

Search Engine Optimisation and PageRank with Google

by Sue Smiles – www.micropulse.com.au – web design – Sydney, Dee Why (northern beaches)

How do I get to the top of Google rankings?

How can I make my web site appear on the first search page?

Unfortunately, there is no magic wand.

However, if you follow the basic rules, you can get a good ranking.

Hints for designing a new web page

Start by compiling a list of about 20 keywords and phrases that describe your business and products (try to think what people will search for). Then use as many of those words in a paragraph or two so that this can be used as content on your web page.

When someone clicks through to your page, you want to hold their attention. Stats show that people will leave your page within 2 seconds unless they see something compelling. So make your content paragraph relevant to those search words and phrases.

Other techniques that should be used are <title> <meta>

Have a fast loading start page or let your visitors know that something is happening. Reasons that a web page is slow are images, flash and sound files. Loading additional files such as javascript libraries can also slow down the page load.

The html code needs to conform to the W3C standards. Make sure there are no errors and test your web page with at least IE and Firefox. Make sure that the page can be viewed easily in different resolutions. Also ask friends and family to view your site and get their feedback.

Encourage your visitors to leave feedback via a contact us page. Encourage your visitors to bookmark your site.

If using javascript menus, make sure that you provide an alternative web page for those who have browsers with javascript turned off. This can be done with the <noscript> tag.

To initially get traffic to your site, use Google Adwords. These are a pay per click form of advertising and are context sensitive to the Google search being done.

Sign up for Google Analytics (it's free), copy the required code and use this regularly to see stats on your web site.

Sign up for Google Webmaster (it's also free), copy the <meta> tag and add a sitemap to reference web pages on your site.

These are the methods that I use when setting up a website. Within 3 to 4 weeks your web site will be indexed and appear in the Google search. Your placement will depend a lot on the keywords used in the search. An example is thesalescoach.net.au. By searching for sales coach, the result comes up on page 3 because Google is finding higher ranked pages that refer to buses/coaches and other sales coach companies. If we refine the search to sales coach training, the site now appears 6th on the first page. To improve the ranking further for this search we would need to have links from higher ranked sites. This is quite difficult to achieve because people are reluctant to add links to external sites – but not impossible!

To see some examples of my web sites goto <http://www.micropulse.com.au> and click on Gallery.

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Copied from the Google site on 13th February, 2008:

Google searches more sites more quickly, delivering the most relevant results.

Introduction

Google runs on a unique combination of advanced hardware and software. The speed you experience can be attributed in part to the efficiency of our search algorithm and partly to the thousands of low cost PC's we've networked together to create a superfast search engine.

The heart of our software is PageRank™, a system for ranking web pages developed by our founders [Larry Page](#) and [Sergey Brin](#) at Stanford University. And while we have dozens of engineers working to improve every aspect of Google on a daily basis, PageRank continues to play a central role in many of our web search tools.

PageRank Explained

PageRank relies on the uniquely democratic nature of the web by using its vast link structure as an indicator of an individual page's value. In essence, Google interprets a link from page A to page B as a vote, by page A, for page B. But, Google looks at considerably more than the sheer volume of votes, or links a page receives; for example, it also analyzes the page that casts the vote. Votes cast by pages that are themselves "important" weigh more heavily and help to make other pages "important." Using these and other factors, Google provides its views on pages' relative importance.

Of course, important pages mean nothing to you if they don't match your query. So, Google combines PageRank with sophisticated text-matching techniques to find pages that are both important and relevant to your search. Google goes far beyond the number of times a term appears on a page and examines dozens of aspects of the page's content (and the content of the pages linking to it) to determine if it's a good match for your query.

Integrity

Google's complex automated methods make human tampering with our search results extremely difficult. And though we may run relevant ads above and next to our results, Google does not sell placement within the results themselves (i.e., no one can buy a particular or higher placement). A Google search provides an easy and effective way to find high-quality websites that contain information relevant to your search.

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MORE ON SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION

Google is the most popular search engine.

Google returns relevant results fast and it's the search engine of choice. Google also offers many other services to which it keeps adding. This keeps it a favourite with web designers and the general public. One popular service is Adwords which uses keywords and phrases to match your search.

Everyone is striving to be on the first search result page but of course, not everyone can get there. Ways to ensure that you have the best possible ranking are based on organic optimisation.

Organic searches make up most of the search results, so it is in your interest to make the most of these methods.

How to improve the ranking of your website

Search engine optimisation is an ongoing process. The following is a guide as to what's required:

Keywords and phrases – make a list of keywords and phrases that describe your business and products (up to about 20). A popular site that can help get the best keywords is wordtracker.com. It provides a list of search phrase popularity stats.

W3C standards – ensure that the html conforms to W3C standards, contains no errors and has plenty of content. All extraneous information such as style and script should be in external files.

Content – try to keep related content together in blocks or paragraphs. This helps when the search engine displays the matching part of your page.

Linked sites – ranking is improved by having other highly ranked sites link to your site.

Blogs – having a link to your web site from a blog can improve your ranking.

PDFs – PDF files are automatically crawled by Google and included in their database so ensure that you use descriptive headings and a link to your web site.

Statistics – once you start receiving visits to your web site, you need to be able to analyse this information. There are many tools available but Google provide their own Analytics program which is very good and it's free.