

Top 10 SEO Mistakes and What to Do to Correct It

Search engine optimization (SEO) is a set of methods aimed at improving the ranking of a website in search engine listings. (Wikipedia)

This definition of SEO sounds simple, but beware! Search engine optimization is a minefield, even for professionals, and although necessary to a business, should not be undertaken lightly. Below, is a brief look at the top 10 mistakes and how to correct them.

1. Non-Relevant Linkage.

External links to your site play a large part in most of the major search engine algorithms and can be considered an endorsement of your site. But if you are being linked to from sites that have no relevance to your content, then that is now considered a negative endorsement and will not raise your ranking in the search engines. Ensure all links to your pages are from relevant sites. Be wary of link builders who acquire links from gambling, pharmaceutical or adult themed sites, especially if your site is not of the same theme. Link building is as much a science as it is an art, one we take very seriously.

2. Untargeted Keywords.

The people who use search engines are 'normal' people who are not likely to use words used in advertising brochures. Get to know how your customers ask for your services/products and use these in your content. Often times, actual keyword research will surprise you.

3. Excessive Graphics and Flash Content.

This looks good on a web page, but to search engine crawlers it means little. Search engines are looking for content, keywords, and relevancy to the search terms. By all means have some graphics, but don't forget the meat. This doesn't mean Flash designed websites are bad necessarily. In fact, some big businesses do use it. For most webmasters though, Flash sites are best avoided. Unless your Flash designer does high-end websites and knows how to integrate the content and keywords within the Flash, hybrid sites combining Flash headers with HTML content will be a good option.

4. Believing all search engines are the same.

What pleases Yahoo might not necessarily please MSN or Google. Optimize your content, keywords, inbound links, and internal linking structure so that there is something for at least one of the three top search engines.

5. Multiple Search Engine Submissions.

In the very early days of search engines, this technique may have had some success, but now it can lead to slower indexing and rankings. A site with inbound links from other sites will get indexed naturally and search engine submission is not necessary. In fact, multiple submissions may be construed as an attempt to spam the search engines. The top 5 engines account for more than 90% of all activity so it is wise not to ruin your chances of ranking naturally in the search results. (comScore Media Metrix qSearch data, August 2005)

6. Incorrect Use of Title Tags.

Most people consider the title to be for their company name or product. Not so. You must include your most important search phrases within your title tag and if you do want your company name there, keep it for the end. Keep the title tag to less than 65 characters long to avoid the appearance of title tag keyword-stuffing.

7. Use of 'Black Hat' techniques.

Techniques such as doorway pages, hidden text, and overstuffing keywords may have had success in the past but now they will earn you penalties and could even get you banned. Avoid them altogether if you are seeking long term success. Some black hat techniques can work on a short term basis, but in the long run prove very costly.

8. Expecting Immediate Results.

SEO is an ongoing process and should be treated as such by your SEO company. Good optimization will involve building good links with quality sites and this takes time.

9. Use of Unethical SEO Consultants.

Beware the consultant that guarantees rankings with no past clients to back it up with or claims of special relationships with search engines. Many such "consultants" or "experts" will probably take your money and run. Choose a reputable SEO consultant, one who will keep in regular contact with progress reports and updates.

10. Decide to do optimization in-house.

Probably possible in the past, but now with ever increasing sophistication of search engine algorithms, this is an area best left to an expert. Furthermore, the good SEO experts usually have other income streams from their online marketing activities and a regular paycheck to work full-time simply doesn't justify their time invested. We've yet to meet a good SEO who doesn't have virtual real estate bringing in a nice chunk of cash.

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