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Seven Golden Rules for Search Optimization Success

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Executive Overview

To achieve high rankings for a variety of keywords within a competitive product sector, an ecommerce business must identify and understand the variables that affect the major search algorithms. By improving the key variables that affect your website rankings, the business creates an incremental traffic source at no cost.

Google, Yahoo, and MSN should be three sources of substantial traffic to your website or eCommerce store. Without executing an SEO optimization attempt, your organization is missing out on thousands of potential customers with interest in your business or your product.

This brief outlines seven rules that will positively affect your search optimization efforts. The key is consistency, a continuous focus on improving the on-page and off-page variables that will drive success.

Rule #1 Target words that are attainable and precise

Every business wants to be ranked #1 for the highest trafficked keywords. In most cases however, it is the secondary tier of terms that delivers your best profits. This is especially true if you are just starting your SEO execution and have a limited number of existing links that are inbound. By initially optimizing for the second tier of keywords, your speed to achieving first page rankings for targeted keywords increases dramatically.

Properly assessing your competition before embarking on your SEO project will allow you to fully understand the probability of SEO success for a given phrase or keyword. Look at your competitor page rank and link popularity and benchmark versus your existing levels.

Rule #2 - Understand the concept of keyword density and make sure your terms are in the right percentage range

Keyword density is the percentage of total words within the body of a page with the keyword that you are targeting. For example, a fishing products retailer trying to optimize your homepage for the terms "fishing supplies", the term "fishing supplies" should represent between 5-10% of the total text on the page.

Go over 10% through un-natural writing, and your page may be flagged as spam. Go less than 5%, and your density may not be high enough. 5-10% has proven to be the "sweet spot" in today's search algorithms regarding keyword density.

Rule #3 - Leverage "viral" marketing for your link building

Because of "link farms", the major engines have reconstructed their algorithms to place a higher value on one way links versus reciprocal links. Outside of buying these links, which is considered "black hat tactics" by Google engineers, the most effective way to grow link numbers is to syndicate original content via the internet to other content-hungry webmasters.

By crafting original articles that include your business URL, and manually submitting these articles to content networks/article directories on the internet, you have a natural "one way" credit link for the content when these articles are shown live by other sites. These one way links make you more of an authority within the engines and hence drive up your natural rankings.

Rule #4 - 2-3 primary keywords per page, no more, no less

Each page should focus on ranking well for 2-3 keywords per page. Optimizing a page for 5+ terms is a waste of time, and will only lead to poor rankings for those attempted terms. Targeting tags and content with more specific keywords will increase your chance of search optimization success.

Rule #5 - Tighten up your title tags

Title tags are the single biggest “on page” component to the major search engine algorithms. It is crucial that your tag be only the two to three keyword phrases that you are targeting within the webpage and that the keywords are replicated within additional tags and the body of the text.

Avoid commas in title tags and stick to a format that has worked for many retailers and brands: Use the “|” key on your keyboard as it is a natural phrase separator that is easier to index than a comma. Take a look at the example below:

Title 1: Fishing Supplies, Tackle, Rods

Title 2: Fishing Supplies | Fishing Tackle | Fishing Rods

The second example is a more effectively written title tag that will rank better. It is more specific to a user, easier to index, and repeats the keyword “fishing” which is pertinent to the theme of the page.

Rule #6 - Include core keyword in the URL if possible

Including a targeted keyword within a URL string has become a vital practice of SEO as of late, especially for eCommerce businesses that are targeting research shoppers who are looking for specific product models or numbers (ex. Sony XR-257).

However, most pages in the eCommerce sector are dynamically generated and include characters such as “?” or “&”, which tend to limit crawling by web spiders. When your URL is filled with these types of stop characters, your full search saturation of indexed pages will likely be limited.

A better practice is to implement a module within your platform that automatically generates static URL's (i.e. “.htm” URL string). These new URL's include your most profitable keyword for even more effective indexing. Look below for an example:

Old URL: www.yourcompany.com/category/641?product-632.aspx

New URL: www.yourcompany.com/category/dvd/sony-dvd-recorder-63754.htm

Notice the .htm at the end of the string and the mention of the product within the URL. By executing both, your site will be more deeply crawled and more properly indexed.

Rule #7 - Understand "anchor text" and why it is so critical to SEO

Anchor text is the text of your links on an external site. For instance, using Trinity Insight as the example, the link **eCommerce Consulting** on a link partner site will take a web surfer to <http://www.trinityinsight.com>.

"eCommerce Consulting" is considered the anchor text for that link. It is crucial that within content syndication and organic link building, your most vital and targeted keywords are represented within the anchor text that points to your website.

Final Thoughts

Make these changes and you will begin to notice improvements in your key search engine metrics. Don't lose focus on the most important variable, which is providing new and updated content that is relevant to both your web visitors and the page keywords for which you are optimizing.

Search optimization takes patience. Contrary to outlandish claims made by SEO firms, ranking increases do not happen overnight. Be prepared to wait at least 3-6 months to see any substantial impact, especially if your site has just been recently indexed. A realistic goal is to achieve 10% incremental lifts within the core engines each month.

With consistent efforts toward improving the overall content quality of your site, along with instituting the basic rules outlined above, your hard work will be rewarded and your site will grow organically.