

Search Engine Optimization Overview

Why is it Important?

Search engines are the number one way that internet users find websites. In most cases, a listing in a search engine is free. So, it's no surprise that Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is often the first priority when marketing a website. Proper search engine optimization can bring you hundreds--possibly thousands--of visitors every day, and at no cost to you. It isn't easy to get a top listing--it could take months of tweaking and waiting--but it is certainly worth it.

Throughout the next few pages, I'm going to outline to you some tips and tricks I have used through out the past year to achieve top ranking within the search engines. Let it be clear that it isn't magic, it does take time and great effort, but if you follow these clear guidelines you will instantly increase your odds of achieving a top ranking within the major search engines such as Yahoo, Google and MSN.

Links are Everything

Other SEO guides talk about the importance of titles, meta tags, text concentration, etc. This *is* important, but there's something much more important: links.

Google is by far the most popular search engine, and the main factor in a site's rank is the number (and quality) of links from other sites to it. *If your website has no inbound links, it is unlikely that you will even show up in Google's listings.* Google isn't the only search engine looking at links; most do to some extent, but Google places the largest weight on it.

Google uses an algorithm called "PageRank" (PR) to determine how popular a site is on the internet. You can read how it's calculated in the [original research paper](#), but here are the basics:

- Every webpage gets a number from 0 to 10 (with decimals). 0 means that the page is not currently ranked, possibly banned or the page may not exist, and 10 is hugely popular (there are about 25 pages on the entire internet with a 10).
- The scale is logarithmic. This means that twice as many links will *not* give you twice the PageRank. In fact, moving from one number to the next could take five or ten times as many links.

This is why it's so difficult to get a high PageRank.

- Google doesn't just look at how many links are pointing to your pages, it also looks at the PR of the pages linking to you. So a link from a PR9 site is worth a lot more than a link from a PR3 site. Also, Google considers how many other links are on the page that links to you.
- **The text of a link matters.** Google considers what text is used to link to your site. If you haven't named your site yet, choose one that has related keywords in it.

To see what a site's PageRank is, [download the Google toolbar](#)

Let's expand a bit on each of those points above:

1) The first thing you should do now, if you haven't done already is to check for the Google Page Rank for your particular website. This is assuming you already have the toolbar installed on your computer. Now, once you've checked your ranking, take note of it, along with today's date. You'll be referencing this date as your starting point for your journey into improving your page rank.

2) Page Rank is considered logarithmic. Let's not get too high on the math in this section, as we will go into this in more detail in the section Search Engine Methodology. For right now, let's focus on the fact that you'll need to have lots of "related" links pointing to your site. We'll go into more detail on how to acquire these related links on the next few pages.

3) Quantity versus Quality. I want to point out here that you should stay away from FFAL, that stands for FREE FOR ALL LINKS pages. Those are a waste of time, and will get your site penalized in the process. Do not and I repeat do not ever have a link to your site on a free for all link page. Secondly, do not submit your site to link farms where you have links on thousands of random sites without any true relation. The key in setting up your link partnerships is to **always** monitor and **know** what sites are linking to you, this way you can ensure that they are quality. If you are reading this article while online, I would like you to do the following:

a. Go to www.google.com

- b. In the search box type link:www.yoursitename.com (replace yoursitename.com with your actual site)
- c. The results shown are the current sites that Google has linking to you.
- d. You can do this same search in Yahoo and Msn as well.

Once you have the results, take note of the number of links that are linking to you, this will be your recorded data for the start process of how many sites are linking to you, so you will see how you have grown.

4) The link within the text matters. Many times when placing links to other pages within your site and linking back to your home page from sub-pages, we use generic terms like home and main for example. Right now I want you to eliminate that chain of linking practices. Every link you have throughout your pages, ensure that they are keyword related. For instance, if your site is dealing with Printing Supplies, then first I would recommend that you have a site that utilizes the keywords within the domain name, *but* also when linking to your home page from a sub-page, you could use the word Printing Supplies Main. There you utilize your keyword and still make it known that when you click that link that it will take you back to the home page.

How to Get Links

Obviously, it's important to get links from popular sites. But how does one do that?

- **Link Exchanges** - Most webmasters are just as interested in getting links as you are. Make a "Links" page on your site, and link to related websites that also have "Links" pages. Then, e-mail those webmasters and ask if they will link back to you. Take note; do not ever label your "links" pages as links.html, links.htm or any other related word. Google has been known to penalize and consider such pages as "link farms", especially if it is filled with one hundred links of random sites. Be unique in what you call your links page and preferably do not have it filled with more than 20 outbound links to start on that one page. When linking to other sites, you should also consider using a description with the link, as that would take some weight off of your page looking like a link farm page. This would actually give you and your partner a better chance of receiving legitimate

clicks from each other, as well as obviously aiding in the possibility of a PR boost.

Sample Link Exchange Request Email:

Hello,

I'm the webmaster for (yoursitenamegoeshere), and I'm emailing you to see if you would be interested in a link trade. I've visited your site and I think it could be a mutually beneficial partnership for us to trade links since our industry is quite similar. I find that our product/services compliment each other nicely.

I've taken the liberty to place a link to your site on my partner's page, and I was wondering if you would be willing to do the same? You can reply to this email with a small text description about your site along with any changes you would like made to the link I've placed. Below you'll find my link title, short description and the site the link should point to.

[Your Link Details/Description Goes Here]

I look forward to your reply.

Warm Regards,

Your Name

- **DMOZ** - If you haven't already, get a free link at [DMOZ](#). This will give you some traffic, and also boost your PR. It is extremely important to submit to DMOZ since Google relies on DMOZ for their directory which is located at [dir.google.com](#). You should also take note, that unless you are one of the lucky ones to get a quick listing, it will take on average 2 weeks and in some cases months to be listed. A listing in DMOZ is never guaranteed so it does take some luck.
- **Niche Directories** - There are directories for every conceivable type of website. Search for directories related to your website, and follow their instructions to exchange links.

- **Submit Reviews** - This is often overlooked. Most webmasters don't mind hearing positive things about their site. It wouldn't hurt to send short testimonials to sites with webmaster-related products, and then put "Webmaster of MySite.com" under your name. They might just add your review--and a link to your site.
- **Write Articles** - Write articles for [ArticleCity](#) and [Ezine Articles](#). This will get your writing on hundreds of websites--and most will follow ArticleCity's and Ezine Articles' requirement to link to the author's site. Another option for articles would be [Goarticles.com](#).
- **Web Forums** - If you haven't yet, I would recommend searching for, and then joining web forums that relate to your industry. Most forums give you the opportunity to have a signature. Whenever you post a message, your signature is posted at the bottom of the post. Always ensure you have a link to your site(s) in your signatures. Popular web forums are spidered by Google and Yahoo daily, and they extract the individual forum posts and those posts or threads appear in the search results. This can help in regards to your link popularity, and it can also help with general targeted traffic to your website. To find forums within your industry, do a simple search on Google or Yahoo for the particular keyword that matches the type of product/service you offer, and add the word forums to the search. For example, if your industry is web hosting, you would search for web hosting forums.
- **Yahoo Directory** - Even though Yahoo has started to focus more on their search function more so than their directory it is still very important to have your site listed within the Yahoo Directory. Unfortunately the price is \$299/year for business sites, and there is no guarantee that you will be listed. Take note, I've yet to be rejected from Yahoo. The only reason they reject sites is based on poor content, duplicate content, and submission to wrong category in most cases. If you have a well developed site, with original content, and it's neatly laid out without any broken links, your chances for acceptance is high. Overall, the investment of \$299 is worth it in my opinion, but please do not consider this an endorsement, it's just my personal opinion. I always submit to the Yahoo Directory, to get the instant credibility of having a link from a very popular directory. A link from Yahoo increases your chances of getting a good PR.

- **Other Directories** - Below I've quickly laid out some of the more popular directories that you can use to submit your website to. The majority of them will require some form of a small investment, but a listing in each of these directories will eventually aid in boosting your PR.
 - a. [Zeal.com](#)
 - b. [BlueFind.com](#)
 - c. [Hoppa.com](#)
 - d. [Business.com](#)
 - e. [Gimpsy.com](#)
 - f. [Small Business Directory](#)
 - g. [Starting Point](#)
 - h. [WhatUSeek](#)
 - i. [ExactSeek](#)
 - j. [GoGuides](#)
 - k. [SevenSeek](#)

Remember that it could take as much as a few months for your PR to increase after getting incoming links.

Targeting Keywords

Having inbound links is important, but you also need to decide which terms you want to appear under in search engines. It is easiest to get a listing under terms that have fewer sites competing. So, try to find a few specific phrases that are relevant to your site, but will still receive a lot of searches.

The easiest way to do this is with Overture's [Keyword Suggestion Tool](#). It will take a broad term like "games" and make suggestions for more specific terms. It will also show how many searches each term gets per day (Google's searches per day for a term will probably be about three times this amount).

Another option is to start signing up for [Adwords](#) (but to abandon the process) so that you can use the Keyword Tool. This will also give you suggestions for related terms.

Here's a good process to use:

- **Make a list** of words and phrases that describe your website.

- **Enter these into Overture's suggestion tool**, and find more specific searches.
- **For each specific phrase**, do a quick search on Google for it. Write down the term, as well as the number of pages matching it (in the top-right) and the PageRank of the first ten pages listed (click on it and then look at the Google toolbar). This will aid in analyzing what you'll need to do to better their formula, and give you an idea of what your PR will need to be to compete.
- **Pick** three or four phrases that have a lot of searches per day, but also have a low PR for the first page (6 or less is best) and a relatively low number of matches. By doing this, you are now focusing on a specific target market that is actually achievable.

It's important that you choose your keywords wisely. Most websites fail by not carefully selecting their keywords or by choosing keywords that are so saturated that the chances of being ranked high are near to impossible. I'm going to detail to you all the tools that I use on a daily basis for my keyword research.

Overture Search Suggestion Tool

1) The first tool that everyone uses and you may already know about is the Overture Search Suggestion tool. This tool is used by webmasters all over the world to determine the popularity of a particular keyword. It is important to note that this tool is limited to Overture/Yahoo and is not a full indication of how popular the word is in Google, MSN or other search engines. This tool is perfect for estimations of the overall popularity of a particular keyword, with the theory of, if people are searching for it on Overture, then they must be searching for it also in the other search engines.

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

The above link takes you directly to the search suggestion box. Once there, simply enter a keyword and it will display the results for the previous month. Take note the total displayed is for the entire month and not per day. For example if the results show 200,099 people searched for the keyword "Recipes" that is the total for the month and not the average per day.

Keyword Suggestion Tool

2) Although the Overture Suggestion Tool is good, it's a bit limited

since it only shows per month and only for Yahoo. It's good to analyze the results that Overture gives with the data from WordTracker. To do this, it's good to use the Keyword API checker from Digitalpoint. When using this tool, you will get a side by side comparison between Overture's estimated traffic vs. Word Tracker's estimated traffic. This shows the number of estimated searches per day instead of per month. This is important, as it gives a better idea of the kind of traffic you can receive daily if you were ranked in the top ten under that particular keyword. Another upgrade is the ability to view Overture's data based by country.

Link: <http://www.digitalpoint.com/tools/suggestion/>

The above link takes you to the keyword suggestion box.

Niche Bot

3) One of my most used tools for keyword research has to be Nichebot, and I'll tell you why. It's simply because they give you not only the estimation of how popular a particular keyword is, but it gives a score for how difficult it will be to achieve a high ranking under the particular keyword. For example if you search for recipes, it will give you the top keywords with the word recipe within it. Then it'll take it a step further by listing the number of sites competing under that keyword, along with what they call the Keyword Effectiveness Index (KEI). The KEI is important as it calculates the likelihood of ranking in the top ten under that keyword. The higher the number, the better chance you have of ranking in the top ten, the lower the number, the chances of ranking in the top ten decreases.

For best results do the following. If the main keyword is "recipes" then do a search for "recipes". It will then list the top keywords containing the keyword "recipes". Select the keyword that has a high KEI, but still has an average to high search count. You have to find the balance between Search Count and KEI to ensure you are giving yourself a chance to rank high under the keyword. Take careful note not to choose useless keywords, as a top ten ranking only matters if the keyword is actually being searched for on a regular basis. It is important that you find a keyword that has a nice balance between KEI and Search Count.

Link: <http://www.nichebot.com>

Good Keywords

4) A software application that I've been using for years is called Good Keywords. This tool is very useful for keyword research. It gives you the opportunity to search based on the following:

Keyword Suggestions
Misspelled Keywords
Keyword Phrase Builder

It also includes a Keyword Organizer and a Site & Link Popularity tool. This software is 100% free, it does not include any adware or spyware, and it's 100% safe. I recommend that you download this tool as it will make the organization of your keyword research much easier. This tool also allows you to see what people have just searched for on Yahoo & Ask.com with relation to the keyword you used. For example if I choose to search for "recipes" and chose Yahoo as the source, it displays "suggestions" from Yahoo & Ask.com about the keywords being used.

Link: http://www.softnik.com/download/gkwv2_setup.exe

Key Notes: For best results select a keyword that is not saturated. When I state a keyword is saturated, I mean that there are too many sites competing for that keyword. It may take quite some time and link building to get your site to the top of the search engines. It is key to know that most search engines do weigh a site based on it's age, so sites that are well optimized with powerful links and that are older than yours, in most cases will rank higher than newer sites.

Run this test:

After using the tools above, go to Google.com, and type in the keyword that you've selected, ensuring that the keyword you chose has a decent KEI rating. Review each website that appears in the top ten. For this exercise it will require that you have the Google Toolbar installed so you can view the Page Rank of each site listed in the top ten of the search results. If you have the Google Toolbar installed then great you can proceed. If not, then please download the google toolbar below:

Google Toolbar Download

http://toolbar.google.com/T4/index_xp.html?promo=mor-tb-en

When installing the toolbar, please be sure to check the option for "PageRank" so that you can see the visible Pagerank for each site you visit.

Great, I'm assuming now that you've got the Google Toolbar installed and can now see the PageRank of every site you visit. Go back to Google.com and now search for the keyword you have selected. Review every site in the top ten, from the site ranked number one to the site ranked number 10. Take a note of the PageRank of each site listed in the top ten under that keyword. This is another way to judge the likelihood of your site ranking in the top ten under that keyword quickly.

If you found any "Greyed out" or PR0 sites listed in the Top Ten, then you're in luck! I've personally sifted through many popular keywords finding keywords that receive traffic but are not saturated, and with PR0 sites being listed in the top ten. This is important as you want immediate traffic; therefore find a niche keyword that can deliver this to you immediately. Since your site is new it does start out as a PR0, but you can quickly change this by having more backlinks to your site. Even though Google's toolbar maybe showing your site as PR0, internally they may have already updated it to have PR, but just not displayed in the toolbar as yet.

Actual PageRank

With regards to what I just mentioned about PageRank, verify that the sites you've visited for the particular keyword you searched for are predicted to be PR0 sites at the next update or if an increase in PageRank is imminent. You can do this by using the tool listed below. It is important to note this tool is not 100% accurate, but I've found that it has been about 80% or above in most cases.

Page Rank Prediction Tool

Link: http://www.iwebtool.com/pagerank_prediction

Use this tool to check the predicted PageRank for every site listed in the top ten. This is important so you can get a clearer understanding of what is needed PageRank wise to crack the top ten for that keyword. PageRank does not apply to MSN, Yahoo and other search engines, but from my experience, a solid PageRank in google usually channels down to an even higher ratio in Yahoo and MSN as they recognize more backlinks than Google does. The key here is if you can achieve a solid PageRank in Google, you are more than likely going to

have an even better record with both MSN and Yahoo. I've mentioned this tool mainly for you to monitor your "Predicted PageRank" once you start your link building, and also for you to review your competition's predicted PageRank, so you can gather how hard you have to work to rank higher for the keywords you've selected.

Okay, now that you've done the keyword searching and reviewed the PageRank for all the sites, reviewed your competition, now it's time to make a final decision on which keyword you will use. Once you've selected the keyword, it's now time to look at how to use those keywords effectively.

Using Your Keywords

Now that you've chosen your keyword phrases, how should you use them? We will go into much more detail in our other report which discusses Meta tags and body optimization, but for a brief overview please see below:

- **Inbound Links** - Google in particular looks at the text of links pointing to your site. If other sites link to you using your phrases, then that will boost your ranking under those searches. How can you control this? Choose a title of your site that has a keyword phrase in it. Also, don't link to your "Home Page." If possible, use the keyword-rich name of your site instead.
- **<TITLE> Tag** - Include your keyword phrases at least once in your Title.
- **Meta Tags** - Most people believe that Google ignores the keyword tag, but you might still want to use them. I won't go into the details here, though, as I have another report that deals specifically for Meta Tags. Take note, Google does recognize the Meta description tag.
- **Text** - You should use your chosen keywords throughout the text of your pages. A good rule is to include each phrase once (but no more than three times) in every paragraph. A little less if you write especially short paragraphs. You'll read more about body optimization in our Body Optimization Report.

These are the basics of an introduction to Search Engine Optimization. We'll continue to go into more detail when we focus on the Meta tags and body optimization.