

## Search Engines in a Nutshell

Search engines are important for users to find your site, so it is well worth your time to do everything you can to improve your site's ranking in these listings on the Internet.

### **Why does it take so much effort?**

There was a time when every search word you put into a search engine would bring up pornographic sites, in large part because these sites would use every word known to man and beast in their meta tags (the code in a web page that search engines use for placement), and so they would show up in every search a user performed. In order to keep search results more relevant, search engines companies came up with a new way of ranking web pages.

The general method they use is as follows:

They look at the page title and the visible content on your page(s) to determine what keywords and keyphrases are most prevalent in your page(s). They then take into account keyword density (how often keywords are used in your content, which can't be either too many or too few times for best results), the text of the links to and from your pages, how many incoming links there are to your pages, when the pages were last updated, how often new content is added to your pages, how fast the page loads (added for 2010 by Google) and a number of other factors to determine both relevance and popularity of your pages. They then use an algorithm they keep very tightly guarded to rank web pages accordingly.

What it comes down to is that every element of your page has at least some effect on your site's ranking.

There are also billions of web pages on the Web, and that number is growing by leaps and bounds every day. This makes it more difficult than ever to get your site where potential customers can find it, but it can be done with a little work up front and some vigilance in keeping an eye on your ranking each month thereafter.

What all this means is that when it comes to raising your site's ranking in the search engines, you need to coordinate several different items that appear in the code on your home page:

1. **Keywords**—choose these carefully. You should choose approximately 25 keywords and put them in order of priority. You know your business best, so choose the words that best reflect your business. These should then be researched to make sure that they are being used by users, discovery of keyphrases you may not have thought of but users did, discovery of niche keyphrases, and so on.
2. **Description**—A sentence/"key phrase" (created from some of your keywords) that describes your business. This is what a user will see first when they find you in a search engine, so choose your wording carefully but make sure it contains 2-3 of your keywords, but no more. Your home page meta description should contain your top 3 keyphrases. It's a good idea to include your company name here, also.
3. **Page Title**—This should also contain some keywords and preferably 3 keyphrases that best describe the content of that page. Repeating much of the same thing you use for your meta description can work.
4. **Page text**—Your home page should have good content (text that the user can see) that incorporates some of the keyphrases you've researched. About 200-300 words is usually optimum, and your top keyphrase for the page should be repeated no more than 3 times within this space for best efficiency. Use more repetition and you're spamming, less and you're not going to show up as well as you might.



P.O. Box 766  
Horse Shoe, NC 28742  
Tel: (828) 891-2563  
Fax: (828) 891-2169

5. **Internal Links**—the names of the links to other pages on your site from your home page should also reflect some of the keywords for best results. This is why we commonly add a footer menu--as well as the menu making it easier to navigate the site, it also helps your ranking and getting your pages indexed. Some text links should be visible on the page.
6. **Backlinks**—these are links TO your site from other sites. Building these slowly but surely can help move your site upwards in ranking.

There are other factors as well, but this all comes under the heading of Search Engine Optimization (SEO). Since you know your business best, we ask that you take a very active part in writing/choosing the wording for the items listed above. We will then research keywords and see what other combinations can be used to improve your ranking. This process takes some fine-tuning, so you can assume that your pages will probably be revised later on in order to further improve your site's ranking. It is an ongoing process--a website is never truly finished in this regard--one must always be keeping it up-to-date.

### **How Search Engines find your site:**

When you register your site with search engines, the search engines check the home page first and then "spider" the rest of the pages on a site. Ideally, if you have a lot of different content on your site, you will want to follow the same procedure as you did on your home page—keywords and so on—with all your other pages so that these will also rank well in search engines. Consider these to be additional "doorway pages"—pages by which a visitor can enter your site—and put them together accordingly.

You should make changes on your site at least once a month in order to maintain a good ranking. This not only appeals to search engines but helps to keep users coming back to see what new items you may have added to your site.

There are also some other things to consider:

Exchanging links with other relevant sites will raise your site's relevance and thus its ranking. Affiliate programs with relevant content that do not compete with your offerings used to be a good bet for helping your ranking, but they are no longer so and in fact can actually hurt your ranking under certain conditions. There are also other things you can do which we will suggest to you when we work with you, in order to make your site a success. Your success is our success—call us at (828) 891-2563 and let us help you succeed!