



Lesson 6: Search Engine Optimisation - On Page

On completion of this lesson you should:

- Understand the concept of on-page search engine optimisation
- Understand how to undertake keyword research
- Be aware of some of the tools available (both paid and non paid) to research potentially suitable keywords
- Understand the elements of "on page" which require to be optimised on any given web page (H1 tags, Page titles, keywords, descriptions, web page content, alt tags)

Introduction

Search engine optimisation (SEO) is the process of improving the visibility of a website or a web page in the Search Engine Result Pages (SERP). The search engine result pages are also referred to as 'natural', 'un-paid', 'organic' or 'algorithmic' search results. This is because you can appear in the search engine results naturally without payment if you are optimising your website in a way that Google algorithms can recognise.

Search engine optimisation is often about making small modifications to parts of your website. When viewed individually, these changes might seem like incremental improvements, but when combined with other optimisations, they can have a noticeable impact on your site's user experience and performance in organic search results.

There are two aspects to Search Engine Optimisation:

- There are the changes that you can make ON your web pages
- There are changes that you make 'off' your website pages (i.e. link building)

However, it is important to note optimising a website is about improving your website for both search engines AND people - it is certainly not about adding keywords to hidden areas of your website (well, not any more).

In this lesson we will be focusing on the changes that you can make "on your website" that can have a positive impact on your search engine rankings. But first we need to look at 'keyword research' as you can't optimise your website without knowing what keywords you are optimising for.

Keyword Research

A big part of optimising your website is picking the keywords (singular words) and key phrases (combinations of keywords) you want to be found for. Undertaking keyword research is really just working out what words people associate with your services, products and business. For some businesses selecting your keywords is easy and for other businesses the process can become very technical and involved. For example, if you own a local business, like a hairdressing salon in Cairns, then you could almost guess your keywords:

"hairdresser Cairns, hairdressing salon Cairns, haircut Cairns, barber Cairns, kids hairdresser Cairns" and so on...

However, if you want to promote multiple products or if your business can be explained in many different ways then finding your keywords is a little more complex. For example if your business was 'retirement accommodation' then your keywords may not be so straight forward:

"retirement living, over 50's housing, retirement accommodation, assisted care accommodation, independent living, senior living options, retirement real estate" and so on...

Or, if your business is an online shop selling 200 different 'organic skin care products' then you might find that you have two or three keywords per product = that's 600 keywords!

So how do you actually hunt out the best keywords and key phrases for you? Luckily, there is a choice of free and paid tools to choose from. Generally, we recommend using the free keyword tool offered by Google from within Google Adwords (The Keyword Planner)

<http://adwords.google.com/>

This tool is actually for people wanting to build keyword lists in order to conduct Google AdWords campaigns (you can learn more about this in the Pay Per Click lesson). However, you can still use this tool to pick your keywords for SEO.

There are also some paid software options when it comes to researching and analysing possible keywords (some are free and some are not - it's up to you whether you want to invest in the ones that cost money):

Mistakes to avoid when selecting keywords:

Before you start your keyword research, there are some common mistakes that you should be aware of:

1. **Choosing competitive single-word terms:**
If your business is 'Computer repairs' then avoid selecting a keyword like 'computers'
2. **Terms that are too broad and not focused to what you offer:**
If your business is 'Computer repairs' then avoid selecting a keyword like 'computer virus'
3. **Terms that nobody searches for or are unpopular:**
If your business is 'Computer repairs' then avoid selecting a keywords like 'Electronic binary device repairs'
4. **Highly-competitive terms which you can't hope to rank well for:**
If your business is 'Computer repairs in Bondi-Junction' then 'Computer repairs Sydney' may be too competitive.

Now you have this basic knowledge, you're ready to go and select the keywords or key phrases you think will work best for you.

a) Write down a list of the words that you (and your customers) use when referring to your business . Start with about half a dozen.

b) Go to the Google AdWords keyword tool and enter your keywords
<http://adwords.google.com/>

Make sure that you change the settings (under the keyword box) so you receive Australian keyword data.

c) Review the results, add or refine the keywords in the search box and look at more results. Ignore the Ad Groups at this time and just focus on the keywords.

d) You could also enter your website URL and have a look at what keywords Google thinks your website content is related to. Try this with a competitors URL and see what comes up. You might get a few ideas you hadn't thought of.

e) Download the keyword list that you come up with and refine them by removing those that are not related to your business. Keep in mind that the number of keywords you have isn't the key issue, the QUALITY is. Pick those keywords that have the highest amount of search volume

f) Ask yourself: "Do my customers use these words to describe my business/products and services?"

g) Go to 'Google' and enter your keywords one at time and look at the results that are displayed.

h) Look at the number of search results for each keyword to gauge which keywords are more competitive. This will display in google as 'About 825,000 results' or similar.

Note: The more specific the keyword/s, or the more words in the key phrase the less the competition for the search term. And generally, the less the competition, the easier it is to rank well on that term.

Example:

Competition Keyword

- 11,600,000 - writer
- 1,200,000 - real estate writer
- 48,000 - freelance real estate writer
- 9,000 - freelance real estate writer los angeles

Narrow your list down further to the top half dozen or so that BEST describe what you do (and where if local), which have a good amount of search, but the least amount of competition.

EXERCISE - CHECK YOUR RANKING

Check your current ranking position of your chosen keyword. To do this go to your Google Webmaster account which you were encouraged to set up in earlier lessons. You will also have had to verify your site in order to perform the next tasks. Not sure how to verify your Google Webmaster account? See: <https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/35179?hl=en>

Once all of this is done, you can access your account by going to google.com/webmasters and logging in using your Google Account details.

Once inside click on the website in question and on the left hand side expand the 'search traffic' navigation bar. Now click on 'search queries'. A list will display of search queries your site is currently being found for and what position you are ranking on Google for these words. The first page of Google displays up to 10 positions, so ideally, you will be being found for words you:

- a) want to be found for, rather than some random items
- b) be in position 10 or under (ideally position 1-3)

You can click on any of the column headers to sort the data for easier analysis i.e. sort by the keyword which has the best position, the most clicks or impressions, or alphabetically by keyword.

Watch a short video from Hubspot to gain some further guidance on conducting keyword research. <http://youtu.be/EZSyzeXuRhw> Even though a few years old, still 100% relevant.

Page Titles

Once you have identified your keywords it is now time to make sure your keywords can be found in key areas on your website such as:

1. Page Titles
2. Meta Description
3. Page Headings
4. Alt Tags
5. Webpage Content

In the lessons to follow, we will go into each of these in a little more detail.

1. Page Titles (Meta-title).

The first place we can insert some relevant keywords and key phrases are our page titles.

A page title - also referred to as a title tag, tells both users and search engines what a webpage is about.

The **<title>** tag should be placed within the **<head>** tag of your source code and each page on your website should have a unique title.

Example of how a title tag looks in the source code:

```
<title>Flowers in Brisbane; Roses, Arrangements, Weddings and Funerals</title>
```

If you search something on Google, the page title is the first line on a listing which appears on the search engines, which is underlined. It has the URL underneath it. The search engines use the page title in the search engine results:

Your page title should be short and succinct, include keywords and accurately describe the content on the web page.

Try to limit your title tag to a maximum of 70 characters, including spaces.

Generally, title tags that are seven words or less are most effective.

Meta Descriptions

Each page of your website should also have a Meta description. The Meta description is basically a short sentence or two and should entice people to click on your website but ideally also feature keywords.

Example of how a Meta description looks in the source code:

```
<meta name="description" content="We provide exquisite Flowers for every occasion. Our award winning Florists are located throughout Brisbane. Order Online or Call us now on 1800 262 733">
```

The search engines use the meta descriptions in the search engine results and feature directly underneath the website in the search engine listing.

It's up to you what you write for the meta description, but again, it should be a carefully crafted balance to reinforce the keywords, key phrases you are going for, whilst being catchy enough to make people want to click on your link. Some people push the 'price' button by using words like 'affordable', 'cheap', 'cost effective'. Others offer free stuff 'free eBook' 'free quotes' while others claim prominence i.e. 'award winning', '20 years experience'. It is not unusual to spend up to 30 minutes working on your meta title and description. After all, this is your first opportunity to make an impression on a new customer.

How you update your page titles and Meta descriptions is different for each CMS - look for the fields called 'page titles' and 'meta description'.

Your CMS may also have another field called 'Meta keywords'. Following the latest search updates it is now unnecessary to use meta keywords and also ill advised. In fact, if you have a meta keywords tag, you would do well to remove it completely.

EXERCISE

As mentioned, your meta description should include your keywords but also accurately reflect the content on your webpage.

Use this tool to review how relevant your meta descriptions are to the content on your web pages <http://www.seocentro.com/tools/search-engines/metatag-analyzer.html>

Want to hear how Google uses meta descriptions? Watch this short 2 minute video http://youtu.be/RBTBEfd7z_Y

Header Tags

Header tags are basically a header or title on your page introducing whatever content you are featuring on that page. It is important to make sure your page headings include your keywords.

Example:

- Poor: Welcome to our Website
- Poor: Home - Real Estate
- Optimised: Sunshine Coast Real Estate - Buy or Sell your home
- Spam: buy, rent, sell, home, house, property, real estate, unit, apartment, properties

You may have more than one heading on your page - main headings, sub-headings, paragraph headings - try to place a keyword in each of your headings. Example:

- Main Heading: Sunshine Coast Real Estate - Buy or Sell your home
- Sub Heading: Buying your home on the Sunshine Coast
- Paragraph Heading: Selling your home on the Sunshine Coast
- Paragraph Heading: How choose a Sunshine Coast real estate agent

If the style sheets of your website have been set up correctly, you should be able to highlight the text you want to be the main heading and apply the <h1> tag to it which tells the search engines this is the most important information in the page content and to read this first. It should also allow you to apply a <h2> <h3> and so on, with the style being applied making the text render differently i.e. a differently colour and usually in a smaller text as the header number increases

i.e. <h4> tags will display the selected text smaller than a <h1>.

There's nothing wrong with a good H1 heading, but you want to avoid having your primary keyword phrase first up in your title, in your description and again in your URL and headings. This can easily be seen as keyword spam.

Alt Tags

'Alt tags' are a descriptive word or sentences that sit behind an image, in the source code.

Search engines can't 'see pictures' they can only read text. So it is helpful for a search engine if you include a few words to explain your image. However, the main function of an 'alt tag' is to provide information about an image for users that may have difficulty viewing the image (i.e. users with visual impairments, or people who use screen readers, or have low bandwidth connections ...).

When implementing ALT tags you should make sure that they are descriptive and accurate. If possible try to use keywords in your alt tags. For the savvy SEO expert, they're a nifty way to grab a few more keyword placements!

To implement ALT tags, click on each of the images within your CMS and either look for an area to insert an alt tag, or you will need to implement it via the source code area.

Not so good: [imgsrc="puppy.jpg" alt=""/]

Better: [imgsrc="puppy.jpg" alt="puppy"/]

Best: [imgsrc="puppy.jpg" alt="Golden Retriever puppy fetching a stick"]

Spam: [imgsrc="puppy.jpg" alt="puppy dog baby dog pup pups puppies doggies pups litter puppies dog retriever Labrador wolfhound setter pointer puppy jack Russell terrier puppies dog food cheap dogfood puppy food"/]

Should I expect increased traffic if I optimise my images? Watch the short video from Google's Matt Cutts to find out. <http://youtu.be/EoxTNq-1Nak>

Web Page Content

Content is the KING! Search engines love content. A great example is an asphalt client. Not a particularly exciting subject and not one that you would initially think there is a whole lot to write about. Well the true test of a good writer is their ability to write 400 - 600 words on anything, so if writing isn't your forte, recognise this weakness and look to sub contract this component of your search engine optimisation exercise out. The asphalt client managed to create various pages on topics such as 'asphalt v concrete', 'residential driveways', 'acreage driveways' and so on.

Now you may say - "there's no way people are going to read all of that" and the truth of the matter is that people don't read websites at all - they tend to scan them. The thing is though, Google and the other search engines will 'read' the words on the page, at least their 'spiders' or 'crawl bots' will, and that is who we are really writing for, so that MORE people can find you.

In regards to content on your website it is therefore important to:

- Make sure you mention your keywords in your web page content. It sounds obvious but we often see web pages that don't mention their keywords!
- Consider whether you have enough web pages. Generally speaking, if you have selected 10 keywords then you should have a web-page per keyword. In 8 out of 10 cases websites need to add more content.

- Do not however be too concerned about keyword density. The gang from Google recommend that your keywords should appear "natural and relevant in your text. "
- Don't just think keywords either; think "topic". Write about the topic that your customer want to know about and other related keywords will naturally become a part of your text.
- Google can easily detect keyword repetition & stuffing so don't overdo it. Search engine optimisation is certainly not a competition about how many times you can mention the same keyword on one page. Read your content out loud, if it sounds like you are 'stuffing' your copy with keywords you probably are!

EXERCISE

Here is a free tool that will check your webpages and report back which keywords get the most amount of mentions. Use this tool to check that your keywords are some of the most regularly mentioned keywords on your web-pages <http://www.seocentro.com/tools/seo/keyword-density.html>

When using this tool make sure that all your 2 and 3 word phrases have a density of less than 2%. More importantly, make sure that all your 2 and 3 word keyword phrases are about the same related topic. However, it's FAR MORE IMPORTANT that you write for your customers than for search engines!

What is the ideal keyword density of a page?

See the short video clip from Google's Matt Cutts which answers this question. <http://youtu.be/Rk4qgQdp2UA>

Check Your Source Code

Now that you know some of the key terminology related to on page optimisation, checking the source code on some key pages of your website (if you have one) will show you if they are currently optimised or not.

Most internet browsers and websites allow users to view the HTML or source code of any of the web pages they visit, including what meta data (i.e. meta description, keywords and page title) is inserted on the page.

Use your preferred browser and view the source code of five of your key website pages.

Microsoft Internet Explorer

To view the source code of a web page in Microsoft Internet Explorer, follow the below steps.

1. Open Internet Explorer
2. Click View
3. From the drop-down-menu click "Source"

Once the above steps have been completed a new window will open displaying the source code.

Mozilla Firefox

To view the source code of a web page in Mozilla Firefox:

1. Open Mozilla Firefox
 2. Click 'Web Developer'
 3. From the drop-down-menu click "Page Source"
- or

Press CTRL+U

Once the above steps have been completed a new window will open displaying the source code.

Safari

1. Open Safari
2. Go to Menu bar -> View -> View Source

Once the above steps have been completed a new window will open displaying the source code.

Google Chrome

1. Open Google Chrome
2. Right click on the page
3. Scroll down and click 'View Page Source'

Once the above steps have been completed a new window will open displaying the source code. The source code will look something like this:

```
<title>Website Design, Social Media, Graphic Design, SEO - Sunshine Coast & Newcastle</title>
```

```
<meta name="description" content="Website Design, SEO, Online Marketing, Graphic Design, PR, Marketing, Branding, Social Media & more! Creative Collective is an award winning agency in Sunshine Coast, Brisbane, Newcastle, Australia." />
```

```
<meta NAME="keywords" CONTENT="Web design, website, graphic designers, pr, search engine optimisation, search engine marketing, seo, Brisbane, Sunshine Coast" />
```

Remember though, if you have meta keywords on your site delete them (just the meta keywords, not the other meta data).

EXERCISE

Once you have worked out how to access your source code, download this [On Page SEO Template](#). Open it up and populate the different columns by adding some of the most important pages on your website, identifying whether the web pages have page titles, meta descriptions, alt tags and keywords in headings and what they currently say.

They should have different keywords targetting each page, not the same which is referred to as duplicate keywords and which is not desirable. Note the results in this spreadsheet. Enter your website's data for your top 5 pages, or more if you can manage (you may like to do a few each week or to outsource this to someone internally if you are short on time).

Also be aware that if you're using a CMS (content management system) like WordPress, by default it will often append your website name to the end of your meta titles. This is bad, and you really want to avoid it. There are plugins like All In One SEO that will help you manage this.

Start Optimising!

Now that you are aware of the current status of your website in regards to what you are optimised for, you need to take the Keyword Research you conducted and update your website with your new titles, meta tags and web page content that will help it perform better.

Make a note of the changes you make in the [On-Page-SEO Template](#) under the 'New Page Title', 'New Page Description' etc. columns of this document that you should have downloaded and started completing in earlier lessons.

Once you have made changes to your site, wait for a week and then check your ranking position for the same keyword again.

If you take the time to optimise your website you could see some big improvements in your website ranking on Google so we highly recommend you invest some time into this activity. Having said this, there are over 200 factors determining where you appear on Google so it is a case of gradual improvement over time.

Be dedicated, and be patient and you should be rewarded with better rankings in the search engines over time!

THAT'S ALL FOR NOW!