



101 WAYS TO RULE THE SEARCH ENGINES

By Matt LaClear, 2009

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Who the Heck is Matt LaClear?

I'm an ornery optimistic schmuck who happens to make a pretty damn good living marketing products and services via the Internet.

That's the truth; whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Because it's true I get accused sometimes of being a bit gruff with the whiners and naysayers I come across who think it isn't possible to make money from marketing things on the Internet.

I find that after administering a quick boot to the southernmost end of a northbound whiner I sleep much better that night and as a result the recipient of my size 13 usually does too.

I mean that with all sincerity too. We **ALL** live in a day and age where it is entirely possible (if not probable!) to earn a good living marketing services and products over the Internet.

When I come across individuals frozen with pessimism I am usually much more prone to give them a kick in the pants than I am to hand them a handkerchief to dry their eyes with.

I just know that until such a person changes their negative mentalities they will stand absolutely no chance whatsoever in claiming the fortunes that could have been theirs for the taking. And since they are not going to claim them then I will instead.

If someone I'm working with is not actively and optimistically out seeking their fortune then quite frankly I don't want them around me. I find that the more I hang out only with positive minded people the more my bank account grows.

Think me harsh? Maybe so.

But I tell it like it is.

Best Regards,
Matt LaClear
517-993-8611 -- Direc

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1. General SEO Tips
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General SEO Tips

- 1. Don't worry what the Google Toolbar says your PageRank is.** Ever since Google released their toolbar that shows a PageRank value for the site you're viewing, people have become obsessed with their PageRank. Even Google admits that the PageRank value displayed in the toolbar is not accurate. So don't worry what ranking your site is receiving, it has very little to do with where you site will show up in the search engine results.
- 2. Don't choose a domain name just because it contains your keywords.** Many people believe that including keywords in the domain name will help their site rank better. They mistakenly point to several examples of keyword rich domain names ranking in the top spot. However, you have to keep in mind that someone who would go to the trouble of choosing a URL with keywords is most likely using many other SEO techniques, which is why their site is ranking well. The only real advantage to keywords in a URL is that those keywords will then be used in anchor text. For example, if your URL is florida-real-estate.com then people linking to you would most likely make the anchor text "Florida Real Estate". This keyword rich anchor text would give you a boost in the rankings. When choosing your domain, instead think of something unique that people will remember. After all, this is your business brand and should not be determined simply by which keywords you would like to rank well for.
- 3. Don't worry about your site being spidered every day.** Search engine "spiders" visit sites and follow links in order to add the content to the search engine's database. It can be very exciting to look at your log files and see that a spider is visiting your site every day. But when it comes to rankings, it really doesn't matter if they come daily or monthly. What's important is that they come! The only advantage of frequent spidering is if you change your content frequently. Your changes will be added to the search engine index soon after the spider visits so your changes will be available to searchers faster.
- 4. Use Google Sitemaps to get your inner pages indexed.** Many sites have a problem when it comes to getting their inner pages indexed. Luckily Google has a solution to help webmasters overcome this problem. Google Sitemaps (www.google.com/webmasters/sitemaps) is an easy to use tool that allows you to tell Google about every page of your site. Although it won't help your rankings, it may get more of your pages in the index, which could mean more traffic.
- 5. Stay up to date with search engine techniques.** The world of search engine optimization is constantly changing. Stay on top of the latest news by monitoring the search engine forums. You'll learn the latest tips and techniques to help your site rank well. Some of the best are <http://www.highrankings.com/forum>, <http://www.searchengineforums.com>, <http://www.ihelpyou.com/forums/> and <http://forums.searchenginewatch.com>

6. **Only use automated rank checking software that uses the Google API.** There are several software applications available that make it easy for you to check your rankings (and the rankings of your competitors) in Google. If you're using one of these applications, be sure that you first get a free Google API. Failing to do so puts you at risk of having your IP banned from searching Google. An even better option is to run your automated queries on AOL instead since they use Google's results but don't have the same rules.
7. **Find out what your competitors are doing.** Although the information does not come cheap, there are services that provide very detailed reports on your competitors including the traffic they get, what keywords generate that traffic and from which search engines. If you're in a highly competitive market it might be worth checking out <http://www.hitwise.com>
8. **Be careful not to over optimize your pages.** When it comes to optimizing your site for the search engines, there is such a thing as too much of a good thing. The search engines have begun penalizing sites that are "over optimized". Remember, their goal is to display the most relevant results and they're on the lookout for anyone trying to manipulate their results for their own gain. Always keep in mind that you're designing a site for humans, not search engines. If you make decisions that are in the best interest of your visitors, chances are you won't be seen as a spammer by the search engines.
9. **Be prepared for Google's aging delay.** It's not uncommon for new sites to take 6 – 12 months before they appear in the Google results pages. This has been dubbed the "aging delay" by some SEO experts. So why does this aging delay exist? It is believed that it is Google's answer to mini-networks and other multi-site strategies intended to artificially inflate link popularity. Many people divide what should be a single site into multiple sites in order to capitalize on the links that are exchanged between them. Others build a series of small sites that are only designed to add link popularity to the main site. By delaying the ranking of brand new sites, the mini-network strategy becomes more of a long-term strategy than a quick jump to the top. Site owners who might have started new sites are going to be more inclined to build new pages on existing sites in order to avoid that delay.
10. **Get your site up, even if it's not complete.** The search engines seem to favor older sites. This is most likely because older sites are more likely to be viable businesses. The clock starts ticking when the spider first becomes aware of your site. So when developing a new site, it's a good idea to get something up at your domain right away, even if it's not your finalized pages.
11. **Don't assume an Adwords campaign will improve your natural search rankings.** It is an SEO myth that running an Adwords campaign will give a boost

to your natural search engine rankings. Although PPC can be a great advertising option, there is no proof that it will help you rank better.

12. **Register your site for longer than one year at a time.** There is some evidence that the search engines, particularly Google, give more weight to sites that have a URL that is registered for longer than one year. The reasoning behind this is that if you own a legitimate site you will plan to be in business indefinitely. Whereas spammers tend to use domains for a few months only and then move on to a new one.
13. **Use the robots.txt file properly.** A robots.txt file can be used to prevent the search engine spiders from indexing certain pages on your site. For example if you have a download page for your product, you would not want it to be indexed and displayed in the search results. You can learn more about creating a robots.txt file at <http://www.robotstxt.org/wc/norobots.html> or check an existing robots.txt file at <http://tool.motoricerca.info/robots-checker.phtml>
14. **Get indexed in Yahoo! quickly.** A quick and easy way to get indexed in Yahoo! is to create an account and add your own site to your list of sites you want to watch. In order to keep track of when there are changes to your site, Yahoo! has to visit it.
15. **Get indexed quickly with a link on a frequently updated page.** How often a search engine visits a site is usually related to how often the content is updated. To have your site found quickly, get a link from a site that is spidered frequently. Otherwise you may wait months before the search engines even find you. A great option is to get a link on an established blog since the search engines know that they typically have new content added regularly. One option to do this quickly is to use the service Pay Per Post (<http://payperpost.com>).
16. **Make it easy for the search engines to spider your site.** The search engine spiders are relatively stupid. They have been programmed to grab HTML from the pages they find, but are unable to properly read flash, frames, text in images and long and messy dynamic URLs. Help the search engines properly interpret your site by avoiding these elements.
17. **Have an SEO evaluation done.** Unsure whether you've done everything you can to optimize your site? There are several experts that offer SEO evaluations to help identify areas you've overlooked. Although you can expect to pay between \$600 and \$2000 depending on the size and complexity of your site, the advice may be what it takes to improve your rankings significantly. In many industries, a top ranking site can earn thousands of dollars a day.
18. **Let the search engines find you naturally instead of submitting your site.** The best way to make sure the search engines know about your site is to

get links on relevant sites, directories and blogs and let them follow those links to find your site. Although all of the major search engines have submission forms and state that no site will be penalized for using them, most SEO experts agree that getting links is the better approach.

19. **Design your pages with customers in mind.** Sites should never be designed only for search engines. Once a customer arrives, your pages have to be designed in such a way as to convert him or her into a customer. If they land on your page and cannot make sense of it because it's designed for search engine spiders instead of real people, you're not going to be any further ahead. And as the search engine spiders become more advanced, they're learning how to spot pages that are useless to customers.
20. **Learn from successful sites in your industry.** One of the best ways to find out how to break into the 10 search engine results is to watch what the people who are already holding those spots are doing. What keywords are they using? How are they using those keywords? What type of content does their site contain? How many links and what type of links do they have? What is their internal navigation structure like? These are just some of the many questions to ask as you study your competitors' sites. Keep detailed notes in a spreadsheet as you evaluate everyone in the top 10 for the keywords you're optimizing for. You will most likely see some patterns that you can use to improve your own site
21. **Don't create different versions of your site.** There are times when it may seem to make sense to have more than one site. For example, if you sell your products to different groups of people. But instead of having multiple sites, create one large one with different sections aimed at your different target audiences. You'll have more content and more keywords on your site using this approach, which will help your search engine rankings.
22. **Don't put all your eggs in one basket.** The search engines are continually working on improving their algorithms. And with each improvement there are changes made to the rankings. If your traffic is dependent on where you rank in the search engines you may be in a bad situation if they change your position. A smart business decision is have a variety of different traffic generation techniques such as links on other sites, PPC advertisements, articles published on other sites and paid banner ads.
23. **Be patient, it takes time to rank well.** It's not uncommon for it to take 6 months or more before a site shows up in the major search engines. So if your site doesn't show up immediately, don't assume something is wrong and start making drastic changes. The best course of action is to create your pages using good on-page optimization techniques and then work on getting links. While you're doing this forget about the search engines and focus on building the best

site you can for your visitors. If your site is as good as it can be, the search engines will rank you well!

24. Understand the importance of both on-page and off-page factors. When it comes to determining a site's ranking, the search engines take into consideration both on-page and off-page factors. On-page factors are the elements you can control on the page including the copy, meta tags, keywords, etc. Off page factors are what happens outside of your site and primarily include links. For terms that are not very competitive you can typically achieve high rankings simply using good on-page factors. However, for more competitive terms, off-page factors are becoming increasingly important. Ensuring you have a combination of the two is the best approach to optimizing your site.

Linking

25. Use keywords in your anchor text. Anchor text is the clickable text displayed for links - and it's more important to your search engine rankings than you might think. Every time the search engines find a link pointing to your site it counts as a "vote" that someone considers your site good enough to share it with their own visitors. If your keywords are included in that anchor text, the search engines assume your site must be related to that topic and your site relevancy for those keywords increases a little. The more links you have with keyword rich anchor text, the more important the search engines consider your site. The most important sites make the top 10.

26. Include keywords in the text surrounding the anchor text. You will get the most value from including your keywords in your link anchor text. However the search engines also look at the text around the link so be sure to include your keywords there as well. This can be useful for links where you're unable to specify keywords to use in the anchor text. For example, some sites that you exchange links with may include your site name as the anchor text. Give the search engines a hint as to what your site is about by writing a site description that uses your major keywords.

27. Make sure your anchor text matches the content of the page you're linking to. When a search engine spider follows a link, it registers whether the anchor text used for that link matches the content on the page it arrives at. For example, if your home page is optimized for "prom dresses" and you get a link to your site that includes the anchor text "green prom dresses", that link will be considered more valuable than if you linked to a page which was optimized for "prom tuxedos". To get the maximum benefit from links pointing to your site, be sure that your anchor text matches the content of the page you're linking to.

28. **Don't worry about getting links from sites with the same IP.** If you own more than one site and they're hosted with the same company, chances are that they have the same IP address. There has been some speculation in the past that if you put a link up on one of your sites that points to the other, that the link is given no value by the search engines. However, many SEO experts now agree that this is a myth. So if it makes sense to link your sites together, do it!
29. **Make sure your link anchor text is varied.** Search engines penalize sites that seem to have used link exchange services. How they spot these sites is by looking at the incoming links. If the anchor text on every link is the same, then there is a good chance that software and not a human generated the links. Instead of using an automated service, take the time to submit link exchanges one at a time and make sure to vary the link text. This gives a more natural look to your incoming links.
30. **Get links from relevant sites.** The search engines are becoming more sophisticated at reading and understanding what a site is about. And they are using this capability to look for natural linking relationships between sites. If a site selling "baby blankets" links to a "parenting information" site it will be seen more favorably because the two cover similar topics. Whereas a link from a "baby blankets" site to one selling "lawnmowers" is most likely only an attempt to improve a site's link popularity.
31. **Provide good content and other webmasters will link to you.** The most effective technique for getting people to link to your site is to make it the best of its kind in your industry. The more valuable and relevant content that you include, the more likely others will be to share it with their site visitors, blog readers and newsletter subscribers. And every mention brings new traffic as well as a one-way link that gives your search engine ranking a boost.
32. **Don't add a blog just for SEO.** The search engines seem to love blogs and they often index them quickly. But if you don't update your blog frequently you won't be doing yourself any favors. Nothing looks worse to potential customers than a blog with only a few outdated entries. So if a blog that is updated regularly doesn't make sense for your business then don't add one to your site.
33. **Get links to internal pages if it's appropriate.** A well designed site that has a proper internal linking structure will pass link popularity between its pages. So don't worry about only getting links to your home page. If it makes sense to have another site link to an internal page then do that. Remember, you should always be focused on creating a site that is usable for your potential customers. If you write an article about "blue widgets" and then at the bottom you put a link to your home page where there is only general information about your company then you may lose the interest of potential customer's. Instead link to your "blue

widgets" page directly. This will still count as a link in the eyes of the search engines, and it's much more user friendly.

34. **Use text links whenever possible.** For both internal links and external links, it's best to keep them in plain text whenever possible. That's not to say that there is no value to links from images, but you lose the benefit of the keywords contained in the link anchor text. When image links cannot be avoided, be sure to use alt text that includes your keywords.
35. **Get one-way links.** One-way links are when another site links to yours, but you do not link to theirs. The alternative is two-way links or reciprocal links, where they link to you and you link to them. The search engines put a much higher importance on one-way links because they are more likely to be a true "vote" for the quality of your site. The idea is that other webmasters would not tell others about your site if it were no good. The best ways to get one-way links are by submitting to directories and offering your articles for other webmasters to publish.
36. **Use alt text in linked images.** When you include pictures on your site it is important to include a description of the image in the alt text. This is particularly true for images that link to other pages. Including relevant keywords in the alt text for these linked images has been shown to have a positive effect on search engine rankings. But be sure to use only relevant keywords and not stuff your alt text with unrelated information in the hopes that you'll impress the search engines.
37. **Don't try and trick the search engines with three-way links.** As one-way links become more important to the search engines, some webmasters have devised a reciprocal linking plan that makes it look like they're getting more one-way links than they are. The idea is that three sites participate. Site A links to site B, site B links to site C and site C links to site A. On the surface it looks like these are all one-way links. But it is only a matter of time before the search engines figure this out (if they haven't already!) and penalize all of the sites involved.
38. **Get links from authority sites.** Authority sites are ones that are seen as the best of the best in their industry. These are typically very large information sites that have been around for a long time. Because the search engines place a lot of value on where these sites link to, one link from an authority site can have a tremendous effect on improving your rankings. Although getting links from authority sites can be difficult, it's definitely worth the extra effort.
39. **Consider the quality of the page you're getting a link from.** When deciding whether to pursue a link from a particular site, some people will tell you to look at its Google PageRank Google. But even Google admits that it does not keep the PageRank value shown to the public up-to-date. Instead, look at

whether the site practices good SEO techniques. Where do they rank in the search engines? Getting a link from a site that is already ranking well will help improve your ranking. Your site looks better by association.

40. **Remember that internal links are important too.** So much emphasis is put on external links that often the links within a site are overlooked. But they are extremely important and should be carefully planned. It is through your internal links that your site's popularity is shared between pages. This gives the inner pages more importance because of their association with your home page. The key to a good internal linking strategy is to ensure that all of your pages have at least one link to them – ideally more. When setting up the links, use plain text whenever possible with keyword rich anchor text.
41. **Get one-way links from directories.** There are hundreds of different directories on every topic imaginable. Be sure to submit your site to relevant ones in your industry as well as general ones. For a listing of directories check out <http://www.isedb.com> and <http://www.grackelfish.com>. The most important directory from an SEO standpoint is DMOZ (<http://www.dmoz.com>). Not only does a link in DMOZ carry a lot of weight with the search engines, but their results are also published on other sites, which brings more one-way links.
42. **Get one-way links by publishing articles.** One of the best ways to get one-way links is to publish articles. Submit them to article directories, related websites, blogs and newsletter publishers. If you write good quality content you'll find that it spreads quickly – bringing traffic and one-way links.
43. **Don't waste time getting links the search engines don't count.** Too many webmasters spend countless hours posting on forums and submitting blog comments in the hopes that these one-way links will improve their rankings. However, the search engines are smart enough to know that the site owners did not put up these links and therefore they carry very little weight. If the link will bring you traffic then it is worthwhile, but do not waste time trying to get links simply for the search engine's sake.

44. **Avoid using image maps for navigation.** Due to the code that makes up an image map search engines often get trapped in them and can't spider your site. If you use image maps for your main site navigation you should consider switching to standard HTML hyperlinks or your site will most likely not be spidered properly. If you want to keep the image maps you can, but you should add another navigation scheme to your site that uses only standard text HTML hyperlinks. An easy way to do this is to create a site map page that links to link to every page on your site. Then add a standard HTML link on each page of your site that links to the site map.
45. **Choose your navigation system carefully.** Your navigation system is how spiders move around your site. If you choose a menu system that they cannot follow they will have no way of indexing all of your pages. Whenever possible, use text links for your menu. Or if you want to do something more graphical, make sure that your navigation buttons do not include an image map and that you include appropriate keywords in the image alt tag. Probably the worst option is DHTML menus that create effects such as pull down boxes so unless it's critical to the design of your site, this type of navigation system is best avoided.
46. **Create a site map.** Site maps are important for users and search engines alike. They are a great way to ensure that you have a link to every page on your site. To make your site map useful, it should contain as much relevant content as possible and not just be a set of one-word links. You can do this easily by adding a one or two sentence after each link that describes what the page is about.
47. **Don't be afraid to link out.** Some people worry that by linking out they are giving away their PageRank to other sites. There is no evidence to support this claim. And many SEO experts believe that having links to other sites is natural and expected by the search engines. An absence of links may be a red flag.
48. **Keep your link pages to a reasonable length.** Including hundreds of outgoing links on a page is not a good idea. The search engines know that these pages have very little value to your site visitors. How are they going to find anything relevant amongst 200 links? Instead focus on creating pages that are valuable to your visitors. Include descriptions for the links and keep it to a reasonable number. If you offer link partners a good quality link they'll be willing to do the same for you. It's a win-win situation!

Keywords

49. **Optimize for keyword phrases rather than single keywords.** Not only is it difficult to rank well for single keywords, it's also ineffective. People rarely search for single keywords. And when they do they usually become overwhelmed by the

number of results and narrow their search. The more profitable approach is to find keyword phrases that include two or more words and are very specific. For example, if you sell "sofas" you will get more targeted traffic from optimizing for "leather sofas" and even more from "black leather sofas". You'll be more likely to rank well for "black leather sofas" and chances are that someone who has entered such a specific search term knows what they want and is likely to be a serious buyer.

50. Look for words to add to your keywords to make them more specific.

The more relevant your keywords, the better. If you are using keywords that are generic and common, the search engines will be unable to give your site appropriate consideration. Whenever possible, try to clarify your keywords with additional words in order to make your site stand out to the search engines. For example, if you sell widgets maybe it makes sense to create pages optimized for "blue widgets", "red widgets" and "green widgets".

51. Work on ranking for longer keyword phrases that contain shorter phrases.

Using a multi word phrase is much more effective than using single keywords, because when you use several words, the search engines will look at each individual word and each possible combination of words. For example, when you use the phrase "website copywriting techniques", the search engines will look at each word and your page will be considered for "website copywriting" and "copywriting techniques" in addition to the full keyword phrase "website copywriting techniques".

52. Look for keyword phrases without a lot of competition.

The best keywords to optimize for are those that have a reasonable number of searches without a lot of competition. Finding these keywords can be a challenge, but luckily there are a few tools available to help you. A great way to research using Google is with "allinanchor" and "allintitle". For example, if you wanted to know the number of sites that have anchor text pointing to them containing the keywords "baby gift baskets", you could enter in Google "allinanchor:baby gifts baskets" (without the quotes). If you wanted to know how many used "baby gift baskets in the title" search for "allintitle:baby gift baskets" (without the quotes). This gives you an idea of how many sites are optimizing for this particular keyword phrase. Another option is to subscribe to a service such as <http://www.wordtracker.com>, which helps you identify good keywords and gives you approximations on the amount of competition.

53. Look in your log files for potential keywords.

A great source of keywords is your site's log files. You'll find keywords that people have used to find your site. You may be surprised what some of them are! These are good terms to improve your optimization for.

- 54. Find out what keywords your competitors are optimizing for.** Find out what keywords your competitors are using on their pages with the Keyword Density Checker (<http://www.webconfs.com/keyword-density-checker.php>). It will tell you what keywords they consider most important and could tip you off to some good ones that you hadn't thought of.
- 55. Use keywords people are actually searching for.** It's easy to rank well for keywords that no one is searching for. But how much traffic do you think that will bring? Be sure to do your research to find terms that potential customers are actually searching for. The best way to do this is to use a tool such as Good Keywords (<http://www.goodkeywords.com>), Keyword Discovery (<http://www.keyworddiscovery.com>) or WordTracker (<http://www.wordtracker.com>).
- 56. Use no more than 2-3 keyword phrases per page.** It's nearly impossible to successfully optimize one web page for more than 2-3 keyword phrases. Instead, focus each page on a narrowly defined set of related keywords. This will make them more useful to your visitors and more easily understood by the search engines. Any more and it looks like you are simply stuffing your pages with keywords – a practice which the search engines may ban you for.
- 57. Don't limit the number of keyword phrases you optimize for.** The more keyword phrases you use on your site, the more likely you will be to rank well for many different terms. Diversifying this way will ensure that your site will not see a dramatic decrease in traffic if your rankings fluctuate. However, be sure to keep it to a maximum of 2-3 keyword phrases per page or else you risk looking irrelevant to both the search engines and your visitors.
- 58. Be sure to use keywords with alternate spellings.** This technique is known as keyword variation, and is particularly important for sites that have an international presence. This is not the same as misspelling, which is frowned upon. Instead, it may mean interchanging the keyword catalog for catalogue, or web site for website. By having these alternate spellings you'll expand the keywords used on your site and increase the number of phrases you rank well for.
- 59. Understand that there is a duplicate content filter, not a penalty.** There is a lot of talk about Google's fabled duplicate content penalty. But most SEO experts agree that if anything exists it is a filter, not a penalty. So you will not be banned if you use content that is also published on other sites, but rather your site may not show in the search engine rankings pages for the page that contains the duplicated content. To ensure that you have enough pages that the search engines view as original, make sure you publish your own content that is unique to your site.

- 60. Use your keyword phrases naturally throughout the page.** Chances are you've read a page that was stuffed with keywords to the point of not making sense to human readers. A good rule of thumb when creating a page is to write it so that it makes sense to your visitors. Don't even think about the search engines and simply insert your keywords when and how it makes sense. If you're really good at writing, people won't even know what keyword phrases you're optimizing for!
- 61. Learn how to interpret competitive research.** Have you researched your competition but you're not sure whether your results show a good keyword to optimize for or not? A good rule of thumb is that if there are less than 1,000 sites actively optimizing for a specific keyword phrase, you should be able to rank for it with some good on-page SEO. Of course you may start out at number 512, but you can always tweak your page to improve that ranking. If there are more than 1,000 sites actively working on optimizing for that keyword phrase it will take time, patience and probably a lot of back links to rank well. Get started with the easier keywords and as your site gains popularity you can add the more competitive terms.
- 62. Don't link to "bad neighborhoods".** Links farms can be spotted from a mile away. They are sites that exist solely as a place where webmasters can put up links in an attempt to inflate the number of inbound links to their site. Whatever you do, NEVER post a link on your site to any sites that are considered link farms. And even if a site looks good when you link to it, be sure to check your link partners periodically to ensure that you're not inadvertently linking to a site that is considered bad.
- 63. Don't get too many links too fast.** Thinking they could trick the search engines, some services popped up that offered hundreds or even thousands of links to members. But the search engines are not stupid. They look at sites that suddenly get hundreds of links at once as unnatural. A natural linking campaign would include a trickle of links – some reciprocal and some one way – all with different link text. So don't waste your time or money on these services. Instead focus on getting good quality links through reciprocal link exchanges, publishing articles, submitting to directories and encouraging other webmasters who enjoy your content to tell their visitors about your site.
- 64. Find phrases that are bringing in a little traffic, but for which you aren't ranking very well.** Look through your site logs and find words that you're getting a little traffic for, but that you're not ranked in the top 20 results for. If the keyword phrase is important enough that people will look past the first or second page of results, then it presents a real opportunity. And if you've already made some progress ranking well for the term you should be able to get into the top 10 with some on-page optimization and appropriate links.

Copywriting

65. **Aim for a minimum of 250 words per page.** There needs to be enough content on your page that the search engines can tell what it is about. SEO experts recommend having at least 250 words per page. Any less and you won't have used your keyword phrases enough. Of course, more is always better!
66. **Make your site attractive to searchers.** There has been a lot of speculation lately that the search engines are now ranking sites higher if they are popular with searchers. Since the engines can easily track the number of clicks that a site gets, it makes sense that they would work this into their algorithms. After all, including the most relevant results is their main goal and if a site is popular it stands to reason that it is relevant. Improve your site's popularity by getting as many click throughs as possible. One of the best ways to do this is to write a good description that encourages searchers to click. Most search engines use what you put in your "title tag" and "meta description" tag so you do have some control over what searchers see. Use this as an opportunity to write something interesting and click worthy!
67. **Make sure your site has lots of frequently updated content.** The search engines love content. The more the better. Give them what they want by adding new content to your site on a regular basis. Some great ways to do this are to add a "what's new" section, include a blog or use syndicated content published by others.
68. **Keep your content relevant.** If you want to rank well for a particular keyword phrase, then make sure your page includes that keyword phrase as often as makes sense in your copy. That may sound obvious but it's amazing how many sites don't do it! Do not make this very basic mistake.
69. **Use your home page wisely.** A lot of the links you get to your site will be pointed at your home page. So make this space count! Optimize it for your most profitable keywords. You can optimize other pages for these keywords as well if that makes sense. Just don't waste your home page by optimizing for terms that don't get many searches.
70. **Add more content, no matter what the focus of your site is.** Even if you sell a product, you can benefit from including lots of related content on your site. Not only do the search engines love it but you'll also create a more useful resource for potential customers and get links from others who enjoyed your site. A few ways to add relevant content are to publish product reviews, include detailed descriptions of your products, allow customers to post their

comments/reviews, write instructions on how to use your products or write related articles that help educate people on your industry.

71. Don't worry, the search engines will find all of the copy on your page.

One of the many SEO fallacies is that you have to include "optimized" copy at specific points on your page in order to rank well. The truth is that the search engine spiders will look at all of the content on your page no matter where it is. So don't waste time trying to build your pages in a certain order because you think it will help your rankings. That time is better spent adding content to your site to make it the best it can be!

72. Add content, content and more content! The search engines love content.

And the more pages of content you have, the more keyword phrases you can optimize for. To get the most value from your content, make sure it's related to the topic of your site and that as much of it as possible is unique to you. Simply copying hundreds of articles that are available everywhere may result in your site being penalized for duplicate content. Although this won't mean a negative result for your site overall, it can result in poor rankings for the keywords contained in the content that is duplicated.

73. Keep the keywords in order throughout your copy. The order of your words does make a difference. Although the search engines will notice when you use single words from your chosen keyword phrases, the best result comes when you use all of the words in order. For example, if you're optimizing for "black leather sofas" make sure you use all three of those words in the correct order as often as makes sense in your copy.

74. Be creative in incorporating keywords. The search engines see a "." a "," and a "-" as a space. Use this to your advantage when writing copy using keyword phrases. For example, if you were optimizing for the term "picture frames" one way to incorporate that phrase into your copy would be to write... "Come to use when you want to do something special with your favorite picture. Frames are available in a variety of different sizes and colors." See how that works?

75. Update your content frequently. Search engines keep track of the iterations of your website that are stored in the search indexes. New, fresh content will show the search engine that you care about the relevancy of your content. This is one of the reasons that blogs are appearing at the top of the search engine results. They tend to be updated much more frequently than most static websites.

76. Don't use foul language. Search engines do not rank sites containing foul language as high as sites with similar content that do not contain foul language. Keep it "G rated" and you won't risk being penalized.

- 77. Use terms related to your keyword phrases in your copy.** As the search engines become more sophisticated, they are better able to look at all of the content on a page and determine what it is about. What they hope to find is content that is well written for the end user – and not just for the search engines. By using synonyms and words related to your keyword phrases throughout the page, you are showing the search engines that you are writing copy that is truly useable to their searchers. As important as it is to include your keyword phrases in your copy, it's more important to write naturally so that it makes sense to your human readers!
- 78. Choose your page titles wisely.** Your title tags are one of the most important factors in achieving high rankings in the search engines. All of the major search engines weigh the keywords used in this tag very heavily. The thinking is that you wouldn't include keywords in the title that are completely unrelated to the content on the page. A great title tag combined with strong on page copy written using the same keyword phrases is the best way to tell the search engines exactly what your page is about. Something else to keep in mind is that the words in your title tag are what appear in the clickable link on the search engine results page (SERP). So you want something that is not only search engine optimized, but also user friendly.

Site Design

- 79. Make sure your links can pass their popularity.** Passing link popularity between pages increases the rankings of inner pages. A good rule of thumb is that as long as the A HREF can be seen in plain HTML then your link will be able to pass its popularity. For example, a good link will look like `Your Link Text`.
- 80. Use the meta tags as they were meant to be used.** Although the meta keyword and meta description tags do little to boost your site rankings, they can hurt them. The search engines are on the lookout for over-optimized sites and penalize them. Use the meta tags as they were intended and include your most relevant keywords without spamming. The best approach is to create different meta tags for each page of your site and in them include the 2-3 keyword phrases used on that page. It's also a good idea not to include any one word (whether you're trying to rank well for it or not) more than 3 times and do not put the same word twice in a row (even if it is separate by a comma or period).
- 81. Include your keywords in <H1> tags.** Whether this technique still makes a difference to the search engines is a point of debate among SEO experts. But the consensus is that it can't hurt – as long as you use them as they're intended.

<H1> can be used for page headings and <H2> or <H3> for subheadings. This let's the search engines know that these words are important to the overall topic of the page.

82. **Highlight your keywords using bold, italics and list.** There is some evidence that including your keyword phrases in bold, italics and a list are all beneficial to showing the search engines that they are important terms for the page. However, you should never bold, italicize or add any special formatting just for the sake of the search engines. Use this type of emphasis as it makes sense for your readers.
83. **Make sure dynamic URLs can be indexed.** Dynamic content is information that is delivered to the web browser in a different form than it exists on the server. It is usually pulled from a database and created on the fly at the server level using CGI programming, ASP, PHP, or by a content management system. Dynamic URLs, are the web addresses used to display dynamic content. They are easily identified because they contain a question mark. Although search engines used to have a problem with dynamic URLs, they no longer do as long as they adhere to a few simple rules. They should contain no more than 3 variables, not include sessions IDs and each query string should be less than 10 digits. If your site uses Dynamic URLs and you're not sure whether you meet this criteria, it's worth asking someone with experience in this area.
84. **Make sure switching servers goes smoothly.** Moving your site to a new server should not cause a problem with your SEO rankings unless there is down time. If your site is down when the spiders visit you can experience a drop in your rankings or be dropped from the results completely. The best approach is to get everything setup and running perfectly on the new server before changing the DNS entries. Once the DNS entries have been changed, check your domain at <http://www.dnsreport.com> to ensure that there are no DNS issues. If for some reason there is still something pointing to the old server it can cause the spiders to think your site is down. Only once everything looks good should you remove your pages from the old server.
85. **Don't use frames.** Framed websites are typically made up of 3 different files that are programmed to work together. Although this works fine for web browsers, the search engine spiders have a difficult time interpreting framed data. With the use of Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) it is possible to create a framed site that the search engines can spider, but it's really not worth the extra hassle. If your intention is to use frames to make the different site components more easily changeable, using PHP files is an easier and more search engine friendly way to accomplish this.
86. **Use 301 redirects to avoid dividing your link popularity.** Websites can be accessed with or without the "www". For example, both

"http://www.yourdomain.com" and "http://yourdomain.com" are valid URLs. However, in the eyes of the search engines these are two different sites. What can happen is that you get incoming links to both of these and as a result your link popularity is divided. Avoid this problem by putting up a 301 redirect at either of the domains. Visitors won't know the difference, and you'll ensure you're maximizing your links.

87. **Include a DTD statement.** A Document Type Definition (DTD) statement is the first line of most web page and is designed to tell website browser's what version of HTML the page uses. An example DTD statement is "<!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD HTML 4.01 Transitional//EN">". Although there is no concrete evidence, some people have reported that not having a DTD statement at the beginning of your HTML may prevent new sites from getting anything other than the homepage indexed. It's a good idea to ensure that every page of your site has one.
88. **Make sure your code validates.** No one can say for sure whether the search engine spiders care about the quality of your code, but it's a good idea to make sure your pages are built properly to avoid any problems. The best way to do this is to make sure that they validate using the W3C Validation Service (<http://validator.w3.org>).
89. **Put javascript code in an external file.** There are lots of instances where it makes sense to use javascript code on a site to provide functionality to users. If it adds value for your customers then go for it! However, since the search engines cannot read javascript it's a good idea to put the code in an external file. This avoids them getting hung up in the code and possibly leaving your site before they've spidered it completely.
90. **If you use keywords in your file names, don't overdo it.** If your keyword phrase includes 5 words you won't be doing yourself any favors to save your homepage file as "here_are_all_my_keywords.html". This looks like you're trying to stuff your keywords in anywhere and everywhere! Instead choose a system for naming your files that makes it easy to tell what they are, without worrying about cramming in every keyword the page is optimized for.
91. **Use breadcrumbs.** Have you ever noticed the "trail" of links at the top of some sites? They're called breadcrumbs and they're a useful way to help visitors and search engines navigate through the pages of a site. If you're not already using them, it's worth the time to get them set-up.
92. **Keep each web page to a maximum size of 100k.** There is no definitive answer on the ideal size for a web page. Some people say that the smaller the file the better. Certainly smaller files load faster for your visitors, which is extremely important. A good rule of thumb is to keep each web page to a

MAXIMUM of 100k (including all pictures) and if possible aim for closer to 40k. If you aren't sure how large your pages are, check them with the free tool at <http://watson.addy.com>.

93. **Build your site using only CSS.** One option that many web designers are now pursuing is to create a complete site design using Cascading Style Sheets (CSS). This allows the designer to put pretty much everything except for text and links in an external file. This makes each page of the site very small and free of any extra coding, allowing the search engine spiders to focus on the text and links on the page.
94. **Use an external CSS file.** Keep your pages smaller and the HTML code uncluttered by putting all of your style information in an external Cascading Style Sheet (CSS) file. Not only is it less code for the search engine spiders to wade through, but it also makes it easy for you to make changes. If you want your titles to be a different color, simply make the change in your CSS file and it will be automatically changed on every page.
95. **Don't change your domain name.** Often times companies create a site using one domain name and then decide they want to change it to something that is easier to remember or that better reflects what they do. Although there may be sound business reasons for the change, keep in mind that from a search engine standpoint you will be starting again with a new domain. This means you can expect to be dropped from the rankings for 6 – 9 months if not longer. A better approach is to keep the original site as is and use a 301 redirect on the new domain so that anyone who goes to that address is automatically taken to the original site.

Techniques to Avoid

96. **Never use doorway pages.** A page made specifically to rank well in the search engines for particular keywords is known as a "doorway page". This serves as an entry point through which visitors pass to the main content. Doorway pages are easy to identify because they have obviously been designed primarily for search engines, not for human beings. For this reason, the engines consider them spam and will ban sites that are caught using this technique.
97. **Never stuff your site with keywords.** In the past, stuffing your website text with the same keywords over and over again was one of the best ways to get a good ranking. But times have changed! If you use this technique nowadays your site may be considered spam by the search engines and banned from the results entirely. If this happens, your site will not show up on the results pages *at all*. Don't risk it!

98. **Never use text that is the same color as your background.** It used to be an effective technique to include extra instances of keywords in your web copy. Simply make them the same color as the background and visitors would not see them but the search engines would. However, if a search engine spider determines that your text and background are the same color there is a good chance that those extra keywords will do nothing more than get your site recognized as search engine spam.
99. **Don't pay to have your site submitted to the search engines.** There is no fee to be indexed by the major search engines. If someone offers to do it for you for a fee, save your money. These services are usually overpriced and can sometimes do more harm than good. The search engines do not need or want you to submit your sites repeatedly. The better approach is to start getting links from sites that are in their index and they'll soon find you.
100. **Don't deliberately include misspelled words on your pages.** Misspelled words accomplish one thing only – driving visitors away from your website. Unless you want to look unprofessional and untrustworthy then reconsider including misspelled words. Why would anyone include misspelled words intentionally? Because some SEO “experts” claim that using common misspellings is a good way to get extra traffic. But the search engine algorithms are not stupid – and they will recognize what you are trying to do.
101. **Don't cloak your pages.** IP redirection - also known as cloaking - is a terrible idea. This technique involves putting a file on your web server that will scan the incoming IP address before deciding which page to display. The search engines see one thing, while users see another. All of the major search engines are following Google's lead in promising to ban any website that is found to be redirecting users to another site with the intention of misleading the search engine spiders about the true intention of the site.