



Site Marketing Strategies

The search industry is continually changing on some level, and listings and site rankings go up and down as a result. Just as site owners and online marketers think we get a grasp on the tactics and techniques, one of the big boys, like Google or Yahoo, changes things a bit and we readjust procedures again.

In our years in this business we have found that two things stay the same; the industry is always evolving, and listings/rankings have to be watched and worked regularly. The experts in online marketing and SEO (Search Engine Optimization) agree that submitting a site to search engines for listing is only the beginning.

Our best advice is to work up a regular marketing schedule that you'll be able to maintain, and keep an eye on the changes that the major search players are going through. But be realistic, there is a tremendous amount of competition out there. Even with that, however, you don't have to pay to compete as long as you have the time to work at it. And the nice thing is, you can choose how hard you need to work at it.

Once your site is listed, and the Meta tag foundation and introduction to the engines and directories are finished, you can focus on building and managing rank. This will take:

- 1) Researching and keeping your keywords current to reflect popular search trends. If your sites are pretty basic, don't have much flexibility in the keywords you use, that's ok, but if you can find some trendy words and phrases that apply and are in the top 50-100 search terms (the higher the better), try using them to see if it helps. Compare your keywords with other sites in your industry/business that are in the top 10 and start there. Look at their content as well, for pointers.
- 2) Scrutinize your page content, be sure you have your keywords used within the text, and have at least one good paragraph on your main page that really describes your site, your functions/features/services. Make it keyword rich but don't forget to make it readable and appealing to site visitors. Directories that have human editors will spot a blatant attempt to list keywords, and that can make them treat your listing negatively or reject it. Also, be sure all of your site images have an ALT tag that uses keywords, too. Bots read ALT tags, so their content can be very advantageous. (For example, if you have a

photo of a product, in the ALT tag it could read something like, "Buy our widget, quality product, kid safe, family fun, affordable and satisfaction guaranteed".) Another vital tag is your TITLE tag. It's the first tag search engines read, so you want to make it as valuable as you can in about 40 characters.

3) Don't give the "search powers that be" any reason to think you are spamming the engines, because they can and will treat your listing poorly if they think you are using high ranking keywords too many times or inappropriately (like using "porn" as a keyword on a site that sells car parts), resubmitting your site too many times or too frequently, placing keywords on your page that are the same color as the background to look invisible, etc. Any of the shady tactics will eventually be spotted and you could permanently be banned.

4) Utilize other methods of getting your site pages ranked, other than Meta tags and content. Post press releases and articles on your site whenever possible, send out press releases to distribution sources and specific online sites whenever applicable. The hot trend right now, that really works, is submitting free information articles that pertain to a site's industry or target audience to article and Web-zine sites as free content for them to offer to their site visitors. Because the articles will have your site URL and name listed, it can get your link posted on established, well-ranked sites. This is especially a great way to get good listings on Google, because they love good content.

5) Contact sites and request that they link to you. It is laborious, but costs nothing and really can make a difference over time. Consider reciprocal links with sites that use many of your keywords, especially if they have a higher rank at the search engines (this can boost your rank over time, by association). If you decide to offer reciprocal links, we suggest you have a specific page or section on your site that is exclusively for links/resources/affiliates, so you don't risk "diluting" your public pages with other offers and distractions.

6) Read articles and search industry news, keep up with trends and changes. Online marketing tool sites like SelfPromotion.com keep an eye on changes and it's easy to keep updated through them and a few search engine newsletters and news outlets such as SearchEngineGuide.com and SearchEngineWatch.com.

Once you start getting decent listings, check back regularly and keep an eye on the competition, as they can lower or change your rankings, too, when new sites come up with stellar keywords or a popular appeal. Remember, SE rankings are not static, they shift and change all the time, so if you fall back a page or slip a bit, evaluate your site's status and make any necessary adjustments. And don't become consumed with "high rankings," as there are many levels of site marketing that are just as, if not more important than, page rankings (such as word of mouth, links,

media attention, offline advertising, etc.). Experiment until you find what works best for your site, your product/service, and to draw your potential clientele.

Pay Per Click Option:

The most popular Pay-Per-Click advertising, and we have found easiest to track and work with, are Google and Overture. Take a look at them and see what you feel the most comfortable with. They have enough similarities and so many of the same target sites that we usually recommend a client pick one and give it a test run, rather than try both. Most of our clients focus on getting the most from one resource, but that depends on your needs, of course.

Your ads, titles and site placement all play into the success factors for PPC, so it will take some testing, experimenting and tracking of which ads work best (same as with any advertising). The big difference is keyword-rich content, which takes observation and "tweaking" for your target markets. To get the most from PPC, you will want to monitor and work the ads regularly. The reason for this, in our opinion, is that searching evolves all the time, and one keyword will give remarkable results one week or month and pull nothing the next.

In summary:

1. Research keywords for your site. This will take some time, check out competitor's sites, etc.
2. Update META tags on every page on your site as the keywords change. Custom, current META tag info for every page is extremely helpful.
3. Resubmit your site to appropriate search engines and directories regularly (about every three months)...always use the free links because the paid ones won't give you any advantages, with few exceptions.
4. Wait...be patient...it can take up to six months to become listed by the "big guys" when you use indexing only.
5. Get a jump on the waiting and use search engine optimization techniques for your site content, online marketing such as press releases and circulating free articles, place your site on industry directories and local business directories online, exchange links with other quality sites, and put your site address on EVERYTHING printable that you can.

We hope this information will help you work toward your success goals! We are pleased to offer free help and information like this, and if we can help in any way, please let us know. Best of luck!