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An Incomplete Guide to SEO

How to earn \$1,000's a day with Search Engine Optimization and Joomla.



"How you can profit from the EXACT SAME search engine optimization strategies that I used to charge clients \$3,590 a day to implement!"

In this web-based, no-hype guide, I'll reveal my simple step-by-step search engine optimization strategy that I have been using for 2 years on over 350 clients and that anyone can use to get a front page ranking on Google:

Do you want:

More web site traffic? More orders? A better cash-flow? A healthier Internet business? A front-page ranking on Google and all major search engines? More money than you thought humanly possible?

... if so, keep reading. Get ready to become a **search engine optimization "insider"**. What I'm about to teach you are the actual secrets that I have used to get *unlimited daily traffic* for over 350 of my clients from Google. For the sake of your business, you can't afford not to read my search engine optimization guide!

Taken from: <http://www.google-search-engine-optimization.com/>

Used without permission as an example of how web marketing consultants get a bad name!

There are millions (literally) of these sites on the web. The real truth about search engine optimization is that there is no "silver bullet" any more. It used to be true that you could stuff a few keywords into some metatags and you get lots of traffic. Now, search engines are much smarter. Google recently released its patent #20050071741 on its "Information Retrieval Based on Historical Data" (that's that little search page to you and me). In the document were over 118 factors that effected a web site's position in the search engine's rankings!

This is the real truth about SEO:

There is no such thing as Search Engine Optimization any more.

The only reality now is having a long term web marketing strategy and a commitment to building a site full of quality information.

Having said that, assuming that your site is one of the ones with the quality content, SEO still has its place.

On an average day, about 68 million Americans will go online."
"More than half of them, over 38 million people, will use a search engine."

Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project, January 2005.

There are a lot of people out there, and why shouldn't they come to your site? Especially if all the "other guys" are still just stuffing metatags. Over the next five articles in this series, I will explain some of the things you can do to increase your traffic and visibility, and make specific references to how this is implemented in Joomla. I will be looking at the steps in a roughly chronological order that you might take as you launch a new site. Follow this guide and some time in the next 6 months, you might be getting that traffic you wanted.

The SEO and Joomla Series:

Part 1: How to earn \$1,000's a day with Search Engine Optimization and Joomla

Part 2: Planning your site

Part 3: Designing your Site

Part 4: Launching your site

Planning your site

Why do you want traffic?

Before you go anywhere you need to answer this question. You can break it down into:

- What is your web site about?
- Who will visit it?
- What will they gain?
- What will you gain?

Write the answers on a piece of paper... no really!

Now you have thought some what about who is going to visit your site, we can talk about the how.

Keywords..

Keywords..

Keywords..

Imagine you are a potential visitor to your site. What keywords will you type in to find it? Take a blank piece of paper. Now, on your piece of paper, write down as many words or phrases as you can that you as a potential visitor would search for to find a site like yours in a search engine. Try to write 20 to 30 keywords or phrases on your piece of paper. If you're having trouble coming up with keywords, ask your partner, friends or family members which keywords they would use to find your site. At this point you should have a list of no less than 20 keywords or phrases at your disposal.

You need this tool below:

<http://www.pixelfast.com/overture/>

I use it almost on a daily basis. It allows you to find out which keywords people are using in their searches, which as I'm sure you will agree is very valuable information!

Another useful way of doing this is a beta Google tool:

<http://www.google.com/webhp?complete=1&hl=en>

Start at the top of your keyword list that you wrote earlier and enter each one into the text box. As you can see, the term suggestion tool returns a list of keywords and how many times they were searched for. As you type each of your keywords into the text box and see the number of searches, write that number down next to your keyword on the page.

You should now have a list of keywords with the number of searches for that keyword from last month on your page. To get the 5 most popular keywords, simply take the 5 keywords with the highest number of searches. Flip your paper over and write them down in order of most to least popular. You should now have your list of 5 popular keywords, maybe something like this:

- Marketing: 1,406
- Advertising: 704
- Web Site Promotion: 442
- Marketing Online: 56
- Branding: 5

These keywords are going to form the basis for all of your site optimization strategies. Keep your keyword list with you as you read through the rest of these articles.

The first way to use these keywords

Engines use your domain name as a factor in the Search Engine Results Page (SERP). Now there is a lot of debate here, some think that branding for the viewers is more important than having a keyword in the URL (remember the URL of my lead example?). But, if you can combine both, then great! Notice my domain is www.compassdesigns.net. This will get me a little boost if someone searches for "web **design**".

Anyway, you can't easily change your domain after you have made your site, so this is why we are thinking about SEO before we have even started on the site design. If we can use a keyword in the domain, go for it.

Part 2 Summary:

- Ask yourself who will visit your site, why and what will you get out of it.
- Research your keywords.
- Domain name; branding or keyword?

Designing your Site

Ready for the techie stuff? OK, grab your coffee/beer/herbal chai.

First and most important:

You need lots of content, LOTS of it. Before you have even considered site design and such, you should have 100 odd pages of actual content. Yes, there are supposed to be two zero's on the end of that 1... 100, I mean it. A page of content means about 200-500 words.

Of course, no-one does this, I didn't! But, if you are serious of getting gobs of traffic, and you do have lots of rich content to publish, just think how far ahead you will be of poor schmucks like me.

As I mentioned before, designing your site for traffic, both human and search engine spider is very different than a few years ago. Its now about what is on the page that people can see. No more having a 200 keyword list that is set to the same color as the background at the bottom of the page.

If your impatient, according to the "SEO guys", here are the most important factors in deciding your SERP, along with a vague number I came up with to show relative value. These ten factors add up to a whopping 21% of the SERP.

Title Tag – 2.3%

This is what appears in the blue bar at the top of your browser, it comes from a metatag called <title>. As well as being used as a pure factor in SERP, it also boosts rank in other ways. Some engines use "click-through" rates as a factor. Sites where the title closely matches the content tend to get better click-throughs (searchers see its not a spam site). When words in the title are also used as anchor text in a link to the page, you get more benefit.

Joomla! Note!

Joomla easily allows you to manipulate the title of a page. With built-in [SEF enabled](#), you title will reflect the content of the page. Even better is to install a 3rd party SEF, then you can set the page title to be the title alias of that page. I prefer using the title alias for my page title, then I can have the title on the page and control the one delivered in <title> better.

Critical note:

You **MUST** have some sort of SEF enabled. Search engines hate dynamically generated pages, and that's the whole point of Joomla! Even if you have just basic enabled, the benefit of the search engine "seeing" static pages is huge, far outweighing the little bonus gained from having keywords in the title too.

Anchor Text of Links – 2.3%

The phrasing, terms, order and length of a link's anchor text is one of the largest factors taken into account by the major search engines for ranking. Specific anchor text links help a site to rank better for that particular term/phrase at the search engines. In other words, it's the actual text that represents the link on a web page.

Keyword Use in Document Text – 2.2%

Your keywords must appear in the actual copy of the page. Supposedly search engines pay more attention to the first and last paragraphs. The way to go about this is have your keywords firmly in your mind as you write your copy. I don't know about you, but I find this really hard. I prefer a different approach.

There is a simple trick here, write your quality content, then use a keyword density tool to find the keyword density. THEN, take the top words and add them to the meta keywords tag for that page. This is somewhat backwards for some maybe, it optimizes a page for what you actually wrote, rather than trying to write a page optimized for certain words. I find I get much better correlation like this and can then tweak my text afterwards.

Sure, if you want to you can further optimize by having the keywords in header tags and bold etc. As a guide, these might contribute less than 1% to the SERP.

Joomla! Note!

Joomla is good and bad here. The good part is its easy to add keywords to the meta keywords tag for that page. You just go to the meta info when you are editing the content and plop them in. Note that they are added as well as any keywords you have specified in the main global configuration. Its good to only have your most important 2-3 words there and put the rest in the pages.

The bad part is linked to the fact that Joomla is dynamic. The code is not very lean, that is, there is a lot of html compared to actual copy text. This in turn reduces your keyword density (indirectly). One way to address this is to design without tables (I hear vavroom applauding). Using CSS instead of tables means leaner code. Its also possible with CSS to have your page "source ordered". This means that the real content (the middle column to you and me) comes before the side columns and/or navigation.

Accessibility of Document – 2.2%

We are not talking human accessibility here (as in 508). Accessibility is anything on the page that impedes a search engine spider's ability to crawl a page. There can be a number of culprits:

- **Avoid Splash Pages:** Flash and heavily graphic introductions prohibit engines from crawling your site.
- **Avoid Frames:** Never use pages with frames. Frames are too complex for the crawlers and too cumbersome to index.
- **Avoid Cookies:** Never require cookies for Web site access! Search engine crawlers are unable to enter any cookie-required materials.
- **Avoid JavaScript when Possible:** Though JavaScript menus are very popular, they disable crawlers from accessing those links. Most, well-indexed Web sites incorporate text-based links primarily because they are search engine friendly. If necessary, JavaScript should be referenced externally.
- **Avoid Redirects:** Search engines frown upon companies that use numerous Web sites to redirect to a single Web site.
- **Avoid Internal Dynamic URLs on the Home page:** Though many sites incorporate internal dynamic links, they should not incorporate those links on the home page. Engine crawlers are currently ill-equipped to navigate dynamic links - which often pass numerous parameters using excessive characters.
- **Utilize Your Error Pages:** Too often companies forget about error pages (such as 404 errors). Error pages should always re-direct "lost" users to valuable, text-based pages. Placing text links to major site pages is an excellent practice. Visit www.cnet.com/error for an example of a well-utilized error page.

Joomla!Note!

Many things to be careful of here. The most important is go turn on Search Engine Friendly URL's (SEF). It changes your links and pages from dynamic to static.

The other important factor is JavaScript menus. They are very popular because they look great. As good as they look to people however, they look equally as bad to spiders. Try using CSS to style your menus, you'll be surprised how good they look. You can even have drop-down sub menus.

Internal Links- 2.1%

Even more important than the holy grail of external links is internal links. Who knew! Easily the most underrated criteria. But, it's important to make sure you are making good use of anchor text. A well-linked to document is considered more important than an obscure page.

Tight Site Content Theme– 2.1%

What your website is about is determined through analysis of the content. It's critical that it correlates to keywords, anchor text, etc.

One strange offshoot of this is perhaps it's not worth spending much effort trying to build the page rank of the home page. This strange concept is explained in the idea of [Search Engine Theme Pyramids](#).

A related factor is having a good sitemap. Not only is it good spider food, you can also load it with lots of quality anchor text for those internal links as well as relevancy text (that which

appears near a link). Also important is the invisible Google sitemap which is an xml file for the Google spider only.

Joomla!Note!

Thumbs up for Joomla! Add-ons such as Docman make it effortless to add globs of content quickly and easily. Remember, it's a Content Management System after all. There are also some add-ons for sitemap, though I think that you have to upload the Google sitemap independently.

External Links – 2.0%

These are the links from other sites to you. Note its much better to have specific pages linked rather than your homepage because of the idea of Search Engine Theme Pyramids. Don't bother with link farms or anything you see advertised for a link. You are much better off finding links from sites that have similar topics as yourself (see below)

Theme of Linking Sites– 2.0%

The search engine is trying to figure out what your page is about, so it can decide if its relevant to a users search. Links from pages with similar topics add credence to your page. When trying to search out those links you can use something like [WebFerret](#). Or if you just want a quick method, use the "related:" tag in Google, e.g. type "related:www.yahoo.com" in and it will search for sites related to the topic of Yahoo (whatever that is?). Then spend some time emailing webmasters and asking for links. There is software out there that will do this automatically for you.

Popularity of Linking Sites – 1.9%

This means that links from sites that are "important" (i.e. have a high SERP) are more valued than those from a lower SERP. A factor worth considering when searching out links, get the ones from sites with a high page rank first.

Keyword Spamming – 1.9%

Careful, this is a negative factor!! This means having a keyword density in text or tags so high that the engine decides you are stuffing. Your rank will go from #1 to #10000 in a heartbeat. Want to know the best part? No-one actually knows what percent density this is, and its probably different for different engines! Between you and me, I am not going above 15% on my pages.

For the morbidly curious, the other factors I have on my site (there are too many to post here) at **Search Engine Ranking Factors**.

Part 3 Summary

- Fortune favors those with rich content
- There are many factors that determine search engine page ranking.

- Rather than tweak minor tags, its better to leverage Joomla's true power of being a fully fledged Content Management System to gain rank.
- Don't use flash (ok, I admit I am biased)
- Make sure your pages are under 10k. Not mentioned above, but it just occurred to me.

Launching your web site

So you have designed your web site, and now its time to put it online. I'll leave the actual process of installation for another time. I will mention hosting however.

Joomla!Note

Not every host will meet the needs of a Joomla site. One issue is safemode. It's a server setting and it needs to be off for Joomla to work properly. Other issues that often crop up are ones involved "ownership" of files on the server. I have a few reviews of [recommended Joomla hosts](#) here.

Ok, so we have our site up, what next?

Open your doors to the spiders

To start showing up on rankings, your site needs to be indexed. This means a program called a spider comes to your web site and crawls it. Crawling involves looking at the tags, text and following all the links it can find. Make sure your site is easy to crawl:

All pages should be linked to more than one page on your site. This is easy to do with Joomla, it happens with the mainmenu and other menus. Also try and make all pages within two levels of the root (home page). If they are buried, try and add more specific sections to hold that content.

Joomla!Note

Two Common Joomla Mistakes!

- Flash menus. I showed my bias against flash in my last article. Spiders struggle to follow flash. If you really must have flash navigation, then you need to include some plain old text links somewhere on the page. An easy way to do this is in the footer. Go to /includes/footer.php and add your links there. They will then turn up on every page, easy eh?
- Don't put it online before you have a quality site to put online. It's worse to put a "nothing" site online, than no site at all. You want it flushed out from the start. Its very easy to fall into this trap with Joomla as its so easy to put a site up, especially with the built in templates. Better to work off line with MSAS and import the SQL database (note to self: write guide to working offline)

One last thing, to actually be indexed, the spiders need to know you exist. This happens by submitting your site and linking.

Submitting your site

The first part is real easy. Go and submit your site by hand to all the major engines, here's a few to get you started.

<http://www.google.com/addurl/?continue=/addurl>

<http://search.yahoo.com/info/submit.html>

When you do submit, take note of who supplies the search. Alltheweb is done by yahoo for example, you don't need to submit there.

The second part is much harder. Forget about you submissions for a few months. That's right, submit them and forget about it. Don't even think about using one of those "submit your site to 89768 engines for \$20" deals.

Also go submit to a few directories. If you have the right contacts, sacrifice a goat or something and submit to dmoz.org. It's the grand daddy, with a page rank of 9, but almost impossible to get on.

Linking your site

Getting links to your site is perhaps the most important part of SEO and perhaps worth a topic all in itself. Needless to say, the more links from quality sites you can get the better. Also ones with the same topic

An easy submission is in the [community news section of Joomla.org](#). Hey, its free, will give you a link and also might trigger a spider to crawl you. If you have a useful site, announce it o the community!

Logging and Tracking

Get a decent tracker that can track inbound referrals (where someone came from). Most hosts have several built in, I use awstats. Whatever you do, don't use a lame graphic counter, it doesn't give you want you want and looks unprofessional. If your host doesn't support referrals, then back up and get a new host. You can't run a modern site without full referrals available 24x7x365 in real time.

For the more compulsive amongst us, you can start watching for spiders from search engine's. Make sure those that are crawling the full site, can do so easily. If not, double check your linking system (use standard hrefs) to make sure the spider found it's way throughout the site.

Buying Traffic

One underused way of SEO is simply buying traffic. You might not think of advertising when you think of optimizing your site, but the ultimate goal of all this is traffic, so why not just skip the middle man.

I recommend using Google AdWords. It's a Pay-per-click program that has somewhat revolutionized online advertising. Basically you only pay (usually a few cents) when someone actually clicks on your link. Your actual ad is designed based on certain keywords you want (remember part 2?), this means it targeted traffic, the best kind.

I'll probably do a guide at some point, but to get started, you need a Google account. Also, to help you figure out how much to bid, and on what words, I use this tool the most:

<http://www.pixelfast.com/overture/>

It does the bid and terms at the same time.

Where is all my traffic?

In March 2004, Google implemented a new filter, now referred to as "The Sandbox". Google's thinking was, A new web site shouldn't be able to get good ranking, until they prove themselves. Spammers generate millions of new pages daily, along with millions of new links to go with them.

Google withholds high ranking ability on new sites, by de-valuing the new links for 2-4 months. If the domain and backlinks have existed for a certain length of time (4 months?), then you are OK, and escape from the sandbox.

This penalty is new-site based. Long-standing sites have no trouble ranking new pages. Over time, the newly generated links are given weight, and eventually the sandbox effect goes away.

Don't get too worked up about instant traffic, its probably not going to happen anyway because of the sandbox. For the next few months you are better off spending your time writing content, a page every few days.

Part 4 Summary

- Use a Joomla friendly host
- Make sure your site can be spidered
- Submit and forget
- Buying traffic is surprisingly cheap
- You won't get good SERP to start



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