link back to your site. Using this network there may be more reliance on relevancy than the randomness of the Digital Point network, and with [LinkItForward](#) all the links are non reciprocal /one way links.

Before joining any linking network I would read the pros and the cons listed in this high quality [Threadwatch thread](#).

## Waiting for Results

#### Patience is a Virtue:

Many people want to change and change and change until they get to the top. The internet is an amazing direct marketing medium. Change is good. With your website you will want to wait a few months after your initial optimization before you really start changing stuff though.

After you feel the page copy is decently structured for usability and SEO then you do not need to change it over and over again unless you are trying to test it. Often times one of the better ways to test conversion rates is through a split A / B test using pay per click search engines (will be explained in the Pay Per Click chapter).

#### Be Consistent:

You have to give search engines a chance to react to what is there. It would be much harder to list well for a term such as "search engine marketing" if I got some links with "online promotions" some with "search engine submission" some with "search engine optimization" some with "website promoter"... you get the idea.

You have to pick and choose. Using a few variations may be a good idea to make your linking appear as natural linking, but you should focus your anchor text around related niches. After you master a few terms you may want to diversify, but you want to choose wisely and stick with it for a few months.

Search engines change their algorithms many times each month. Ranking changes you see are often due to algorithmic changes and not changes in relevancy based on small changes in page copy.

### Why Frequently Changing can be Bad:

If you write a blog or a site with rapidly rotating content it makes sense that your copy will constantly be changing. That is not a problem. Where people run into a problem is when they waste time obsessive compulsively tweaking the same page copy over and over again. The time spent doing that might be better doing other promotions.

If you keep changing your page copy and randomly mixing anchor text excessively before you establish your online presence with good links then you will never know what was the best page format or layout.

You will not be sure how you would rank if you picked and stayed with your copy. Another good idea is to only change one thing at a time since you can not tell why the changes occur if you do change everything. If your site is a complete disaster a makeover may be necessary, otherwise just give it time and keep working on building relevant inbound links.

## Interactive Elements

### Resources Cited:

#### Software:

- Server Header Check  
(<http://www.searchengineworld.com/cgi-bin/servercheck.cgi>)
- Digital Point Google Ranking Checker  
(<http://www.digitalpoint.com/tools/keywords>)
- Yahoo! Tracker  
(<http://www.webmaster-gadgets.com/ytracker/>)
- Yahoo! Developer Network – various tools  
(<http://developer.yahoo.net/wiki/index.cgi?ApplicationList>)

- Rusty Brick's Goolge link analysis tool ([http://www.rustybrick.com/link\\_analysis.php](http://www.rustybrick.com/link_analysis.php))
- The Google Toolbar (<http://toolbar.google.com/>)
- GoogleBar (for Mozilla) (<http://googlebar.mozdev.org/>)
- GoogleBar Hack (for Mozilla) (<http://toolbar.nickstallman.net/>)
- PageRank for Safari (<http://www.digitalpoint.com/tools/pagerank-mac>)
- Top25Web PageRank lookup (<http://www.top25web.com/pagerank.php>)
- Prog free Google PageRank display search tool. (<http://seochat.com/seo-tools/pagerank-search>)
- HubFinder (<http://www.andyhagans.com/tools/hubfinder/>)
- Roboform – form filler (<http://www.roboform.com>)
- Optilink (\$224) (<http://www.optitext.com/>)
- SEO Elite (\$167) (<http://www.seoelite.com>)

#### Websites:

- Google Search: Miserable Failure which shows the power of link text. (<http://www.google.com/search?sourceid=navclient&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&q=miserable+failure>)
- Major search engine search volume breakdown (<http://searchenginewatch.com/reports/index.php>)
- Paul Graham's How to Start a Startup article - free example of an article that helps build links (<http://www.paulgraham.com/start.html>)

#### The Major Search Engines

- Inktomi - powers some of Yahoo!'s partner sites. (<http://www.inktomi.com>)
- MSN Search (<http://search.msn.com/>)
- MSN Search blog (<http://blogs.msdn.com/msnsearch>)
- MSN Site owner suggestions (<http://search.msn.com/docs/siteowner.aspx>)
- Teoma - powers Teoma and Ask Jeeves. (<http://www.Teoma.com>)
- AllTheWeb- powers Lycos and AllTheWeb. (<http://www.AllTheWeb.com>)

- AltaVista (<http://www.AltaVista.com>)
- Yahoo! Search (<http://www.search.yahoo.com>) free submission (<http://submit.search.yahoo.com/free/request>)
- Google (<http://www.google.com>) free submission (<http://www.google.com/addurl.html>) webmaster guidelines (<http://www.google.com/webmasters/guidelines.html>)
- Google Research Papers: PageRank (<http://www-db.stanford.edu/~backrub/google.html>) Hilltop (<http://www.cs.toronto.edu/~georgem/hilltop/>) Topic Specific PageRank (<http://www.stanford.edu/~taherh/papers/topic-sensitive-pagerank-tkde.pdf>)
- InfoSpace - Meta search engine which owns Dogpile, Excite, WebCrawler, MetaCrawler and a few others. (<http://www.infospace.com>)
- Search Engine Relationship chart by Bruce Clay (<http://www.bruceclay.com/searchenginereationshipchart.htm>)

#### Directories

- DMOZ (<http://www.dmoz.org>)
- DMOZ submission guidelines (<http://dmoz.org/add.html>)
- DMOZ Resource Zone (<http://resource-zone.com/>)
- Yahoo! Directory (<http://www.dir.yahoo.com/>)
- Gimpsy (<http://www.gimpsy.com>)
- GoGuides (<http://www.goguides.org>)
- JoeANT (<http://www.joeant.com>)
- RubberStamped (<http://www.rubberstamped.org>)
- Uncover the Net (<http://www.uncoverthenet.com>)
- SevenSeek (<http://www.sevenseek.com>)
- Skaffe (<http://www.skaffe.com>)
- Web Beacon (<http://www.web-beacon.com>)
- Wow Directory (<http://www.wowdirectory.com>)

- Business.com (<http://www.business.com>)
- MSN SBD (<http://sbd.bcentral.com/>)

#### Directories of Directories

- Directory Archives (<http://www.directoryarchives.com>)
- Search Engine Guide  
(<http://www.searchengineguide.com/searchengines.html>)
- ISEDB ([http://www.isedb.com/html/Web\\_Directories/](http://www.isedb.com/html/Web_Directories/))

#### Other Sites

- Google's cache of my home page  
(<http://216.239.41.104/search?sourceid=navclient&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&q=cache%3Awww.seobook.com>)
- PR Web press releases (<http://www.prweb.com>)
- 101 Public Relations – press release templates and report  
(<http://www.101publicrelations.com/>)
- My Directory Checklist (<http://www.seobook.com/directorylist.xls>)
- Coverage of Google's new patent  
(<http://www.threadwatch.org/node/2115>)  
(<http://www.threadwatch.org/node/2132>)
- Latent Semantic Indexing information  
([http://javelina.cet.middlebury.edu/lisa/out/cover\\_page.htm](http://javelina.cet.middlebury.edu/lisa/out/cover_page.htm))
- Usually time spent reporting spam is time wasted, but you can report spam to Google (<http://www.google.com/contact/spamreport.html>)
- Froogle (<http://www.froogle.com>)
- Froogle information for webmasters  
(<http://www.google.com/froogle/merchants.html>)
- Report spam to Yahoo! – Yahoo! does edit their search results and is more likely to reply to a spam report than some engines such as Google  
([http://add.yahoo.com/fast/help/us/ysearch/cgi\\_reportsearchspam](http://add.yahoo.com/fast/help/us/ysearch/cgi_reportsearchspam))
- Thumbshot search engine and ranking comparison tool  
(<http://ranking.thumbshots.com>)
- World Wide Web Consortium (<http://www.w3c.org>)

- Problems with SEO friendly affiliate programs (<http://www.overthemark.com/seoblog/item/51>)
- Eric Ward's Netpost linking strategies website. (<http://www.netpost.com/>)
- Linking Matters (<http://www.linkingmatters.com>)
- Linking 101 (<http://www.linking101.com>)
- SearchEngineWatch - Danny Sullivan's search engine information website. (<http://www.searchenginewatch.com>)
- SearchDay - the free SearchEngineWatch newsletter (<http://searchenginewatch.com/about/article.php/2155721>)
- Digital Point's Cooperative Advertising Network (<http://www.digitalpoint.com/tools/ad-network/>)
- LinkItForward link exchange site (<http://linkitforward.com/>)
- Threadwatch thread about link exchange networks (<http://www.threadwatch.org/node/808>)

#### SEO Article Sites

- SearchGuild (<http://www.searchguild.com/>)
- SEO Journal (<http://www.seojournal.com>)
- Sticky Sauce (<http://www.stickysauce.com/>)
- LilEngine (<http://www.lilengine.com/>)
- Internet Search Engine Database (<http://www.isedb.com/>)

#### General Article Sites

- Buzzle (<http://www.buzzle.com>)
- Idea Marketers (<http://www.ideamarketers.com/>)
- Ebooks N Bytes (<http://www.ebooksnbytes.com/>)
- Article Central (<http://thewhir.com/find/articlecentral/>)

#### More Article Ideas

- My list of article submission locations (<http://www.seobook.com/archives/000099.shtml>)



### Other Resources

- NetworkForGood (<http://www.networkforgood.org/>)
- BlogAds (<http://www.blogads.com>)
- AdBrite (<http://www.adbrite.com/>)

### Some Notes

- Download the Google Toolbar if you are using internet explorer. Try it out on a few sites. Type in a few of the keywords and use the highlight feature to view approximate page copy keyword density. Also use it to check the backlinks on one of your competitors site. (link:www.evilcompetitor.com) Keep in mind that I do not view keyword density as being super important. I think it is a good idea to see how much it can vary from site to site.
- Apply to become an editor at JoeANT, Skaffe, Web Beacon, and DMOZ in categories which interest you. DMOZ will probably reject you. When you do apply to DMOZ try to apply for a small, ugly, and non-commercial category (maybe a local one) and take your time filling out the application.
- If your site is together and you can afford it, submit your site to the above listed directories. If you can not afford it apply to become an editor and submit your site to whatever directories you can for free.
- Apply to become an author for Buzzle. (<http://www.buzzle.com>)
- Write an article about something that interests you that relates to your business. Practice writing at least one article a week.
- Glance through my list of article submission locations. (<http://www.seobook.com/archives/000099.shtml>)
- Find a website to submit this article to and make sure you link to your site in the author bio. Submit one article to at least one different site each week.

## Pay Per Click

**P**ay per click search engines can give you instant traffic and allow you to test new business models in real time. The pay per click market is competitive though. It is worth spending an extensive period of time learning how to write and target ads, tracking your competitors, and doing deep keyword research before jumping in.

### Before You Start

#### Metrics Based Marketing:

PPC search engines provide a highly trackable marketing medium. Frequently people begin marketing without any idea as to the approximate value of a click. If you do not set up a value range and track the results you have no way to distinguish good marketing from bad marketing.

To know the value of a click you need to decide what the goal of your marketing is. If you are just branding then you should expect to lose money and tracking may not be that important.

If you are using pay per click search engines for direct product marketing you need to know how much each click is worth.

#### Typical Conversion Rates:

Lead generation sites typically have a conversion rate around 10 to 12%, but can go as high as 30% + if they are properly targeted and exceptionally appealing to visitors. Since little investment is needed to arrive at your website and so many others are just a click away selling stuff the web has a conversion rate similar to direct mail advertising. High ticket items have a lower conversion rate and unique cheap items tend to have higher conversion rates. Many stores find typical conversion rates might be anywhere from .3 to 4%.

#### Doing the Math:

There are a ton of factors that go into click price. It is somewhat hard to measure branding, but ad distribution can help with that. Most other things are tangible.

If you know your average order size, profit per order, and estimated conversion rate you can get a good idea what clicks are worth. Some people also factor in lifetime cost of a customer, but it is harder to measure and there is still enough opportunity in many markets to do your math primarily based on direct return.

### Before You Start:

It is a good idea to look at the various ads which are displayed in which order over time. The top guy might be an idiot losing tons of money or a person who is paying an extreme premium for branding.

If ads from affiliate marketers or smaller sites are ranking around the same ad position over the course of a few weeks to a month then they are probably doing something right (generating profits). It is worth it to take a couple weeks to do deep keyword research and market analysis before jumping into pay per click search engine marketing.

### Why Pay Per Click is Important:

I was working to raise the rankings of one client for a few competitive phrases. It was taking a decent investment in time and money. I then started a pay per click campaign to test a ton of terms. As it turns out his conversion rate for the words we thought we needed were not great. There were a couple other terms with lower search frequency and less competition which converted exceptionally well.

Had we not done pay per click marketing we may have never properly focused his SEO efforts. In less than a month on about \$300 we increased the productivity of his site ten fold.

The only way to be certain of anything in marketing is to test it. Pay per click marketing allows you to test real time with the fastest feedback loop of any marketing medium in the world.

## What is Pay Per Click

In 1998 Overture pioneered the idea of selling contextual based advertising. You could buy search results for as low as a penny or two per click. This system has quickly evolved into one of the worlds most competitive marketplaces.

### Why Use Pay Per Click?

Sometime you can not afford to...or simply do not want to wait. Pay per click search engines allows you to list atop search results quickly. This will allow you to:

- Prototype ideas to track demand before you invest into a new business model or are stuck footing the bill for a new site design.
- Quickly gather feedback on market conditions.
- Split test to a live audience and gather results in real time.

You can use Google AdWords to offer a free white paper about some topic from a one page website. If nobody is interested in downloading your white paper or you can not seem to get enough clickthroughs then odds are:

- the market is not yet ready for your product

- or you are marketing it from the wrong angle
- or you are marketing it to the wrong people

### Who Should I Trust in Pay Per Click?

There are a few major players in the pay per click arena. Overture (as of writing this) currently has network partnerships that span Yahoo, MSN, InfoSpace, AltaVista, AllTheWeb and many other partners. Google AdWords has a larger distribution network across Google, AOL, About, Earthlink, and many others sites...even a few of my own.

For the sake of this report I am only going to cover [Google AdWords](#) and [Overture](#). There are a few other pay per click search engines ([FindWhat](#), [Kanoodle](#), [Enhance Interactive](#), [Search123](#), [Epilot](#)) that may be well worth a look **after** trying Google AdWords and Overture. While beginning pay per click advertising I would recommend **only using Google AdWords and Overture**.

### Why Use Large Pay Per Click Search Engines (Google AdWords + Overture)?

- The results will be scaleable.
- The feedback will be quicker.
- Large pay per click search engines offer many great tracking and targeting features free.
- Larger pay per click search engines generally present higher quality traffic and are less susceptible to fraud.
- It is less complex managing two or three accounts versus 100 accounts.
- It's easier to track the ROI on 2 accounts than on 100 accounts.
- Many of the extremely small search engines **never have real traffic**. You are wasting your time registering with them.
- Even some of the better second tier search engines may waste a big hunk of change. In early November 2004 I tried using LookSmart. It sent me twice as much traffic as Overture and traffic from LookSmart had a 95% bounce rate. That means that 19 of 20 site visitors from LookSmart immediately left and **I paid for a ton of garbage traffic**. The quality of traffic from smaller engines will vary from term to term, but its best to go with the biggest guys off the start and then try some of the smaller engines.

When you use large pay per click search engines you guarantee you are getting good traffic and that your business model is scalable.

Smaller engines provide slower feedback loops and some may not even provide quality traffic.

## Overture



### How Does Overture Work?

Overture is manually edited pay per click search engine. You write ads for your website and they get approved to appear in the search results on Overture partner websites. Overture bid prices are completely transparent and you can see exactly what your competitors are bidding at any given time.

Overture places exact match listings above broad match listings. This means that if you bid on the exact term that someone is searching for you will rank above ads that are matched via broader matching options.

If you bid 10 cents for “best seo book” and someone else bids 25 cents for “seo books” your best seo book ad will show above theirs if someone is searching for “best seo book.”

Overture also truncates search terms for ad targeting, so book and books should target the same ads.

### Overture Bid Prices vs. Click Costs:

With Overture you pick a maximum bid price and your bid will never exceed that. Their software has a bid discounter built in, so often times your average bid cost may be less than your bid prices. Overture makes bid prices transparent. In competitive fields competitors will ensure your click costs are near your bid price.

### Overture Programs:

Overture has a \$50 startup fee (which is converted to click credit), and it has a \$20 monthly minimum spend (20 pounds for Overture UK). If you do some searches for Overture and PPC related terms you will likely find some account opening bonus. Yahoo! occasionally posts \$25 or \$50 Overture bonus offers in their directory or in other Yahoo! network places. They also have a FastTrack program where their account representatives will set up your account for a one time \$199 fee. I recommend taking the time to set up your own account. If you are taking the effort to read this ebook you likely know your products better and are more interested in your own success than the average Overture editor is.

Overture recently launched Local Match, which allows you to target your ads from a .5 to 100 mile radius of your business location. The Local Match product requires that you have a business with a physical address, but it does not require a website. These ads give driving directions to your place of business. Local Match ads show

up in the same location where other Overture ads appear. Unlike the regular Overture product Local Match has no monthly minimum.

Overture also offers a paid inclusion program by the name of Site Match (which I do not recommend most webmasters use). Site Match gives your sites 48 hour refresh throughout the Yahoo! powered search products. Site Match is a one time \$49 review fee and also has an incremental cost per click. Site Match is good for sites which:

- are rapidly changing
- or are having dynamic indexing problems
- or need indexed quickly
- or need the associated tracking offered by Site Match

### Free Overture Tools:

Overture offers a suite of tools to help their advertisers set up their accounts.

- **Overture Search Term Suggestion Tool:** shows the frequency of searches across the Overture network for the prior month. (<http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/>)
- **Overture View Bid Tool:** show the highest bidders for a specific search term. ([http://uv.bidtool.overture.com/d/search/tools/bidtool/?Keywords=casino&mkt=us&lang=en\\_US](http://uv.bidtool.overture.com/d/search/tools/bidtool/?Keywords=casino&mkt=us&lang=en_US))
- **Overture Regional Search Term Suggestion Tools:** gives [country or region specific search frequency](#).
- **Overture Advertiser Workbook:** [free downloadable ebook released](#) by Overture to help you get the most out of your Overture campaign.

### Overture Search Term Suggestion Tool Errors:

Overture truncates their search volumes. While the plural and singular versions of search terms will greatly differ in search volume Overture just lumps them together.

Please note that the Overture search term suggestion tool tends to run high since many automated bots and bid managers scour through their partner network.

WordTracker tracks click data from the meta search engines by the name of Dogpile and WebCrawler. Since WordTracker makes their money by selling data versus clicks you can usually expect more legitimate traffic measurements using WordTracker. Digital Point created a [free keyword suggestion tool](#) which compares both traffic estimates.

[KeywordDiscovery.com](#) and [GoodKeywords.com](#) are two additional useful keyword research resources.

When doing pay per click advertising deep keyword research is a fundamental part of most successful campaigns.

### The Keys to Doing Well on Overture:

Ensure you target your keywords properly and do not get in bidding wars. Do not bid high prices for exceptionally broad or generic phrases.

Your exact match listings will compete against broad match listings, but if you make a list of targeted phrases then you will not likely pay for as many untargeted clicks as a person bidding for more generic phrases. If you use somewhat generic phrases you will want to make sure you use negative words to block terms you are not interested in.

A few good examples of good negative terms to block are cracks and free.

**Keyword tip - spammed out guestbooks:** software or searching techniques which find spammed out guestbooks which have been visited by competitors can help you find many keyword variations. Keyword tools may help you find about 500 keywords, but the guestbooks sometimes may yeild over 5,000.

[This free tool](#) (web based) or [this free tool](#) (downloadable software) or [this \\$50 tool](#) (downloadable software) will help you create a ton of keywords based on different keyword groupings. Using that tool will allow you to quickly create hundreds or thousands of relevant exact match terms. This is the tool I use to make up my extended keyword lists after I have already done primary keyword research. Microsoft Excel also has a similar feature.

Some of Overture's partners cut the ad text short so you will want to include your most important words near the beginning of the ad title and ad description.

Overture does not factor clickthrough rate into click cost. A high click through rate may bring more expenses without many more conversions so you will want to prequalify your site visitors. If you are trying to sell bulk stuff at wholesale do not be afraid to use the word wholesale in the title AND use \$1,000 minimum order in the ad text.

## Ad Writing Tips

There are many subtle hints to doing pay per click advertising correctly. A small change in conversion rate can make a huge difference once scaled out across the entire web. A marginal loss that turns into a marginal profit can become an automated revenue stream if you know how to write your ads correctly.

### English to English Conversion

I went to the UK and realized just how different the versions of English are around the world. If you are targeting a specific region or country make sure your ads and

website make sense to locals using words and phrases that make sense in their dialect.

### Use Specific Words!

Choosing a keyword for pay per click ads is similar to choosing a keyword for search engine optimization. You do not want generic terms. Frequently single word terms bring so many competitor clicks, compulsive clicks, and fraudulent clicks that it is hard to justify having them. Single words are usually poorly targeted AND more expensive. If you get into bidding wars over general terms you are playing the game all wrong. Actually, the game is playing you.

### Do Not Follow the Crowd:

Bid prices may not be justified where they are. Many times people feel they need to have certain terms. Without tracking them, these people lose money and do not know why they are losing.

Sometimes people chase things which give them an inflated artificial value. If you try to do exactly what the other ads are doing you may fail. In many markets the top listed ad is losing money on each and every click.

### Use Creativity to Lower Cost and Increase Conversion Rates:

#### Keyword Selection:

The way to choose a term is to think creatively. Try to imagine what your user may type into the search engine to find what you are selling. You may even want to bid on terms which exist in a question format. Think of your target audience. Maybe these terms are problems that people have. Perhaps these people do not even know your product exists.

#### Writing Headlines:

Some of the most competitive ads in the world are magazine covers in a checkout isle. You may want to glance through a few magazines covers and table of contents to find ways to write headlines and ads that pull sales.

### Place Keywords in Your Ads:

Many search engines highlight the words in ads that match the users query. Placing the search term in the ad will help your ad stick out more and improve your click through rate.

### Bid on Current Events & Buzz Words:

Often times my cheapest and highest converting ads are for industry buzz words that nobody else bid on. The phrase “Nigritude Ultramarine” (from the SEO competition) has sold multiple copies of this ebook. In addition it has introduced hundreds of visitors to my site at 8 cents per click.

### Start with a Verb:



You may be able to significantly increase your clickthrough rate if you start your ad copy with a powerful active verb.

### Additional Conversion Tips:

Many times it is not worth it to list at the top spot. Frequently trying to list at the top will cause bid wars with ego bidders. Usually listing a bit lower will improve the return on investment since you have less compulsive clickers and a lower bid price. In addition as people scroll down the ad list they do a better job of showing user intent. They do a better job of prequalifying themselves for the purchase.

If you make the ads sound compelling to the reader, you can improve your click through rate to where you get more traffic than the top ad does anyway. Try to solve a problem, show a benefit, or offer a solution to their problems.

### Link to a Landing Page:

Link into the exact page of your site you want visitors to see and not to your home page. By channeling all your traffic through the home page you may be telling a person that you do not care about them, and making it harder for them to convert into a sale. You may even consider adding a special page to your site that is made exclusively for that pay per click program. By linking directly into it from the ads you make it very easy to track ROI.

### Exact vs. Broad Matching (will be explained further in AdWords section):

Many search engines have different matching levels.

Exact match will only show for search results where the user searched specifically for your keyword phrase, **and only your keyword phrase**.

Phrase match will show when your exact phrase appears anywhere within the search query with the words in the same order.

Google and Overture will sometimes show broad match ads when people search for synonyms of your keywords. If your keywords appear in the search in any order your ads will display.

If you are new to pay per click you may want to use exact match until you get a feel for pay per click advertising.

### Search & the Buying Cycle:

Many people perform multiple searches prior to purchase. Typically early searches tend to be more generic and as people get closer to determining what they want to buy they search for brand names (or brand name + keyword) more frequently.

It may be harder to determine the ROI on the more generic terms than on well branded terms as the branded clicks typically fall closer to the purchase date.

## Customer Tracking and Bid Management

### How Tracking Works:

If you are paying by the click, you need to know what each of those clicks is doing. From the second they click until they leave or purchase.

If your server is already equipped with great tracking software it is easy to add a tracking tag on the back of your ads. Instead of your Overture listing going to <http://www.domain.com/salespage.html> have it go to <http://www.domain.com/salespage.html?source=ov+add=6+keyword=fred>.

### Tracking Software:

My favorite log file analyzer is ClickTracks. It displays the webpage in a viewable browser highlighting the click ratio for each of the links. [ClickTracks](#) also allows you to set up custom tracking tags to view traffic through different visitor paths. While the software is expensive to some at \$500, it is a steal for some larger commercial websites.

Some other popular conversion tracking software options are [Keyword Max](#), [Urchin](#), [Index Tools](#), & [WebSideStory](#)

[ConversionRuler](#) is inexpensive suitable software if you are primarily concerned with tracking pay per click results. ConversionRuler starts out around \$20 a month. Overture and Google also provide built in conversion tracking software which they provide free.

Google also created a free cross platform conversion tracking tool which comes with their AdWords product. It works for tracking email ads, banner ads, and various PPC search engine ads.

There are also free tracking services such as [Extreme Tracking](#) and [SiteMeter](#) if you want to access referrer stats easily, but I would not recommend using them for tracking any of your pay per click statistics.

If you are a heavy spender on pay per click you will most likely want to use bid management software.

### Bid Management Software:

There are automated software programs which will track your bids and change them multiple times a day so that you achieve optimal efficiency with your ads. These programs can do various things such as: list your site relative to another website, bid gap management (list your site right where the first large bid gap is),

bid trapping (bidding 1 cent underneath your competitor) and various other functions.

The best part of bid management software is that good bid management software can allow you to dynamically change the bid price from price per click to other metrics such cost per action or ROI.

If you get big into pay per click search engines and are managing multiple accounts it is worth the money to use a bid management program to help save time and money. Currently three market leaders in this field are [BidRank](#) (downloadable software), [Keyword Max](#) (hosted software application), and [Atlas OnePoint](#) (hosted software application). Overture also recently created their own bid management tool by the name of [Overture Search Optimizer](#).

### Fraud Prevention Software:

Most major pay per click search engines have fraud protection built into their system to protect the value of click prices. You should use your server logs to validate clicks if you are running a large campaign. Generally due to time overlaps and differences in reporting it is considered acceptable to have an error up to 10%. If your error is much larger than that be sure to notify the search engine.

If you have a good log file analyzer and understand how to use it then you have no need for a fraud prevention tool, but these tools make it quick and easy to spot potential fraud.

If you believe your competitors are clicking your ads or you are investing heavily in a competitive market you will want to take a look at additional fraud protection. Two of the current leaders in the PPC fraud prevention software market are [Who'sClickingWho](#) and KeywordMax [Click Auditor](#). They both keep track of clicks from IP addresses over time. Even if a competitor only clicks on your ads every few days it still adds up over time. This software allows you to accumulate the evidence you need to reverse charges and potentially file a lawsuit.

## Google Adwords



Google AdWords gets it's own extremely long section because it is exceptionally more complicated than other PPC search engines.

### Google vs. Overture:

Google AdWords and Overture are in a battle for search distribution. One or both of these PPC delivers ads on nearly every major search engine or portal.

### Google Bid Prices vs. Click Costs:

With Google you pick a maximum bid price and your bid will never exceed that. Their software has a bid discounter built in, so often times your average bid cost may be way less than your bid prices.

Google bid prices are not transparent so your competitors have no way to be sure exactly what your ads are costing (due to factoring in click through rates into effective bid price – which I will explain later). Often times your actual price is much lower than your maximum bid price. Remember that on Google it is average click cost that matters and that is often way different than your max bid.

### A few Things you can do with AdWords:

Google AdWords is an advertising medium like no other.

- There is only a \$5 signup fee (which is converted into bid credits).
- You can have ads across Google's network of sites in less than 10 minutes.
- Google's broad match technology allows you to receive extremely broad distribution while keeping it quick, easy, and simple to use. Overture now does this too.
- Google's vast distribution network makes it possible to test a business model without fully investing into creating that business.
- Google AdWords has syndication which you can turn on or off to determine whether or not you want AOL users and other searchers to see your message.
- Google has a content network of sites (including a few of mine) which you can decide whether or not you want to advertise on.
- Google has rolled out Geotargeting so you can target your ad to a country, state, metro area, zip code, or geographic radius of your choice. You can run multiple ads for the same words and test them against each other or send them to different pages to A/B split test your site or ad copy.

### The Importance of a High Clickthrough Rate:

Google lets its users determine the relevancy of the ads. Price for Google AdWords is a function of price per click \* click through rate. Google uses the average click through rate from the 1,000 most recent ads in this calculation. This means if you know how to get a high click through rate you can dominate Google AdWords by serving up ads at a far cheaper rate than what your competitors are paying.

The best way to do well with Google AdWords is to create ads with a high click through rate.

Distribution buys further distribution. Off the start you will want to overbid slightly as you will be competing against the best ads that have developed over time in your niche. If your click through rate falls below .5% Google will slowly choke the ads and eventually will suspend the ad group.

The bid prices Google suggest are often somewhat high. I usually cut the suggested bid price by 50-75% when I first start an account. I then monitor closely and change it to try to maintain decent ad position.

### Broad Match, Phrase Match, and Exact Match:

Google AdWords and Overture both have different levels of word matching. Using [search term] will only return searches for **search term**.

Using "search term" will appear on **any ad that has search term in the query** (in the same order.)

Using search term (no quotations or brackets) will appear on **any search that has search and term in it**. Also with broad matching, synonyms to search term will also return results. If you decide to start off with broad matching you should view the synonyms to ensure none of them are wasteful.

Examples:	Match Type	Will Show Results For	Will not show results for
[eat cheese]	Exact	Eat cheese	Any other search.
"eat cheese"	Phrase	Eat cheese, I love to eat cheese, you eat cheese	Cheese eat, or anything else which does not have both elements together in the same order as the search term
Eat cheese	Broad	All above options and searches such as: cheese eating, ate cheddar, etc.	

Please note that Overture is combining broad match and phrase match into a single group called advanced match. Google still offers all three matching technologies.

### Google Keyword Sandbox:

(Not the same thing as the SEO phenomena some people call the Google Sandbox.)

The Google Keyword Sandbox (<http://www.adwords.google.com/select/main>) will show you what terms will be used for AdWords broad matching. In addition it will suggest other keywords you may want to advertise for. Unlike many of the other keyword suggestion tools the Google Keyword Sandbox does not offer search frequency. To test search frequency you need to set up a bidding account for the

specified term (please note: this can be expensive if you do not target and bid too high).

In December of 2004 Google also created a [search term suggestion tool](#) which auto-completes partial search queries. It does not show search volumes, but search volume is believed to play a heavy role in its output. The tool is currently only available in some languages.

### Negative Keywords:

There is a negative keyword option in both Overture and Google AdWords. Any word that you do not want your ad to appear for can simply be blocked by placing - badword beneath your keywords.

There are many words which would indicate a lack of desire to purchase anything. Words like crack, free, pic, mp3 or download are often money losers if you do not remember to include these in your - keyword list.

Example keyword list showing a negative keyword: (should be much longer and more detailed, this is just an example though)

Eat cheese  
Buy cheese  
-free

Thus your ad would show up for many cheese queries, but for none that included the words free. Google also allows you to filter negative keywords at a campaign level.

### Dynamic Keyword Mapping:

By including your keywords in your copy, you help boost the clickthrough rate. Keywords which occur in your ads will be highlighted by the search engine results page display processing program. This draws additional attention to your ad.

Google now offers a tool which will place the active search word from your keyword list in the ad title automatically. If you have a group of similar keywords that will still use the same body text you can enable this feature by writing out your normal body text, and placing {KeyWord: default keyword} in the title of the ad.

When the chosen keyword is greater than 25 characters the default ad title will show. Otherwise the ad will show the search term as the ad title. Also note how I capitalized the K and W in keyword. This makes the words in your ad title appear capitalized. You also can place dynamic keyword mapping technology in the middle of sentences, such as “Buy Cheap {KeyWord: default keyword}.”

### Getting Feedback from Your Account:

When opening up a Google AdWords account many people are hesitant to spend much money. In spending a small amount the business is essentially ignoring the feedback loop Google has set up.

Is it better to loose \$100 today, than to loose it over three months to finally come to the conclusion that you need to change? I would rather want to know that I need to change now. **Not all industries will make money from AdWords.** It is not a business model that will work perfectly across the board.

If you spent on targeted keywords your site should have a chance for success. Any good marketing internet based business relies on fast feedback loops to help it improve. Off the start you want to overspend on your ads so you can see which ones are effective. After a while you can regroup your ads by prices and then slash your bid price down. The ineffective ad groups or keywords will automatically shut off and your effective ads will keep displaying.

### Google Advertising Professional:

The [Google Advertising Professional program](#) is a program which allows marketers to be certified as a Google AdWords expert. The requirements are that you spend at least \$1,000 in a 90 day period after signing up, comply with their rules, and pass a test. After the 90 day period is up you can place a logo on your site which will perhaps make many people assume that Google endorses all of your SEO / SEM services.

The new program also allows you to link together up to 500 AdWords accounts so that you can access and manage them from a single login. Google also offers many [free online tutorials](#) which can help prepare you for the test and help you learn more about AdWords even if you do not want to take the test.

### Google AdWords is Responsible Advertising:

Add all the above features to the fact that Google also offers a free web based conversion tracking tool, and you can see how the AdWords system is a direct marketers dream. Everything is targetable, tangible, and measurable right down to the cent.

Google also offers a program by the name of [Google JumpStart](#) where they will help set up your account for you. Likely they will not be able to set up the best account for you, but they might be able to help you get your feet wet. The fee to join JumpStart is \$299, and the fee gets converted to bid clicks.

## Bonus Info: How to Improve Clickthrough Rate and Slash Google AdWords Costs to Maximize Profits:

### Determine Price By Position:

Often times the top ad position is losing money. To find out what the top position costs on Google AdWords you can enter \$50 as your bid price at the account setup process. The estimated cost per click would be how much that position would cost you assuming the standardized assumed click through rate (I believe this to be 1%).

You then can lower the bid price down until you get at position 2.0 then 3.0 and on down. Each time you get to a different integer you can look at the estimated click price to see what the click would cost assuming the standard click through rate. If you have a higher clickthrough rate the bid price for that position will be lower. If you have a low clickthrough rate your price will be higher.

### Determine how Competitive a Market is:

Often markets shift rather quickly. If you notice certain ads appearing again and again over time they are probably ads that are generating profits. For a quick glance at how competitive a market is you can download the software product by the name of [AdWord Analyzer](#) (\$67).

You also will want to record the top 10 results every few days for a few weeks to up to a month. If an ad is in around the same position (which is not from a huge corporation) after a month has passed they are probably earning profits.

### Listing Your ads on Top of Google Search Results:

While lower ad positions may have a better ROI in some markets they also may not provide adequate distribution to create significant profits. Google AdWords will occasionally list the top ad or two above the regular search results (versus off to the right side like most other AdWords ads). The top ads usually have a high clickthrough rate which helps lower click costs. If you get an ad which is placed in a premium position and then edit it then it may take a few days to get your ad to appear back in a top position.

The ad position on the Google SERP right column is determined strictly by the equation  $\text{max bid} \times \text{ad clickthrough rate}$ . Before an ad can appear on top it has to be reviewed by a human and the ad has to be deemed extremely relevant. Relevancy is closely approximated by clickthrough rate, so the ads which display above the Google search results factor in clickthrough rate more heavily than max bid.

If you get an ad which is placed in a premium position and then edit it your ad may take at least a few days appear back in a top position.

### Find the Best Products:

If you see a lot of affiliate ads then typically there is a dominant player or system in that keyword termspace. You may want to try purchasing your competitors product to see the whole sales path all the way through to the backend.

If there are more non affiliate ads than affiliate ads odds are that there is no dominant player / system in the marketplace yet.

### Checking Broad Match, Phrase Match, & Exact Match:

Often times simply using exact match can drastically increase click through rates. To determine if a person is using exact match do a search for *keyword A adfkafdisadf keyword B*



If their ad still shows up they are using broad match. If their ads are showing up for nonsensical broad match searches then they usually have a decent click through rate and are making profits.

You then can search for *keyword A keyword B dfadfkadfa*. If their ad does not show up for the broad match check and shows up for this check they are using phrase match.

If their ad does not show up for the phrase match, then they are advertising via exact match. Any time you are checking competitors' ads you will want to refresh the screen multiple times as sometimes certain ads will not show.

### Extreme Local Targeting:

Google will allow you to target your ads to:

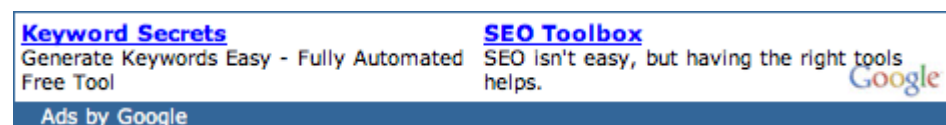
- any zip code or metropolitan area
- a radius near your business
- the defined coordinates of any polygon you enter

### Using Syndication:

You can check if your competitors are using AdSense syndication on content networks by performing a search on Amazon.com and then clicking through to a product from that search.

If you set up ad syndication you can (and should) make separate ad campaigns for each level of syndication. Bid whatever you determine to be fair market value for the Google AdWords distribution. **On that ad campaign disable all syndication.**

Set up a second campaign and bid a slightly lower amount and enable search syndication but do not enable content syndication.



Since content ads do not have as much implied desire they usually have a value of only around 20-30% of what of ads displayed on Google. Set up a third campaign with a significantly lower bid and enable content syndication. You may also want to try using image ads to lock out competition from being able to advertise against you.

At any given time Google will only display one of your ads. By using three separate tiers you ensure you bid a price which is close to fair market value for each ad network while still maximizing the reach of your ads.

Syndicated ads do not appear on partner sites until they are approved by an editor.

### How Google Determines AdSense Relevancy:

Google reads the content of AdSense publisher webpages to determine what their pages are about. When attempting to match ads with those pages Google considers:

- not a single keyword, but the entire keyword list associated with an ad group;
- adgroup creatives are also used to help understand what ads to display;
- max PPC and clickthrough rate also play into the order of the ads displayed; and
- you want to use well themed keyword adgroups to help ensure your ads are delivered properly. Including generic words like laptop can make it harder for Google to understand what your adgroup is trying to sell.
- Using appropriate campaign negative keywords can also help further target your ads.
- Google offers effective contextual advertising tips in this [free 9 minute video](#).

### Why Lower Ads Often have Better ROI:

The lower ads have a lower bid price. That can help save money if the top placed ads are overpriced. Another great benefit of having a lower ad is that a user that clicks on one is more prequalified to make a purchase. By scrolling through a bunch of ads they have displayed a greater intent to make a purchase.

These two mathematical facts often mean that listing at 5 or 6 often provides a better ROI than listing at the top. You will need to determine the profit elasticity for your market to see what ad locations will return the highest overall profits.

### Lowering Click Price after Bidding:

After you get 10 or 20 clicks and have a decent click through rate you may want to slash your bids in half or by 2/3. Often it is best to start off with your ad around the #1 or #2 positions to collect feedback and then let it fall back after you drop ad price.

### Expanding Breadth:

If you are running your ads correctly **the availability of well targeted ads** should be what is limiting your spend.

If your ad spend is limited by a budget and you are ranking high for many of the search terms you may want to lower your max bid to lower the position down to 3 to 7. In doing so you will be able to show up on more search results and people who are looking at the lower ad positions are more prequalified to buy.

### Dynamic Keyword Insertion:

If you have a group of similar keywords that will still use the same body text you can enable this feature by writing out your normal body text, and placing {Keyword: default keyword} in the title of the ad.

When the keyword matching the search is greater than 25 characters the default ad title will show. Otherwise the ad will show the search term as the ad title. Also note how I capitalized the K and W in keyword. This makes the words in your ad title appear capitalized.

Having keywords in your title can help your title jump out at people and improve click through rates.

Google now also allows you to pass the referring keyword trigger as a variable in the actual destination URL. To pass the trigger keyword as a variable use &kw={keyword}.

### Use Keyword Rich URL's to Your Advantage:

Often people view the URL as one of the most important parts of an ad. The ad title sticks out the most, but many people factor in the URL more than the copy. By changing your URL to a keyword rich URL you can sometimes raise your click through rate by 50 – 200%. A new throw away domain name only costs \$8 at [GoDaddy](#).

If you have some high selling affiliates you may want to reward them by giving them their own keyword rich domain. This can also help some of your affiliates get their message through to customers since a few bad affiliates can get messages with your URL in it blocked from being received by people using AOL or similar email clients.

### Bid on Competitors Names:

Trademark laws still have not been firmly set in this field. Google allows US and Canadian advertisers to bid on trademark names of their competitors. The competitors trademark names may not appear in the ad, but they can be used as the ad trigger word.

If you use competitor names as the triggering word then you need to group that in an ad that is not using dynamic keyword insertion or your ad title will put you in trademark violation.

Keep in mind that since the laws are gray in this area you may run into some problems if you push the envelope and do not respond to complaints. I believe in the US trademark owners are required to inform you of the problem and give you a chance to fix it before they have a chance to sue you for damages (whether or not they can sue you is still somewhat up in the air).

I did this particular technique and ticked off about a dozen SEOs who made a few hate threads. I primarily was looking for AdSense ad space in articles, but some of the SEOs had nasty comments about the technique (although it is rather common technique).

You may want to ask people before using their names if you think they may take it the wrong way. Another good way to appear on many of the content sites is to run your ads on phrase match for some of the more popular article titles in your industry.

### Viewing Geographically Targeted Ads:

Often people will target ads to a specific country. If you are not in the country you will be advertising in you can view the country specific ads by adding &gl=country code to the search string (ca for Canada, US for United States, UK for United Kingdom, etc).

If Google is mixing in state regional ads it will list the state name at the bottom of the ad.

Geotargeting can allow you to afford words which may be broader than your globally effective keywords since they geotargeting only delivers ads to locations you are interested in advertising at.

You may want to break your ads down by different price levels by country codes. One of my friends nearly doubled his ROI by placing ads from low converting countries in their own cheaper ad groups.

### Sending Users to a Landing Page:

The conversion process works best when you remove unnecessary steps. By sending a user to a focused landing page versus your home page you can improve conversion rates.

### Use Capital Letters:

Google will allow you to use capital letters at the beginning of words in the title and in the description. Using capital letters at the beginning of each word in your ad title and ad description can also help boost your clickthrough rate.

### Split Testing:

Google will allow you to test multiple ads at any given time. Every week you should try to make a new ad and place it up against the best ad from the week prior. If you have an ad that is getting an exceptionally low click through rate and another pulling decent you can usually get rid of the bad ad after a few clicks on it.

Perry Marshall created a free online [Split Testing tool](#) which will help guide you using mathematics to determine if it is whether or not you have collected enough data do stop testing. He said he usually recommends waiting until it is at least 90% to 95% sure of the results (as determined by the software).

You can also make two copies of the same ad and send it to different URLs to test different landing pages.

When split testing you will want to turn off the auto optimization tool and you may want to limit the test only to Google so you can get the most accurate data.

### If You Are Having Problems with a Word:

For your highest traffic and most expensive keywords you will usually want to make custom ads specific to each one. If you have a word that is giving you problems in an ad group, remove it from the ad group and set it out on its own.

Off the start you can try to exact match it for a while. If you try multiple exact match specific targeted ads for that keyword and still can not get it to run then that might not be a word worth running an ad for.

### Cheap Traffic:

Some AOL users have type search term here in their search queries. Some of them accidentally run searches with the word here attached to a term, like *hereViagra* or *hereYourTerm*. Some people search for stuff like NBA Basketball.com. There is a ton of cheap targeted traffic if you are creative.

### Affiliate Ads:

Google only allows one affiliate or merchant ad per keyword per URL. This means that affiliates do not need to identify their relationships in the ads and whoever has the ad with the highest effective click price between the merchant and all of their affiliates gets their ad displayed.

Affiliates can still have their ads show up if they create white label affiliate sites with information about the products.

### Creative PPC Techniques:

Mikkel wrote a few good ppc tips in [this article](#). A few pointers he offered were:

- Think creatively.
- Do not point PPC ads at landing pages.
- You may be able to cloak pages that the ad editors see.
- Do not use the budget function.

Someone at ThreadWatch also mentioned that some of your most creative AdWords ad ideas might be best to try out on a Friday evening so that they may be able to run a full weekend before being spotted by an editor.

If you have the top premium AdSense position and also rank well in the organic listings you can help bump the #2 premium ad position down to the right rail if you edit your copy. It may take up to 3 days for an editor to read your new ad and raise both ads to the top of the results again.

### Getting Quicker Business Feedback:

When starting a B2B account it is often a bad idea to start an account on a weekend. Monday is usually the biggest spending day for most B2B purchases and is the best day to start your ads.

Lead generation is a smarter way to dive into Google AdWords than trying to sell affiliate products. Since it is common to have a lead generation rate of 10-20% the feedback loop is about 10 times as fast as selling a product that may convert at 1-2%.

### Google AdWords Competitive Analysis Software:

Google does not give its users tons of information about competing sites. Recently a couple software products hit the market which ping Google and determine the ad display rate and average ad position for your ads and competing ads. You can use this information to see which competitors are most sophisticated and what positions have the most competition and perhaps profits.

[AdArchiver](#) is a cheaper lower end product. [AdGooroo](#) is a higher end more sophisticated system. Google also released an [API](#) which allows people to build interfacing software.

### Additional AdWords Resources:

- Google offers a [free ebook](#) to help you get the most out of your Google AdWords account.
- Andrew Goodman's [Google AdWords report](#).
- Perry Marshall's [Definitive Guide to Google AdWords](#).
- Google Advertising Professional Program  
<https://adwords.google.com/select/ProfessionalWelcome>
- Google's learning center  
<http://www.google.com/adwords/learningcenter/>
- Many of the Google AdWords tips I learned came from Andrew Goodman's and Perry Marshall's reports.

## Resources Cited

### Literature:

- Overture Advertiser Workbook: (free)  
(<http://www.content.overture.com/d/USm/ac/tu/ebk.jhtml>)
- Google's Maximum Effect Guide (free)  
([http://www.google.com/ads/library/maximum\\_effect\\_dec03.pdf](http://www.google.com/ads/library/maximum_effect_dec03.pdf))
- Andrew Goodman's 21 Way AdWords Report (<http://www.page-zero.com/>)
- Perry Marshall's Definitive Guide to Google AdWords  
(<http://www.perrymarshall.com/adwords/>)

- Google Advertising Professional Program  
<https://adwords.google.com/select/ProfessionalWelcome>
- Google's learning center  
<http://www.google.com/adwords/learningcenter/>
- Black Hat PPC  
<http://www.e-marketing-news.co.uk/Mar05/black-hat-ppc.html>

## Software:

### Customer Tracking & Bid Management

- ClickTracks - log file analyzer...awesome (<http://www.clicktracks.com/>)
- Urchin – offers both log file analyzer and downloadable software. Google recently purchased Urchin. (<http://www.urchin.com>)
- Index Tools – web based tracking software (<http://www.indextools.com>)
- WebSideStory – (<http://www.websidestory.com>)
- ConversionRuler – web based PPC click tracking  
(<http://www.conversionruler.com>)
- Extreme Tracking - free tracking software (<http://extreme-dm.com/tracking/>)
- SiteMeter - free tracking software  
(<http://www.sitemeter.com/default.asp?action=newaccount>)
- BidRank - downloadable bid management software  
(<http://www.bidrank.com>)
- KeywordMax – web based software (<http://www.keywordmax.com>)
- Atlas OnePoint - web based software (<http://www.atlasonepoint.com/>)
- Overture Search Optimizer  
(<http://www.content.overture.com/d/USm/ac/pr/so.jhtml>)
- Google also offers a free cross platform tracking product with AdWords which can track email ads, banner ads, and various PPC search engine ads.

### Fraud Prevention Software

- Who's Clicking Who (<http://www.whosclicckingwho.com/>)
- Click Auditor ([http://www.keywordmax.com/click\\_auditor.html](http://www.keywordmax.com/click_auditor.html))

### Keyword Suggestion Tools

- Digital Point Keyword Suggestion Tool (<http://www.digitalpoint.com/tools/suggestion/>)
- Keyword Discovery (<http://www.keyworddiscovery.com/>)
- Good Keywords (<http://www.goodkeywords.com/>)
- The Google Keyword Sandbox (<http://www.adwords.google.com/select/main>)
- Google Search Suggestion (organized by search volume) (<http://www.google.com/webhp?complete=1&hl=en>)
- Overture Keyword Suggestion Tool (<http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/>)
- Overture View Bid Price Tool ([http://uv.bidtool.overture.com/d/search/tools/bidtool/?Keywords=casino&mkt=us&lang=en\\_US](http://uv.bidtool.overture.com/d/search/tools/bidtool/?Keywords=casino&mkt=us&lang=en_US))
- Country Specific Search Frequency (<http://www.seoindex.com/index.php?c=26>)

### Keyword List Creators

- Free web based (<http://www.related-pages.com/adwordskeywords.aspx>)
- Free downloadable software (<http://www.googedit.com/>)
- \$50 downloadable software (<http://www.thepermutator.com>)

### AdWord Analyzer

- Helps you see how many competing ads there are. (<http://www.adwordanalyzer.com>)

### AdWords Competitive Analysis Software

- AdArchiver – cheaper competitive analysis software. (<http://www.adarchiver.com>)
- AdGooroo – more expensive and more sophisticated software. (<http://www.adgooroo.com/>)
- Google AdWords API (<http://www.google.com/apis/adwords/>)

### Websites:

- ZoneEdit (<http://www.zoneedit.com>)



- Split Tester (<http://www.splittester.com/>)
- Google Contextual AdWords Tips (<http://www.google.com/adwords/context/webinar/1971/index.html>)

#### Large Pay Per Click Search Engines

- Google AdWords (<https://adwords.google.com/select/main>)
- Overture (<http://www.overture.com>)

#### Smaller Pay Per Click Search Engines

- FindWhat (<http://www.findwhat.com>)
- Kanoodle (<http://www.kanoodle.com>)
- Enhance Interactive (<http://www.enhance.com>)
- Search123 (<http://www.search123.com>)
- Epilot (<http://www.epilot.com>)

### Some Notes

- Sign up for a Google AdWords account (one time \$5 fee which is converted into bid credits) (<https://adwords.google.com/select/main>)
- Write down 5 generic terms for your website. Check the traffic for these terms using the Overture Keyword Suggestion Tool. (<http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/>)
- Search for these terms and view how much people are bidding using the Overture bid price tool. ([http://uv.bidtool.overture.com/d/search/tools/bidtool/?Keywords=yourkeyword&mkt=us&lang=en\\_US](http://uv.bidtool.overture.com/d/search/tools/bidtool/?Keywords=yourkeyword&mkt=us&lang=en_US))
- Do the words seem like they are worth their price? Do these prices surprise you?
- Check the price of these same words with your Google account. Are these prices close to one another?
- Write down 10 negative keywords for your site. Why are these words bad?
- Write down 10 phrases you think you can make a killing off of. Why are these phrases good? Check the prices, are these generic terms? If they are generic write down ten more terms and compare their prices.
- Before spending money on pay per click you should spend hours writing ad copy and many hours performing keyword research.

- If you intend to spend heavily on Google AdWords you may want to read the additional reports I linked to. You only need to find one or two good tips from a different perspective for those reports to pay for themselves.

## Monitoring Results

**S**earch engine marketing is an ongoing process which is never really done. You should reserve some time each month for viewing the competition and working hard to create new ideas to help spread your popularity.

The web grows with or without you, so if you are stagnant then you are falling behind.

### When Results Don't Show

#### Think Big:

With pay per click or regular search engines you should always be looking to improve your bottom line. Hosting has gotten so cheap that more traffic does not usually cost much more money. Most people rarely come near their limits. Pay per click advertising it is the same thing that Don LaPree preaches with his newspaper ads, except that it is way more trackable and has faster feedback loops. You find something that is marginally profitable and repeat it many times over. Keep refining the ads and increase profit margins.

#### The Value of Large, Reputable Services:

Sometimes results never show up. That is why it is important to **stick with the larger pay per click search engines** when you use them. If you start using small ones you not only have to spend more time managing a ton of accounts, but you may also be buying traffic which is only machine generated. The things you need to focus on are your site, your ads, and your conversions. It is easy to lose focus of the big picture if you are trying to maintain 25 accounts.

#### Why Isn't It Working?

With regular search listing it takes months of optimization and gathering links to list well. If your site does not list at all after a month or two (especially for really focused terms such as your own domain name or domain string), then it indicates a problem. You have either not created enough inbound links for the search engine to find you, or you are being penalized for spamming, or you do not know how to find your site, or have technical problems with your site.

## SEO Worst Practice Manual

This chapter is dedicated to some of the tricks people try to play on search engines. Much the same as people spam your inbox; many others are spamming the search engines. Some of the most common current techniques are:

- free for all link exchange – not effective
- cloaking (if done incorrectly) – cheap cloaking is usually bad cloaking
- redirects – usually not effective
- hiding text either on or off the page – not effective
- interlinking many small sites to gain popularity (**this one still usually works exceptionally well if done correctly**)
- keyword stuffing – not effective
- link renting / buying & creating a link network (**this one still usually works exceptionally well if done correctly**)

### Why They Usually do Not Work:

#### Free For All:

Free for all link exchanges are very easy to spot for search engines. Once they are spotted they get issued a spam penalty and many get deleted from the search engine index.

As long as there is some small amount of value there some adult or drug website webmaster will find it. After one finds it many follow and then the site becomes worthless.

#### Redirects:

Meta redirects with short time duration are offered a small penalty to lower their relevancy. Google has been doing a better job of spidering java redirects recently and has penalized many sites that were using mouseover redirects. Yahoo! editors may remove your site from their search index if they notice deceptive redirects.

If you do move a site or page you can use a 301 redirect to allow the link popularity to parse through to the new location. If you do move site locations you will want to leave the old site up for a few weeks to a month to ensure search engines and internet service providers have updated the old DNS details for your site before taking it down.

#### Link Renting & Creating a Link Network:

Link renting and creating link networks are exceptionally effective SEO techniques if done correctly (though if your link renting or site networks are done exclusively to manipulate search results and it is easily detectable you may get penalized).

Linking a bunch of small sites together also shows up easily if you do not have a bunch of different external links pointing into your link network. Many search engines also have the ability to devalue links from the same C block IP range or from the same owner. Make sure if you do this you register your domains through a proxy, use various hosts for different sites, and get a bunch of links pointing into your sites. If you create link networks and do not have original useful content on each site (and reasons for creating many sites) then you are taking a risk that your site may be removed from search results.

Some people also use automated bots to scour the web for links. They still work some, **but they really annoy some people and can ruin your branding.**

Hidden Text:

Hidden text usually exists on sites that have other problems as well. If the search engines find it they drop the site. While it is sometimes hard for a search engine to find, fellow webmasters may rat you out to the search engines or not want to exchange links with you for using this practice. Yahoo! actively edits their search results and that would be a large amount of traffic to lose if they found you.

Cloaking:

If cloaking is done correctly it is extremely hard to detect. The problem with cloaking is that **it builds no intrinsic value**. As the web grows your site stays stagnant. I would not be interested in chancing my long term financial stability on the ability of one software company to stay ahead of the major search engines indefinitely.

If you do use cloaking I would recommend going with one of the best: [Fantomaster](#).

\*\*\*\*\* Link Building / spam TANGENT\*\*\*\*\*

Black Hat is the term given to unethical SEO. When in doubt if something is bad feel free to ask me. I also have recently created [blackhatseo.com](#) as an example directory of promotion ideas which will typically waste your time and money. Me creating Black Hat SEO caused some people to view me in a negative light.

Even if people hate it they may talk about it...as the idea spreads I will become more well known. **To be extremely successful on the web you either have to be really good or really bad...**that site is really bad...but it has a clear purpose. Now the entire industry has to either come up with a different catch phrase, or my site sticks as the official answer... That is a bunch of marketing power I can leverage in the future!!!

Within 6 months of me making that site Danny Sullivan (of SearchEngineWatch) mentioned it in a new article about spam. Since that site has came out it has cost less than \$5 a month and has generated thousands of dollars worth of business, link popularity, and notoriety.

- It is hard for me to get people to link to “Aaron Wall: SEO Consultant.”

- It is somewhat easier for me to get links into “SEO Book: free search engine news.”
- It is way easier for me to get links into “Black Hat SEO: funny link directory.”

\*\*\*\*\*END TANGENT\*\*\*\*\*

### Why Frames are Evil:

Though it is not a spam technique it is not recommended that you use frames. The problem with frames is that everything on the internet has a defined location, except frames. While the home page has a defined location the search engine will not group the other frame sets. All the internal documents will show as stand alone pages, which will require you to use redirects to display the frameset. You can use a noframes tag to allow search engines to read the content, but you still will have other major problems.

The most evil thing about frames is that if I do not know what the URL of one of your great articles is, **then how can I link to it?**

### Aggressive SEO Practices Which Still Help:

Some SEO firms still do rather well by creating reciprocal link rings and by buying links. When a person is paying for placement in the Yahoo! Directory, they are renting links the same way that “unethical” SEO firms are. Ethics is generally a bogus term to use in relation to SEO. Effective vs ineffective and risk vs reward are better ways of describing different SEO practices.

When exchanging links you do not want to exchange links with any site that does not add value to your user experience or offer you great strategic advantages. I have in the past reciprocated links with a few off topic sites, but usually I would only consider doing this if my site was new and theirs was extremely powerful.

When buying links you should look at local 501 C nonprofit sites, blogs, and other sites that sell links rather cheaply. Sometimes sites inside your industry will rent or sell links at reasonable prices.

### Aggressive SEO Firms:

Many people will play the ethics angle to promote themselves. Search engine ethics is a rather bogus concept when you are getting paid a ton of money to promote corporations which use sweatshop labor.

It is important that you can trust your SEO, and you should know if they are doing anything which could get you punished. It is a fact though that the search engines and SEO firms owe each other absolutely nothing when it comes to the organic search results.

I recently became more aggressive, though I am still rather conservative in comparison to many SEO firms. It is a balancing act.

Link purchasing is an effective form of advertisement just like buying a billboard. Many people who sell links do not care about your gain, but their own. There are some exceptionally gifted link broker networks out there, but they are not necessarily going to be easy to find. If you are marketing in an extremely aggressive category I can help you find a link broker that suits your needs, but you will probably save money by hunting out cheap links from related sites and listing in directories first. Whenever possible I also try to rent “run of the site” links versus renting single links.

If something seems like a thing you have never heard of before or it can not be easily explained then it should probably be questioned. If the idea shows search engines one thing and then shows the user something else it is generally not a good practice unless it is via paid inclusion, or is done by an extremely talented SEO.

Feel free to ask me if you have any specific questions on the topic.

## Other Problems

### Flash

Often people like to use flash to show off their web design talents. Many people are overwhelmed by flash content. Some dialup visitors will not wait for your flash to load. Overture and Google AdWords have become such an effective advertising medium **because of their simplicity**.

I strongly urge not using flash on most websites because it gives search engines inadequate content to read. If you do not give search engines much text then you will need a larger linking campaign to get that page to rank well. If you do embed a flash object make sure you also provide content inside noembed tags to help search engines understand what is inside the flash.

<NOEMBED> My happy content or whatever...</NOEMBED>

### Session IDs - Do Not Feed Search Engines Cookies:

Assuming you have many incoming links and your site is still not indexed after an extended period of time you should do some evaluation. If you have not received a spam penalty and your site was not previously banned you may have a technical issue.

There are many dynamic websites which only get a fraction of their web pages indexed. Search engines are getting better at finding the pages, but they still do not like session ids. If a search engine thinks you are giving it a session ID number it will not want to cache your page.

If search engines indexed sites that gave them session ID numbers they could draw too much from the site in a quick amount of time and crash the server, they could get the idea that the site is much larger than it actually is, or they could fill their index up with pages that no longer exist.

## Dynamic Site Fiction

Some ill informed people say that search engines penalize sites for having a .asp or .php extension. **This is complete garbage.**

Search engines read any page as hypertext no matter what the file extension is. If a site is not getting indexed it usually is lacking in sufficient inbound link popularity, is using java navigation that spiders can not follow, or is issuing the search engine spiders a session ID or cookies.

## Get Around Your Problems:

To check whether or not your page is in the Google cache you can do a search in Google for cache:www.mysite.com/mypage.whatever. If the page is in their cache then Google is reading it just fine.

The best tips I have been told for getting dynamic content spidered are have three or less variables, and keep each product or category ID variable at or below 10 digits. Building a site map can also help spiders find your inner pages.

If you do not have dozens of inbound links into a large database driven site then only a small portion of your site is likely to get indexed.

Also, if you are using an Apache server you can use [mod rewrite](#) to write your inner pages as if they were static domains and not executed variables. Microsoft servers also have [custom software solutions](#). In the next section I will cover what I consider a last alternative way around some of these types of problems: paid inclusion.

## Free Help:

If you are uncertain if something is wrong with your site there is a ton of free feedback available at the [SEO forums](#). Often times you will get great free advice because the person giving it either likes to help people or realizes that it is great marketing to help people out.

## Speeding Things Up - Paid Inclusion

### Disclaimers:

- I do not usually use paid inclusion. It may be worth the fee for helping teach how to do SEO, but I think the fees are rarely justified for most sites.
- **Yahoo! has been cracking down on low quality content.** If your site is less than 100% legit or does not have substantial original content I would not recommend using Yahoo!'s paid inclusion program. If you submit it to their paid inclusion program and they reject you they may remove your site from their search index.

### Paid Inclusion Benefits:

- The first benefit of paid inclusion is that you are guaranteed that your page will be in the index, even if your site would otherwise have a dynamic issue



that was stopping it. You may not immediately list exceptionally well with it, but it will be in the index.

- Paid inclusion programs also offer a rapid refresh rate, which is perfect if you have rotating stock.
- Paid inclusion gives you the chance to tweak your page to match the algorithm and see the changes in the rankings within a couple days. This is invaluable if you are teaching yourself how to do SEO. It gives you a rapid feedback loop which helps you learn and change quickly.
- Yahoo! Search heavily weighs in page content into their algorithm. Yahoo! factors in links, but nowhere near as much as Google or Teoma does. Add a decent number of quality inbound text links to a page ranking well in Yahoo! Search and it should list well in Google, Teoma, and other major engines.

### Why I Don't Use Paid Inclusion:

I do not recommend buying many paid inclusion programs unless you have a page of rotating stock that you need updated frequently.

Yahoo! is the only major paid inclusion program with a decent amount of traffic. They charge recurring fees for each click which does not work with many business models. Their paid inclusion program goes by the name of Overture Site Match.

#### Overture Site Match:

Inktomi Site Submit was replaced by Overture Site Match (Yahoo!'s paid inclusion program), which charges a review fee and an incremental cost per click. Having a web page included in the [Site Match paid inclusion program](#) costs \$49/year, plus a flat category based cost per click of 15 cents or 30 cents. There is speculation within the SEO community that Yahoo! may be thinking about dumping or changing its paid inclusion program.

#### Yahoo! Search's Info:

Yahoo! Search has a rather large index. It is also an algorithm which is primarily driven by page content. Typically if you list good in Yahoo! and then add a quality linking program you should rank well in the other major search engines which place more focus on links.

One of the good things about Site Match program is that if an editor reviews and views your content as valuable then they may shift it over so that they use that page as a seed page to get the rest of your site indexed. Additionally Yahoo! offers free inclusion into the Site Match program to some 501C charity websites.

Most people spending money on paid inclusion programs would fair better to spend their money on building a linking campaign. I only recommend paid inclusion if your site has rapidly rotating stock, is driven by a large database that search engines struggle to crawl, or if you need the tracking associated with the Site Match program.

### Other Paid Inclusion Programs:

[InfoSpace](#) has a paid inclusion programs, but they do not get enough traffic to justify the fee for smaller websites. If you build up sufficient link popularity your site may get spidered by the major search engines frequently enough to where there would be no purpose to pay for InfoSpace paid inclusion.

InfoSpace powers less than 10% of the overall search market. Google and Yahoo! Search control the lion share of the market.

Many other small search engines such as EntireWeb offer paid inclusion, but generally I think they are not money well spent. I usually do not recommend paying for inclusion in sites or search indexes that do not provide a **spiderable static text link to your site**.

General and topical directories are important to list in, but you need to investigate the area thoroughly before spending. Make sure they provide you with a spiderable text link and that the page you will be listed on is in the Google index by checking [cache:www.whateverdirectory.com/mycategory.html](http://cache:www.whateverdirectory.com/mycategory.html) from Google and Yahoo!.

## Other Search Engines

There are hundreds of search engines on the web, but only a few control most of the traffic. Generally speaking if I did not mention a search engine in the ebook I do not think of it as a primary concern for most search engine marketers.

### Smaller Foreign Search Engines:

Some asian search engines operate using different functions for relevancy than their current worldwide counterparts since many of the characters are ran together. Recently Yahoo! and Google have both invested in this space and I would expect rapid shifts in relevancy in the next year.

Most of the other large search engines (domestic or international) can easily be found out by checking the latest Neilson / Netratings figures [from SearchEngineWatch](#).

### Shopping Search Engines:

I did not cover shopping search engines extensively but they usually operate similarly to how pay per click search engines work. Shopping search engines have a limited distribution compared with the larger search engines. The major shopping search engines are Bizrate, DealTime (owns shopping.com and Epinions), Kelkoo (a European shopping search engine purchased by Yahoo!), Froogle, Yahoo! Shopping, MSN Shopping, Price Grabber, and MySimon.

Expect to see significant consolidation in this market soon. Google has actively been promoting their Froogle product and Yahoo! bought Kelkoo toward the end of 2003. [Click here](#) for more information about shopping search engines.

#### Local Search:

Local search has the potential to be a rather large market, as North America Yellow Pages bring in 16 billion dollars per year.

Various businesses will tell you that is not a big deal and other businesses will tell you that it is the best thing since sliced bread. Typically who is funding the report determines the outcome.

Local search is still somewhat underdeveloped. [Google Local](#) recently allowed businesses to [list their local information for free](#). [Yahoo! Local](#) allows sites to be [listed for free](#) and charges \$9.95 a month for premium placement.

If you have a local type business you may also want to look at some of the other local search properties such as [CitySearch](#), [SuperPages](#), and [SwitchBoard](#).

#### Invisible Tabs:

A general search database can only provide a useful search service for a limited number of search queries. That is why so many vertical search engines exist. They can afford to buy leads from Google or Yahoo! and then funnel them through the sales cycle and sell them at a higher price to merchants.

All of the major search engines are also looking to build out their vertical search offerings. Sometimes at Google you will notice above the search results they have links to news, press releases, local search, Froogle (shopping search), stock quotes, weather, maps, books, and other types of information.

Google calls this area OneBox. Danny Sullivan wrote a great article about this concept called [Searching with Invisible Tabs](#) which helps explain what this technology does. Essentially if search engines know enough about you or your query to assume that a smaller more specific database will provide better results than the general database they will make that selection for you.

For the time being general search is exceptionally important, but as time passes these niche databases will be used more and more frequently. If you have a local business it is probably worth the time to submit your business details to local search engines. If you sell a wide variety of products it is probably worth your time to submit a Froogle feed.

#### Search Engine Papers:

If you are interested in more of the algorithm stuff there are some [free great documents](#) out there which go into great detail.

#### Websites:

- SearchEngineWatch search engine ratings and reviews (<http://searchenginewatch.com/reports/index.php>)
- Shopping Search Engines (<http://searchenginewatch.com/links/article.php/2156331>)

- Black Hat SEO (<http://www.blackhatseo.com>)
- Old article I wrote about SEO Forums (<http://www.search-marketing.info/newsletter/articles/seo-forums.htm>)
- Free ebooks and literature (<http://www.search-marketing.info/literature/free.htm>)
- Overture Content Match – paid inclusion program – not recommended to most webmasters  
(<http://www.content.overture.com/d/USm/aya/sm.jhtml>)
- Lycos Insite paid inclusion – not recommended to most webmasters  
(<http://insite.lycos.com/inclusion/searchenginesubmit.asp>)
- Excite Paid inclusion – not recommended to most webmasters  
([https://secure.ah-ha.com/guaranteed\\_inclusion/teaser.aspx?network=ah-ha](https://secure.ah-ha.com/guaranteed_inclusion/teaser.aspx?network=ah-ha))
- Searching with Invisible Tabs  
(<http://searchenginewatch.com/searchday/article.php/3115131>)
- Google Local (<http://local.google.com/>) Add your site to Google Local  
(<http://www.google.com/local/add/>)
- Yahoo! Local (<http://local.yahoo.com/>) Add your site to Yahoo! Local.  
(<http://listings.local.yahoo.com/>)
- CitySearch (<http://www.citysearch.com/>)
- SuperPages (<http://www.superpages.com/>)
- SwitchBoard (<http://www.switchboard.com/>)

#### Software:

- Fantomaster – industrial strength cloaking (<http://www.fantomaster.com>)
- ISAPI rewrite software – url rewrite software from MicroSoft servers  
(<http://www.isapirewrite.com/>)
- Mod Rewrite – url rewrite instructions for Apache servers  
([http://httpd.apache.org/docs/mod/mod\\_rewrite.html](http://httpd.apache.org/docs/mod/mod_rewrite.html))

## Hiring an SEO

### The Goal of this Ebook:

The goal of this ebook was to be a do it yourself guide to SEO. Some people read through this and say that its too much and they do not want to do it.

The core of SEO is a simple concept...you want other people to link to your with your primary keyword phrases in their link text. That is what good SEO is.

If you do not remember parts of the ebook you can look at it later or ask questions at SEO forums. Additionally the last chapter is a quick start checklist. I decided to add this section to the ebook because I know some people who read this ebook end up wanting to buy SEO services and hopefully I can help them find a good partner.

### What are My Goals?

#### Sales:

That is what most businesses or webmasters want. Some people think they need a number one ranking, but ranking number one in and of itself may not mean a bunch.

Each day around half of all web searches are unique. If you do SEO well then you site not only shows up ok for some of the generic terms related to your products, but also lots of specific terms.

#### Buying Rankings:

When you buy SEO it is best to pay for targeted traffic instead of just trying to buy a number one ranking. You should communicate clearly with your SEO so they understand what your specific goals are. You also should feel comfortable with them and trust them before you give them any money. If you do not feel comfortable then you are likely better off to keep shopping around.

Pay for quality targeted traffic, do not pay for rankings!

#### Risk vs Reward:

Some SEO techniques are more risky than others. Make sure you understand what risks are associated with your promotion techniques.

There are exceptionally cheap and effective automated techniques which eventually may cause your site to get penalized. If you are setting up throw away domains that may be fine, but if you are not using a throw away domain you will want to avoid those types of techniques.

#### Timetable:

Most SEOs are not able to gain top rankings or tons of traffic overnight. Make sure you know what to expect and when. If you need traffic in a hurry then you will probably want to use pay per click search engines.

## SEO Business Models

#### Profit Share:

Some SEOs may be interested in working using a profit share business model. This type of relationship requires a great amount of trust from both parties. Usually people who do not know you well will not want to work for a potential share of future profits.

I can not even tell you how many people set up a generic pharmacy template driven affiliate website and want me to work for future profits for them.

Most SEOs are not going to want to work via profit share off the start. If you have an original great idea some may but it is going to be hard for most webmasters to find a profit share SEO partner.

#### Pay Per Click:

Some marketers specifically sell services for setting up and managing pay per click search engine accounts. Some people charge 20% of ad spend for management, some people charge for account setup and let you run things from there, and some people charge recurring fees.

Different business models will be better for you depending on how competitive your market is and how complex your campaign needs to be. If you have an exceptionally cheap campaign then it will be hard to get people to work for 20% of ad spend.

#### Sell All Clicks as Pay Per Click:

Some SEOs sell both organic traffic and pay per click ads on a cost per click basis. This has recurring fees, but also may limit your down payment risk since you are only paying for traffic which you get.

#### Cloaking and Doorway Pages:

Some software allows people to automatically generate thousands of keyword rich pages a day. Obviously search engines do not like this technique. Some people are exceptionally good at cloaking, but you still may get caught if you use it.

If you find yourself paying only a few hundred dollars you will want to set up different sites for those types of services and you will not want to connect those

other sites to your other site in any way. Multiple sites can get penalized because one of them was doing something shady.

### Create a Content Network for You:

Some SEOs create a content network for you and charge you for the traffic. In a sense this is leasing traffic in a way similar to using pay per click search engines. If they know what they are doing they should be able to provide you targeted traffic cheaper than pay per click search engines do, but there are a couple major downsides to this business model.

- Some of these networks also sell traffic to your competitors...meaning you could be paying to set up networks that send traffic at competing websites.
- Some of these networks may require a down payment which takes many years to pay itself off. After they already have your money there is no guarantee that they will care about you.
- When your clicks run out you have to pay again.
- If you decide not to renew then in the end you paid to create another competing website which will continue to drive traffic at competing websites.

### One Time Fee for SEO on Your Site:

Some niche fields have little competition. If you do not have many competing websites in your field you may be able to rank well by doing on page SEO, performing a bit of directory registration, and trading a few links. In niche fields you may be able to get by with only paying a one time fee.

Most quality SEO services (even for a niche site) will cost over a thousand dollars since there is great value in it. Some people who do not realize what their services are worth may charge less, but if you pay only a few hundred dollars you stand a good chance of wasting time and money.

### Ongoing Fees for SEO:

If you are in a competitive field doing a good job of SEO may require ongoing fees. Many SEOs also require a down payment before they begin work. The competitive nature of the market will determine what rates work.

Some SEOs will be cheaper than others, while some charge a hefty premium for their knowledge and experience. If you are in a field such as gambling or pharmacy then the associated SEO fees are going to be much greater than they are for a person selling pillows or dog toys.

### Size of Firm:

As an individual I am somewhat biased in saying that I think small SEO firms generally do a better job than larger ones.

There are a ton of problems with scaling out a large SEO firm.

- Most people inherently are not going to be as creative or knowledgeable as some of the better SEOs.
- As the size of the firms increase cost increases exponentially.
- It is hard to keep good SEOs working at larger firms because they might feel like they are lost in the shuffle.
- Doing SEO does not necessarily require a ton of expenses or an office. If a person could make \$100,000 or more per year working out of their house why would they want to work for a firm for much less?

## More Information on Buying SEO Services

### SEO Trade Unions & SEO Directories:

Any trade union or SEO directory will have some people (likely marketers) at the center of it. This may of course cause conflict. SEMPO, for example has been ridiculed to death by many prominent members of the SEO community. I do not recommend SEMPO.

There are a few more reputable locations you can look for SEOs at. SMA is comprised of many regional SEO / SEM trade associations which intends to be a bit more reputable than SEMPO. A couple other spots where you can hunt for SEO / SEM professionals are:

- [SEO Pros](#) – reviewed best practices guide of SEO firms.
- [SEO Consultants](#) – reviewed directory of SEO firms.
- SEO forums – much of the information in SEO forums will be outdated, but it is an additional location where you can seek feedback about SEO firms.

People somehow related to Traffic Power made a bunch of fake forums to promote there less than stellar services, but on most SEO forums you will find a few friendly people who provide good answers to SEO questions.

Some of the people who seem like they would be compatible with you may be worth contacting to see if they are available to perform SEO services. At various SEO forums you will find various different biases, so it is a good idea to ask questions at a bunch of different forums to get a feel for them.

You can also find further information about hiring an SEO at [HonestSEO.com](#).



## Quick Start Checklist

Some people have stated that they thought some of the stuff in this ebook was a bit complex or maybe too much information. Just in case you forgot some of the stuff, if any of it was confusing, or you need help getting a foot in the right direction I created this checklist to help out new webmasters.

### SEO Tools

Often times using the right tools can save you a bunch of time and money. I created a free PDF checklist of [all the SEO tools I use](#).

### Picking a Product

- Are you interested in the product you are trying to sell? If no, why not chose a different product?

The internet makes marketing anything a possibility. You are far more likely to succeed if you are interested in what you are trying to sell. Also it is far easier to sell people what they want than to get them to want your product.

- Is the marketplace for your product oversaturated?  
Example: posters, credit cards, prescription drugs, hosting, generic site design, & ink refills are all oversaturated markets.
- Is there something you can do to make yourself different than everyone else on the market? (please note: cheaper usually is not a legitimate branding / business model for most websites on the hyper competitive web)

Example: No other ebook covering SEO was supported by a blog that keeps up with the SEO industry every day (at least when I created this one).

Example: I created a SEO worst practice directory. Nobody else has made a site like that. It has earned me \$1,000's in the first year with a marketing budget under \$100.

- Would people want to link into your site without you asking them to? If no, what creative or original ideas can you add to your site to make people want to?

## Picking a Domain Name

- FOR NEW SITES: Pick a domain name that has your **primary keywords in it. Use a short & memorable domain name.**
- Register as a .com if possible if you have a global market.
- If you are targeting a specific country or language: register a domain name in that country's TLD designation (ex: buy a co.uk website for a UK targeted site). Also buy the .com version of your domain name and point it at your country specific location.

Often times certain directories and search engines will either be biased toward local sites or only let local sites in the index.

- If you are going to be working in competitive fields or if you will have large sites you may want to use a different domain for each different language you are targeting.
- Example Domain Names I own: BlackHatSEO.com SEOBook.com

## Domain Registration & Hosting

- Register your domain with an ICANN accredited registrar. I use GoDaddy.
- Host your site with a reliable host. I recommend V7inc or DreamHost.
- For dynamic sites: make sure your host supports the technology you will be using (such as ASP & PHP) before spending money.

## Keyword Selection

- Use a keyword tool to help you find the most targeted keywords for your site. <http://www.digitalpoint.com/tools/suggestion/> is free.
- Pick themes or keyword baskets to optimize the various sections of your site around.
- Targeting keyword phrases is a much better idea than trying to target individual words. Keyword phrases tend to be easier to rank well for AND they typically convert far better than individual words.
- Target different keyword phrases on each page.

- Target no more than 1-2 primary and 2-3 secondary keyword phrases per page.

## Page Optimization

- Use your keywords in your page title. Place the most important keyword phrase at the beginning of the page title. Do not put your site title on every page of your site unless you are really trying to brand that name. In that scenario it still is usually best to place the site name at the end of the pages.
- Shorter site titles are usually better than really long ones. Often times I overlap keyword phrases in the page title.
- Overlapping keyword phrases in the page title can help you pick up multiple search phrases. For example, “Professional search engine marketing services” helps me obtain good rankings for:
  - search engine marketing
  - professional search engine marketing
  - search engine marketing services
  - & professional search engine marketing services
- Create a unique page title, meta tags, and content for each page. Here is my free page title and meta tag generator:  
<http://www.search-marketing.info/meta-tags/make-meta.htm>
- Meta tags are not extremely important but they can help some. The meta description should be a few sentences to a paragraph describing the page contents. The meta description tag can be seen in some search results so you want to write it for human eyes. The meta keywords tag should contain misspellings and synonyms. Each keyword phrase in the keywords tag should be comma separated.
- Use a single keyword rich H1 header on your page containing the same the primary keyword phrases. This helps reinforce the page title.
- Use keyword rich subheaders (H2 or H3) before every paragraph or every other paragraph. This improves usability and helps define what the page is about to search engines without making the page look like it was wrote for a search engine.
- Use bulleted lists and bolding to make content easier to read.
- Write the bulk content for human consumption. If you write all your sentences for the search engines the pages will read bad and nobody will read them.

## Home Page Optimization

- Target your most competitive keyword phrase with the home page.
- Link to your home page from every page of your site. Include your home page's primary keyword phrase in the text links pointing at it.
- Link to the major theme pages from your home page.

## Site Optimization

- Use text based navigation.
- If you use graphic navigation:
  - Use descriptive alt text for your image links.
  - Link to your primary pages from every page of your site using footer text links.
  - Make sure you include the primary
- Use keyword rich breadcrumb navigation to help search engines understand the structure of your site.  
EX: home page link(use keywords in it) > level 1 > level 2 > page I am on
- Use a site map to help search engines spider through your site.
- Whenever possible use descriptive text when linking between pages of your site.
- Link to other resources that improve your users experience.
- Use CSS to improve the look and feel of your pages.

## Registering With Directories

Register your site with the major directories, second tier general directories, and topically related directories. Almost all of the directories listed in <http://www.directoryarchives.com> provide static text links. More niche specific directories are located at <http://www.isedb.com>, but you should check to ensure they provide static links before spending money registering your sites. Search for things like “my keywords” + add url to find other niche directories.

Often times I do not mind spending hundreds of dollars getting links from different sites (or directories) across many different IP ranges. Many of the tier 2 directories charge a one time fee for listing and some of them allow you to add your sites free if you become an editor.

In my directory archives I have 50-100 general directories listed in the general directory categories. Most top ranking sites in mildly competitive fields do not have text links from 50 different sites pointing at them (so if you can afford it, doing this offers a huge advantage to you). Even if you are in more competitive fields and rent some powerful links these listings in various directories can help stabilize your rankings when search engine algorithms shift.

If done correctly owning a directory right now has the potential to be a highly lucrative business model because there is a ton of value in getting links from different IP ranges.

## Link Building

- Link building is the single most important part of achieving a high ranking website.
- When possible try to get your keywords in the links pointing at your pages.
- Trade links with topical hubs and related sites.
- Look for free links from related sites and directories.
- If you have some good internal content try to get direct links to your inner pages.
- Write articles and get them syndicated at other sites.
- Participate in forums which provide signature text links with your posts. If you are knowledgeable enough and a good communicator you can make many friends in the forums who will link to you free.
- Issue press releases with links into your site.
- Leave super glowing testimonials for people and products you really like. Often times when they post them they will include a link back to your site.
- Leave relevant comments in blogs that do not send their comments through redirects.
- Sponsor charities, blogs, or websites related to your site.
- Consider renting links through a link broker if you are in an extremely competitive industry. Adult, gaming, credit, or pharmacy categories will likely require link rentals and / or building topical link networks.
- Mix your link text up. Adding words like “buy” or “store” to the keywords in your some of your link text can make it look like more natural linkage data and help you rank well for many targeted secondary phrases.

- If you need help determining how competitive your industry is feel free to send me an email and I will give you my opinion. If you are looking to hire an SEO you may want to look at <http://www.honestseo.com> or feel free to ask me to recommend you to someone.
- Brett Tabke (owner of WebmasterWorld) wrote a quick couple page guide worth looking at before building your site.  
<http://www.searchengineworld.com/misc/guide.htm>

## Closing Tips

The web is nothing but a big social network. SEO was my entry to the web, but I have bigger hopes, dreams, and goals in mind.

No matter what your goals are SEO can help you get there off the start, but at some point it will be necessary for you to find ways to get other people to want to syndicate your ideas. Kinda like what Abe Lincoln was saying when he said “With public sentiment nothing can fail. Without it nothing can succeed.”

I am somewhat altruistic in that I think if you study and do what you are interested in (even if it is on the side off the start) then eventually that will drive you toward success.

I also want to share a quote with you from Weaving the Web by one my favorite web personalities, Tim Berners-Lee (he created the World Wide Web).

“People have sometimes asked me whether I am upset that I have not made a lot of money from the Web. In fact, I made some quite conscious decisions about which way to take my life. These I would not change - though I am making no comment on what I might do in the future. What does distress me, though, is how important a question it seems to be to some. This happens mostly in America, not Europe. What is maddening is the terrible notion that a person's value depends on how important and financially successful they are, and that that is measured in terms of money. That suggests disrespect for the researchers across the globe developing ideas for the next leaps in science and technology. Core in my upbringing was a value system that put monetary gain well in its place, behind things like doing what I really want to do. To use net worth as a criterion by which to judge people is to set our children's sights on cash rather than on things that will actually make them happy.”

Most successful web based businesses do not need to actively practice SEO. SEO does help improve the bottom line and help get you found, but after you get found it is up to you to convert. It is up to you how hard and creatively you work to develop your business and reputation.

If this is the last book or ebook you ever read about running your business online I would probably consider that a mistake. I try to read at least one book a week. While not everyone has that much time, it is a always a good call to keep learning

new stuff. Rarely do I ever read a book without learning an important lesson or good idea.

I am not a creative genius or a branding expert, but if you need help coming up with another angle to promote your business from or need SEO help don't hesitate to shoot me an email and I will see if and how I can help in any way.

Also, create a blog to see if you like writing. Way too few people ever actually speak their mind in this world. <http://www.blogger.com> is free and easy to set up.

Best of luck with everything & to your success,

Aaron

