

How to get Google to love your website

How to get the most out of this guide

This guide is not a complete explanation of Search Engine Optimisation (SEO). It is written to give you, the website owner, a basic grounding in SEO. It will help you increase the number of your website's visitors and better understand the role of your website in your business.

The guide is broken into four major chapters explaining the Potent SEO process. At the end of the guide we have added some useful resources and information for assessing SEO providers.

The guide is written to read from beginning to end. We advise you plan to read a chapter a day and to devote an hour each day to actually start practising the topic discussed. Worksheets are available to help you, which can be downloaded from our website (<http://potentseo.com.au>) and examples can be found near the end of this guide.

We have also added a to-do list which will take you month to month through the process of assessing and enhancing your website's SEO.

We hope you find this resource to be both engaging and informative. We encourage your feedback and questions. Please get in touch via our website: <http://potentweb.com.au>

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1 Potent SEO

Back in the 1750s in Sweden there lived a scientist named Karl Scheele. Scheele made many important contributions to the then young science of chemistry but was incredibly unlucky. He discovered eight elements and many valuable industrial chemicals which he received no credit or cash for.

Nevertheless Karl continued to slave away at his experiments. Somewhere along the way he developed a strange habit of tasting every chemical that he worked with. Predictably this ended badly when he was found dead, aged 43, at his workbench with a look of surprise on his face.

No one is sure which chemical actually finished him off but Scheele died surrounded by compounds where the smallest amount could be deadly.

Potent – When small amounts have a big effect

That is why this guide is called Potent SEO (Search Engine Optimisation). In the same way that a small amount of poison had a big effect on poor Karl a small amount of SEO can have a big (positive) effect on your business.

There are thousands of SEO techniques which would take years to even begin to master. Potent SEO aims to distil SEO down to the most effective techniques which give you the most benefit for your time invested.

Where 20% of your effort gets 80% of your gains

We don't pretend this is a complete guide to SEO. It is the result of our experience with what works with small to medium businesses. These businesses tend to sell primarily to a particular location and compete online with (mostly) clueless competitors.

It is primarily aimed at:

- Business people who don't have a massive amount of time to dedicate to their website alone.
- Business people who need a quick education in SEO so they can outsource sensibly.

So what exactly is all the fuss over SEO about anyway?

What is SEO?

SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) is the answer to the question **“How do I get to number 1 on Google?”**

Search engines are what people use to find things online. Google is the most popular search engine performing around 90% of all searches online. While there are other search engines available I'll be ignoring them in this guide because if you do well in Google you'll do well in the other search engines anyway as a by-product.

SEO makes you listen to your customers

I think the best thing about SEO is that it forces you to listen to what your customers want. It works like this:

1. **Search engines help people find what they want online.** Google became the most popular search engine because it was better than the others in connecting people with what they were looking for. Google's profits (\$14.81 billion in 2009) depend almost totally on them continuing to help people find what they are looking for better than anyone else.
2. **Search engine optimisation is creating a website that people want to see.** You then help Google figure out who those people are and send them over to your site. Everyone is happy.

“Most of the right choices in SEO come from asking, what's the best thing for the user?”
- Matt Cutts (Google)

A website that makes you money

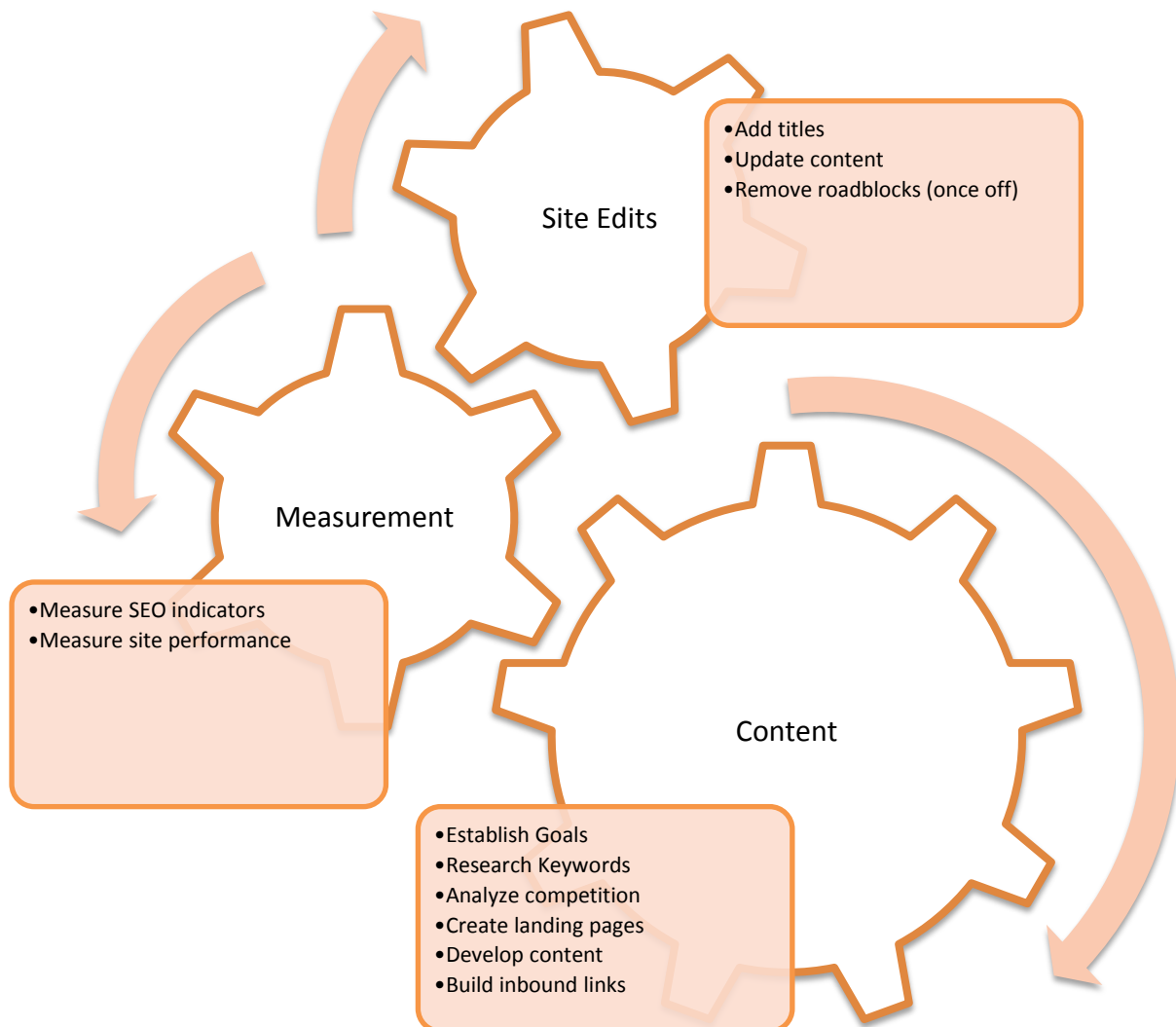
Creating a website that gives people what they want makes sense in another way too. Being #1 in Google does not automatically cause money to rain from the sky. Once people find you through Google your website then needs to encourage them down the path to buying something from you. It is important to never forget that, as you start to optimise your website.

The Potent SEO Process

The Potent SEO method consists of three broad areas:

1. Content
2. Measurement
3. Site Edits

It is an ongoing process which you repeat as often as possible. I would suggest about every 3-6 months depending on how happy you are with your website's performance.



You can grab supporting worksheets for the process from the end of this guide or go to the website: <http://potentseo.com.au>.

“Good HTML titles, good body copy, great content, ensuring that your site doesn't have roadblocks to crawling – these have worked for nearly a decade.” – Danny Sullivan

If you've just created your site you'll need to make sure that the search engines know about it. You can use the following links to submit your new site address.

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

Yahoo: <http://siteexplorer.search.yahoo.com/submit?ei=UTF-8>

Bing: <http://www.bing.com/webmaster/SubmitSitePage.aspx>

Be warned that it may take some time for the site to show up but you can get started with the Potent SEO process in the meantime.

Avoid using those programs which submit to thousands of search engines. They are frowned upon by the search engines. You only really should bother with the three listed above.

When search engines dance

SEO can sometimes be a frustrating process because your ranking can sometimes jump around in what is affectionately known as the "Google dance". Any of the following things can cause this dance:

- **Competitor activity.** If a new competitor enters the market or an existing competitor's website is improved this can cause the rankings to change.
- **Server performance.** If your server is unavailable when Google visits, it can cause your rankings to be downgraded or even dropped. Hopefully this is only temporary.
- **Algorithm changes.** The algorithm is the "brains" behind matching people's searches to the content they are looking for. This is being constantly refined by Google and can cause rankings to jump around for a little while after it is introduced.
- **Site age.** Newer sites can tend to drop back quicker than established sites. As your site hangs around a while this gradually becomes less of a factor.

You shouldn't be discouraged by a temporary dip in your rankings. If you consistently work on your site you should see a general long term trend in the upwards direction.

2 Potent Content

Make sure you grab the worksheet available on our website at <http://potentseo.com.au>

Goals

Most people only have the vaguest idea of what they want from their website. Simply thinking carefully about what you want your website to do for your business can give you a big advantage.

You need to think carefully about what you want your visitors to do once they reach your website. Goals should be broken down to be as specific as possible. The aim is to have one page (or area) on your website to accomplish each specific goal.

For example the main goal for a new website may be to:

- Sell oranges

After some more thought you come up with some more specific goals:

- Sell Blood oranges
- Sell Navel oranges
- Sell Valencia oranges
- Educate clients in the differences between orange varieties
- Gather contacts of people looking to buy oranges wholesale
- Build a community of people that love oranges
- Provide customer support

Business Goals

The goals we discuss here are **visitor focussed** because we are trying to figure out how to get visitors from Google to your site. They are going to be making particular searches online and we are trying to establish how your site will show up for those searches.

You should also have goals for your website which are in terms of value to the business. For instance the overall website goal may be to make \$5000 in sales in the first quarter. To make sure you are meeting this goal you need to know how much each visitor is worth to you. You figure this out by taking the total turnover added by the website, subtracting the website costs and dividing by the number of unique visitors. If this number is positive your website is a benefit to your business, if it is negative it is a drain.

If you are interested in applying this this kind of thinking to your website please get in touch via <http://potentweb.com.au>

Don't worry about getting it perfect first time. Your goals can and should evolve as you get a better understanding of what your customers are looking for.

Add each of these goals to your worksheet.

Keywords

Once you have developed your goals the next step is to put yourself in the mind of someone who is searching online related to that goal. Think about what someone would type into Google if they are looking to achieve each of your specific website goals.

The Google Keyword tool

To help you develop a list the Google keyword tool is essential. This tool brings traffic data and keyword suggestions based on the millions of searches that Google performs each day. You can find the tool online here:

<https://adwords.google.com.au/select/KeywordToolExternal>

The screenshot shows the Google Keyword Tool interface. The search term 'navel oranges' is entered in the 'Word or phrase' field. The location is set to 'Australia' and the language to 'English'. The results table shows the following data:

Keyword	Competition	Global Monthly Searches	Local Monthly Searches	Local Search Trends
navel orange	Low	27,100	980	Bar chart showing trends
navel oranges	Low	14,800	480	Bar chart showing trends
navel oranges	Low	1,900	73	Bar chart showing trends
navel oranges tree	Low	3,600	170	Bar chart showing trends

1. First make sure Australia (or your relevant country) is selected. This can be found in the advanced options.
2. Type in your initial ideas about keywords.
3. Click Search.

Good local traffic numbers

You are looking for keywords which have decent local traffic. Optimising your site and getting #1 in Google for keywords that no one is looking for is not going to help you at all.

This number is going to be relative, there may only be a few hundred people searching for particular keywords per month. You might find that 350 people search for "Valencia oranges" while only 30 search for "Valencia orange". You are going to prioritise "Valencia oranges" in this case.

If you find that your keywords have tens of thousands of searches you are in a competitive environment. The bad news is that this guide may not cover enough of the SEO techniques for you to be competitive. The good news is that if you succeed your reward will be bigger. See the further reading for some resources that you can learn some more advanced SEO.

With your list of keywords open in front of you open a new browser window and drop the more promising keywords into a Google search. You are trying to figure out two things:

1. **Confirm that people searching for that keyword are actually looking for what you sell.** Recently we had a client who sold exhaust extraction systems to keep the air clean in auto-workshops. However everyone searching online for exhaust extraction was looking to hot up their cars, or looking for exhaust fans for kitchens.
2. **Which competitor websites keep popping up.** Make a note of these sites on your worksheet for further study. Feed them back into the Google Keyword tool by typing their address in the website area of the tool (next to the word or phrase box). You should get some good keyword ideas from that as well.

You are looking for a list of around 5 keywords for each goal. There may even be less if there are not many high traffic terms. If you find there are too many keywords for each page you should try and break down your goal even further, and potentially add sub-pages.

Your Unique Selling Proposition (USP)

Why would someone buy from you rather than going down the road to your competitor? For the purposes of this guide I'm going to assume you have worked out your USP.

One hint for your USP... it's not good customer service or quality products, those are expected from any business.

For help developing your USP please get in touch via our website: <http://potentcopy.com.au>

A good USP will help you think of keywords. For example you may be one of the only people who home deliver oranges. In that case "home delivery" may be among your keywords.

Search Location

Make sure you include keywords for the particular region you are servicing. Include nearby suburbs and region, eg. "Melbourne West".

Search Engines Search Text (mostly)

After your keyword research you should now have several pages of website goals with keyword research for each one. The next step is to use what you've discovered to generate text for your website.

How search engines work

Search engines work out what your site is about by “spidering” your website. Spidering is simply loading all of the text of your website into its index (database of pages) and following (“crawling”) any links it finds to find more text. The index is what search engines use to find answers to what people are searching for.

If you think about it this means you need to put your content into **text** on your website. Search engines are beginning to search pictures, videos and other content but simple text is still your best bet.

Using the keywords in the text will make sure Google understands who would be interested in your site. Often when people complain that Google is not ranking them for a particular search we find that their site doesn't mention those keywords at all.

Landing pages - pages for searchers

For each website goal you identified earlier you are next going to create a page which is written for especially for someone who uses that search. These pages are called landing pages.

Include Keywords

For example, one of your website goals might be to get the contact details of people looking to buy oranges wholesale. The landing page would include information about your wholesale orange program. You would include as many keywords you identified earlier as possible without making the text feel stilted and awkward. Remember whilst including keywords helps people find your site, the content still needs to read well and engage your visitors. The page may also include a contact form so that interested visitors could easily submit their details.

If you are improving an existing page go through your keyword list and make your keywords are included, replacing general words where possible. Just make sure you don't overdo it and make the page impossible to read.

There are a few things to keep in mind when you are writing your landing pages.

Your content needs to be useful to your visitors

Remember that your site's content is not simply about getting good search rankings. That only helps get the visitors to your website. The content also has to motivate your readers to spend time on your website and ultimately buy what you are selling. If your webpages end up as an unreadable mash of keywords linked with clumsy sentences you are not going to get anywhere.

Put yourself in the head of your potential customer. Ask yourself what your customers want to know? Think about the common questions your clients ask you every day.

Most websites talk about themselves excessively. If you must talk about yourself create a page like “About Us” and stick it all in there.

Make sure your content is original

Copying content from other sites is illegal and can penalise your search engine ranking. By all means get ideas from successful competitor websites but write the content yourself.

Once you've gone to all the trouble of creating your original content you might be worried someone else might steal it. You can use a tool like **copyscape.com** to catch them red handed!

Unique content is a huge advantage.

No doubt as you looked over some of the competitor's websites when you were doing your keyword research you would have noticed a certain "sameness". Most websites tend to cover the same ground.

If you can offer something useful and unique on your site you can get a good competitive advantage. Whitepapers or special reports (like this one) which are immediately useful to your visitors not only give you a unique advantage but also demonstrate practically your expertise.

Up to date

Make sure that the website is up to date. Nothing looks worse than seeing a website that obviously hasn't been touched in years. If you aren't going to update your content very often, make sure it won't date in an obvious way. Excluding dates and years in your content is a prime example.

Freely available

Your web pages need to be accessible without password or payment. They will not be picked up by Google unless they are freely available.

Writing for the web

People tend to scan content quickly on the web until they find what they are looking for. Make sure you use as many headings, dot points and paragraphs as possible to make life easier for the "scanners".

Breaking up your content in this way will also make your content less daunting to read onscreen.

Write a summary of your content at the beginning and then develop your points in greater depth further down the page. This way visitors can scan the page and decide quickly if they want to read further.

Make sure you keep the style as non-commercial as possible. You want to make sure the page is easy to understand as possible.

Facing the blank page can be frightening. If writing is not your thing consider getting a copywriter in. However remember that you know your business better than anyone. Make sure you have still done your research. This way your interview or notes to the copywriter will be as useful as possible.

If you are interested in a copywriter with a specialisation in writing for the web please visit our website: <http://potentcopy.com.au>

Other content

Landing pages are not the only pages you are going to have on your site. As long as the content is useful to visitors the more content on your site is to your advantage. Make sure you include anything that you write in your business on your website if you think it is useful. It will make the time and effort you spent on it pay dividends.

Optimise NON-HTML documents

Unless there is a good reason all of the pages on your site should be HTML. You may want to keep forms for printing in PDF form. Otherwise stick to HTML.

Email newsletters

If you send out regular email newsletters put an archive of those newsletters on your website somewhere. You never know how a potential prospect might find you.

Articles & Press Releases

Newspaper articles and press releases featuring your company can be included on the site. Scan the original article in and then retype the text as plain HTML for maximum benefit.

User generated content

If you can get customers to leave reviews or comments that can be a great way of adding content to your site. You'll want to set up a process so you can check and approve comments before they are published.

Testimonials

Testimonials can be a powerful way to build trust. Don't just confine them to a testimonials page but place them all over your website, especially next to your product or service the testimonial is for.

Testimonials are a great way to highlight how good you are without coming across as arrogant. After all it is someone else who is talking you up.

We've found that scanning in testimonial letters and then re-typing in the text along-side gives testimonials even more credibility.

Inbound links

The content on your site is only one part of successful SEO. Inbound links (sites that actually link to your site) are an important part of improving your rankings.

However not all inbound links are created equal.

Link should include keywords

The best inbound link will include the keywords that you wish to be found by in the actual link. For example:

- [Buy Valencia oranges](#) online at [dougsoranges.com.au](#) ...is better than...
- Buy Valencia oranges online at [dougsoranges.com.au](#)

Links should not be reciprocal

If you've had a public website with a contact email for any length of time you've probably been bombarded with emails requesting that they will put your link on their site if you put their link on yours.

This is known as reciprocal linking and is useless for SEO purposes. In the past the practice was heavily abused and so these links don't help you at all. In fact they can sometimes even cause your site to be penalised. It is important to understand that every outbound link is an "EXIT" sign to your visitors, directing people away from your site after all of your effort to attract them.

Links should be (ideally) from respected websites

One of the ways Google attempts to deliver better results to searchers is building up a picture of which websites provide the best content about particular topics. Using a top secret formula (which includes inbound links) websites are given a particular weighting ("authority") by Google. A link from one of these respected websites is a valuable link.

On the flip side groups of websites that are purely built to add links from websites (known as link farms) are penalised as an attempt to abuse search engines. Exchanging a link with these low quality websites can actually cause your rankings to fall.

How to find inbound links

Directories

Building inbound links is a time consuming process which most business owners will tend to avoid. However getting listings in free online directories is low hanging fruit.

By typing in “link: yourcompetitor.com.au” into Google you can see the sites that are linking to your competitors. Make sure you are in all of the free directories that your key competitors are in.

Also see what free directories are listed when you search Google for the keywords you are targeting, and list your site with these.

Clients and suppliers

Clients and suppliers may also be willing to put a link to your website on their sites. Make sure you include the keywords you would like to be linked in your request. Be sure to thank them - they are doing you a big favour!

Social Networking

It seems like everyone is promising that Twitter, Facebook and Myspace (or other social networks) are the keys to making big dollars on the web. Our experience is that this may be true but it comes at the cost of a great deal of time. Spending a large amount of time on the social networks is unlikely to suit the typical time-poor businessman. See the links in further reading if you want to investigate this further.

Also with all the hype around Twitter etc. don't forget the old fashioned forum. If there is an active forum about your topic get online and start helping out. Forums can be a great opportunity to get your expertise out there and build some links from a respected site.

Blogging

Blogging was (is?) one of the buzzwords in the last few years. A blog is basically a website where articles are published regularly with the opportunity for the audience to comment.

Probably the best way to get inbound links is build an audience with a blog that is unique and insightful.

This is obviously easier said than done. Successful blogging requires a higher than average personality and expertise than your competitors.

To keep interest alive blogging also requires articles that are published regularly. So you'll need to invest significant time, copywriting skills and discipline or alternatively the money (to pay someone else to do it) to make that happen.

If you are finding that most of your competitors are blogging you may have no choice. Otherwise it is a large commitment that is best entered into carefully and only worthwhile if done seriously.

I just haven't done justice to the discipline of link building here. Check out the additional resources and websites under **further reading**, later in this guide if you're interested in finding out more.

3 Measurement

In our experience measuring website results is one of the most neglected parts of owning a website. When we ask people what their monthly visitor numbers are I am met with a blank stare, and that's only one of a dozen valuable statistics.

Measurement tells you if your website efforts are working or if they are falling short. By knowing how your website is performing you can assess if it is an asset to your business or is a liability. By measuring your results and making changes based on those measurements you can refine your website into a powerful competitive advantage for your business.

Most web developers are weak on measurement and ongoing evaluation of websites. They see their business as simply to develop the websites and then you are on your own. Potent Web Design (a division of Managed Content Webs) has developed a method which constantly evaluates and improves your website for greater profit. We call it our DMI principal (Develop Measure Improve) If you are interested in finding out more please visit our website to read more on DMI:
<http://mcwebs.com.au/articles/website-evaluation/the-method-dmi.html>

In the Potent SEO method we gather the following measurements:

1. SEO Performance Indicators
2. Website Performance Indicators

The first time through the measurement process you will be establishing a baseline. The next round of measurements will tell you if you are improving or falling back.

How often to measure?

The website performance statistics are typically recorded automatically so it's no real hardship to pull them together monthly. I would recommend collecting the SEO performance statistics at least every 3 months. If you have high traffic to your website you may want to collect them more often.

SEO Performance Indicators

Getting the SEO performance for your site involves doing a series of searches in Google. Although there are tools to gather some of this information for you automatically it is a good idea to do manually. While you are doing the manual searches you'll get a feeling for what is going on in the rankings and what your competitors are doing. These insights are invaluable and will sharpen your own SEO efforts.

You'll want to source the following statistics for your website:

- Keyword ranks
- Indexed pages (how many pages of your site Google knows about)

- Inbound links (links to your site that Google knows about)

There is an SEO performance worksheet available on our website at <http://potentseo.com.au>

Keyword Ranks

Get the keyword ranks for your website by typing in the keywords that you have been (or are hoping to) optimise your site against.

Simply count down the number of listings to find your rank. If your rank is outside the top 30 just mark it “30+” leave it at that.

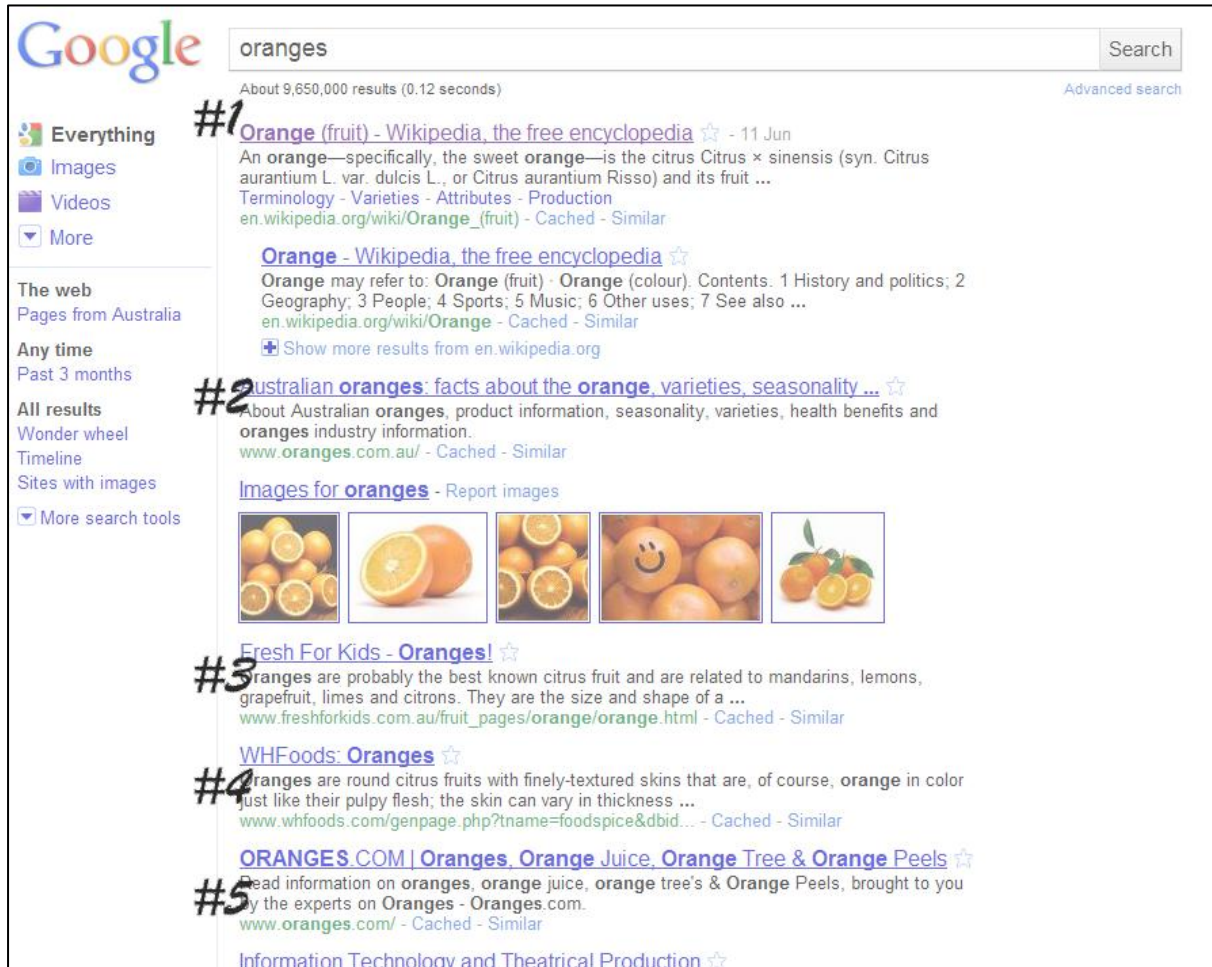


Figure 1- How to count rankings

Indexed pages

Type “site:domain.com.au” into Google to measure the number of pages Google knows about. You obviously would replace domain.com.au in the example with your domain name.

Inbound links

Type “link:domain.com.au” into Google to get a list of sites which link to yours. It is never a complete list but may give you an indication over time of the number of inbound links. Again, domain.com.au in the above example should be replaced with your actual domain.

Google offers webmaster tools which include, among other things, a much more detailed inbound link report than you can with the link: domain.com.au search. Go to <http://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/> if you are interested in finding out more.

Website Analytics

The second group of statistics cover the performance of the website itself. You should have these statistics available as part of your website hosting. If you don't have access to these numbers you need to stop reading now and install Google Analytics on your website.

Google Analytics

Google Analytics is a free product from Google which will give you more numbers on your website's performance than you will ever need to know. Even if you have some kind of statistics package on your website already you might want to think about adding Google Analytics anyway for a more detailed picture. Go to <http://www.google.com.au/analytics> to get started.

These are the statistics that we think are the most important:

- Unique Visitors
- Bounce rate
- Pages per visit
- Time on site
- Entry pages
- Exit pages
- Visitor Source
- Keywords
- Conversions

You can fill in your results on the Website performance worksheet available on our website at <http://potentseo.com.au>

The above statistics make up the bulk of the statistics available to our clients through the regular Website Performance Review reporting. If you are interested in finding out more visit our website. <http://mcwebs.com.au/services/website-evaluation.html>

Unique Visitors

A site's unique visitor count is a good baseline on how well it is performing.

Unique visitors should not be confused with "hits" which is often used as a measure of a website's popularity. The problem with hits is this: a web page with eight pictures would count as nine hits, one for the actual page and one each for the images. If you doubled the amount of pictures on a site you could double the amount of hits!

A unique visitor is a more honest statistic which tries to get to the number of people actually visiting a site. Unique visitors would only count once even if the person visited the site several times during the month.

Bounce rate

A bounce occurs when a visitor leaves the website without viewing a second page. A high bounce rate indicates that there is something wrong with the website's ability to engage visitors. Or potentially Google has misunderstood what you do and has sent uninterested visitors

Pages per visit

Pages per visit is calculated by the total page views divided by the unique visitors. It is also a good measurement of how interesting the site's visitors are finding the website. The more pages viewed, the more engaging your site is.

Time on site

Time on site is another indication of how well the site is at capturing the attention of the audience. It is useful mainly as a relative measure. With it you should be able to tell if your site is getting more interesting or less interesting to your site visitors over time. Also understand that a new site or lots of new content would tend to increase time on site.

Entry pages

An entry page is the first page a website visitor sees. Note that it might not necessarily be the site's homepage. Unless your website is gigantic analysing the top 5-7 entry pages should be plenty.

Exit pages

Like the entry pages but instead they are the last page a website visitor loaded. Exit pages might indicate parts of your website that are turning off your visitors. As above, understanding the top exit 5-7 pages should be enough.

Visitor Source

The visitor source statistic tells you where your website traffic came from. Most statistics packages break it into the following categories:

- Direct – people typing your website address directly into their browser.
- Search engines – people who found your site via a search.
- Referrers – people who found your website by clicking on a link elsewhere.

This is another statistic that is best looked at as relative to itself. You'll get most of your insights by studying how it changes over a period of time.

Keywords

The keywords statistics tells you what keywords people actually used in search engines to find you. You may get some ideas for additional keyword ideas from this list. If you are finding that you are getting a lot of traffic for certain keywords you may want to consider expanding the relevant part of your website. You should also get a sense of whether keywords you rank well for are actually turning into traffic.

Conversions

Having some kind of measurable action on your website is one of the best things you can do to make sure your website actually works for your business. If you want people to get in touch with you then you should have a contact form which counts as a conversion if people fill it out.

Most of the above statistics help you with measuring how well your site is doing at getting the visitors in the door. Conversions help you remember that this is only one part of your website's success.

You may be getting a lot of traffic for certain keywords which never turn into conversions on your website. In this case you might need to consider if those searchers are actually your potential clients at all. You may need to tweak that part of your site to try and get them to respond more positively.

Above all you need to remember your website exists to encourage people to take the next step in buying something from you, or whatever other goals you have established.

Google Analytics can measure these conversions for you automatically. Whatever statistic package you choose you need to work out a way to measure conversions.

Measuring conversions online automatically is unlikely to capture everyone. You will need to develop systems to make sure that you know where everyone found you. Visit our website (<http://mcwebs.com.au/services/scientific-advertising.html>) to get a book called *Scientific Advertising* by Claude Hopkins which has some invaluable ideas on how to do this.

4 Site Edits

For the purposes of this guide I'm going to assume that you have the basic technical skills required to make the changes to your website. If you don't you'll probably want to start coming to grips with HTML (which is what web pages are built with). You can start teaching yourself here:

<http://www.w3schools.com/html/default.asp>

Adding Your Content

The easiest way to add your newly developed content to your site is with a CMS (content management system). The advantage of a CMS is that you can change your website's content without having any particularly advanced technical ability. If you can use a word processor or your email you should be fine editing your site with a CMS. Also if a CMS has been properly setup it should automatically avoid a lot of the mistakes (below) that make it hard for Google to rank your site.

If you don't have a CMS powering your site you should seriously consider moving your site over to one. We never build a site without one. See <http://potentweb.com.au> for more information.

When you are adding your content to your website avoid the following common mistakes.

All text should be text

You often see websites with text included as images or Flash (web animation). This can sometimes just be in a few places as extra decoration or can go to the extreme of having the entire site built in Flash or pictures.

Since search engines need plain text to understand what your site is about the problem is obvious. Flash and decorative images are important to make your site look more attractive. You need to make sure they are kept to that purpose and don't actually contain content that you want Google to know about.

No "click here" links

When you are linking your content together avoid using "click here" in the text of the links. Instead you should link using the keywords and as part of a normal sentence. For example:

Bad:

To buy Valencia oranges online [click here](#).

Good:

Buy [fresh Valencia oranges](#) and get free home delivery.

You should use appropriate keywords in your links wherever possible.

Page titles are very important

Writing good page titles is one of the most effective things you can do to optimise your site.

Titles are headlines to draw visitors in

Good page titles are like the headlines in newspapers. In the same way a juicy headline encourages you to read on a great page title will bring visitors onto your site. You may have developed the most insightful, unique and interesting content in the world but if your page titles are boring and repetitive you will have trouble getting people to click through to your website.

This is evident when you consider where the page title is shown in the Google search results:

[Page Title Including Keywords | Keywords Are Bolded](#)

This is text from the page surrounding the **keywords**... that have been **searched** for.
[thepageurl.com.au/page-keyword.html](#)

Keep titles short

Titles should be around 40-60 characters long.

You should include the relevant keywords for the page towards the beginning of the title. Google bolds the keywords that the searcher uses in the results so this can help your result stand out.

Don't overdo it though. A clumsy, "keyword-stuffed" page title probably won't encourage people to click on it.

Include business name

Include your business name at the end of each page title, not the start.

Titles need to be unique

Every page title on your website should be unique. This goes double for your landing pages you developed for particular keywords.

Title case

Page Titles Should Be In Title Case. Completely uppercase or lowercase page titles are harder to read on the screen.

Eliminate Road Blocks

Despite SEO becoming more recognised lately it is still common to see certain mistakes on websites which actually make life harder for the search engines to "crawl". The websites are actually making it more difficult for Google to give them a good ranking!

If you remember that search engines primarily work by reading the plain text on your pages some of what follows should become obvious to you.

If you already have a site make sure that you remove these roadblocks to maximise your SEO efforts. If you are going to build a new site you can avoid them from the beginning.

You can use a tool like <http://seo-browser.com> to get insight into how a search engine views your website.

Eliminating road blocks should be something you should only need to do once. Just make sure you don't reintroduce them down the track.

Search engine friendly AND visitor friendly

You will notice that many of the roadblocks below also make your site harder to use for visitors. This highlights the fact that if you make a site that is great for your visitors then Google looks to reward that.

It's also good because a site is only effective for your business if it helps visitors buy something from you. An easy to use site is going to achieve that.

Fancy menus

If your site navigation (menus) are in Flash (web animation) or have a fancy drop down effect they can prevent Google from seeing the rest of your site. This is because the menu links to the other pages are not in plain text and are invisible to Google.

If you find that only a few of your pages are listed in Google make sure that this isn't your problem.

It is true that there are now ways to do dropdown menus which are friendly to search engines. However I would personally avoid them for another reason. They can be almost impossible to use if you have poor mouse skills or using a touchpad on a laptop. This goes double if the menus have multiple levels (sub-pages and sub-sub-pages).

Navigation

You need to keep your site's pages quite shallow. You don't want to have to click through 3 or 4 pages to get to the important information hidden several levels deep.

Your landing pages and any other popular pages should be linked prominently from the home page.

Weird URLs

The URL is what you type into your browser address bar to get to a web page. <http://google.com> is a URL. You want to keep your URLs as simple as possible.

A poorly setup CMS or web shop can produce URLs which look something like this:

<http://domain.com.au?id=24&type=2&sec=2334>. Most web software these days has a feature which will convert this into a much more optimised ("friendly") URL like this:

<http://domain.com.au/valencia-oranges>.

Check out your software's documentation or ask your web developer and get this fixed up. If this feature is missing from your software you'll want to think about changing.

Breaking links

At some point you'll want to rearrange the pages on your website. You'll run across two problems when you do this:

1. **Breaking inbound links.** Inbound links are hard to get so if you move the page that has been linked to you'll want to make sure that these people are sent to the new page.
2. **Maintaining your Google rank.** Google will have attached some value to your pages and if you move them you run the risk of losing that value. You need to let Google know where the replacement pages are located.

The answer to both of these problems is to use what is known as "301 redirects". The redirect automatically redirects any visitor looking for the old page across to the new one. In addition the 301 is a server code which tells Google that the content has moved permanently and it should change its search results to reflect the new page URL.

301 redirects may be handled by your website software. You should check your manuals to see if that is the case. Mostly they are set at a server level. You can Google "301 redirects" for details on how to add them to your server setup.

Duplicate content

You should never copy content from somewhere else or duplicate content across different websites. This is likely to get your ranking severely penalised.

Sometimes your website can be setup so that a different URL returns the same page. This is commonly seen on the home page where the following URLs might return the exact same content:

- <http://domain.com.au>
- <http://www.domain.com.au>
- <http://domain.com.au/home.html>
- <http://www.domain.com.au/home.html>

You should setup a 301 redirect (as above) to make sure that the variations are redirected to a single URL, in this case <http://domain.com.au>.

Keyword captions

We've discussed how SEO requires that your content be in plain text so the search engines can read it easily. This doesn't mean that you should completely avoid images, video or other multimedia. This is a vital part of what makes the web so interactive and popular. Remember your site's ultimate goal is about getting through to your visitors. Video and images are vital in doing that job.

Just make sure that you add keyword rich captions to photos and other multimedia. This gives the search engines the text they need to figure out what the image or multimedia is about and point interested viewers your way.

Splash Pages

Sometimes when you visit a website you'll see a page with a fancy graphic or logo which says something like "click here to enter the site". These are known as "splash pages". Not only are they consistently rated as highly annoying by website users it can upset search engines as well. Often splash pages hide the rest of the website from search engines.

If you have a splash page on your website get rid of it - now. Everyone else should avoid them.

Server outage

If Google keeps coming to your site and it is unavailable because your server is down your ranking will suffer. If your webserver is unreliable then you should be concerned anyway because people can't see your site. Get yourself some reliable hosting. These days it is not that expensive.

Local Search

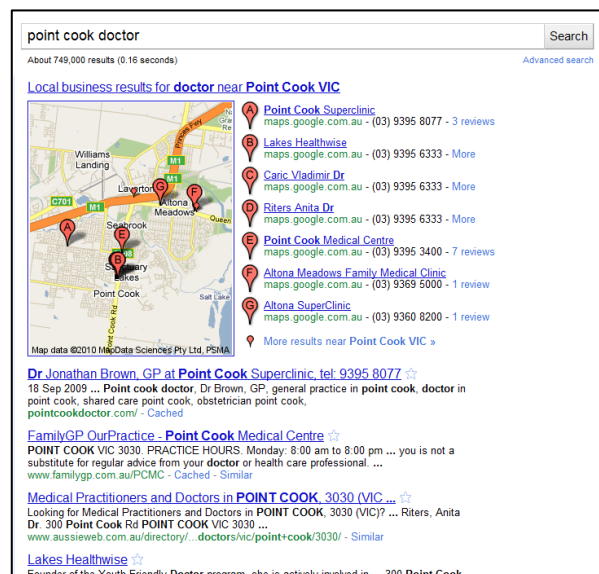
You may have noticed that sometimes when you are searching Google includes a map in the search results.

While this is something that is not strictly related to your website you'll want to make sure your business is included in these results.

The program is known as Google Places and you can find more information here:

<http://www.google.com/places>

Even if your business is already be listed in Google Places (sometimes it happens automatically) you can claim your listing and add further information to it.



What are meta-tags?

Before we finish up we probably should talk about meta-tags. Meta-tags are parts of the webpage which don't display in your browser. They were originally conceived as a way to help search engines figure out what the page was about. Unfortunately, especially because they are invisible to the website user, they were abused and now search engines pretty much ignore them.

For some reason their legend lives on and I still come across people who are paying good money for “SEO” which consists only of adding useless meta-tags to their website. So avoid spending your money on this out of date and false “search engine optimisation”.

Having said that Google does VERY occasionally use the description meta-tag in its search results. So if you’ve completely run out of other things to do on your website then by all means add the meta-tag “descriptions” to your web pages. You want to make sure:

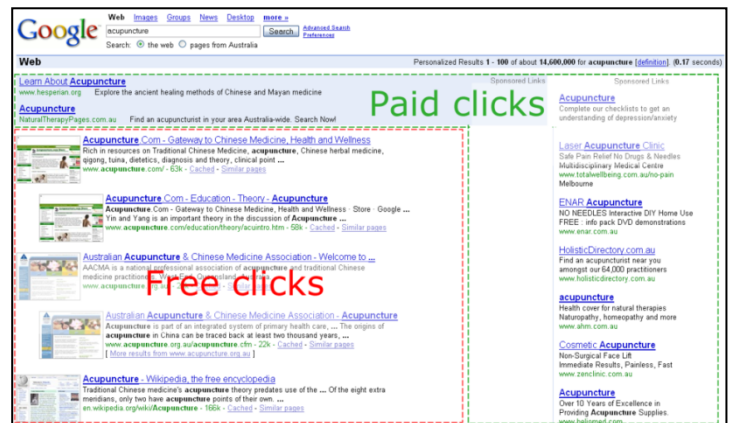
- They are unique for every page
- They are between 30-40 words.

Accelerate your SEO with Pay-Per-Click (PPC)

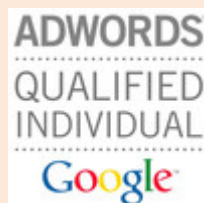
Before we finish up it is worth talking about the role of PPC advertising in SEO.

All of our efforts so far have been to improve what is called the organic ranking of your website. Organic ranking is not for sale, it appears on Google according to how relevant Google thinks it is. There is another way of getting your website on the front page of Google and that is to pay for it. The Google Adwords program allows you to pay money and your ad is listed down the right of the regular organic results. And sometimes if enough people are using the search term and clicking on your advert it appears above the organic results. The key to PPC is that you only pay for the ad if someone clicks on it and comes through to your website.

A well-executed PPC campaign gives you a lot more information around keywords and what messages your audience are responding to. It can bring results much more quickly than an SEO campaign, which cuts down the time and inefficiency of chasing down the wrong keywords and visitors.



We have experience in running Google Adwords campaigns which have benefited both local business and large companies with offices interstate. Lindsay Stewart (our PPC Campaigns Manager) has also achieved Google Adwords certification, and is therefore a Google Adwords Qualified Advertising Professional. If you are interested in this please visit our website:
<http://potentppc.com.au>



Conclusion

That brings us to the end of our Potent SEO process. We hope you have gained some valuable insights.

If you are interested in buying SEO services there is a section about some of the pitfalls you may encounter below.

You should ideally consider this guide as an introduction to SEO. We encourage you to make sure you use some of the resources in the further reading section (below). Above all don't be afraid to experiment and try out new things. Trying new things at a small scale should not hurt your results (too much) and may uncover some gems which will give you great results used across your whole site.

It's a marathon

SEO is more like a marathon than a sprint. You will find that you are spending most of your time making incremental improvements rather than making a huge effort and then ignoring your site for several months or years. This means you don't have to get it perfect first time. Keep researching, developing great content and measuring and you'll gradually reap the rewards.

What customers want

Along the way you'll be finding out what people are looking for. You'll be able to get further benefit by including these insights in your other marketing, and of course in honing your overall business' focus.

All the best

We wish you all the best for the success of your website and your business. If you have any questions, feedback or want to tell us anything you think we've missed please get in touch via our website:

<http://potentweb.com.au>. We look forward to hearing from you.

About Us

Potent Web Design is the new trading name for Managed Content Webs which has been established for eight years, and currently manages sites for hospitals, financial institutions, engineering firms, trades people and numerous churches and charities (to name a few). Our philosophy of ongoing partnership with our clients, with no contracts, has attracted a wide range of businesses and organisations that remain with us because they choose to (not because they are obliged to).

Our primary staff members include:



Lukas White

Lukas has been in Operational Sales managerial roles in the Retail FMCG Industry for over 16 years. Through extensive "real world" experience and studies in Sales and Marketing Psychology Lukas has a unique insight into how to assist businesses to get the most out of their marketing message.

With five years focussing on project development and staged implementation for Coles Group Ltd, Lukas is well placed to manage your web project with attention to detail and on time delivery.

Lukas White is a co-owner and director of Managed Content Webs Pty Ltd.

Lindsay Stewart

Lindsay has been involved in designing, building and maintaining websites for over six years. It was his frustration with keeping various websites up to date that caused him to investigate Content Management Systems software and ultimately develop the service offered by Potent Web Design.

He has earned a Master of Technology (Information Technology) and is an accredited Google AdWords Qualified Advertising Professional.

Lindsay Stewart is a co-owner and director of Managed Content Webs Pty Ltd.

Andrew Watson

Andrew has been a graphic designer in the industry for the past six years. After winning the Gold Folio award for Graphic Art through his studies at VUT, Andrew moved onto working for some of Melbourne's freshest advertising and design agencies. His experience includes designing corporate id's, advertising, print, fashion and web design. His clientele have included such companies as Australian Unity, Brown Brothers, Herald Sun, Seek, Stussy and Volvo.

Andrew is a creative and hardworking designer paying great attention to fine detail.

Andrew Watson is the creative director for The Mixing Bowl, the Graphic Design division of Managed Content Webs Pty Ltd.

Emma Sutcliffe

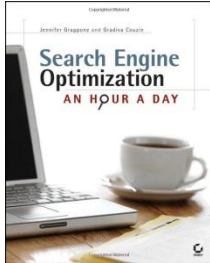
After dismally failing the first year of a Chemistry degree, Emma decided to concentrate on what she was good at and enrol in Journalism at Deakin University. Various jobs have followed including several years overseas where she gained invaluable experience writing for an international marketing company, before returning to Australia to walk the beat for a local newspaper. A foray into the management of heritage tourist attraction, gives Emma real small business / operational insights. This role also led to a position on the board of the Wyndham Tourism Association as Media Liaison Officer, a post she still holds.

Emma's writing style is relaxed and conversational, engaging and informative, but designed to clearly communicate your marketing message and improve your search engine rankings.

Emma is the lead copywriter for our Potent Copy services.

5 Resources

Further Reading



Search Engine Optimization – An Hour a Day (2nd Edition)

Jennifer Grappone & Gradiva Couzin, 2008

We've recommended some websites below but it can be hard to get a solid introduction to SEO reading articles. You find that beginning level information gets mixed with more advanced information. This book gives an excellent foundation. In fact the Potent SEO program owes much to this book. If you are interested in getting into some more depth with SEO start here.

Check out their website as well: <http://www.yourseoplan.com/blog/>

Other Useful Websites

- <http://searchengineland.com/>
- <http://www.highrankings.com/newsletter/>
- <http://www.seobook.com/>
- <http://www.seomoz.org/blog/>

What to watch out for when buying SEO

You might not actually want to SEO your site yourself, which is fine. Plenty of people offer SEO services these days. How can you tell if you are going to get ripped off?

Watch out for the following:

A No #1 Guarantee

There are two potential problems with this guarantee. How can they guarantee the actions of a third party (Google)?

In addition it is pretty easy to choose a couple of keywords and get to number #1. However is anyone searching for it and is it worth anything to your business? For instance "rusty orange sculpture" may be easy to get good rankings for but it is unlikely to be worth millions.

Likewise be very wary anyone guaranteeing #1 position with a PPC Campaign. Unless there is an unlimited bucket of money it is impossible to guarantee this for valuable keywords given the high level of competition and activity by many online advertisers. If you are worried about this please visit our website to read more: <http://potentppc.com.au>

Small Price and Tiny Time

Effective SEO is an involved and sometimes tedious process. A low price and time can indicate that the so called SEO is really a bunch of out-of-date tricks which could even hurt your site's Google ranking.

Sometimes people claim to have discovered a trick which guarantees that you can get top place on Google. The trick may even work for a short time but in the long run they'll leave you worse off.

Why? At the risk of being repetitive, Google is #1 because it helps searchers find what they are looking for better than anyone else. The SEO trick misleads Google into showing web pages that searchers are not really interested in. To maintain their profits Google moves quickly to neutralise the trick and usually penalises sites that try to use it.

These are some common tricks which are useless and will end up hurting you:

- **Meta-tags.** Adding meta-tags is a common example of SEO which is worthless. Make sure you don't pay money for it.
- **Cloaking.** A technique where a different website is shown to Google than the one visitors see.
- **Duplicate Content.** Using the same content across different pages or even websites.
- **Keyword stuffing.** Excessive use of keywords in pages and titles.
- **Submission to thousands of search engines.** Since only a few matter this doesn't really help you.
- **Links to/from large number of unrelated sites.** Many of these sites are engaged in questionable SEO tactics and having your website associated with them may ultimately drag you down.

Secretive methods

If the SEO expert is ultra-secretive you run the risk of running foul of some of the above tricks. There should be no reason why they can't give you the general outlines of how they do what they do.

Intermediate domains

It's risky for you when a company does it's SEO work on their own domains which link to your site. If you ever decide to discontinue or change your service you'll lose all your rankings. Make sure that any changes are actually going to be applied to your own site.

Todo List (First 6 Months)

Month _____	Month _____	Month _____	Month _____	Month _____	Month _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Establish Goals			<input type="checkbox"/> Review Goals		
<input type="checkbox"/> Research Keywords			<input type="checkbox"/> Review Keywords		
<input type="checkbox"/> Analyse competition			<input type="checkbox"/> Review competition		
<input type="checkbox"/> Create landing pages			<input type="checkbox"/> Review landing pages		
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop content	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop content	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop content	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop content	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop content	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop content
<input type="checkbox"/> Build inbound links					
<input type="checkbox"/> Measure SEO indicators	<input type="checkbox"/> Measure SEO indicators	<input type="checkbox"/> Measure SEO indicators	<input type="checkbox"/> Measure SEO indicators	<input type="checkbox"/> Measure SEO indicators	<input type="checkbox"/> Measure SEO indicators
<input type="checkbox"/> Measure site performance	<input type="checkbox"/> Measure site performance	<input type="checkbox"/> Measure site performance	<input type="checkbox"/> Measure site performance	<input type="checkbox"/> Measure site performance	<input type="checkbox"/> Measure site performance
<input type="checkbox"/> Add titles			<input type="checkbox"/> Review titles		
<input type="checkbox"/> Update content	<input type="checkbox"/> Update content	<input type="checkbox"/> Update content	<input type="checkbox"/> Update content	<input type="checkbox"/> Update content	<input type="checkbox"/> Update content
<input type="checkbox"/> Remove roadblocks					

Notes

Todo List (6+ months - repeat)

Month _____	Month _____	Month _____	Month _____	Month _____	Month _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Review Goals			<input type="checkbox"/> Review Goals		<input type="checkbox"/> Develop content
<input type="checkbox"/> Review Keywords			<input type="checkbox"/> Review Keywords		<input type="checkbox"/> Measure SEO indicators
<input type="checkbox"/> Review competition			<input type="checkbox"/> Review competition		<input type="checkbox"/> Measure site performance
<input type="checkbox"/> Review landing pages			<input type="checkbox"/> Review landing pages		<input type="checkbox"/> Review titles
<input type="checkbox"/> Develop content	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop content	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop content	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop content	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop content	<input type="checkbox"/> Update content
<input type="checkbox"/> Build inbound links					
<input type="checkbox"/> Measure SEO indicators	<input type="checkbox"/> Measure SEO indicators	<input type="checkbox"/> Measure SEO indicators	<input type="checkbox"/> Measure SEO indicators	<input type="checkbox"/> Measure SEO indicators	<input type="checkbox"/> Update content
<input type="checkbox"/> Measure site performance	<input type="checkbox"/> Measure site performance	<input type="checkbox"/> Measure site performance	<input type="checkbox"/> Measure site performance	<input type="checkbox"/> Measure site performance	<input type="checkbox"/> Update content
<input type="checkbox"/> Review titles			<input type="checkbox"/> Review titles		
<input type="checkbox"/> Update content	<input type="checkbox"/> Update content	<input type="checkbox"/> Update content	<input type="checkbox"/> Update content	<input type="checkbox"/> Update content	<input type="checkbox"/> Update content

Notes

Website Goal Sheet

Goal Description	
Keyword Research	Competitors
	Competitor Notes
	Keyword Notes
Landing Page	
Title	
Content Notes	

Website Goal Sheet

Goal Description	
Keyword Research	Competitors
	Competitor Notes
	Keyword Notes
Landing Page	
Title	
Content Notes	

Website Performance

Date			
Unique visitors		Bounce Rate (%)	
Pages per visit		Average time on site	
Entry page URL	Entries	Exit page URL	Exits
Visitor Source (%)		Direct	
		Search engines	
		Referrers	
Keywords	Visits for keywords	Keywords	Visits for keywords
Conversion Description			Conversion #