

How To Gain A Good Page Ranking On The Major Search Engines

What is the secret for gaining a high page ranking in the major search engines? In essence, it's nothing more complicated than doing what the search engines want you to do. In other words, it's making things easy for the robots when they come crawling around your site.

Let's talk first principles.

One.

The search engines don't operate for the benefit of webmasters. Their main function is to provide good information to the public at large. This means that any website you submit to them must reach their 'good content' criteria. Therefore, to achieve a high ranking, it is imperative that your website has better, more illuminating content than your competitors.

Two.

Search engine robots are pretty rigid in their approach to sites. The robot crawls your HTML from top to bottom. Given this, it is important that the first stick of body copy it comes across (the stuff your readers also see) contains copy which is relevant to, and reflects: (a) the Title of your web page and, (b) the meta keywords and meta description phrases contained in the "Head-tag" of your HTML.

To put it simply, the first few lines of copy will often be grabbed by the bots and used as a description of your site in their listing. So, if this copy says nothing in particular about your products or services, then you'll be banished to page 97.

Three.

Some webmasters are obsessed by keywords. They drive themselves nuts attempting to coin exactly the right set of words with which to describe their site. This approach is essentially flawed. It's not keywords you want, but key phrases.

Allow me to explain. Let's say that you are in the market for a good book on copywriting. You open Google search and you type in....what? Copywriting? Not really, because that will result in approximately one-and-a-half million entries from copywriters looking for work. Thus, the obvious thing is to type the phrase Books on Copywriting, which will cut the list to about half. But this list will largely be relevant to what you are looking for.

Research shows that people generally use phrases in their search requests - they rarely employ a single word. It makes sense, then, to populate your meta keywords with phrases you feel people will employ in their search for products or services.

And the easiest way to figure out what key phrases are optimal for your products, is to ask yourself what phrases people would use to find you, then try them out on the search engines.

One other point worth mentioning about keywords and phrases is that some search engines - Google, for instance - no longer take them into account at all! On the other hand, many others do. So it is generally better to incorporate them.

Four.

The "title tag" in your website HTML is the phrase you choose to name your site. The general rule in framing your title is: 'what's right for people is generally wrong for search engines'. Essentially, you should try to incorporate your major key phrases into the "title tag". Just make a list of them and try to incorporate them in the title.

The fact is it really doesn't matter whether your site title is a million miles away from your own name, or the actual name of your business. It's simply a device for gaining the attention of the bots.

A title tag can contain up to twenty words; but more doesn't mean better. Eight to twelve well chosen words is more than sufficient. For best results, the first (short) phrase of the title tag should be geared towards the human reader, while the remainder can be key words aimed at the bot. Bear in mind that the search engine will display only the first few words of the title tag anyway (whatever suits their house-style).

Five.

It's a terrible old cliché, but with robots, you never get a second chance to make a first impression. As mentioned above, the crawler will grab the first thing it comes across and then use it to describe your site. Good enough reason to make the very first paragraph on your site as key-phrase rich as you can. Indeed, the first para should recap and enlarge upon all the material in your title and meta tags.

All right, this first paragraph also has to be read by your visitors, so it has to make sense. Writing this para so that it is acceptable to both robot and human is an art in itself. But perseverance can pay large dividends insofar as search engine placement is concerned.

In addition, your opening para should be designated by an H1 paragraph tag so that its importance is obvious to the bot. If you hand-flog your HTML, just drop in "H1-tag" and "H1 end-tag" at front and back of the paragraph.

Six.

Now a word or two about how often you should post your site to search engines. Some authorities believe that if you post too often, your efforts may be seen as spam by the engines and you'll be banned. On the other hand, it seems to be the consensus that you should post every time you make changes to pages or add pages.

Generally speaking, whenever you tweak your site - particularly the index page, you should post straight away. The search engines seem to like changes and they react accordingly by shoving you farther to the front of the listings. The more you do, the better they like it.

If all of this leaves you somewhat cold, not to mention baffled, you may be wiser to employ a professional Search Engine Optimizer. Somebody who knows what they are doing. The modest cost could save you a lot of heartache.

And that's that.

About the Author: Pat Quinn is an award-winning UK copywriter.