

## What is Website Optimisation?

*- A look at the basis of website optimization and limitations as part of your Internet marketing strategy.*

For anyone who has a website for the purposes of conducting business, or more specifically for gaining business, website optimisation (or optimization as the Americans call it) is very likely to be something you have heard of.

Web optimisation can help to get your website listed higher in the natural ('organic') results on Search Engines (such as Google, Yahoo, MSN etc.)

From your point of view, optimising a website is about getting more visitors to your site, and therefore gaining more business from your site. The more visitors you get, the more business you're likely to make. That's not rocket science. Of course there are other factors involved in good Internet businesses; a poor website may get loads of visitors but if the site is poorly structured or designed, or difficult to navigate, then those visitors will quickly leave the site again and go to another site that is easier to use.

## What's involved?

Website optimisation can be broadly split into two main different areas:

1. Onsite optimisation
2. Offsite optimisation

**Onsite optimisation** relates to changes that are made to your website pages to make them easy to navigate and read by the search engine spiders. Search engine spiders are the programs that trawl the pages of the Internet, reading the text that they contain, and storing that information in huge databases. The textual information together with other elements of information that are in each web page will be used in an algorithm by the search engine to determine what a web page is about (its primary subject). Different search engines use different algorithms to determine this information, hence the reason why different engines will return different results for the same search phrases.

**Offsite optimisation** is primarily about getting other websites to link to your website. The principal behind this is that if a website links to your site, then your site must be quite good because someone wants to link to it. Therefore, the more links that there are to your site, the more important your site must be.

The onsite and offsite information will be combined and used in the search engine algorithms to determine how important your website is on your given subject matter, compared to other websites that deal with the same subject.

## So it's simple then?

Well, the principals are simple, but in reality things are a little more complex. It is because of this basic simplicity that web masters have been able to manipulate the search engine results by using optimisation techniques, and thereby get their websites higher in search engine results. Primarily this has been done by: creating keyword stuffed pages that look good to the search engine spiders that read the information, but to a human user don't make any sense; getting other websites to link to theirs by paying for the links or exchanging links (each link is then not a vote on how good their website is and should therefore not count to its popularity in the search engine results listings).

Search engine algorithms have therefore become highly complex in attempting to identify optimisation methods that have been used that are trying to fool search engines (known as black hat techniques), compared to optimisation techniques that have been used to help search engines spiders (white hat techniques), and are actually good websites that have attracted a high number of links to them.

## **Is it worth optimising my website then?**

Yes it is, but only if you have a good website, which is useful to end-users and has good content.

If your website does not have any original content, or does not provide anything of particular use for an end-user, then optimisation is likely to prove fruitless, or any successes will be short lived.

The best and first stage in optimisation is ensuring that your site has good content, and that this content that is *original* content (not just copied from other websites). Content is the food the search engine spiders live on! The more content that is relevant to your website subject, the better.

Once you have good content, then you need to ensure your website is optimised, which in essence means that you are making the most of the content on your site; you're helping the search engines as far as possible to determine what your site is about, and you're helping the spiders to move from one page to the next on your site, so that all the pages can be read by the spiders.

Good content should also mean that other websites want to link to yours - without you having to buy links or get involved with link exchanges.

## **So what actually needs to be done to optimise the site.**

The actual site changes that need to be made to your site will obviously be determined by what's already there and the search terms that you are trying to appear for in the search engines. There's no real mystery to it, but there's also no definitive answer to the question, because it depends so much on the individual site.

## **After optimising my site, how long before the visitors come flooding in?**

Firstly website optimisation should be seen as a long term goal. The basic rule of thumb is that the quicker your site appears in the top results for search engines, the quicker it is likely to disappear again! You should optimise your site, and then keep it optimised by watching the changes to the search engine results and making any adjustments to the onsite optimisation as required.

Will visitors come flooding in? It is unlikely that they will from simply optimising your site. You should view website optimisation as *one part of your overall marketing strategy* of your site. Gone are the days when you could upload a site and suddenly it would be appearing everywhere in search engines and be known by the world! You need to use traditional marketing methods, combined with other online marketing techniques such as writing and submitting articles online, to raise the profile of your business, your know-how and your website.

### **What about these companies that promise top ten search results?**

There are a number of good search engine optimisation companies out there who can help you to get the most from your website. However; be very careful about companies that make such bold statements about "top ten results guaranteed". The chances are that these companies will do what they have said they would, but they will only get your website listed for very obscure search terms that people who are looking on the Internet do not actually use; the net result is that you don't actually get any more visitors to your site.

Due to the still relative newness of the Internet, and the use of websites as a marketing tool, there are many companies who are taking advantage of the fact that it is still perceived to be possible to suddenly be the number one website for a particular topic overnight. Unfortunately this is not the case. Think about it; whatever search terms you are trying to appear for on the Internet, the chances are there are thousands of others trying to appear for the same, and not everyone can be in the first slot. So, think long term and build your content, employ optimisation techniques and market your business and your site through as many different channels as you can.

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If you would like some advice on the optimisation of your own website then you can contact us at [enquiries@itzbits.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@itzbits.co.uk).

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