Optimize your Web site

By Matt Louis

Like most companies, you have a Web site. But what is it really doing for you? There are hundreds of millions of sites on the World Wide Web. The number is growing all the time. How do you get your customer to find you among the millions? There are several methods that can be used. Today I am talking about S.E.O., or search engine optimization.

S.E.O. is a method of making your Web site friendly to the bots of the search engines. Bots are basically little programs that the search engines run that will seek out Web sites, index them and then report back to the server they came from. Once a bot gets to your Web site it will either do a quick surface scan or a deep scan. The information it collects is then taken back to the server it came from so that it can be indexed along with all the other sites.

When a consumer types a phrase into Google the search engine looks at the information that the bots have collected and displays the Web pages relevant to the phrase that was entered. There have been many techniques in the past that Web designers have used to try and trick the bots so they will display their pages for any and all searches that were done. This was frowned upon by the search engines and they have changed their programming to catch this kind of behavior.

S.E.O. is not a quick fix or a guarantee; it is simply making your Web site easy for the bots to index and report back. S.E.O. takes time, as you have to make the changes then wait to be indexed by the bots. Once you have been indexed you can then check to see if the changes you have made improved your position in the search results. There are companies out there that say they will guarantee you the number one spot on all search engines. This is not something that can be guaranteed as all Web sites cannot be number one.

S.E.O. is not difficult to do, however to get the results you want it is often a matter of trial and error. Google and other search engines have over the past several years given more information out about how their programs look for information. This information has allowed many Web sites of smaller businesses to keep up with and compete with the larger companies (google.com/webmasters/tools/).

No matter if your Web site is just an informational page or a store for you to sell your products, the goal is the same—to get people to see the site. S.E.O. is one way to accomplish this goal.

Next I would like to share with you my top five tips for S.E.O.

Think like the consumer—The first step in S.E.O. is to determine what you as a consumer would type into a search engine that would get you to the page you are looking for (e.g., alternator repair Yakima).

Results—Search for the phrases you just thought of and look at what Web sites come up in the results. Read their pages and keep in mind what they look like. This information can be useful when doing your own content and description.

Unique information—Every page on your Web site needs to have a unique title tag, description, and key words. All of these things need to be relevant to each other and to the actual content of the page.

Links—Your Web site will get a higher rank in the search engines if the bots find multiple links from other Web sites to yours. Sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Google business directory are great free places you can get a link to your site.

Social media/local search/directories—The more instances of information on your company that are available on the Web will make the search engines feel your site is more important and needs to be displayed higher in the search results.

There is a lot more information available on S.E.O. If you would like to learn more please make sure you attend the ERA Show in Nashville April 1 through 3. There will be an S.E.O./social media seminar on Sunday.

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