

Search Engine Optimisation for Recruitment Businesses

Expert knowledge means success

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Meta Tags – What Are They and Why Do We Need Them?
3. Using keywords to influence your search engine rankings
3. Using link strategies to enhance search engine rankings
4. Submitting your site to search engines and directories
5. Pay-Per-Click Advertising
6. Search Engine Specialists
6. Popular Search Engine Websites
6. Further Information

Note: This publication has not been updated since it was last published. Some of the hyperlinks may have changed and may need updating. In addition, some of the information in this publication may be out of date.

Introduction

This publication is intended to let you know about **Search Engine Optimisation**. If you use this powerful tool, you will:

- appreciate the reasons why it is essential to promote your website in the right way; and
- benefit from the millions of searches made every day by job seekers and clients looking to make a connection.

Firstly, why do you need to get traffic from search engines? Isn't advertising enough?

It's a simple fact that over 80% of internet users reach sites through search engines. Of course, if you don't mind spending money then there are plenty of agencies just waiting to help you spend it! For the rest of us, optimisation helps to make web pages more search engine friendly, to promote them as the most relevant solution for a search engines' users.

What exactly is search engine optimisation then?

Search engine optimisation is basically about following search engine rules. If your web page fits the criteria that a search engine considers relevant, then you will be rewarded with a top ranking in searches.

Optimisers simply modify web pages to fit the criteria. This gives your site a better chance of being selected by the search engines as the most relevant page for the search query.

But which search engines?

Don't believe those e-mails telling you that they will submit your site to 10,000 search engines; most of it is hype and there are only a handful of important search engines.

If search engines are important, then Google is the Holy Grail. Quite simply, Google represents the highest proportion of searches made anywhere on the web.

- 8 billion documents indexed;
- 62.2 million visitors monthly;
- 39.4% audience reach.

A listing on Google represents traffic – just what you want.

There are four keys to finding and attracting traffic to your website

1. Researching and defining the keywords that users will key into search engines to find your site.
2. Ensuring that your site uses those words effectively through effective optimisation.
3. Understanding the search engines to ensure a high ranking and thereby a good position in search results.
4. Promoting your site to search engines so that they index it.

Keywords

Proper analysis of the right keywords to target is essential. This entails studying various sources of information that provide the source for research in your market. This in turn becomes the basis for defining your keywords in niche sectors, after all there's no point in competing for generalist keywords when more specific ones drive more targeted traffic to your site.

Ensuring that your keywords are in the correct place on the pages of your website requires knowledge of the ways in which pages, paragraphs and sentences are constructed to maximise a page's appeal to search engine spiders and indexes. It's not only what you see but what is behind the visible content that is seen by search engine spiders. Optimising your site to perform well requires an in-depth knowledge of these practices.

The importance of keywords

The Internet is in effect, one enormously disorganised library of articles. The search engines are like librarians, trying to organise everything they find so that everyone else can find what they're looking for.

What a search engine does is index all the content and then match searches through keywords and links. If your site contains keywords related to a certain topic, it should be relevant to any searches on that particular topic.

Search engine optimisation specialists make sure that web pages target those keywords people use when looking for recruitment-related searches.



Keyword Accuracy

As important as keywords are, it's even more important to select the right ones. You would be amazed at how many different ways people search for the same information. In fact, unless pages contain all the relevant keywords for a search, they have very little chance of appearing at the top of the rankings.

Before pages can be optimised, research needs to be carried out to determine the most appropriate keywords. This involves finding potential keywords and then finding out their popularity, assessing the competition and deciding which of them to use in your optimisation.

Meta Tags – What Are They and Why Do We Need Them?

Meta tags are a type of hidden code that help to describe aspects of a web page to browsers and search engines. In terms of search engines, the most important meta tags are the 'description' and 'keywords' tags. Generally you won't need to know much about these as your web developer deals with them, but just so that you know what he or she is talking about, let's take a brief look at these tags - this is how they look in the code of your site (right click the page to view the source):

```
<HEAD>
<TITLE>Meta Tags</TITLE>
<META NAME="description"
CONTENT="Search engine optimisation for
recruitment businesses">
<META NAME="keywords"
CONTENT="search engine optimisation,
recruitment, Online Recruiter">
</HEAD>
<BODY>
```

Meta 'description' tag

The 'description' tag is often indexed by search engines as the page description displayed in Search Engine Results Pages (SERPS).

However, the tag has been misused in the past, with false descriptions about a page leading to irrelevant search engine results. As a result, search engines do not place so much importance on the tag these days.

You should always create a description specific to each page, placing the most important keywords at the beginning of the tag. Don't just fill the description tag with keywords. Of course, this may be difficult if your site is 'dynamic' (i.e. uses a database to build the pages on the fly).

Meta 'keywords' tag

The meta 'keywords' tag defines the all-important keywords on a page. Unfortunately, this has always been an area open to misuse and unscrupulous site owners stuffing their tags full of misleading keywords have relegated this tag to almost worthless.

Optimising HTML tags

The next 2 most important HTML tags in search engine optimisation are header tags and ALT tags. Let's take a closer look at these HTML tags:

Header tags

Many of the major search engines place a lot of relevance on keywords in header tags (H1, H2, H3 etc.). As such I recommend that you sprinkle keyword rich header tags on your Web pages.

Sample header tags:

```
<H1>Search Engine Optimisation</H1>
<H2>Online recruitment specialists</H2>
```

ALT text

You should always use ALT tags to describe every image. Use your keywords in the ALT text, as some search engines index these keywords.

Some people switch off image viewing in their browsers due to slow connections so the ALT text really does need to be there. Some people use accessibility options for the visually impaired such as screen readers to interpret images on the screen. Again, images can only be interpreted if there is alternative text present.

For the same reason, you should also end the tag with a ".", so that someone listening to a screen reader can tell where one image ends and another begins.

Using keywords to influence your search engine rankings

Here's a simple fact: Keywords contained within a Web page are the most important element to achieving high search engine rankings.

Okay, so they are not the only factor in search engine ranking, but most search engine optimisation involves keywords in one form or another on your pages.

It's therefore fair to say that keywords are the most important element in achieving good search engine rankings.

Perfect Keywords

Concentrate on the following:

- Base each page around one keyword or keyword phrase per page;
- Make it the most frequently used by the target audience;
- Ensure it has the least number of competing pages in the search engines.

It's not easy but it is possible.

Keyword frequency

Keyword frequency refers to the number of times a keyword phrase appears within your page. The more times a keyword or phrase appears within a web page, the more relevant the page is likely to be for searches based on those keywords. Just make sure you don't put in your keywords too many times though!

Keyword density

In much the same way, keyword density is the ratio of keywords against the number of words within a Web page.

Keyword prominence

Keyword prominence is about placing your keywords at the top of a Web page. Basically, the closer your important keywords are to the start of a page, the better.

Keyword proximity

Keyword proximity refers to the positioning of two or more of your keywords. The closer the keywords are the better.

Keywords in domain names

Keywords in domain names can help to improve search engine rankings. If you include your chosen keywords in your domain name (preferably with and without hyphens), you will have a far greater chance of being seen.

For instance:

www.bloggssearch.com

may be your company name, but what about also using

www.bloggs-recruitment.com



Using link strategies to enhance search engine rankings

Link popularity is a very important part of improving your site's ranking and thereby its relevancy in search engines.

Three types of links are relevant here:

- Internal links;
- Inbound links;
- Outbound links.

Let's take a look at each one in more detail.

Internal links

Internal linking is all about cross-links within a site, helping search engine spiders to find the pages, especially if some of them are buried deep within your site.

Site maps are a way of ensuring that your entire site is internally linked, ensuring that search engine spiders can find the site map, crawl the links and index your whole web site.

Inbound links

Inbound links refer to those links pointing to your site from elsewhere. As a start point, you should cross-link between all sites you operate (if you have more than one site). Make sure that the text you use in the links includes your keywords, as Google and other search engines place great importance on this text.

But of course, you don't control all the sites from which you would like to receive links. There are many ways to find sites that will

link to yours; the best way is to ask them politely for a link to you (possibly in exchange for a link to them). The best way to find opportunities is to ask sites that link to your competition (if possible).

Look for sites listed in the major web directories such as Yahoo! and Open Directory Project (ODP), looking under the same categories as those in which your site appears.

Another way of finding sites that can provide inbound links to yours is to find submission pages on suitable sites.

Outbound links

Outbound links refer to those pointing to other directly-related sites from your site. Although this is not the most important type of link it is certainly worth ensuring that you have a range of good industry-related links (again using appropriate link text).

Link keywords

It is vital to use the right text in your internal and outbound links. Since keywords play such a major part in assessing the relevance of pages, it is essential that they are included in link text.

Link quality

The quality of inbound links is just as important as the number of links you have to your site.

Concentrate on high traffic and highly ranked sites such as the major search engines (google.co.uk), search portals (msn.co.uk), web directories (yahoo.com and the Open Directory Project - dmoz.org), high traffic sites (ebay.co.uk and amazon.co.uk) and news sites (timesonline.co.uk).

Link exchanges and farms

Whatever you do, don't be fooled by emails claiming to deliver tons of traffic and sign up for a service from link exchange sites and link farms. All the major search engines consider these tactics as spam, so stay clear of them!

Submitting your site to search engines and directories

Also known as 'search engine registration', 'search engine submission' is about submitting your site to the search engines and web directories, in order to get it indexed and ultimately so that people can find it.

Free submission does not guarantee inclusion

Firstly, submitting your web site using free submission forms in search engines and web directories doesn't guarantee inclusion of your site into an index. You sometimes have to resubmit again and again to get all of your pages indexed.

Submitting to Search Engines

Search engine submission is important for getting your site indexed, but not as important as it has been in the past. Google and other search engines rely on finding sites via links (now you see the importance of links, www.onlinerecruiter.co.uk/link_strategies.htm - don't you?).

Of course you should do it anyway, to ensure that you are giving yourself every chance. As with directory submissions, you should really only consider manual submissions.

Manual search engine submission

This of course involves visiting each search engine and registering your web pages manually. Although time-consuming it really is the only way to ensure that all the correct information is provided and you can tailor your submission to the search engine in particular. Remember also that automated submissions might result in a site ban, so take care.

Also, some search engines have a policy of only accepting a limited number of submissions per day, so make sure you prioritise your work and keep track of submissions made, working on the most important pages of your website.

Web directories

Web directories are lists of web sites organised into topics. You need to select the most appropriate categories and then compose your title and description, as they become your listing in the directory and contribute to the success of your listings in search engines.

Each web directory has its own submission policies, so study them carefully.

You should always submit your web site to the web directories before submitting to the search engines. This is because search engines often find your web site through the top web directories and they have particular relevance to them.

Again, don't bother to use submission software - submit by hand or ask a professional to help.

Submitting your site to the top three directories

The top three directories accept submissions in different ways. Although it involves a fixed cost, the first should be seriously considered for any new commercial web site:

Yahoo! is the leading web directory with 2 submission programs:

- "Yahoo! Standard submission is for non-commercial web sites". Although free, there is no guarantee of when your site will be reviewed or even listed;
- "Yahoo! Directory Submit submission is for commercial and non-commercial web sites". It guarantees a site review within 7 business days for a non-refundable fee of \$299.

However, payment doesn't guarantee inclusion of your site in the directory. It only guarantees that Yahoo! will review your site within 7 business days. If it is added to the Yahoo! Directory, you will be charged the recurring annual fee in subsequent years to maintain the listing. Find out more about Yahoo! Directory Submit submission here. (<https://ecom.yahoo.com/dir/submit/intro>)

The **Open Directory Project** is the largest human-edited web directory. The ODP index is used by most of the search engines, including Google, AOL and Netscape, so it's essential that you submit your site to the index.

Submissions to the Open Directory Project are free and you should use this page on how

to add a site to the Open Directory (<http://www.dmoz.org/add.html>).

LookSmart operates a directory that shows through sites such as Lycos, InfoSpace, Mamma.com, and CNET Search, amongst others.

Their directory only accepts commercial web sites, and charges on a cost-per-click basis (CPC). Submit your site to the LookSmart Directory using the LookListings submission programme (<http://looklistings.looksmart.com/home/details.jhtml>).

Pay-Per-Click Advertising

How to get search engine traffic quickly on the major search engines

Pay Per Click (PPC) or Pay for Performance search engines provide a really effective way to get your web site in front of search engine traffic. By using those ads that appear when you search in most major search engines, your site can appear in front of every search on your keywords. All you have to do is work with a company that can create an effective campaign based on your targeted keywords, placing your ads where users will click on them, bringing them straight to your door.

Pay Per Click searches work by referring traffic from partner sites. You only pay for the click-throughs to your web site, meaning that only 'qualified' searches will get to you, so you are only getting real leads.

There are a number of PPC providers that can deliver quality traffic, for example:

- Google;
- Overture;
- Espotting.

There are many other PPC providers that may be able to attract traffic for recruitment sites but many are likely to be focused on specific vertical markets.

The great thing about PPC is that you can start receiving traffic straight away, rather than waiting for months until a new site is listed on the major search engines. You can also use PPC for time-limited offers and seasonal promotions.



Search Engine Specialists

What should you be looking for in an SEO specialist?

If you are serious about optimisation services then you should look for an SEO specialist. Relying on your web developer is not always the best solution - they do their job well, but an SEO specialist understands the constantly changing nature of this subject and should be able to give you acceptable answers to the following ten questions:

1. Do you charge set up fees, and what do I pay thereafter?
2. What is the contract duration?
3. Do you guarantee performance?
4. Do you provide performance reports and what do they contain?
5. When can I expect to start seeing results?
6. Which search engines do you submit to?
7. Which do you operate; free submissions or paid submissions?
8. Can you provide references and existing sites?
9. What techniques do you use?
10. What else do you do?

Popular Search Websites

Visit the following search engines and directories to find out more about their submission services and indexing techniques:

www.altavista.com
www.aol.com
www.ask.com
www.dmoz.org
www.google.com
<http://search.looksmart.com>
www.lycos.com
www.msn.com
www.teoma.com
www.yahoo.com
www.bing.com

Further Information

This guide is for general interest - it is always essential to take advice on specific issues. We believe that the facts are correct as at the date of publication, but there may be certain errors and omissions for which we cannot be responsible.

Acknowledgment

If you would like to discover more about Online Recruiter or if you would like to know more about how Search Engine Optimisation can benefit your website, call Hugo Pickering on 01993 832769 or contact Online Recruiter direct (hugo@onlinerecruiter.co.uk). In addition, you will receive a full copy of the article from which this publication has been excerpted and a bonus document containing loads of useful Windows keyboard shortcuts.

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