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Know Your Keywords for Search Engine Marketing Success

By C S Wurzberger and Pam Foster

Search engine optimization is the industry term for enhancing the code and content of your Web site so it ranks higher in the search engines (Google, Yahoo, MSN, etc.). This is also referred to as “organic” because search engines find your Web pages naturally through the keywords on your pages. Let us explain.

The foundation of successful search-engine optimization is in knowing the keywords your prospects use in search engines to find solutions to their needs.

Here’s what we mean by keywords. If you want to fly to Kenya for a fabulous jungle safari, you’ll probably go to the Google search engine and type in the keywords: “flights to Kenya” or “cheap flights to Kenya” or “Kenya flights” or something similar. These keywords are very likely to be used by other people looking for flights to Kenya. So, these keywords will also likely be used by the airlines offering bargain flights to Kenya.

A profitable Web site is “keyword rich,” meaning it revolves around carefully chosen and strategically placed keywords. And remember that keywords are big business! Your competition could race ahead of you if they use your keywords more effectively than you do. Make sure you carefully select keywords by truly understanding the words used by your desired audience. Also, each page of your site should focus on its own keywords.

Here are 9 steps to finding the best keywords for your Web site.

1. Make a list of all the keywords you can think of. They’re actually more than one word usually, but the industry calls words or phrases keywords to simplify the discussion. Two to five keywords are best.
2. Put yourself in your customers’ shoes as you consider keywords. You can do this by interviewing customers.
3. Check out your site traffic reports. If you already have a Web site, you can get keywords from your own traffic logs (from your hosting company).
4. Check out your competition to discover the keywords they’re targeting. Enter your keywords and see what pages come up. Also, when you’re on their site, go to the top menu of your Internet screen and select “View,” then “Source” (Internet Explorer) or “View,” then “Page Source” (Mozilla Firefox) to look at the source codes—showing their keywords (depending on how the site is coded).
5. Cover all keyword variations. Keep in mind that people may misspell a keyword or phrase or use plurals, upper or lower case or other variations.

6. Be descriptive. Add descriptive terms, such as low cost, affordable, cheap, free, etc.
7. Use action words. Think of what your customers are trying to do—buy, find, purchase, define, shop, etc.
8. Target local markets if that's relevant. If you're an electrical company in Milwaukee, your keywords may include "Milwaukee electrician" or "Milwaukee electricians."
9. Use online keyword research tools. There are a number of companies offering keyword research and rankings. www.wordtracker.com is the most widely used.

One caution: don't jam ("spam") too many keywords into your Web pages or make them invisible to users (visible to search engines only). These practices are not allowed by search engines and they may boot you out of their rankings.

These are just some of the ways you can boost your success on the Internet. To learn more, you'll want to attend the three-part Web development seminars that Score offers.

You will also want to get your hands on the new Internet Jungle Guide book, *9 Easy Steps to Planning a Profitable Web Site: Your complete guide to navigating the Web development jungle and launching a site that sells!* This mini-course and workbook will help you launch a site that truly attracts prospects and customers who are ready to make purchases!

You can order this book online at www.internetjungleguide.com. *The Internet Jungle Guide is a division of Premiere Visions, LLC.*

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The national SCORE Association is a nonprofit organization dedicated to entrepreneur education and the formation, growth and success of small business nationwide. SCORE Portland is one of 389 chapters throughout the United States, with over 11,000 volunteers nationwide. SCORE is a resource partner of the U.S. Small Business Administration.

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