What is Search Engine Optimization (SEO)?

SEO is the active practice of optimizing a web site by improving internal and external aspects in order to increase the traffic the site receives from search engines. In other words, it is the process of taking a page built by humans and making it easily consumable for both other humans and for search engine robots.

SEO considers how search engines work and what people search for. Optimizing a website may involve editing its content and HTML and associated coding to both increase its relevance to specific keywords and to remove barriers to the indexing activities of search engines.

Why does my company/website need SEO?

The majority of web traffic is driven by the major commercial search engines - Google, Bing and Yahoo. If your site cannot be found by search engines you miss out on the incredible opportunities available to websites provided via search, namely people who want what you have to offer. Whether your site provides content, services, products, or information, search engines are a primary method for people to find you.

Why can't the search engines find my site without SEO help?

Search engines are always working towards improving their technology to crawl the web more deeply and return increasingly relevant results to users. In addition to making content available to search engines, SEO can also help boost rankings so that content that has been found will be placed where searchers will more readily see it. The companies who perform SEO will have a decided advantage in visitors and customers. Flash files, images, photos, video, audio and other plug-in content as well as non-HTML text are all invisible to search engines. On the other hand, great content may be the best way to help search engines find your site.

What do the search engines look for?

Each of the three major search engines looks for different factors in your site to determine page ranking and relevance.

Google

Google recommends the following factors to get better rankings in their search engine:

1. Make pages primarily for users, not for search engines. Don't present different content to search engines than you display for users: also known as cloaking.

2. Make a site with a clear hierarchy and text links. Every page should be reachable from at least one static text link.

3. Create a useful, information-rich site, and write pages that clearly and accurately describe your content. Make sure that your <title> elements and ALT attributes are descriptive and accurate.

4. Keep links on a given page to a reasonable number (usually less than 100).

Bing

Engineers at Microsoft recommend the following to get better rankings in their search engine:

1. In the visible page text, include words users might choose as search query terms to find the information on your site.

2. Limit all pages to a reasonable size.

3. Make sure that each page is accessible by at least one static text link.

4. Don't put text that you want indexed inside images. This includes your title and main content headers.

Yahoo

Factors that influence page ranking in Yahoo are:

1. The number of other sites linking to yours.

2. The content of the pages.

3. The updates made to indices.

4. The testing of new product versions.

5. The discovery of additional sites.

Where does website traffic come from?

Basically, all traffic falls into 5 major categories

- Direct

- Organic Search Engines

- Paid Search Engines

- Referral

- Paid Referral (Ads)

The "healthiest" websites have a good mix of all five types of traffic. If more than 50% of your traffic is coming from 1 of the 5 categories, it is time to diversify. Just like a good stock portfolio,

you never want one primary source of website traffic. Here's more detail on each of the 5 categories of website traffic.

Direct Traffic

Direct traffic is all traffic of which there is no referrer or the referrer is unknown. Examples include:

- Typing in the website URL in the browser

- Accessing the website from browser bookmarks

- Accessing the website from links in email footers, documents or newsletters

- Accessing the website via server or client redirects

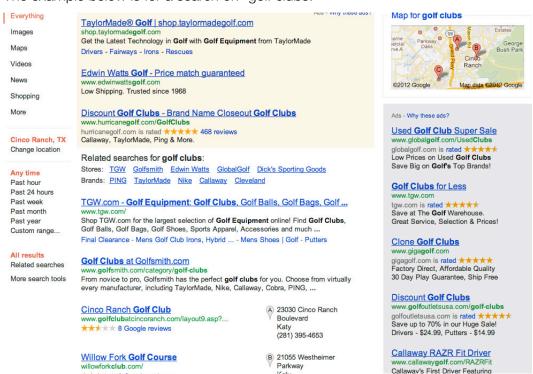- Accessing the website in very security-restricted environments

You can increase your direct traffic by:

- Encouraging your website visitors to bookmark your website

- Making sure you add your website of all off-line printed materials (business cards, brochures, signs, etc.)

- If possible, invest in a domain name that is easy to remember and tus easily shared offline by word of mouth

Organic Search Engine Traffic

Organic Search Engine Traffic is traffic that comes from a Search Engine Result Page or SERP. Here's how it works.

When a person uses a search engine like Google to search for information, they are presented with a SERP. The example below is for a search on "golf clubs."

Notice the area at the top of the page with a yellow background and the area on the right with a gray background. These are the paid search results (ads.) The area below the yellow highlighted are is the organic (free) search results. The first website listed in the organic results is TGW.com.

A surprisingly large number of website rely primarily on Organic Search Engine traffic. These businesses enjoy a steady flow of free traffic, but there is a major drawback to "putting all your eggs in this basket." The search engines control the basket. For example, in 2011 with Google's Panda Update, Mahalo.com ranked for 33,875 keywords before the update and just 9,740 keywords after the update. That's a decrease of more than 70% literally overnight without warning.

That being said, building Organic Search Engine Traffic has tremendous benefits to your business and should be one of your marketing strategies. In order to drive organic traffic to your website through search engines you will need to focus on two key areas: On-Page SEO (Search Engine Optimization) and OFF-Page SEO.

On-Page SEO

On-Page SEO is the optimization of a website's content, text, tags and other elements. It includes your content, keywords, meta tags and other things located on your website. Refer to the SEO checklist at the end of this PDF for SEO tips.

Off-Page SEO

Off-Page SEO is everything you do to get a website to rank well that is not actually located on the site itself. Instead, it's elsewhere on the web. Off-Page SEO can include article marketing, social media, other blogs linking back to the website and other mentions of the website on the Internet.

Off-Page optimization takes into consideration the following factors:

- The number of links pointing to the website and its pages

- The actual linking text (anchor text) of these links

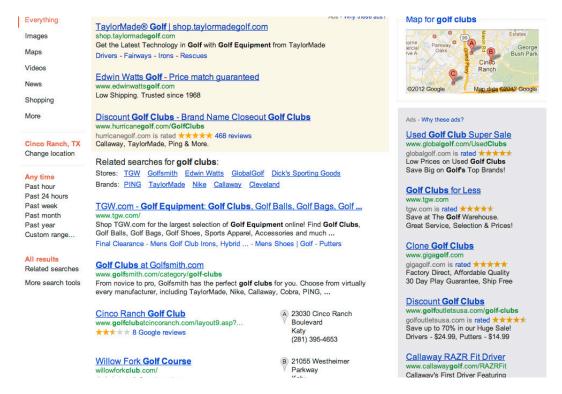- The quality of the pages which the links are on.

To learn more about Off-Page SEO, refer to the SEO checklist at the end of the PDF for SEO tips.

Paid Search Engine Traffic

Paid Search Engine Traffic is generated when you place small ads on a Search Engine Results Page. Although the traffic requires an investment, one of the big benefits is the ability to target specific prospects. You can target a very specific group of people based on the information they are searching for.

Let's use the "golf clubs" example again.

When a person uses a search engine like Google to search for information, they are presented a SERP. The example below is for a search on "golf clubs." As mentioned previously, the area at the top of the page with the yellow background and the area on the right with a gray background are the paid search results (ads). the area below the yellow highlighted area is the organic (free) search results. The first website listed in the organic results is TGW.com

The advertisers on this page are able to show ads at the very moment that you are looking for that information. And the best part is that they only pay when you click on their ad. This is called Pay-Per-Click advertising.

Who controls most of the Search Engine Traffic?

It is probably no surprise to hear that Google dominates this space. They blew past Yahoo yearrs ago and now control two-thirds of all search traffic and subsequently two-thirds of the revenue as well. Here is a breakdown of the top 5 Search Engines.

- Google --64.6%

- Yahoo -- 17.9%

- Bing -- 12.8%

- ASK -- 3.1%

- AOL -- 1.6%

This simplifies your Marketing Plan quite a bit. By focusing your Paid Search Engine Traffic efforts on Google, you can reach the bulk of the traffic very quickly. Once you have an established Marketing Plan, you can go back and set up Paid Search campaigns for Yahoo and Bing.

Why Paid Search Is A Secret Weapon For a Successful Website

The success of any website hinges on your ability to drive targeted traffic to the website and convert that traffic into sales for the business owner. Most business owners want results fast and Paid Search provides the ability to have targeted traffic within 10 minutes of launching your Adwords account.

Setting Up Your Google Adwords Account

Before you setup your Google Adwords account I recommend the following resource:

Follow this link for a free course and cheat sheet on how to set up your Google Adwords account:

http://www.perrymarshall.com/google/

Important Note: Google also has a number of tutorials on how to setup and manage your account.

Referral Traffic

Referral traffic is generated when a website links to your website. With a bit of planning and consistent link building you can have thousands or even tens of thousands of website linkin to you in a fairly short time frame.

Referral Traffic Strategy

At the heart of getting referral traffic is providing some incentive for the referrer (the website linking to your web site). Here are some reasons they would link to you:

1. You provide a valuable service/product their visitors could benefit from. This is the best kind of referral traffic because it is essentially a recommendation for your business.

2. You provide valuable information their visitors could benefit from. This is not as powerful as the referral traffic in #1 above because it is not a direct recommendation for your product or service. However, if you provide valuable information you can nurture those referrals over time and turn them into clients. The best way to help you generate some ideas for developing a referral traffic strategy is to use an example of a typical client. In this case we will use a local tree service business.

   First, here are a number of ways you can get direct referrals (recommendations) for a tree service business.

   - *Register with Online Business Directories*. This is a quick and easy way to build up your referral traffic. Some are broad business directories like the yellow pages. Others will be specific to your type of business. Some are paid directories, but many are free. It is hard to know which directories will produce the most leads, but it is definitely worth taking the time to research and register with as many as possible.

   - *Establish relationships with complementary businesses.* In our tree service example, these businesses could be lawn care, pest control, plumbers, painter, roofers, etc. Basically any business that works in or around the home could refer clients to your tree service. These businesses could easily hand your business cards to their clients. Or they could make the recommendation on their websites with a link to your website.

   - *Even competitors could refer business to your business. Reasons why:*

- When they are too busy. If they are having to turn away clients because they cannot handle their current workload

- If they cannot provide a specific service that you can provide.

- They have a lead outside of their service area. You could set up a referral fee system with other businesses similar to yours that don't serve your area.

Second, here are a number of ways you can get indirect referrals (providing information)

- *A Blog* is a great way to provide valuable information in the form of short articles. A popular blog can attract a steady flow of referral traffic.

- *A Newsletter* with tips that relate to your business. This way you can build client loyalty as well.

- *A Free Service* that could provide a valuable piece of customized information.

Third, a great way to get links to your website is through **Social Media**

- Social media is the online tool enabling people to share information and resources via the Internet including audio, video, text, pictures, etc.

- Social media is becoming more important than ever because it makes it easier, quicker and cheaper for you to reach more people than ever before.   You can now contact the masses with just a few words and a click or two of your mouse...IF the masses are following them.

- According to "Resources for Entrepreneurs Staff", using social media to improve a small business' exposure online is one of the fastest-growing trends today.

  ❖ **The First Thing You Should Know About Social Media**

  - All your social media efforts must have a purpose. You shouldn't start tweeting and updating Facebook and not get anything in return. This will be a complete waste of time and you won't see any results.

  - Like all online marketing, your goal should be to build a list. To build a list through social media, you must drive people to a website where they will be presented with an irresistible offer. The goal of social media is to get people to come to your website, so once they get there you need to be able to collect their name and email address so that you can follow up with them later.

Fourth, **Paid Referral Traffic**

- Paid Referral traffic is simply traffic that comes from your advertising campaigns. This is an often overlooked source of traffic. Most small business owners do not use this strategy for one of two primary reasons:

1. They say it is too expensive and they do not have the budget for it. Many business owners assume that they need several thousand dollars to start advertising. In reality you can begin on a very small budget of $100 to $200 per month. On the internet, you can literally test an ad for a couple of days for $10. This allows you to run a series of small test campaigns to find what works.

2. They tried advertising one time in the past and it did not work so they gave up completely. On the internet, you can run dozens of small ad campaigns to find the one's that making you money. Then you keep the winners and go on to test other ad sources.

   - Ad Networks: Ad Networks allow you to reach a large percentage of all Internet users while advertising through just one network. So, instead of contacting thousands of individual website to place your ads, you contact one network and they will manage your ad placement and allow you to reach thousands of sites instantly.

     The largest ad network is the Google Ad Network. They reach 93.1% of the U.S. through their network of websites. Advertising on these networks is fairly simple and straight forward. You create a series of ads, then select the sites or categories of sites you want to advertise on and then you track the results.

     Start with the Google Ad Network and then select 2 or 3 other networks from the top 10 networks. Here is a step-by-step guide for setting up your ads on the Google Ad Network:

     http://www.google.com/adwords/displaynetwork/getting-started/

     Top 10 Ad Focus Properties:

     Google Ad Network -- 93.1%

     Yahoo! Network Plus -- 85.5%

     AOL Advertising -- 85.0%

     Yahoo! Sites -- 84.5%

     Google Search -- 80.5%

     Turn Media Platform -- 79.7%

     ValueClick Networks -- 79.6%

     24/7 Real Media -- 78.0%

     AdBrite -- 73.7%

     Facebook.com -- 72.3%

- Paid Business Directories can be a valuable source of traffic especially for local businesses. Some of these business directories charge a fee to list your company. Here is a list of some of the larger business directories. You will need to do your own research to find local or regional directories.livepage.apple.com

  http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/10322/The-Ultimate-List-50-Local-Business-Directories.aspx

- Direct Advertising is simply bypassing the Ad Networks and advertising directly with the website owner. Many of the larger website will work exclusively with Ad Networks. Smaller websites will manage part or all of their ad sales. For these small sites you will need to contact them directly and negotiate ad placement and pricing.

SEO Checklists

On-Page SEO Checklist

Things To Do:

‣ Get a domain with your keywords in it

‣ Write great content

‣ Write unique content

‣ Add new content consistently and often

‣ Use a really good keyword phrase for each page

‣ Use the keyword phrase in the title tag

‣ Use the keyword phrase in the URL

‣ Use a popular keyword phrase

‣ Make sure all pages are accessible for the search engines. Don't hide any pages behind a JavaScript or Flash menu

‣ Keep a keyword density between 5-6%

‣ Use the keyword phrase in header tags (h1, h2, h3, h4, h5 & h6)

‣ Use the keyword phrase in the anchor text of links

‣ Stick with one topic for the whole website. Use a different domain for non-relevant content.

‣ Keep website live as long as possible. Older pages rank better

‣ Create sitemaps (both HTML and XML)

‣ Make sure content is near the top of your HTML document.

- ‣ Use descriptive alt tags that include your keyword phrases

- ‣ Use bold, underline or italic fonts occasionally on the keyword phrases IF it makes sense.

- ‣ Craft a descriptive meta description that includes the keyword phrase

- ‣ Link from pages in the website to other pages on the website

- ‣ Only link to websites that are relevant and have good page ranks.

- ‣ Remove links if the pages that are linked to decrease in page rank

- ‣ Only link to other pages if it increase the user's experience

- ‣ Update pages by adding more content. Never remove content

- ‣ Keep pages close to the root directory. Never go over 4 levels deep

- ‣ Use the keyword phrase in the meta keywords tag

- ‣ Use variations of the keyword phrase, like past tense, plural, etc

- ‣ Don't link to a lot of external websites.

- ‣ Use a .com domain name rather than .biz or .us or .ws, etc.

- ‣ Use hyphens, not underscores, in all URLS and file names.

- ‣ Be careful with JavaScript. Most search engines ignore it -- and the content inside it.

- ‣ Create text transcripts of podcasts. This will help you rank better because the search engines will have more content to rank - and your visitors who would rather read will love you.

- ‣ Use text instead of graphics with text in them.

- ‣ Make big update - don't just change small things like spelling, punctuation, etc.

- ‣ Fix or remove broken links

Things To NOT Do:
- ‣ Don't use duplicate content

- ‣ Don't use duplicate content

- ‣ Don't use duplicate content

- ‣ Don't go over a keyword density of 10%

- ‣ Don't use a host that is down a lot. You want a host with an up-time of 98% or better

- ‣ Don't create pages of links

- ‣ Don't link to the same page repeatedly

- ‣ Don't create Flash "Enter" or splash pages

- ‣ Don't create entire websites in Flash

- ‣ Try to avoid using Flash. If you have to use Flash, use alternative text

- ‣ Never use content that can't be seen by your visitors to try to trick the search engines

- ‣ Never try to trick the search engines

Off-Page SEO Checklist

Things To Do:
- ‣ Try to get the keyword phrase in the anchor text of incoming links.

- ‣ Get links from other people to your website

- ‣ Get links from quality websites, .edu and .gov websites are best

- ‣ Get links from relevant websites

- ‣ Get a lot of inbound links, but don't buy them

- ‣ Consistently ask for inbound links

- ‣ Get listed in directories

Things To NOT Do:
- ‣ Never buy links and only trade links with relevant websites

- ‣ Don't use a host that is down a lot. You want a host with an up-time of 98% or better

- ‣ Never try to trick the search engines

SEO Cheatsheet

Search Engine Indexing Limits

All search engines have a limit of what they will index per web page. These limits do not mean you cannot exceed them, it just means that if you do exceed them, the extra content will not be indexed. You can break up pages to help avoid exceeding the limits.

Page File size	No more than 150 kilobytes - before images, CSS & other attachments
Number of links	No more than 100 unique links per page
Title Tag	No more than 70 characters
Meta Description	No more than 155 characters

Page File size	No more than 150 kilobytes - before images, CSS & other attachments
Depth of URL	No more than 4 levels Good URL: http://www.site.com/services Bad URL: http://www.site.com/about/design/terms/pricing/services

Important SEO HTML Tags

Title Tag	<head> <title>Title of page or post </title> </head>
h1, h2, h3	Headline Subhead Subhead of the subhead
bold or strong	keyword phrase keyword phrase
Image (XHTML)	<img src=:keyword-phrase.jpg" alt="Descriptive text using keyword phrase.">
Link	Correct: Keyword Phrase Not correct: Click here