

Post-Research Optimization

1. Page Structure

a. Home Page

- i. For the purposes of SEO, the home page's job is to rank for the company name, and maybe one major keyword. Otherwise, its job is to drive traffic to conversion pages.

b. Conversion Pages

- i. These pages are intended less for SEO, and more for lead generation. These pages are the only pages that should be linked to from SEO pages.

c. SEO Pages

- i. These pages are filled with highly relevant content that can be found by search engines. There should be multiple anchor-text links all over the site pointing to these pages.
- ii. Every SEO page should be optimized for one or two closely related keywords only.
- iii. No two pages should be optimized for the same keyword, with the exception of blog posts.

d. Blogs

- i. Blogs provide a constant stream of information, which is itself a sign of relevancy to search engine algorithms. More than this, every anchor-text link from a blog to an SEO page is one more hint to search engines that the SEO page is relevant for a given keyword.

2. URL

a. Structure

- i. URLs should contain keywords.
- ii. Generally speaking, it is better to hyphenate than underscore.
 1. Ex: "/purple-widgets" is better than "/purple_widgets"

b. Depth

- i. The deeper a page is buried in a URL structure, the less significant Google assumes it is.
 1. Ex: "company.com/purple-widgets" is better than "company.com/products/widgets/purple-widgets"

c. Subdomain vs. Subdirectory

- i. Wherever there is a section of a website dedicated to providing links to other pages within the main structure of a website (a blog, for instance), it should be housed in a subdomain (blog.company.com).
- ii. Google can use subdirectories as semi-objective sources to determine the structure of the main domain.

3. <head>

a. <title>

- i. Length:

1. A search engine results page (SERP) will only display the first 64-70 characters of a title.
 2. Search engines will read the entire title tag, however, and rank pages based on the whole content of the tag.
 - ii. Order:
 1. Front-load keywords as much as possible.
 2. End the title tag with “ | Company Name”
 - b. <meta>
 - i. <meta name=“description”>
 1. This does not factor into SEO, *per se*, but it does affect the rate at which searchers click through to your site from an SERP.
 2. Should be no longer than 160 characters, spaces included.
 - ii. <meta name=“keywords”>
 1. Google, Yahoo! and Bing no longer use meta keywords to determine relevance.
 2. There are lots of other search engines out there, and while many of them are not widely known, there are several industry-specific engines that operate differently. If searchers use any of these engines in any kind of volume, it is worth entering keywords. Otherwise, it’s safe to ignore them.
 - c. <script>
 - i. Google takes page load times into account when ranking pages for competing keywords. One way to help a page load faster is to use external scripts wherever possible.
 - d. <link>
 - i. <link rel=“stylesheet”>
 1. Always use a stylesheet. Using HTML style elements, with very few exceptions (see 4.d), inhibits a search engine from accurately reading web content.
 - ii. <link rel=“canonical”>
 1. If the content of a given page is found in multiple locations on a site, Google may deduct points for repetitive content (a common black hat technique). The rel=“canonical” tag alerts Google to multiple instances of the same content, and points the spiders to the original instance.
 - a. Example: A press release is found by browsing to “/press/release1.html”, and is also found on “/press/categories/widgets/release1.html”. In this case, the Categories page should include the tag <link href=“/press/release1.html” rel=“canonical”> to avoid being penalized for duplicate content.
4. <body>
 - a. General:
 - i. Keywords should appear several times within the first 150 words of the body.
 - b. <hX>

- i. The header tag on every page should contain one or two closely related targeted keywords.
 - ii. Well-optimized pages use tags for <h1> through <h4>. Keywords in headers on tiers lower than <h4> provide minimal SEO value.
 - iii. If possible, front-load keywords within <hX> tags.
 - c. <a>
 - i.
 - 1. Title attributes are read by search engine spiders and should contain keywords when possible.
 - ii.
 - 1. Alt attributes are read by search engine spiders and should always contain keywords.
 - iii.
 - 1. Rel (or relative) attributes tell search engine spiders about the nature of the relationship between two pages. When Page A links to Page B, Google takes this as an indication that Page A vouches for the "goodness" of Page B. The rel="nofollow" tag indicates to Google that the page it is on does **not** vouch for the page it is linking to.
 - 2. Use this sparingly, and only on SEO pages where the anchor text matches the keyword(s) for which the page is optimized.
 - a. Example: An SEO page optimized for "Purple Widgets" might have a link that reads Pictures of Purple Widgets that links to another page. The HTML for this link should contain the rel="nofollow" tag. A link that reads Pictures of Widgets should not.
 - iv. Example of a link optimized for "Purple Widgets":
 - 1. With nofollow: Purple Widgets
 - 2. Without nofollow: Purple Widgets
- d. and
 - i. Search engine spiders will generally ignore font tags, with the exception of and . It is generally advisable to have one instance of a keyword in **both** and tags in the first 150 words.
- e.
 - i.
 - 1. Search engine spiders are unable to "see" images. They rely on HTML attributes to tell them what an image is about. Every image should have a keyword in the alt attribute.
 - ii.
 - 1. Search engine spiders also read image title attributes, though they value them less than alt attributes.

5. Link Building

a. Quality

- i. Given two pages optimized identically for the same keyword, Google will determine rank based on the average PageRank of pages linking to the two sites. PageRank is a measure of authority; the more quality links a page gets, the more authority it has. Links from pages with high PageRank are more valuable.
- b. Quantity
 - i. Given two pages optimized identically for the same keyword and in-pointing links of the same average quality, Google will determine rank based on the number of in-pointing links. In a very fundamental sense, the more links a page has, the better.
- c. Source
 - i. For whatever reason, Google puts a greater value on links from certain kinds of domains. In general, links from .edu and .gov sites are more valuable than links from .com, .net or .org sites, which are in turn more valuable than links from .info or .me sites.
- d. Process:
 - i. Link building sites
 - 1. There are only a handful of these that are valuable. The Yahoo! Directory and DMOZ.org are the two big ones, and there may be one or two others that are relevant.
 - ii. Paid links
 - 1. There are very few of these that generate any kind of meaningful SEO value, with a few exceptions. Affiliate links generally produce good SEO value, but paying webmasters to put a link to your site on theirs generally does not.
 - iii. Press releases
 - 1. Press releases are a great way of building anchor text specific links. A good PR wire service (like PRWeb) will let you specify the anchor text on your links, which is great for SEO.
 - a. Make sure the keywords on the page being linked to match the keywords in the anchor text links.
 - iv. Social links from followers
 - 1. These are more difficult to build, and require good old-fashioned networking, but they're the most valuable links you can get. By "social links," we don't mean links from social media – those probably have very little SEO value – but rather links from bloggers and journalists in your social network from their business or personal websites. These links could come from clients, participants in social promotions, raving fans, etc. They are honest-to-goodness endorsements, and search engines are good at deciphering that sentiment.