

Search Engine Optimization in Plain English: The 5 Building Blocks of High Rankings

by

Elgé Premeau,
eMarketing Strategist



Elgé Premeau, the eMarketing Strategist, shows you how to attract clients via the internet. Custom designed for your business, she creates internet marketing strategy, infrastructure and content that appeals to your target markets. She never loses sight of the fact that the high ranking websites, eNewsletters, blogs, info products and social networking programs she creates must result in income for you. Elgé is a life-long learner and has made it her personal mission to explain doing business online in plain English. www.eMarketingStrategist.com.

Table of Contents

Why Doesn't My Website Show Up in the Search Engines?	3
What Is Search Engine Optimization?	3
Who this eBook is for:	4
Why You Need This eBook:	4
Before We Get Started.....	4
#1: Website Coding.....	6
What You See vs. What Search Engines See.....	7
What Programming Languages DO Search Engines Like?	7
What Languages DON'T Search Engines Like?	8
#2: Meta Tags	10
#3: Page Copy	12
What do you want to rank for?.....	12
Voodoo Alert! Key Word Density	13
Finding the Balance: Search Engines vs. Humans	13
Quick Writing Tips	14
#1 Look for generic words and make them specific.....	14
#2 Look for single key words and replace them with key phrases.....	14
#3 Put Key Phrases in Titles.....	14
#4 Put Key Phrases in Headings	15
Linking Basics	17
How Links Help	17
#4: Internal Links.....	19
Navigation Links	19
Page Copy Links	19
Other Onsite Link Opportunities	20
Navigation in Your Footer	20
Break Up Long Pages.....	20
Add a Site Map	20
#5: External Links.....	21
Directory Links.....	21
Comment Links.....	22
Article Marketing.....	22
Reciprocal Links	23
Social Bookmarking & Social Media Links	23
Where Do I Go from Here?	24
Get Your Key Phrase Report.....	24
Get Your Competition Report	24
Get on Our Mailing List.....	24
Resources.....	25
SEO Basics	25
SEO Copywriting	25
Link Building	25

Why Doesn't My Website Show Up in the Search Engines?

It happens all the time. You put months worth of painful effort into getting your new website up and running. Then what happens? Nothing. No emails. No phone calls. No clients. Nothing. It's pretty demoralizing.

So then you try to figure out why your website is proving to be just another business expense instead of a source of revenue. You go to Google, type in a search term you think your website should rank for and find out your website is nowhere to be found. You try another search term and get the same result. Then it hits you: "No one is contacting me because they can't find me."

Your customers can't find you because your website is drowning in a sea of other websites. In 1995 there were 18,000 websites on the internet. In 2006, there were 100 million websites. If the internet were a body of water, it was a small pond in 1995 and by 2006 it was an ocean; an ocean that gets bigger every day. Think of your website as a rubber raft. When the internet was a pond, you were able to stay afloat. But a rubber raft is not designed for the ocean: Eventually it sinks.

So where am I going with this rather morbid analogy? The bottom line is this: The internet is huge and it's growing every day. For clients to find your website, you need to proactively identify what search terms your customers use, and get your website to rank for them. So how do you do that? By effectively using search engine optimization.

What Is Search Engine Optimization?

The science (and art!) of getting a website to show up higher in the search results is called "search engine optimization" or SEO for short. People who do search engine optimization are called "SEOs" as in "SEO consultant" or "SEO expert." Sometimes they're called "search marketers"; although sticklers for accuracy might tell you a search marketer works on other aspects of internet marketing besides just search engine optimization.

Many self-proclaimed experts make search engine optimization sound like rocket science or some kind of mysterious voodoo. It's not. There are only five factors that give the search engines virtually all of the information they need to determine whether your website is #1 or #100 in the search results.

The five building blocks of higher search engine rankings are:

1. Website Code – how your website is built
2. Meta Tags – which tell the search engines what the web page is about
3. Page Copy – the actual words on the page
4. Internal Links – the links between the pages on your website
5. External Links – links from other websites to your website

Who this eBook is for:

This ebook is for smart business people too busy running their business to become a search engine optimization expert such as

- New website owners who want to give their website every chance to rank well from the beginning.
- People trying to figure out why an existing site isn't ranking.
- People who have a website that was ranking well in the past but isn't anymore.

Why You Need This eBook:

Ranking well is a marathon, not a sprint. When you know the fundamentals of what it takes to rank, you can make smart simple daily decisions that over time add up to high rankings.

This ebook shows you what you need to know to give your website every opportunity to rank well from the beginning. If you already have a website and your rankings have been slipping, you'll learn what you need to do to stop the bleeding and get your rankings moving in the right direction.



Occasionally in this ebook you will see this warning sign. This is to alert you to common mistakes and misperceptions made when it comes to search engine optimization. It also warns you about some of the games some SEOs play to make you think this stuff is harder than it really is.

Before We Get Started...

Before we dig into Search Engine Optimization in Plain English, it's important to understand the basics of how search engines work. If you're an internet marketing newbie, I suggest you start by reading "How Search Engines Work." In it, you will learn the basics of how search engines work, the difference between a search term and a key phrase, what the search engine results page is telling you and the 5 top misconceptions about search engines. Search Engine Optimization in Plain English assumes you understand these concepts, so if you need to brush up on them, download it here: <http://www.emarketingstrategist.com/Articles/HowSearchEnginesWork.pdf>

Throughout this ebook, I cite a number of resources that will help you learn more about a particular topic. For easy reference, there is a list of resources at the end of the report.

Onsite versus offsite.

There are two ways you can impact your website's rankings:

1. Onsite optimization – include things you do to your website to improve its rankings.
2. Offsite optimization – includes things that can be done other places on the internet to improve your rankings. For the most part, offsite optimization has to do with getting other websites to link to your website.

The first four building blocks deal with onsite factors. The last building block has to do with offsite optimization.

Where your website shows up in the search results for a particular key phrase depends on how many other websites are trying to rank for it. Unless you're in a very competitive industry, such as real estate or law, onsite optimization will probably get your website on the first page of the search results. For key phrases that are competitive, you have to convince other websites and blogs to link to your website.

#1: Website Coding

The foundation of your website is the programming language used to build it. While you may not care what language is used, the search engines do. This may come as a surprise, but there are several commonly used programming languages that search engines *can't* read. And when the search engines can't read your site, they don't know what your site is about or how to rank it.

When talking with web designers about selecting a programming language, it helps to understand the difference between the *programming language* and the *software program* used to build your website. Sound confusing? It's not if you think about it like other types of languages.

Say you've decided to write a book. The first thing you do is select what language you're going to write it in; such as English, French or Japanese. Once you pick your language, you decide on a method for writing the book. You can write your book using pen and paper, a typewriter or a computer. The language is not dependent on the method used to write it. For example, there is no rule that says you can only write English on paper and Japanese on a computer.

While it's not fair to say one language is inherently better than another, it's just a fact of life that certain languages are better suited to specific purposes. For better or worse, English is the language of business. Swahili may be your preferred language, but if you want to get customers anywhere other than Tanzania, you need to speak English.

Websites are the same way. If the primary purpose of your website is for business and rankings are important to you, your site needs to be programmed in HTML. If you want a visually intense website and don't care so much about rankings, Flash is fine.



Don't assume your website designer will pick a search engine - friendly programming language! Many website designers, especially ones with a strong graphic design background, build websites in programming languages search engines can't read. There are several factors that go into selecting a programming language. You should have a thorough discussion with your web

programmer about the languages he or she uses. Ask why this program was chosen, what are the possible trade-offs and how does this language affect your site's rankings in the search engines.

If your programmer can't answer those questions, either hire a designer who understands search engine optimization, or bring in a search engine optimization consultant **BEFORE** the website is built. It's a real bummer to spend all that time and money on a new website only to discover you will always be fighting an uphill battle trying to get it to rank better.

What You See vs. What Search Engines See

What you see when you view a web page is different than what a search engine sees. You see text, pictures, links and videos. The search engines see the source code. It's as if the search engine is wearing X ray glasses - it bypasses the flesh and sees the raw bones and structure of your site. The source code is the programming language that makes the web page work. The following example is from the Wall Street Journal's website. On the left is what you see; on the right is what the search engines see.

The image shows a side-by-side comparison of a web page. On the left is the visual rendering of the Wall Street Journal homepage as of August 3, 2009. It features a 'What's News' section with a headline: "'Clunkers' Give Car Sales Lift". Below the headline is a table showing July U.S. light-vehicle sales from year ago for various manufacturers:

Manufacturer	Change (%)
Chrysler	▲ 9.4%
Ford	▲ 2.4
GM	▼ 19.4
Honda	▼ 17.3
Hyundai	▲ 11.9
Toyota	▼ 11.4

Source: the companies

On the right is the raw HTML source code of the same page. It shows the underlying structure, including JavaScript, CSS links, and the main content area. The code is a mix of HTML tags and JavaScript code, illustrating the 'raw bones' of the page that search engines see.

What Programming Languages DO Search Engines Like?

The first language of the internet is HTML which stands for Hyper Text Markup Language. As the internet and software evolved, many other programming languages and techniques have been developed. If you want your website to be as search engine-friendly as possible, write it in HTML.

CSS stands for Cascading Styles Sheets. Where HTML creates the structure of the website, CSS is used to determine how the text will look and where things are placed. A good way to think about it is that HTML builds the rooms of the house and CSS makes them pretty.

There are several programming languages such as PHP, ASP and MySQL that are essentially just different ways of managing HTML. These programming methods are search engine friendly, too. But, how search engine friendly they are depends on several decisions your programmer makes. If your programmer uses these languages, it's very important they know and can communicate to you how their decisions will impact your website's ability to rank in the search engines.

What Languages DON'T Search Engines Like?

1. Flash: Flash is a programming language that is popular for its “flashy” visual appeal. If you’re working in an industry that is judged strongly by visual creativity, Flash might be a good idea. But, if you want to give your website every opportunity to rank well, Flash is not your friend.

There are ways to use Flash judiciously. You can use Flash for elements of your website and still have it rank well, but if your entire website is programmed in Flash you will have to rely on offsite methods of optimization to get it to rank well. It’s kind of like the difference between having frosting on a cake and having a cake made of frosting. Frosting on cake is good. A frosting cake is gross.

2. JavaScript: JavaScript is a programming language primarily used for website navigation menus. JavaScript is popular because it’s an easy way for graphic designers to make navigation do all kinds of fancy things. When a search engine spider lands on your site, it looks for links to other pages. JavaScript is a problem because search engines can’t read JavaScript so instead of spidering the other pages on your site, they move on to the next website. You might have a 100 page website but as far as the search engines are concerned, you have a one page website.

You can compensate for JavaScript navigation by including text links in the page copy or in the footer. However, the best fix is to re-build the navigation in Cascading Style Sheets. CSS does just about everything JavaScript does. So why don’t more programmers use CSS? Getting a CSS navigation to work across browsers (Internet Explorer, Safari, AOL, etc.) is tricky. With JavaScript, you don’t have to do as much testing and debugging. However, “CSS takes longer” is not a good excuse. A website designer who knows that a website is a business generation tool will understand that search engine friendly navigation is important and will take the time to do it right.

3. Frames: Frames is an older programming technique that allows the web programmer to create a template for the webpages. The template contains all the page elements that are the same on each page, such as the header, navigation and footer. The frame is essentially an empty box where the main content of the page is. The problem with frames is that the content doesn’t really live in that empty box. It lives in another file. It’s like an optical illusion. The website visitor sees the content, but the search engines don’t. So as far as the search engine can tell, there’s nothing on the page that makes it any different than the other pages on the site; thus there is nothing to rank it for.

In this day and age there is absolutely no reason to build a website with frames. There are other, search engine-friendly ways, to have the benefits of a template. If your website is built in Frames, the first thing you need to do is have it rebuilt. You don’t have to change the way it looks to the human eye. (Although if your site was built in frames it’s probably been several years and is time for a fresh look.) You just need to change the way it looks to the search engines.

4. Text in Images: Images aren’t just limited to pictures. Website designers often turn text into images because they can be sure the text is going to look exactly the way they want it to. If the “text” is in a fancy font or has special effects such as drop shadow or glow, it’s probably an image and not “real” text.

Text in images is a problem because while humans can read the text, all the search engines can tell is that there's a picture there. To add injury to insult, text images are commonly used in headings. Since search engines give more weight to the words in the headings, you're missing a great opportunity to help your rankings when you have text in images.

Sometimes you just can't get around putting text in an image. In those instances, you want to be sure to use what's called an "alt tag." An alt tag is a snippet of code that describes what's in an image. Sometimes when you hover over an image, words pop up. That's the alt tag.

The following example is from www.CuteOverload.com. When you hover your mouse over the picture, the alt tag "Even when she is fully grown, she'll only stand 40cm tall." pops up.



An alt tag won't completely counteract the negative impact of having text in an image but it's better than nothing.

#2: Meta Tags

Probably the fastest and easiest way to improve your website's rankings is by updating the meta tags. For something that is so easy to do and has so much impact on rankings, I am amazed at how few website even have meta tags! What are meta tags? Let's dig in...

Meta tags are descriptions in the source code of a web page that tell the search engines what this page is about. While there are about a dozen different meta tags, two are most important for our purposes: the Title tag and the Description tag. Their names pretty much tell you what they do. The Title tag is the title of the page and the Description tag is a brief description of what that page is about.

The search engines will rank your web pages for the words in your title tag. How high the search engines place your web pages in the search results depends on whether you're doing other things right and how many other sites are competing for those same key phrases. While the search engines don't use the Description tag as a factor in your rankings, the Description tag is still very important. A well-written Description tag that makes people think "Oh! That's what I'm looking for." will get them to click on your link versus your competitor's link.

You might have heard that you should use the Keyword meta tag too, but don't bother. In the early days of the internet the Keyword meta tag was a list of words to help the search engines understand what the web page was about. Then the search engine spammers got a hold of the Keyword meta tag and ruined it for the rest of us. They did what's called "Keyword stuffing," which means they filled the Keyword meta tag with irrelevant words that get searched on a lot in hopes it would drive traffic to their website. It wasn't too long after that that the search engines stopped considering the Keyword meta as a criteria for rankings. Many people still use the Keyword meta tag anyway. Frankly, all it does is tell your competitors what you're trying to rank for and possibly give them ideas they hadn't thought of themselves.

Meta Tags at Work

You can see the Title and Description tags at work by doing a simple web search. Go to Google and type in the search term “growing dahlias.”



Web [+ Show options...](#) Results 1 - 10 of about 73,500 for

[Planting, Growing and Caring for Dahlias](#)

A guide to the care and cultivation of **Dahlia** plants, with tips on planting, digging and winter storing.

www.thegardenhelper.com/dahlia.html - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#) - [Feedback](#) [Print](#) [Close](#)

The first search result is the page "http://www.thegardenhelper.com/dahlias.html". The Title tag of the page is “Planting, Growing and Caring for Dahlias.” The words “growing” and “dahlias” are bold because they were words used in the search. If the search term had been “caring for dahlias,” those words would have been in bold instead. The Description tag for this page is “A guide to the care and cultivation of Dahlia plants, with tips on planting, digging and winter storing.”

The following is the source code of the webpage. The Title tag is outlined in red and the Description tag is outlined in blue.

```

dahlia[1] - Notepad
File Edit Format View Help
<HTML>
<HEAD>
<TITLE>Planting, Growing and Caring for Dahlias</TITLE>
<META name="description" content="A guide to the care and cultivation of Dahlia plants,
with tips on planting, digging and winter storing">
<META name="keywords" content="dahlias, tubers, dahlia, soil, plants, plant, tuber, growing, flow
<meta http-equiv="Page-Exit" content="revealTrans(Duration=3,Transition=23)">
</head>
<BODY BGCOLOR="#FFFFFF" TEXT="#006A00" LINK="#0000B9" VLINK="#CA0000" BACKGROUND="graphics/paper2.
<CENTER>
<!-- Created by CoffeeCup Image Mapper++ (www.coffeecup.com) -->
<b>Celebrating 10 years of helping your gardens c
<a href="http://www.thegardenhelper.com/" title="Garden Helper Home Page" onMouseover="window.stat
<a href="http://www.thegardenhelper.com/gardenerindex.html" title="Gardening for beginners" onMous
<A HREF="http://www.thegardenhelper.com/gardeningguides.html" title="Gardening Guides" onMouseover
<a href="http://www.thegardenhelper.com/houseplants.html" title="House Plant care and cultivation"
<A HREF="http://www.thegardenhelper.com/dictionary.html" title="Garden Glossary" onMouseover="winc
  
```

I suggest you check the source code of your own web pages to see what information you’re giving the search engines about your website. It’s easy to check the source code of your own website, The follow article will show you how:

<http://www.emarketingstrategist.com/Articles/HowToViewSourceCode.pdf>.

#3: Page Copy

A lot of smart people spend a lot of time trying to figure out exactly what factors search engines consider and how much weight they give each one. These people then spend hours agonizing over minor tweaks to their website. For those of us who don't have the luxury of stressing out over things like "Page Rank Sculpting," well-written page copy will go a long way toward giving your site stable rankings over the long term.



The vast majority of businesses put WAY more effort into how their website looks than what it says. **This is easily the most preventable rankings mistake!** If you've got a limited budget, a simple design with strong copy is the best use of your marketing dollar. It will not only improve your website's ability to rank, it will dramatically increase the likelihood that you will get business from your website. Put your resources toward good copy, not bells and whistles.

What do you want to rank for?

News flash: Your website won't rank for key phrases that aren't on the pages. Seems obvious, right? But, I regularly talk to people who can't figure out why their website doesn't rank for a key phrase, only to discover the key phrase isn't even on the page in question.

Knowing what words and phrases buying customers use when they search for your product or service is the foundation of making money online. Before you decide what pages to have, what to call them and what they're going to say, you need to do key phrase research. This takes place early in the design process, so start thinking about key phrases as soon as you decide to build a website or redesign an existing site.

You may think you know what search terms people use to find you, but chances are very good that you're wrong. I see people do it all the time. Business owners assume that their customers use the same language to describe their products and services as they do. They forget their customers have a different perspective. Your customers are not searching for what *you provide*; they are looking for a *solution to their problem*. This may not be an obvious distinction but it is a profound and important one. For example, you might provide "employee retention consultation services" but your customers are looking for an answer to the question "Why do my employees keep quitting on me?" These are two very different ways on looking at the same issue.

The purpose of search engine optimization is to drive traffic to your website. When your website ranks for key phrases your customers use, your website gets more traffic. Key phrase research can not only tell you what search terms customers use, it can tell you how often those search terms are used and give you an idea of how much traffic you can expect when your site ranks for them.

Voodoo Alert! Key Word Density

One of the terms SEO consultants throw around to make them sound smarter than you is “key word density” or “key phrase density.” This might sound complicated, but it’s not. “Key word density” is a percent of how many times you use your key words (or phrases) in the web page copy. If you can divide, you can calculate key word density.

Here’s how to calculate key phrase density:

First, count the words on the page. Second, count the times you use your key word or key phrase. Then, divide key phrases by the total number of words. That’s your key word density.

For example:

Key phrases	15
Total number of words in the copy	500
Key word density	3%

One of the issues SEO consultants with too much time on their hands argue about is “What is the optimal key word density?” This argument has been raging for years and it always seems to boil down to “key word density should be 3% – 5%.” My answer to this question is “Key word density should be whatever makes sense to the customer.”

Finding the Balance: Search Engines vs. Humans

While the search engines can get you in front of your customers,

SEARCH ENGINES ARE NOT YOUR CUSTOMERS!

For web pages to rank well, you need to use your key phrases in your page copy, headings and titles as much as possible. But! High rankings are not the end goal. Too many people assume “When my website ranks well, I get customers from the internet.” That equation is missing a step. The equation that really works is “When my website ranks well *and the copy appeals to my target markets*, I get customers from the internet.”

Sales don’t happen just because your website is on the first page of the search results. Sales happen when the words on the page motivate potential customers to buy your product or service.



SEO consultants who focus solely on rankings can lose site of the importance of compelling copy and engage in “**key word stuffing**.” They look for absolutely every opportunity to use a key phrase and use it! The problem is that at some point that copy ceases to make sense to humans. Key word stuffing is kind of like pornography. It’s hard to define, but you know it when you see it.

Quick Writing Tips

When I'm looking for ways to insert key phrases into page copy, I start with a list of 2 or 3 key phrases I want to add to the page. I then look for words in the existing copy that can be replaced. Sometimes you have to think creatively and rework a sentence, but with a little practice, increasing your key phrase density becomes fairly easy to do.

#1 Look for generic words and make them specific

Generic words can often be replaced with specific key phrases.

Generic: **It** is one of the fastest cars on the road.

Specific: The **Porsche Carrera GT** is one of the fastest cars on the road.

Generic: How can you live without **them**?

Specific: How can you live without **couture microfleece pajamas**?

Generic: **They** are the best lawyers in town.

Specific: **Our personal injury attorneys** are the best lawyers in town.

Generic: Our **service** will come to you.

Specific: Our **eco-friendly dry cleaning service** will come to you.

Generic: Our **products** work as well as the name brands at half the cost.

Specific: Our **all natural hair care products** work as well as the name brands at half the cost.

#2 Look for single key words and replace them with key phrases

Say you're a personal injury lawyer in Phoenix, Arizona. Would you really want your website to rank #1 for lawyer? At first, it might sound like a good idea, but it's not. First of all, it would cost a fortune to get your site to rank that high. . Second, 99.9% of the traffic you'd get would be useless. If you're a personal injury lawyer practicing in Phoenix, that's what you want your website to rank for.

Scan your copy for instances of single key words and replace them with key phrases. If your business is location specific, work that into the copy as well.

#3 Put Key Phrases in Titles

It's tempting to give your articles and blog posts cute, snappy, or pithy titles that grab attention and get people to keep reading. There are people at major fashion magazines who get paid a lot of money to do just this.

For our purposes, we'll call them "snappy titles." While snappy titles grab attention, they rarely have key phrases in them. Considering search engines give significant weight to the words in titles, it's just as important to put key phrases in your article titles as it is to make people want to keep reading. If people can't find your articles or blog posts, it doesn't really matter if your snappy title keeps people reading.

Finding a balance between search engine-friendly and "snappy" can be quite a challenge. I usually start with a title that accurately describes the content of the article and includes key phrases. I call this the functional title. Then I brainstorm a list of alternative titles likely to keep people reading and try to work the functional title into them. Here are some examples which start with the key phrase to insert in the title.

Key Phrase: internet marketing tips

Before: The 5 Things You Really Need to Know

After: 5 Internet Marketing Tips You Need to Know to Increase Profits

Key Phrase: walking and biking tours

Before: Dream Vacations on a Budget

After: Waling & Biking Tours: Vacations for the Budget Minded

#4 Put Key Phrases in Headings

You probably know that most people tend to scan articles, reading the headings first to get an idea of what it's about. When the reader finds a heading that interests them, they read the copy in that section. Headings tell you what the page is about. For that reason, search engines give more weight to the words in headings than they do the words in the page copy.

But how do search engines know what's a heading and what's page copy? This is where knowing a little bit about HTML and CSS comes in handy. HTML uses tags to customize elements of a web page. A tag tells the search engines how to display that particular page element, whether is a heading, a link, page copy or an image.

Say you want your main headings, also known as an H1 tag, to be Arial font, 18 point, bold. Your heading would look like this:

This is a Heading 1

There are two ways to code your page so your headings look this way. The first way is to literally spell it out like this:

```
<font face="Arial" font-size="18pt" font-weight="bold">This is a Heading 1</font>
```

The second way is to customize the H1 tag in your style sheet (a separate file the web page references to know how to display things) which would make your code look like this:

```
<h1>This is a Heading 1</h1>
```

Either way you code it, it looks the same to humans. However, the second version tells the search engines “This is a main heading.” So, code your page right and use key phrases in your headings.

Writing good copy is hard work and many people do everything they can to avoid it. But, people who rely on tricks and gimmicks in an attempt to fool the search engines into higher rankings suffer mightily when the search engines catch on to their games. Knowing what key phrases your customers use and working them into your titles, headings and page copy, will not only improve your rankings, it will keep them stable over time. You won't have to worry that your website will suffer when the search engines update their algorithm.

Linking Basics

The ability to click on a link and wind up on a page with more details on a particular topic makes the internet unique as a source of information. These days we take links for granted. But think about what an amazing innovation they are. Prior to the internet, if you were lucky enough to be in a well-stocked library that had the source material referenced in the book you were reading, at the very least you had to put your book down and hunt down the book or journal cited. I remember doing that and it was a pain. Many times, once I'd tracked down the source material I'd forgotten why I'd bothered hunting it down in the first place.

Search engines give a lot of weight to links. In fact, all else being equal, the page with the most links wins the rankings wars. But, there is a lot of confusion when it comes to using links to your advantage. The confusion arises because there are different types of links and links come from many sources. The last 2 high rankings building blocks are about the 2 main types of links: internal (or onsite) links and external (or offsite) links.

Before I explain the fundamentals of internal and external links, It's important to understand how links help your website in the rankings wars.

How Links Help

We all know that when you click on blue underlined text you go to another web page. The blue underlined text is called "anchor text" and there are ways to use anchor text in your links that helps more than others. In the following example let's consider the fictional Jones & Smith Law Firm who specialize in personal injury cases and have the domain name www.JonesSmith.com.

Let's consider the following 2 ways of linking to the Jones & Smith website.

Link #1: Visit <http://www.jonesandsmith.com> for more information.

Link #2: Learn more about how the [personal injury attorneys](#) at the Jones Smith Law Firm can help you.

The search engines will pick up link #1 and give the Jones & Smith website credit for it. But with link #2, the search engines will give the Jones and Smith website link credit for the key phrase "personal injury attorneys." Whereas, link #1 gets a vague credit, link #2 will help the website rank better for a specific key phrase. Long story short, a domain name link is good; a key phrase link is better.

Using the key phrases you know your customers are searching on has the potential to drive exponentially more traffic to your site than merely guessing. You may think you know what search terms they use but often our hunches miss the mark. I'll illustrate with an example from my own business. My business name is "eMarketing Strategist." I help businesses get clients from the internet. Another way to describe what I do is to say "I'm an internet marketing consultant." The two titles are virtually interchangeable. But! The

phrase “internet marketing consultant” is used as a search term over 1000 times a day. On the other hand, “emarketing strategist” is searched on approximately once a day. What would I rather rank #1 for? “Internet marketing consultant” of course! It has the potential to drive a thousand times more traffic to my site.



A common misperception about links is the benefit to your site when you link to other websites. **When you link to another site it helps them NOT you.** This doesn't mean don't do it. If your website has a Resource page where you link to content others find helpful, people will link to your Resources page which then helps your site.

#4: Internal Links

Internal links are an easy way to increase your key phrase density without making it look like you're engaging in keyword stuffing. Navigation and page copy are the two primary methods I want to address first, followed by other ways to increase/boost onsite linking.

Navigation Links

Most websites use generic language in their navigation such as "Services," "Products," "Clients," and "Resources." Where possible, choose the key words that best describe your offer, and use those in your top-line navigation.

For example, I have a friend who is a copywriter. She provides a wide range of copywriting and editing services. There are several ways she can organize and name the pages of her website. Instead of just having a "Services" page with a laundry list of tasks on it, she could organize her site like this:

Web Copywriting	Print	Media
Website copywriting	Brochures	Radio spots
Blog Copywriting	Advertisements	Commercials
Sales Letter Copywriting	Fliers	Online Videos
		Podcast Scripts

Now, If her programmer takes this list, builds her navigation in CSS so that when a visitor hovers over a main navigation item and the sub-items appear, her site will be coded so that *each one* of these phrases appears on *every* page of her website. That's a lot of mentions for some very juicy key phrases!

Other ideas for replacing generic navigation include:

- If you have a specific type of client, name them. For example, my copywriter friend could break down her client list by "Copywriting Clients" or "Editing Clients."
- If you have a Resources or Links page, name those too. On my own site, I have a section for "Internet Marketing Resources. And, as I build a list of resources, I will break it down by topic such as Search Engine Optimization Resources, Blogging Resources and Social Networking Resources.

Page Copy Links

Do you really want your website to rank for "click here"? No! So stop using it in your link text. Every internet user knows that blue underline text means "click here to go to another page."

It's easy to make these links work for you:

Before: To download our report, [click here](#).

After: Download our report "[5 Tips for Growing Bigger Dahlias](#)".

Before: Learn more about our services by [clicking here](#).

After: Learn more about our [employee retention services](#).

Other Onsite Link Opportunities

Navigation in Your Footer

Many websites repeat their main navigation at the bottom of each page. This is a great opportunity to link juicy key phrases to your service pages (even if you don't use the same names in the footer as you do the main navigation). For example, I worked with a personal injury law firm and we added the following links to the footer of each page:

[Auto Accident Lawyer](#) | [Medical Malpractice Lawyer](#) | [Personal Injury Lawyer](#) | [Wrongful Death Lawyer](#)

Break Up Long Pages

In a nutshell, improved rankings boils down to "More pages and more links." This means the more pages your site has and the more pages that link to it, the better it will rank. This is why one of the first things I look for when working with a new client is long pages that can be broken down into multiple pages. I then create a top level page that links to sub-pages using key phrases in the link.

An easy way to do this is to take long pages of text and break them down into multiple pages. This not only makes the content easier to read, it allows you/us to use more key phrases, which ultimately improves page rank.

Add a Site Map

A site map is a page that lists every page on your site and links to it. The IRS website has an excellent example here: <http://www.irs.gov/sitemap/index.html>. A site map makes it easy for the search engines to find and spider every page of your website.

While you have very little control over offsite links, you have complete control over onsite links. So make them count!

#5: External Links

Onsite optimization only get you so far. If your targeted key phrases are in high demand, you will have to work harder to get noticed by the search engines. Getting other websites and blogs to link to your website will help you rank well for the more competitive key words. Although I don't recommend relying on this as your sole SEO strategy, it is possible to take a poorly coded website, get a few hundred links to it and land on the first page of the search results. (Your results with this strategy will vary depending on how many links your competition has.)

Ranking well is a popularity contest, and search engines consider links from other web pages to your web pages as a vote of popularity. These types of links are called "backlinks." The more backlinks there are to your pages, the more popular your pages are, and the higher they will rank. Notice I use the word "pages" instead of "site." This is one of those areas where thinking about your site as a whole can limit your SEO efforts. Individual web pages link to other individual web pages, not an entire site. This is important because in your link-building efforts, you will want to spread the links around to multiple pages on your site versus just pointing them all at the home page.

Exactly how to get links to your web pages is a very complex topic. In fact, there are SEO companies that only do link campaigns. It's not that link building is particularly hard, it's that getting the good links takes A LOT of work.

In the normal flow of events, links to your website come from a variety of sources. So if the overwhelming majority of the links to your site are one kind of link, it looks fishy to the search engines and they will penalize your site for it. That's why you need to pursue several types of links.

Some links are easier to get than others. The following are the 6 major link types listed in order of easiest to get to hardest to get.

Directory Links

There are hundreds of online directories on the internet where you can add your website.

Advantages

- Have control over what your link says
- Relatively easy to do
- Using the paid option gets your link displayed within days

Drawbacks

- Not weighted as highly as other types of links
- Need to keep track of renewal dates and fees

Comment Links

Many newspaper websites and blogs include the ability to comment on the article or blog post. Leaving a helpful or insightful comment can drive traffic to your site and may result in a link.

Advantages

- When done correctly, it's an easy way to get in front of your target markets. To learn more about this process read [How to Blog without Having a Blog \(http://www.emarketingstrategist.com/Articles/BloggingWithoutABlog.html\)](http://www.emarketingstrategist.com/Articles/BloggingWithoutABlog.html)

Drawbacks

- Many blogs "nofollow" links which means they tell the search engines not to give you credit for the link.
- In most cases you don't have control over your link text.

Article Marketing

Article marketing is where you write a series of articles about your industry, and then post them for free distribution via article database websites such as xxx and xxx. Each article contains a bio that can include links to your website. When someone uses your article, they must include your bio. In this way you drive traffic to your website and get more links.

a method of getting links in which articles are made available for distribution via article database websites such as www.ezinearticles.com and www.articlealley.com. Each article contains a bio that can include links to your website. When someone uses your article on their website or newsletter, they must include your bio.

Advantages:

- These articles are fairly easy to write.
- You have complete control over your anchor text.
- A good article can be used by many audiences, thus putting your information in front of new people for months, if not years, to come. It's more than these two groups, once it's posted, the average Joe can link to it and keep it going, ie viral, right? So audience to me is more accurate.

Disadvantages:

- Relying excessively on article marketing for link building can work against you in the long run because if all your links come from one source the search engines will notice and penalize your site for it.
- Although there are hundreds of article databases out there, only one or two dozen that allow backlinks.
- An article database that has "follow" links today may change their policy and be "no-follow" tomorrow.

Reciprocal Links

A reciprocal link essentially means “If you link to my site, I’ll link to your site.”

Advantages

- A great way to get links on an ongoing basis which can ultimately result in thousands of links to your site.
- You have control over the anchor text

Drawbacks

- You have to have a page on your website that links to other websites
- To avoid an implied endorsement of the sites you link to, you need to have clear verbiage that you’re not necessarily endorsing the websites on your links page.
- Researching potential link partners, communicating with them, adding their links to your site and verifying that they have added your link to their site is very labor intensive

Social Bookmarking & Social Media Links

People like to collect and share information, and that’s where “the socials” come in. There is some overlap between the sites that are considered social bookmarking sites and those that are considered social media sites. In general, social bookmarking websites such as www.delicious.com are for keeping track of web pages, blogs, videos, etc. you want to come back to later. What makes it social is that unless you make your account private, anyone can see what you’ve bookmarked. Social media sites, such as www.digg.com, have a bookmarking component, but the main emphasis is on sharing the stuff you find online and then discussing it with others interested in the same topic.

Advantages:

- One good article, white paper or blog post can garner thousands of links and open doors for speaking or guest blogging opportunities.
- Links from high authority websites and blogs carry more weight than any other kind of link.
- Enough of these types of links can make your website virtually untouchable by your competition.

Disadvantages:

- Creating link-worthy content is hard work and requires an excellent understanding of what your audience finds valuable.
- You have no control over what people say about your content. If other experts (or self-proclaimed experts) disagree with what you have to say, you can wind up looking bad.
- You have to walk a fine line between providing value and promoting your business. Overly promotional content won’t get you links; worse, it will get your content flamed.

Where Do I Go from Here?

Get Your Key Phrase Report

Words are at the core of internet marketing. You use words on your website, in your blog, in your social networking profiles and in your videos and podcasts . Words – search terms – are what your prospects use to find you. When the words *you* use and the words your *prospects* use are the same, you connect.

It's difficult to over-emphasize the importance of using the right words. That's why the eMarketing Strategist has created the Key Phrase Report. In it you will learn:

- Key words and phrases most likely to be used by your prospects
- Key phrases you should target for maximum ROI
- Where and how to use key phrases on your website, in SEO and in social networking

Want to learn more about the Key Phrase Report?

Email us at inquiry@emarketingstrategist.com

Get Your Competition Report

Improving your website's rankings can be a walk in the park or it can be attempting to summit Mt. Everest. Wouldn't you like to know what you're up for?

The Competition Report will tell you:

- What the top rankings sites are doing to be there
- What you need to do to outrank them (or join them)
- Are there any "800 lb. Gorillas" you didn't know about? (It happens more than you think.)

Want to learn more about the Competition Report?

Email us at inquiry@emarketingstrategist.com

Get on Our Mailing List

If you got this report from a friend, that's cool. I hope you found it helpful and would like to hear from us again. If so, please visit www.eMarketingStrategist.com and join our mailing list.

Resources

SEO Basics

Article: "How Search Engines Work." By Elgé Premeau

<http://www.emarketingstrategist.com/Articles/HowSearchEnginesWork.pdf>

eBook: "Search Engine Optimization Fast Start" by Dan Thies (Free)

An excellent resource for those who want to learn how to optimize their own website. It can get pretty technical and I've heard from a few people that they found it overwhelming. If your goal isn't to become an expert, just read the first three chapters.

<http://www.seoresearchlabs.com/seo-book.php>

Newsletter: High Rankings Advisor by Jill Whelan

<http://www.highrankings.com/newsletter/>

SEO Copywriting

eBook: "The Nitty-gritty of Writing for the Search Engines"* by Jill Whelan (\$49)

Jill does a great job showing you how to balance writing for the search engines and writing for website visitors. This book includes lots of helpful examples.

<http://61b1ah-1p2fscobqm6xbmsma20.hop.clickbank.net/>

eBook: "The Fat Free Guide to SEO Copywriting"* by Ian Lurie (\$7)

This ebook shows you how search engines think, how to structure your content and writing tips in a quick, easy to learn format.

<http://www.coolsiteoftheday.com/7-seo/?=elge@emarketingstrategist.com>

Articles: Copywriting Articles by Karon Thackston (Free)

<http://www.marketingwords.com/articles.html>

Link Building

Article: "Link Mixology: The 12 Kinds Of Links Your Site Needs" by Michelle MacPhearson

<http://www.michellemacphearson.com/link-mixology-the-12-kinds-of-links-your-site-needs/>

Blog: Eric Ward's blog

<http://www.ericward.com/bestpractices/>

*Fair disclosure: eMarketing Strategist is an affiliate of these products and will make a commission on your purchase.