

SEO Checklist

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SEO is as important as the messages you're trying to deliver. Today, we have a guest post from John Miller, President of [Salient Software](#) who's been developing websites and SEO programs for the B-to-B space since the mid 90s. SEO rules change all the time (thanks to Google) and you need to continually keep up on the latest ways to stay ahead of the curve. John outlines some typical areas you need address. Enjoy.

People have been increasingly turning to the Internet to find what they need ever since Al Gore fostered the creation of the "information superhighway" in the earlier 90s.

While newspapers, magazines and yellow pages are disappearing, the number of websites has been increasing. In the early 90s, there were just a handful of websites, however, that number has now grown to 266,848,493 sites at last count (Dec 2010).

People are now carrying handheld computers disguised as phones, they carry tablet PCs, have the Internet piped into their TVs and DVD players and have desktop computers sitting at home.

People find content using Search Engines, using one or more of the 2000 search engines that currently exist. Google and Bing are the top players in the market today, followed by a number of general and specialty search engines that cater to narrow topics and vertical markets.

What does this mean to a website owner?

Start by spending less advertising dollars on traditional media, and then look to the Internet. Most businesses have websites which is a big leap from even 5 years ago, however, ***if someone is searching for the products and services you offer, will they find you?***

Google and other search engines are very good at returning your website if someone knows the name of your business. They have made a special effort to assure you top billing when searching for businesses by name. If that's all you need, then you don't need to pay much attention to *search*, it is already working for you.

However, if you want people to find YOUR website when searching

for *your products and services*, then chances are that *search* isn't helping you at all.

In fact, it's deliberately working against you. Google has built an empire (\$175B market cap) by charging companies for top billing on search results.

It's also true that any given a search for a generic product or service is likely to return in excess of 10 million web pages.

Given this back-drop, how can you get noticed?

Well, you can pay Google \$.50-1.00 or more (depending on the popularity of key words and phrases) per click and have an ongoing tab that will cost you thousands each month. If you take that road, you will get your top billing in Google, but what about Bing, Yahoo, Altavista and the like? You will need to pay them too!

Or, you can choose Search Engine Optimization which modifies your site so your products and services have a much more likely chance of showing up in Page 1 – 3 of the search results.

What is Search Engine Optimization and How Does it Help?

No doubt you have noticed that some company websites frequently show up at the top in the "free" (called organic) search results much more often than other websites. This is no accident, someone spent a good deal of time and effort to make their company's site rank higher with the search engines. This process is called "Search Engine Optimization" (SEO).

SEO is the way to bring the traffic and new customers to your website. If your site is not optimized for Search Engines, then those customers will go to someone else's website. It's a simple as that.

Here are the areas typically addressed for SEO:

Keywords and key phrases – based on your products and services and based on what people are actually searching for, create a list of keywords and phrases that will lead people to your site. This list becomes your "Trophy" keywords and is then used for evaluation and updating everything else related to your site.

Site structure and content – a single website page can only rank well for 1 or 2 Trophy words, hence, check the structure of the site to see if it complies or alter the structure to comply.

Domain name – if the domain name echoes the product or

service you are selling, it will raise your rank in Google and other search engines. You can have multiple domain names for a single website.

Other Websites Linking to Yours? – the more links to your site, the better. Check to see who is linking to you, perhaps you can work out a deal with other website owners.

Wiki and Blogs – have you noticed that Wiki entries often appear at the top of the free listings? Find Wiki entries that relate to your products and services and edit them – make sure you mention your own special “twist” and/or trade name. That will bring people to your site.

Social media – make sure you are taking full advantage of Social Media, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+ and the like. The more your website is mentioned “elsewhere,” the higher your Google rank.

Sitemap? – does your site have a sitemap? There are two kinds, an internal sitemap for search engines and one for “people.” Make sure you have both.

Search Engine Submission – once changes have been made to your site, use a reliable submission service to submit your site to as many of the 2000 search engines as possible.

SEO is an expense, but costs less than the Google, Bing, Yahoo, etc., ads in the long run. A website is like a “garden,” you look at it frequently and “tend” it to remove weeds or replant crops. With SEO, you run reports to see how your site is ranking with respect to your Trophy words. Then, make adjustments to the site to enhance your ranking.

When was the last time you looked at your SEO?