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Ten Things You Must Know to Boost Web Site Visibility

By Jim Grinney, Partner, 90octane

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The world of search engines is fast-paced and ever-changing. Google, Yahoo!, MSN and numerous other engines are the gateways to the Web's valuable content. As they continue to evolve, it's important to keep their latest developments in sight. Why? Because your Web site's visibility in search engines makes a significant impact on how many visits it will receive. So, what can you do to promote your Web site? Optimize.

Here are some tips to help boost your Web site's chances of being discovered.

Do your research. Determine the keywords and phrases that your target audiences will search for to find you. This is the cornerstone of a successful search engine marketing program, and your strategy has to be reassessed frequently. First, think of that target audience. What terms would they use to conduct a search for your organization and others like it? Use popularity, offerings and search behavior to narrow the list. Launch the program, track conversions, optimize the program according to the results you're seeing and repeat.

Put keywords to work. Place keywords in either the subdirectory or file name of your URL—not both—to help search ranking. One mention of the term in the URL is the best way to avoid search engine spam triggers.

Stay accessible. Allow for multiple means of navigation within your Web site. This will give search engines quick access to your Web pages. Interlinking—whether through a navigation menu, links within the content of the page or both—is especially effective when keywords are used in the links.

Share your 411. Don't forget to add a footer to your Web site. Your physical address should appear in the Web site's header or footer in hCard format and mention your location in the content, as 49% of searchers use geo-modifiers when performing a local search. Utilize your Web site as a source of geographical information beyond your simple address. Do you have multiple locations? Are you near a popular landmark? Is there parking nearby? Give your location in computer friendly and human friendly formats. Also, some search engines look for a privacy policy link to qualify your site as trustworthy, so include that as well.

Get writing. Page copy is critical. Aim for at least 200 to 250 words per page and be sure to use keywords throughout. Place high-priority keywords in the top third of the page. By crawling keyword-rich copy, engines understand how to classify the site. Don't overdo it though. Making copy too dense in any one keyword raises a spam flag to search engines and could get you blacklisted.

Target searchers through meta tags. Develop customized, keyword-rich meta data for each page of your site. Meta tags provide behind the scenes information about a Web page's HTML specifications and content. Keep titles to 63 characters and descriptions to 140 characters





(including spaces). Because some major search engines use descriptions when displaying search results, include a call to action that not only uses keywords but also encourages searchers to visit your site.

Warning: Keep out. Place a robots.txt file on your server to completely prevent engines from indexing your site, to stop certain areas of your site from being indexed or to issue individual indexing instructions to specific search engines. This simple text file can be created in Microsoft Notepad and saved to the root directory of your site.

Generate an XML site map. Doing so informs the search engines about pages available for crawling. By placing one on your Web server, you provide search engines with the following information: what pages exist within the site, when the URL was last updated, how often the page changes and how important a specific page is in relation to others. Search Google for a free XML site map generating tool to keep things simple.

Gravitate to Google. Take advantage of a free opportunity to market your business locally with Google Maps. It allows you to create, display and edit your business listing, which includes a link to your site. Reach qualified prospects and reward both loyal customers and new ones by offering coupons in your listing.

Encourage incoming links to your site. Generally, the more inbound links a Web page has, the more popular it is. Engines like popular pages. The most important thing to remember is that they like natural link structures, not artificial ones, so inbound anchor text should vary. Only link to reputable pages and keep reciprocal links to a minimum. One tactic to encourage inbound links is to optimize your press releases and submit them to PR sites that feed search engine news sites.

To be worthy of high rankings in the eyes of search engines, ongoing optimization of keyword strategies and updates to various areas of your Web site are required. Don't be daunted. More resources exist today than ever before for developing a successful search engine optimization program. Take advantage of new technologies—you'll find yourself rewarded with increased visibility and Web site traffic.

Jim Grinney is a partner at Denver-based interactive marketing agency [90octane](http://90octane.com). He can be reached at jimgrinney@90octane.com and 720-904-8169.

