**SEO for FLECKMERCHANDISERS**

**Keyword Usage and Targeting**

Keywords are fundamental to the search process. They are the building blocks of language and of search. In fact, the entire science of information retrieval (including web-based search engines like Google) is based on keywords. As the engines crawl and index the contents of pages around the web, they keep track of those pages in keyword-based indexes rather than storing 25 billion web pages all in one database. Millions and millions of smaller databases, each centered on a particular keyword term or phrase, allow the engines to retrieve the data they need in a mere fraction of a second.

Obviously, if you want your page to have a chance of ranking in the search results for "dog," it's wise to make sure the word "dog" is part of the crawlable content of your document.

## Keyword Domination

Keywords dominate how we communicate our search intent and interact with the engines. When we enter words to search for, the engine matches pages to retrieve based on the words we entered. The order of the words ("pandas juggling" vs. "juggling pandas"), spelling, punctuation, and capitalization provide additional information that the engines use to help retrieve the right pages and rank them.

Search engines measure how keywords are used on pages to help determine the relevance of a particular document to a query. One of the best ways to optimize a page's rankings is to ensure that the keywords you want to rank for are prominently used in titles, text, and metadata.

As you make your keywords more specific, you narrow the competition for search results, and improve your chances of achieving a higher ranking. The map graphic to the left compares the relevance of the broad term "books" to the specific title Tale of Two Cities. Notice that while there are many results for the broad term, there are considerably fewer results (and thus, less competition) for the specific result.

## On-Page Optimization

Keyword usage and targeting are still a part of the search engines' ranking algorithms, and we can apply some effective techniques for keyword usage to help create pages that are well optimized. Here at Moz, we engage in a lot of testing and get to see a huge number of search results and shifts based on keyword usage tactics. When working with one of your own sites, we recommend this process. Use the keyword phrase:

* *In the title tag at least once. Try to keep the keyword phrase as close to the beginning of the title tag as possible. More detail on title tags follows later in this section.*
* *Once prominently near the top of the page.*
* *At least two or three times, including variations, in the body copy on the page. Perhaps a few more times if there's a lot of text content. You may find additional value in using the keyword or variations more than this, but in our experience, adding more instances of a term or phrase tends to have little or no impact on rankings.*
* *At least once, in the alt attribute of an image on the page. This not only helps with web search, but also image search, which can occasionally bring valuable traffic.*
* *Once in the URL. Additional rules for URLs and keywords are discussed later on in this section.*
* *At least once in the Meta description tag. Note that the Meta description tag does*not*get used by the engines for rankings, but rather helps to attract clicks by searchers reading the results page, as the Meta description becomes the snippet of text used by the search engines.*

In addition, you should generally not use keywords in link anchor text pointing to other pages on your site; this is known as Keyword Cannibalization.

## Title Tags

The title element of a page is meant to be an accurate, concise description of a page's content. It is critical to both user experience and search engine optimization.

As title tags are such an important part of search engine optimization, the following best practices for title tag creation makes for terrific low-hanging SEO fruit. The recommendations below cover the critical steps to optimize title tags for search engines and for usability.

### *Be mindful of length*

Search engines display only the first 65-75 characters of a title tag in the search results (after that, the engines show an ellipsis – "..." – to indicate when a title tag has been cut off). This is also the general limit allowed by most social media sites, so sticking to this limit is generally wise. However, if you are targeting multiple keywords (or an especially long keyword phrase), and having them in the title tag is essential to ranking, it may be advisable to go longer.

### *Place important keywords close to the front*

The closer to the start of the title tag your keywords are, the more helpful they will be for ranking, and the more likely a user will be to click them in the search results.

### *Include branding*

At Moz, we love to end every title tag with a brand name mention, as these help to increase brand awareness, and create a higher click-through rate for people who like and are familiar with a brand. Sometimes it makes sense to place your brand at the beginning of the title tag, such as your homepage. Since words at the beginning of the title tag carry more weight, be mindful of what you are trying to rank for.

### *Consider readability and emotional impact*

Title tags should be descriptive and readable. The title tag is a new visitor's first interaction with your brand and should convey the most positive impression possible. Creating a compelling title tag will help grab attention on the search results page, and attract more visitors to your site. This underscores that SEO is about not only optimization and strategic keyword usage, but also the entire user experience.

## Meta Tags

Meta tags were originally intended as a proxy for information about a website's content. Several of the basic Meta tags are listed below, along with a description of their use.

### *Meta Robots*

The Meta Robots tag can be used to control search engine crawler activity (for all of the major engines) on a per-page level. There are several ways to use Meta Robots to control how search engines treat a page:

* **Index/no, index** tells the engines whether the page should be crawled and kept in the engines' index for retrieval. If you opt to use "no index," the page will be excluded from the index. By default, search engines assume they can index all pages, so using the "index" value is generally unnecessary.
* **Follow/no follow** tells the engines whether links on the page should be crawled. If you elect to employ "no follow," the engines will disregard the links on the page for discovery, ranking purposes, or both. By default, all pages are assumed to have the "follow" attribute.  
  Example: <META NAME="ROBOTS" CONTENT="NOINDEX, NOFOLLOW">
* **no archive** is used to restrict search engines from saving a cached copy of the page. By default, the engines will maintain visible copies of all pages they have indexed, accessible to searchers through the cached link in the search results.
* **Nosnippet** informs the engines that they should refrain from displaying a descriptive block of text next to the page's title and URL in the search results.
* **noodp/noydir** are specialized tags telling the engines not to grab a descriptive snippet about a page from the Open Directory Project (DMOZ) or the Yahoo! Directory for display in the search results.

The X-Robots-Tag HTTP header directive also accomplishes these same objectives. This technique works especially well for content within non-HTML files, like images.

### *Meta Description*

The Meta description tag exists as a short description of a page's content. Search engines do not use the keywords or phrases in this tag for rankings, but Meta descriptions are the primary source for the snippet of text displayed beneath a listing in the results.

The Meta description tag serves the function of advertising copy, drawing readers to your site from the results. It is an extremely important part of search marketing. Constructing a readable, compelling description using important keywords (notice how Google bolds the searched keywords in the description) can draw a much higher click-through rate of searchers to your page.

Meta descriptions can be any length, but search engines generally will cut snippets longer than 160 characters, so it is generally wise to stay within in these limits.

In the absence of Meta descriptions, search engines will create the search snippet from other elements of the page. For pages that target multiple keywords and topics, this is a perfectly valid tactic.