10 SEO Tips to Jump Start Your Google Marketing in 2012

Brought to you by Ross Barefoot and the

Rocky Mountain

Search Engine Academy

http://www.RockyMountainSearchAcademy.com

SEO Basic Tip #1: Don't Neglect Effective Internal Linking
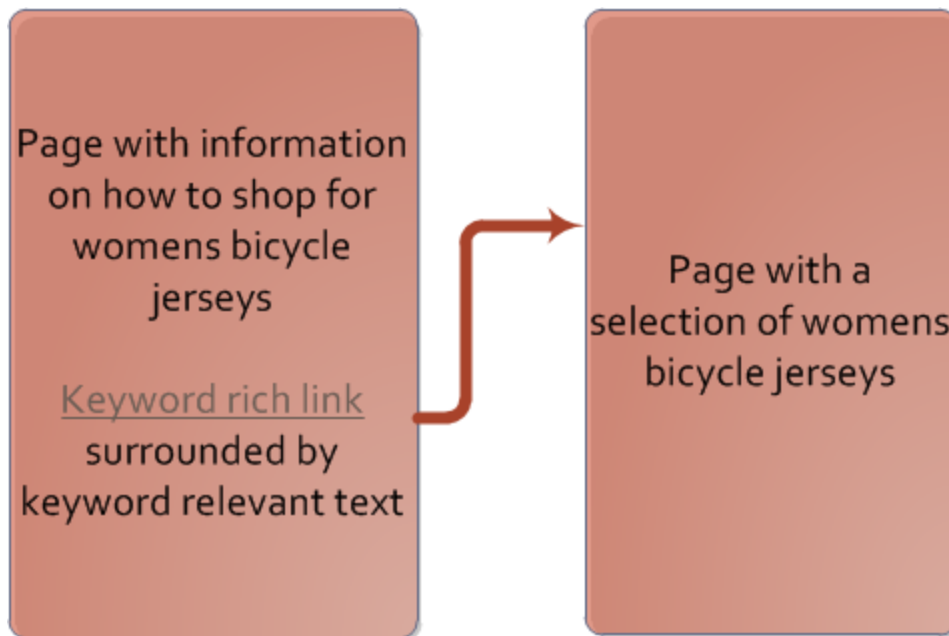

Let's Get to Work!

A Quick Recap on Links

Before we get into this SEO How-to, let's start with a bit of review. There are three basic types of links that affect your Search Engine performance:

- Inbound Links – Links from a website you don't control (theoretically) to your website
- Outbound Links – Links you place on your website to someone else's webset
- Internal Links – Links from one area of your website to another area of your website

Today I'm addressing internal linking. Many website owners feel that once they have useful navigation and a sitemap, they have covered their bases for internal linking. That's like thinking once you have your pants and socks on you're dressed…not so fast, my dear scantily-dressed Web optimizer.

The Importance of Placing Internal Links in the Body of Your Content

Because of the way Google develops their understanding of your site, it's important that you have keyword-*rich* links placed in the text of your pages surrounded by more keyword-*relevant* content. Rather than give you a bunch of blah, blah, blah, let's skip that and go straight to an illustration. Let's say I'm optimizing a page on an ecommerce website for "Womens bicycle jerseys." Let's furthermore say that I've set up a page that details different design features of womens bicycle jerseys that are important to a shopper (i.e., we're providing useful content). At the same time we have a catalog page with a bunch of different womens jerseys that can be purchased. So a simple flowchart would look like this:

Page with information on how to shop for womens bicycle jerseys

Keyword rich link surrounded by keyword relevant text

Page with a selection of womens bicycle jerseys

So first let's create some keyword-relevant content. This will help Google to understand what the text surrounding your page is about. And we want them to understand that the page is about women's bicycle jerseys. So our paragraph might read like this (note that I've put keyword-relevant text in red):

Most women's bicycle jerseys nowadays are made out of high-tech synthetic fabrics. This is a good thing, because those fabrics are designed to wick moisture away from your body while you ride. Your cycle clothing needs to keep you feeling cool and comfortable. Our women's bicycle jerseys are also tailored to fit differently than cycling jerseys for men. They tend to be smaller, with less bulk in the shoulders. And of course you want your jersey to have a pretty substantial zipper on the front. Many women will wear a matching sport bra under their top on bike rides so they can unzip and stay modest and coordinated all at the same time.

Note that the paragraph substantiates the idea that its topic is bicycle clothing. Additionally, we've placed our keyword phrase, "women's bicycle jerseys" as a link within that relevant copy. All of this tends to add much more keyword punch to the internal link we've created, and therefore enhanced its value substantially.

SEO Basic Tip #2: Just Read Google's Webmaster Guidelines…for Cryin' Out Loud!

This SEO tip starts with a confession. You know all those clichès about men? I hate to admit how much they apply to me (please don't tell my wife about this post). Like the fact that we don't ask for directions, don't read instructions, don't put the toilet seat down… Just thinking of those three I'm guilty of at least 2. (I'll let you guess which 2.)

Let's take my resistance to reading instructions. Why is it that reading instructions is such a pain? Why do I avoid it so energetically and to my own detriment? I think part of it has to do with laziness. It takes effort to read instructions, and that effort sometimes seems enormous when I'm sitting in the middle of a pile of packing materials already pissed off because manufacturers never put their own lousy products together anymore. (Except when it comes to food, which is ever more processed before it hits the consumers lazy and grubby paws, all of retail consumption is moving toward "assemble it yourself.")

Part of it is pride. Why do I need to read instructions that bother to give me a picture of a Phillips screwdriver when there are only Phillips head screws in the box. Really? You need to draw me a picture. Some things do require a picture, but since I've already jumped to an admittedly prideful conclusion about the grade level of the intended reader, I miss those parts and end up putting things together wrong half the time.

And then of course part of it is impatience. I just want to get this job done and move on to the next tedious Honey-do. If I can get by without the added time burden of reading instructions, I'm ahead.

If you're already getting impatient with me, I'll get to the point: Let's face it, reading Google's webmaster guidelines is a lot like reading the instructions. I don't want to do it because 1) I'm lazy, 2) I'm prideful and I already know all this stuff and 3) I'm ready to get started, don't slow me down. Unfortunately, those are usually bad reasons in the world of home improvement projects, and they're bad reasons in the world of SEO. The tip for today is force yourself…yeah I said force yourself…to read those annoying guidelines at least once a year.

So I forced myself to review them before I wrote this article (just so I can avoid immediate hypocrisy) and again I'm impressed how fundamentally sound they are. If you just make a good faith effort to follow their guidelines you'll be ahead of the 95% of webmasters who ignore them. Here's a direct link, now go read 'em! Google Webmaster Guidelines.

SEO Basic Tip #3 – If You Want a Happy Search Engine, Keep the Humans Happy

Bear with me. I have an SEO point to make, but I'd like to wander a bit into my own little alternate universe of gripes and then bring it back around. Maybe the analogy will work, and maybe it won't… Have you ever tried Google translate? Are you happy with it? I'm not. It stinks, IMHO. Take a look at this sentence I pulled from an Italian news article that Google "translated":

> *But not quite seen that, Castagnetti recalls, "I did these and other budget items that were too summary, explanations and asked, after a discussion, the 2011 budget was not voted and returned to the clarification of an ad hoc"*

Huh? And you call this a "translation." Really? I'd like to suggest that no human who reads English would be happy with that translation. And why is that? Because a machine wrote it and a human has to read it, and never the twain shall meet.

So, are you writing content primarily for search engines? Really? Unfortunately some SEO guys and gals write so much for the engines that they forget about the humans. However, as bad as Google is at translating (and to be fair, there isn't much tougher of a challenge than translating one language into another), they realize that something written for a machine might please a machine but not a human.

Google, above all else, is in the business of pleasing humans. If they serve up search results that sound like that piece of translation I cited, about as many people will use the Google search engine as currently use Google translation, which isn't many.

So Google has the best and brightest of their talent working on something other than translation (as if we couldn't tell). That something is called Natural Language Processing (similar too, but not to be confused with, Latent Semantic Indexing, or LSI). This represents their quest for tools to screen out the content garbage and allow well-written content, content that keeps humans happy, to rise to the top.

With that in mind, here's your tip and your action agenda. I suggest you use this as your bottom line on anything you produce for your site:

- Above all else, write for a human visitor, not a search engine. That having been said, you can still optimize for search, but keep the following in mind…

- Forget about writing your content around "keywords"
- Instead, determine the theme that *contains* the keywords that are important to you and write for that theme, not those keywords (subtle but important difference)
- Think like a human and write like a human. Google and the rest are catching up to you, and if you write good content for humans it will pay off down the road.
- After you write content, read it. Out loud. A couple of times. If it sounds awkward to you, it probably will to Google as well.
- Revise it
- Take some time with it (sigh, I know this suggestion really sucks, but oh well…)

If you create your content according to these principles, you will be building content that will, with time, make your site stand out to both humans and search engines as high-quality, worthy of showing higher in SERPs, and worthy of recommending to friends. That's the best of all worlds.

SEO Basic Tip #4 – Prepare for SERP Success

As you work on your pages your visibility WILL improve and so will your business. But you need more than just top visibility on the SERP (Search Engine Results Page). You actually need people to visit your website (unless you're some sort of a weirdo who only gets excited about showing up on Google page 1 for its own sake).

I'd like you to indulge me by participating in an experiment (c'mon, you're here already, you've already spent this much time with me, humor me, ok?).

Here's what you do…it's really simple, just 3 steps…

1. Search on something that matters to you.   Maybe a hobby, a band, a place you want to move to, whatever.
2. When you get to the SERP, click on the entry that you think best matches what you're looking for.
3. Come back here when you're done.

(Did you do it? Don't cheat yourself, if you didn't do it, go back and do it.)

What was your experience like? More specifically, what did you click on? Why did you click on it? If you're like me there's a good chance you did not just click on any old random entry. You probably did a quick evaluation based on what the entry looked like. Here was my experience:

Because I happen to help organize a group called the "Western Colorado Socratic Club" I did a search on "Socratic Clubs." Here's what the results page looked like…
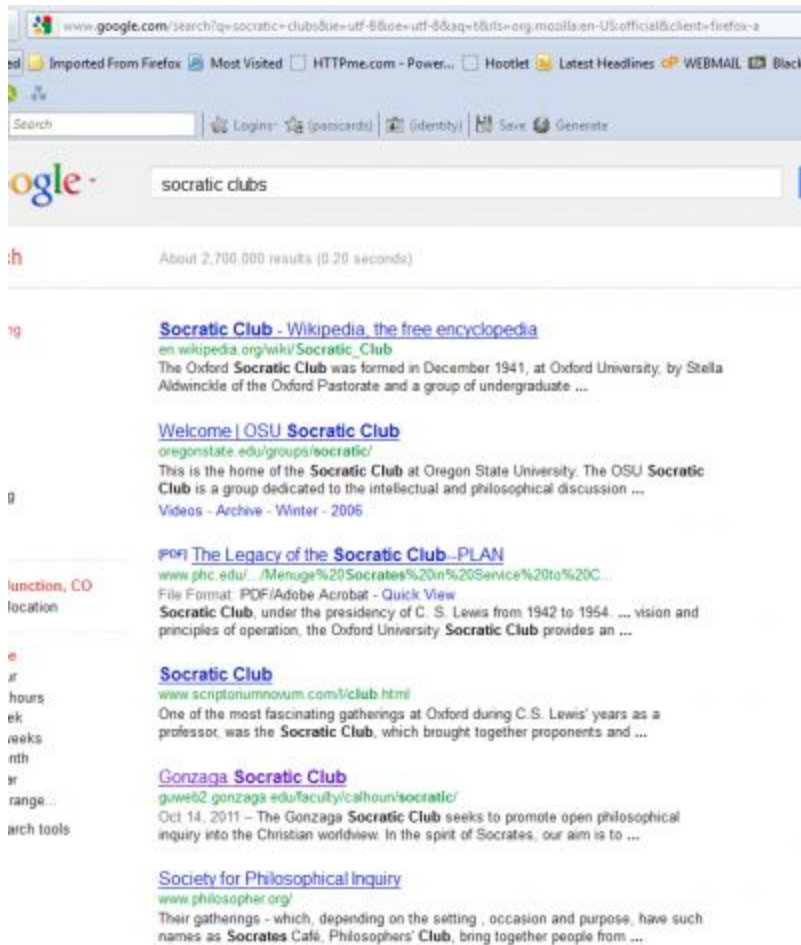
I hope you can see just from the purple text which entry I clicked on. Yes, Wilfred, it was the "Gonzaga Socratic Club."

The reason I clicked on it was two-fold. Before I explain that however, for those of you who might be unfamiliar with the terms I'm about to use, take a look at this entry which shows the simple anatomy of this search engine result:

One of the most fascinating gatherings at Oxford during [...] professor, was the **Socratic Club**, which brought togeth[...] — Title tag of site

Gonzaga **Socratic Club**

Oct 14, 2011 – The Gonzaga **Socratic Club** seeks to promote open philosophical inquiry into the Christian worldview. In the spirit of Socrates, our aim is to ...

Society for Philosophical Inquiry
www.philosopher.org/
Their gatherings - which, depending on the settin[...] occasion and purpose, have such names as **Socrates** Café, Philosophers' **Club**, brin[...] together people from ...

Duke **Socratic Club** Blog
dukesocraticclub.blogspot.com/
Duke **Socratic Club** Blog. The (semi) public rantings of the Duke **Socratic Club**, a.k.a. Fight Club. Tuesday, April 06, 2010. What Would Michael Scott Do? — Meta Description tag of site

As for the two reasons I clicked on this entry instead of entry number one, here they are:

1. The Title Tag of this site matched what I was looking for. I searched for "Socratic Clubs" and by Golly this is a Socratic Club (contrast that with the number 1 entry, which was from Wikipedia, and which told me what the original Socratic Club was. But I already know what it was, that's why I'm searching for Socratic Clubs).
2. The Meta Description Tag of the site gave me a clear view into this particular club at a glance. They seem to match the profile of what I'm searching for, plus the entry was descriptive enough that it allowed me to make a better judgment call about what I would get when I clicked on it.

So here's the lesson from this: Don't just optimize your Title Tag and your Meta Description Tag for the search engines, polish them to match the intention of the person searching. Does this involve making some educated guesses? Of course it does. You need to know your market and know the mindset of your audience.   That part is up to you.

Footnote: If you know how to change your Title Tag and Meta Description Tag, the above tip will be easy for you to implement. If you don't know how to do this, you have two options:

1. Ask your web developer to make the change for you
2. Learn how to do it yourself

For those of you who want to learn how to do it yourself, it will depend on what platform your website is built on. I plan on doing a couple of quick tutorials on how to do this in WordPress, so check back with http://www.RockyMountainSearchAcademy.com for more information.

SEO Basic Tip #5 – Be Careful When Optimizing for Acronyms

To all you SEO, SEM and SMO professionals: as an FYI, you'd better learn this PDQ: TLA. I even have a URL to help you FIO.*

TLA is the most fun acronym of them all: **T**hree **L**etter**A**cronym. And we, my friends, are awash in TLA's, in case you haven't noticed. It's a symptom of our abbreviated age. No one has time to speak in words, so we use TLA's, or sometimes FLA's (yes, you have cracked the code, I mean "**F**our **L**etter **A**cronyms").

To follow up on this SEO tip, you will need that URL that I promised you above to help you FIO. You will find it in point number 1 of my step-by-step guide below, but first a bit of explanation. You will often encounter situations where you want to be found for an acronym that is common to your industry or your client's industry. But how do you know that acronym is not also used in another industry? Or another context.

I'll take an example out of my past. I grew up in the import industry, and one of the most common acronyms we dealt with was FOB, **F**reight **o**n **B**oard (alternately **F**ree **o**n**B**oard). What if I wanted to capture the interest of importers in that phrase and so I optimized a page for FOB? I might capture some of that interest. On the other hand, I might also snare military people learning about FOB (**F**orward **O**perating **B**ases), or music lovers interested in the band FOB (**F**all **O**ut**B**oy), or wedding planners wondering how to handle the FOB (**F**ather **o**f the **B**ride).   And in the 90′s you would have found lots of political junkies searching for FOB's (**F**riends **o**f **B**ill…Clinton that is) All of those are common uses of the TLA FOB.

Dealing with this situation is fairly simple, as long as you don't take it for granted that all audiences will use acronyms the same way. Before you optimize for an acronym, follow this vetting process:

1. Search for your acronym on [Acronym Finder](). (That's the URL I promised you)
2. If any of the acronyms look like they might appeal to a significant segment of the market, do a Google search and see what comes up.
3. If competing acronyms come up that might confuse your audience, always make sure that your on-page optimization (and off-page if you can swing it) carries a generous mix of both the acronym and its complete parent phrase.
4. Make sure that the theme of your page is built around a number of high value terms that are meaningful to the industry that you are targeting, so Google is able to determine what the general topic of the page is (they are quite good at figuring out that type of thing, thanks to their emphasis on [natural language processing]())

Oh, and BTW, you might be interested in the acronyms in the first sentence, so let me rephrase that…

Opening sentence, with the TLA's translated: To all you SEO (Search Engine Optimization), SEM (Search Engine Marketing) and SMO (Social Media Optimization) professionals: as an FYI (For Your Information), you'd better learn this PDQ (Pretty Damn Quick): TLA (Three Letter Acronym). I even have a URL (Uniform Resource Locator) to help you FIO (Figure it Out).
Dang! Now I see why we use acronyms. TG for TLA's!

SEO Basic Tip #6 – Don't Scrape Photos for Content

Put that putty knife away. There will be no scraping around here.

For all you SEO professionals who have to constantly crank out quality content, don't you love Google's image search? When I need to dress up an article, I just do an image search, pay a little visit to the site that has the image I want to use, right click on the image, and save it to my hard drive. Then I can drop it into a blog post, an article, put it up on Facebook…whatever. It's never been easier to find quality photos. And best of all it's free. This practice is called "scraping," and I've done it many times.

Oh, and I almost forgot…

SCRAPING PHOTOS MIGHT COST YOU THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS.

Several months ago I radically changed my behavior and ceased and desisted from all such scraping. I'd like to say that I had an agonizing night where I came to grips with my unethical desire to have something for nothing; where I experienced a re-examination of my core principles and my commitment to the rights of an artist to his creative output; where I engaged in a wrestling with my own hypocrisy, thereby defeating it and paving the wave for my integrity to rise triumphant. Sadly, that's not the reason I stopped scraping.

The reason I stopped is that I got a polite but firm email from a photographer whose work I had pilfered. No, I had not tried to rip the guy off. I just did a Google image search and grabbed what looked good.   The photographer in question gave me a couple of interesting links, and I share them with you at the bottom of this article. I'll give you the 1-minute summary:

Scraping an image is a violation of copyright law

- The aggrieved party (i.e. the party whose work you are using without permission, otherwise known as the "scrapee") can sue you even if they can't prove damages

- You could loose thousands of dollars, either in a judgment, legal fees, or an extorted settlement. (Did I say "extorted"? Well, bite my tongue and allow me to retract that. I meant to say a "mutually acceptable" settlement.)
- You might get your first notice from a law firm who has a financial interest in making you pay through the nose and who will not, I repeat will *not*, be satisfied if you just remove the image and apologize.

Sometimes the practice of "don't ask permission, beg forgiveness" works. This is a case where it does not. The article link I give you below is the true story of a web developer who ended up paying $4000 for a $10 photo that they scraped.

I'm happy to say that the photographer who gave me notice was extremely lenient. He did request a payment, but it was modest (I think it was about $100). If he had been greedy he could have done a lot more damage to me.

Note that this is not a pure SEO tip. It will not help you rank higher in the SERPs (Search Engine Results Pages). Nor is it a tip that will help you convert more traffic. Nor is it even a tip about how to improve your SEO efficiency and cost effectiveness. But I think this tip is important enough that it might save you a world of frustration and thousands of dollars.

Increasingly SEO is about creating content that is high quality. I advise you to create content that is themed according to your target keywords, but which is also engaging to human visitors. An important point of creating that interest is photography. So it's only natural that we would be tempted to snag photos from a Google or Bing image search. At the same time, when quality photos can be purchased very cheaply, so the temptation is pretty minimal.

For web content highlight photos I typically use BigStockPhoto.com. I buy 100 credits for $169 and usually will use 1 credit for an image. Considering the fact that the quality is high, the searching is more efficient, and the risk is, well, not there, it's a no brainer.

Now about those links:
Legal Lesson Learned: Copywriter Pays $4000 for a $10 Photo
The 7 Deadly Myths of Internet Copyright (pay attention kiddos, this one is written by a lawyer…no hissing or booing please)

SEO Basic Tip #7 – Make Sure Your Pages Load Quickly

Repeat after me: "Feed Google's Need for Speed"

What do you do when you click on a link, your browser starts to load the page you want to see, and then, nothing happens. You wait. After a few seconds you see some text. Then an image or two. By this time you wonder why you clicked on that link in the first place, and you hit the most used button on the Internet: the dreaded "back" button.

Guess what. In your impatience you and Google have a lot in common. Google hates slow-loading pages and is engaged in a crusade to drive them from the web. The might G has a number of reasons for actively disliking web pages that are pigs. To wit (as the lawyers say)…

1. Slow-loading web pages are a waste of Google's processing time. Think about the billions of pages that comprise the web. If each one loads 5 seconds too slow, that adds millions of hours to Google's processing workload. Slow pages cost Google money. **Strike 1.**
2. Slow-loading pages create a negative user experience. When someone does a search on Google, clicks on a likely link, and gets nothing, or gets it so slowly they're irritated, they displace some of their frustration onto the "one who brung 'em." Slow pages cost Google good will. **Strike 2.**
3. Slow-loading web pages often indicate other problems that will further waste Google's – and visitors' – time and energy. Often the things that slow down page loads are bloated code, poorly optimized images, even malware and external scripts. So once Google gets the page loaded, often it has to deal with a secondary mess. Slow pages create secondary problems. **Strike 3.**

Click here for: the official Google answer on page load times and site performance

Unfortunately judging the performance of your site is a bit fuzzy, especially if you use tools to do nothing more than judge "load times." Here are three common tools you can use to get a handle on your site:

1. Google Webmaster Tools site performance indicator in their "Labs" section (you will need to set up Webmaster tools for your site to pull this number; tutorial for that will be added to the site later in case you don't know how)

2. Google Page Speed plugin for Firefox (Make sure you are using [Firefox](#), then [download and install the Firebug plugin](#), then [download and install the Google page speed plugin](#), then read these [brief instructions on how to use it](#))
3. [Pingdom tools website](#)

Ok, now that I've given you the tools, don't obsess over them. I find the performance indicator in Google Labs only marginally useful. It gives you a benchmark that averages site performance, and it doesn't give you details on improving it. Using the Page Speed Plugin and the Pingdom tool will give you specific suggestions. I think that the page speed tool is easiest to understand.

The illustration below shows the output that the Page Speed Plugin is giving on the CNN home page. You want to notice the items in red, that's where you should focus your efforts. If you're not a web developer you definitely will need some help on some of these issues, but at least this gives you a benchmark. Tell your developer to work on the red items until they turn yellow or green…that's all you need to know about it.

It isn't hard to tune for speed, but you do need to know where to start. I hope this has helped.

SEO Basic Tip #8 – Audit Your Links and Look for Wasted Opportunities

This SEO tip should be an easy 2 points.

This one will be easy. Maybe that's why so few people do it. I think it's ironic that the stuff that we don't do is the very easy stuff and the very hard stuff. The very hard stuff, yeah, I get that. Maybe I get the procrastination on the easy stuff too; it just can't be very effective if it isn't at least a little hard, right? But enough rambling…

Most websites have unseen link value sitting there, waiting to be made use of. I'm talking about the infamous "Click Here" and its surrogates. "Click Here" is probably the most common link text on the iPlanet.

> **Definition of Link Text** – *The text you click on in a link, the text that is visible to your site visitors. The text that attracts them to the link and explains what will happen with the visitor clicks on it.*

We know that Google pays attention to links. There are two parts to what they pay attention to
1. The theme of the target page
2. What the link text says about that target page

If your link text says "Click Here," you've optimized it for the keyword phrase, well, "click here." Brilliant. Yes, "click here" is a useful phrase. I admit it. It tells people to do something (actually it's a little on the bossy side, but we'll just call that a "call to action"). But how does that support the theme of the target page? (Hint: it doesn't) However, there's no reason we can't add some SEO value to "click here" so it does support the value of the target page.

For example, "click here for our SEO class schedule" (notice how I got a little bit of my own optimization in there). Usually something can be done with a "click here" to tie some keyword significance to the action. Typically your keyword text should match the theme of the target page. If

it's not accurate, the mighty G will catch on and slap you for clumsiness. The mighty G hates bait and switch.

There are lots of examples of wasted link text out there. Here's a partial list…

- home
- about
- contact
- view now
- find out more
- more info
- blog

Don't take what I'm saying too literally. I'm not saying that every one of these phrases can be optimized in all situations. But take a look at the navigation on this site as an example of how you can add value to many of those phrases.

Let's get to work

So now that you have the principle in mind, I'm going to give you a quick tip for finding the targets of opportunity on your site.

Use the Google "site:" operator to search for occurrences in your site that you might want to optimize. The syntax is simple. Go to Google and type in the following:

> ***site:www.YourDomainHere.com "click here"***

This will search your domain specifically for all occurrences of the phrase "click here." Then do it for some of those other throwaway link text. I guarantee you that you'll come up with a ton of prospects for adding value to otherwise wasted linking real estate. You should be able to significantly improve the keyword optimization of much of your internal linking overnight. Easy 2 points.

(By the way, does anyone need me to explain that you replace "YourDomainHere" with your own domain? No? OK, just checking.)

Now go out and turn throwaway link text into high value link text.

SEO Basic Tip #9 – Pay it Forward

My wife Tina has a favorite phrase that came out of working with horses. "You get more on the give than you do on the take." It's a homespun way of saying that, beyond being the right thing to do, giving will serve you better than taking. SEO is no exception to that rule.

This isn't about mechanics. It's more about metaphysics. I don't want to go all creepy new-age on you, after all you came here for some pointy-headed SEO tips, I get that. But this is about a fundamental principle that I absolutely believe works, and that I absolutely teach as an essential skill for SEO success: contribution. As John Alexander, founder of Search Engine Academy, wisely asks:

Do you create content that serves your customer's needs FIRST and your own needs second? Everyone says they do keyword research but that is usually limited to a set of keyword phrases, right?

Every day people are searching on the Internet for a myriad of reasons usually based on the circumstances in their life. The next time you create a high performance page, see if there is not opportunity to meet the customer's search need first and satisfy the reason why they searched.
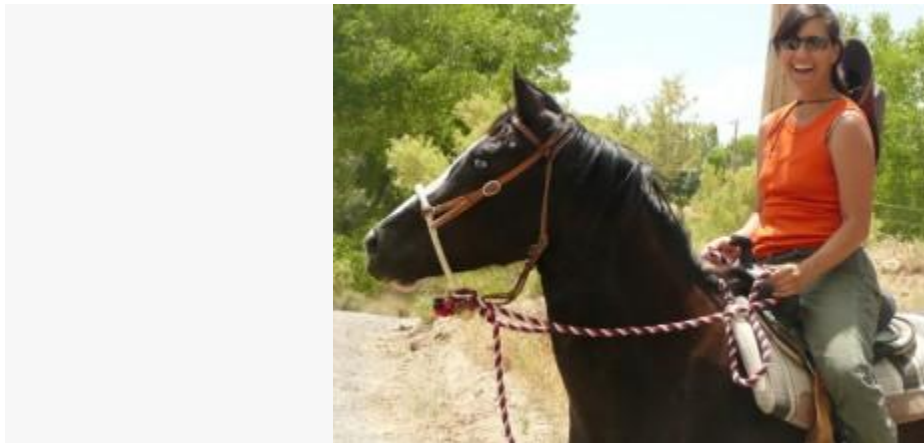
Tina on Milagro, Giving and Getting

The fact is that in a plethora of ways serving the needs of your site visitors and your target audience will actually improve your odds of ranking high in the search engines. It's not a quick technique, but it's a lasting one. As you build valuable content, improve your website services, enhance the predictability and reliability of your information, you will encourage incoming links and you automatically will theme pages correctly. SEO will take time but become almost effortless.

Is contribution enough? Sometimes. Usually you are best served by learning the skills of SEO and then matching that with a spirit of contribution. The combination will inevitably make you a powerful force in the search engine results pages you are most interested in.

Sorry to go all corny on you, but you need it. You lovable cynic, you.

SEO Basic Tip #10 – Find and Eliminate Duplicate Title Tags

Find Duplicate Tags Using Google Webmaster Tools

Just throw those duplicate title tags over here and we'll be on our way.

Sometimes this is easy, sometimes not so much. The first and foremost rule of SEO is to make sure each of your unique pages has a unique title tag. That's because the first and foremost rule of Google (or at least sometimes it seems that way) is to avoid the dreaded "duplicate content" monster.

Now the purpose of this SEO tip is not to show you what a title tag is, or how to manipulate it. I'll leave that to other pages that are already online. (At the bottom of this post is a link to one that you might find of interest.)

Instead of covering the basics of title tags right here, I want to point you to an easy way to determine where to look for duplicate tags in your site. The best tool I know of, and it's free, is of course Google Webmaster Tools. If you haven't already created an account with Google, or tied your Google account into, Webmaster Tools, you'll need to get that done first (learn more about Google Webmaster Tools here). Then if you visit Google Webmaster Tools, the following illustration will make sense to you:

OK, so we're done. Right?

Eliminate "Duplicate" Content with Robots.txt and Wild Cards

Not so fast, *hombre*. (Or *mujer*, as the case may be.) Depending on the type of platform you're working on, you might have a challenge on your hands. For example, one of my sites is an ecommerce website built on top of a Magento platform. I noticed that the duplicate title tags for this site numbered in the thousands and thousands, yet I had carefully optimized the website title tags. After a bit of searching I found that the primary problem related to the way Magento was allowing Google to find many pages using different URL's.

For example, the following two URL's take a shopper to the exact same item:
http://www.ecyclingstore.com/bicycle-jerseys/men-s-jerseys/world-jerseys-1960-formaggio-retro-team-jersey-blue.html
http://www.ecyclingstore.com/bicycle-jerseys/world-jerseys-1960-formaggio-retro-team-jersey-blue.html

Google will view these addresses, not as one page with duplicate addresses, but separate pages with duplicate content. The mighty G doesn't like that. It's so untidy.

So what do we do about that? Allow me to introduce my friend, robots.txt. Allow me to introduce my other friend, wild cards. By using a robots.txt file (which Google allows you to create in Webmaster Tools) and some creative use of wild cards, we can make sure that Google only looks at this jersey in one of the two places that Magento would normally allow it to.

Here's how to get to the robots.txt tab in the dashboard.

A robots.txt file basically tells Google what to ignore. So, let's use robots.txt to tell Google to ignore any content that appears with a category of "mens-s-jerseys" (you can see that in the first url up above).

The syntax for that would look like this:

    Disallow: /*men-s-jerseys*

Now that you have the principle in hand, slow down. If you put a disallow line in your robots.txt file, and if you get it wrong, you could block Google from accessing your entire site. Yikes!
But I didn't say stop, just slow down. Fortunately Google builds a handy little test mechanism into Webmaster tools. Here's how you use it:

1. I add the line I want to test in the robots.txt
2. I input the two different url's that I want to test.
3. I click the test button
4. I examine the results…and the results are what I want: one url is blocked, one is allowed. Duplicate content has been eliminated. Hurray for me!

See the screenshot below to see what that 1-4 process looks like on screen.

Well, I have no illusions that this process is a bit on the advanced side of SEO. But it's certainly not beyond your reach, you starry-eyed dreamer. Just use the test tool, ok? Otherwise I'll worry.

Footnote: Want the basics on title tags? I did a quick Google search (handy tool, this Google *thang*). I found this fairly useful beginners introduction to title tags (and a few other tags as well). In the near future I'll also post a video tutorial on updating title tags in WordPress, the platform I prefer to work with for the websites I manage.

If you found these tips useful, and you want to continue to improve in your knowledge of Search Engine Optimization, you have a couple of paths forward with Rocky Mountain Search Engine Academy.

First, sign up for our newsletter. If you visit http://www.RockyMountainSearchAcademy.com you'll can sign up from any page on the site.

Second, consider signing up for one of our certification workshops. All our workshops are hands-on, with a small class size, and a lot of personalized attention. We typically hold our classes in Denver, Colorado and Salt Lake City, Utah. Here's a link to our online course catalog: http://rockymountainsearchacademy.com/how-to-seo-courses/seo-course-catalog/

And here are a few more links to information on our various workshops:

http://rockymountainsearchacademy.com/how-to-seo-courses/seo-essentials-workshop/

http://rockymountainsearchacademy.com/how-to-seo-courses/seo-advanced-skills-workshop/

http://rockymountainsearchacademy.com/how-to-seo-courses/seo-mastery-workshop/

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