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Website Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Now days, the Internet has become the primary source for locating businesses and information. Millions of businesses, from large corporations to small "Mom and Pop" types have an Internet presence. Because of this online competition, it's important to have a website presence for your business, but it is also important that you are easily found on the Internet.

When potential customers enter keywords into a search engine like Google or Yahoo, ideally you would like your business to be among those on the first page of search results returned. The competition is fierce on the Internet and this kind of ranking isn't always an easy task.

There are two ways to rise to the first or second page on Search Engine rankings – by paying for that ranking, an expensive undertaking, or by "organic" means, a more cost effective solution for most businesses.

Using an organic means to get good Search Engine ranking requires some work from my end as your website designer, some persistent effort on your part as business owner and a lot of patience!

An organic method of SEO can take up to a year of work and dedication before good page ranking is achieved.

MY PART

For my part, as your web designer, this means creating a website that has solid structure using current standards, is easy to navigate, is appealing for viewers and works across the major browsers – IE 6,7 and 8 and Firefox 3.+.

I hand code and build websites using current site structure standards. This means not using templates which often use an outdated table layout, are cluttered with extraneous "junk" tags and are "structure messy" because the site's style code is integrated throughout the HTML structure.

I separate site structure (the backbone of a site) from the code that dictates how the site looks (this is the style code). This makes for easier rendering and reading of your site by the browsers and appeals to Search Engines.

I label all images with descriptive alt tags which assists SEO as well as being ADA (American Disability Act) compliant.

I use descriptive page titles that differ for each page and use keywords including business name and location.

I put in lists of keywords (that you provide me with) in the meta tags, I use meta tags for site description (a short description of your business that you provide me with and that shows up in the Search Engine listing describing your business) and other meta tags for site title and name. These “meta” tags aren’t seen by your customers (except for the description that shows up on the search engine listing) or seen on your website but they assist with SEO.

I discourage using excessive Flash, Rich Media and animation as this is difficult for Search Engines to read and index and can be annoying to viewers who typically want fast and accessible information without having to wait for fancy effects to finish before content is presented.

I “encourage” site design that has easy-to-use navigation that is logical and accessible on every page. However, ultimately the design of the site is up to you!

I design appealing page layouts that use “text-chunks” rather than one long page of text which can often be difficult to read from the computer.

I discourage linking to additional pages within a page without that page being present on the main navigation. But, I use multiple links within a page that will take you to other main pages (those present on your main navigation) of the site.

I index your site with Google once it is complete to let Google know it is out there and to start taking notice. I also can set up a Google Analytics account for you so you can start tracking the performance of your site on many different levels.

And lastly, I try to give you instruction, ideas and resources for eventually getting your website high ranking on Search Engine pages.

This is the end of my obligation to SEO – now the rest is up to you and does require some effort!

YOUR PART

Here are the things you can do, and will need to continue to do once your site is live, that will help your Search Engine ranking OVER TIME.

1. **Good Keywords:** do some research for these. They should apply to your business. Google certain keywords to see what businesses come up. Use resources such as Google’s keyword tool (<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>) to help find keywords and phrases that pertain to your business. Give me a list of these keywords for the meta tag and use these keywords or phrases sprinkled throughout the content of your site.
2. **Good Content:** This can’t be emphasized enough. Create content that is keyword rich but don’t forget that you are writing for HUMAN viewers and not the Search Engines. Make sure your content is interesting, informative and readable for your viewers.
3. **Keep Content Updated and Fresh:** it’s a good idea to periodically refresh your website content. If you have a business that has changing information, you might want to consider integrating a “blog” on the site or having a Content Management System site that allows you to edit and change your own content on a regular basis.

Search Engines (and the Spiders that crawl your site) love changing, dynamic, fresh content. This greatly assists page ranking!

4. **Research ALL online resource directories** in your field of business and list your business information and website url in these. Many of these are FREE! When you Google "Gemstones in Oregon", what generally pops up first is a Google directory for businesses that have to do with Gemstones.
5. **Join social networks and forums in your field** where you can post links to your website or write comments about latest products, sales, etc...
6. **Write an article** for an online or print paper about your business
7. **Join professional organizations** where you can post online links to your site or be listed in print directories
8. **Hand out business card and flyers** everywhere you go to as many people as you can – the more traffic you can direct to your site, the higher it's ranking.
9. **Word of mouth** – promote your business as often as you can and be sure to tell your website address!
10. **Place paid ads** for your business or products in local papers and magazines to promote your business

These are some suggestions you can implement to increase traffic to your site and increase your site's Search Engine ranking. Keep in mind that what will keep people coming back most of all is good content, an easy-to-use site and of course – Good Product. There are probably other ways to promote your business that I haven't mentioned. Be creative and think of all the ways you can "get" your business out there! This is an ongoing process but eventually your efforts will be rewarded by having a popular site, better online sales and good Search Engine rankings.

It's important to keep in mind that I can't wave a magic wand and make your site "get noticed". And just having a well-designed site won't put you at the top of the Search Engine pages although it helps in that direction. The work to make this happen has to come from your efforts. For more ideas on promoting your online business try Googling "how to promote an online business" – you'll come up with lots of helpful information!

Some examples of good sites found this way are:

<http://www.wilsonweb.com/articles/checklist.htm>

<http://www.entrepreneur.com/ebusiness/expandingyouronlinepresence/article60916.html>

There are many others as well!

Good luck to you and your online business!