



Primitive SEO DIY Worksheet

What is SEO?

SEO, or search engine optimisation if you're not up with the lingo, is a collection of scientific and creative techniques used to increase the visibility of your web site to search engines and to raise the placement of your web site within their indexed results. Usually for a portfolio of chosen words related to your field.



General SEO

SEO is split into two main sectors. On-site and Off-site. Search engines like Google, Yahoo and Bing use programs commonly referred to as robots or spiders. These crawl the Internet, following hyperlinks from page to page to site to site. Many years ago these indexed little more than the domain name and page titles. However modern search engines are clever, they think more like humans.

There are two contrasting approaches to SEO:

- The bad way referred to as “Black Hat” which aims to manipulate search engine algorithms to boost index placement. This is poor practice and even when it does work in the short term it often leads to penalisation in the long term. We do not do this.
- The good way aka “White Hat”. This is what we do. These methods work with search engines to provide naturally occurring high quality, “organic” results. This is ensured via a well built, standards compliant web site, with relevant content and dependent on your needs you may also want to run an online/offline marketing campaign.

If SEO is important to you as a web site owner you should:

- Ensure you have a semantically correct, standards compliant HTML/CSS web site (Flash is not covered by this guide).
- Include good quality, relevant and useful content which people will want to read and/or link to.
- Research your market, your competition and find common terms and phrases related to your subject.
- Establish a suitable marketing plan to combine your online/offline efforts.



On-site SEO

A well built web site is the first important factor. The content (text and inline images) should exist as a semantically correct HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language) file. This exists separate from the design, which is applied via CSS (Cascading Style Sheets). This allows the raw data to be effectively read and indexed by robots and if necessary allows the content to be displayed differently on screen, mobile or print devices. The designer should also always include a sitemap and a robots.txt file in your web sites root folder.

Semantics

Documents have an inherent structure. Think of a magazine for example. If you buy a fashion magazine you would expect the sections and articles within to be about fashion. There is a relationship between the elements and hierarchy similar to this:

A Web Site		A Magazine
URL (Domain Name)	=	Name of magazine
Title	=	Section Title
Header	=	Article Title
Sub header 1	=	Top level sub header
Sub header 2	=	Lower level sub header
Paragraph	=	Text

Search engines now analyze your site and give it an overall semantic profile. Whilst the text content and words remain important they are placed within an overall context. Your web site should have a logical, integrated structure and contain variations of related words or terms with similar meaning.

The Domain Name

This should be chosen carefully. How important is branding to you? If you have a really well known name then it may be best to place this in the URL. If not, you will receive more traffic using something like www.chestertaxis.co.uk as your primary domain. You can always register multiple domains and set up domain mapping or web forwarding to redirect browsers with or without them knowing. Many people still automatically think web sites will end .com, if you choose a non .uk domain and target the UK make sure you use a UK based hosting company.



Pages & Titles

Give each page a unique and relevant title and focus the overall message of that page.

Meta Data

Description: This is a couple of short sentences which should summarise what you are or what you do. This content is indexed and is show in search engine results viewed by the browsers.

Keywords: These have practically no effect on search engine listings now but are good admin practices. Select 3 – 12 words or phrases which epitomize your web site's purpose.

Targeting

SEO is always easier if you offer specialty products/services. Getting to number 1 for “shoes” would be incredibly time consuming and expensive however getting to number 1 for “green velvet winklepickers” would be relatively easy.

If your local, target geographical search results. People often search for terms like “gardeners in leeds” so It's worth including your location in your domain name or page title.

Hyperlinks

Include internal hyperlinks. Search robots don't like dead ends. The Internet, as the name suggests should be a net. It should all connect. If you mention the different types of product

Gain trust, get certified and link to other sites. Showing links/logos for relevant awards, certification, membership or regulating bodies not only reassures potential customers but also builds on the network structure of your web site. Many of these will also have directories that will give you backlinks. Some general Small Business orgs. include FSB, UKBI, FPB, GMBH. A quick internet search should show and specialist bodies in your industry.

Blogs & Forums

These can be very effective ways of attracting traffic. The same rules apply to the content. Make it relevant. Make it useful. Giving something away for free even just information can attract visitors to your web site.



Off-site SEO

Google retains roughly 80 – 85% of the global search engine market share. Your first call of action should be to set up an account with Google Local Business Center. This can give you a page 1 listing in local search results with hardly any effort at all. You may also want to set up an Ad-words account, this list's your web site in the sponsored results and you pay a small fee each time you get traffic via the sponsored link.

Submit

To get indexed quicker you should submit your web site to Search Engines (we do this for you). The major player are Google, Yahoo, Bing, MSN, Ask, Lycos, DMOZ.

PageRank

PageRank is an analytical method of calculating the importance of hyperlinked content. Or put simply a voting system. The more important and trustworthy the web site is linking to you the more your ranking is increased.

A few things you can do here are:

- Avoid organized link exchanges and only exchange with reputable sites
- Links to your pages should use relevant keywords in a variation of orders
- One way linking better than two way, the incoming links give the rankings.

Directories & Classifieds

Get listed. There are loads of online directories and classified listings, some are free and a some charge. A few of these would be:

Google Directory, Yahoo Directory, Touch Local, Yell, Free Index, Gumtree, City Visitor, Local Life, WWWi, Scoot, Business Services UK, 192.com, Rated People, Thompson Local, Viva street.



Social & Business Bookmarking, Networking, Tagging etc

Set up profiles for your business on sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Many of these backlinks do not count but they can attract visitors.

If people like your content, bookmark your site in Delicious, Digg it or list in other social networks this can also work to increase index placement.

Increase Traffic

Increased traffic will also boost index placement. Initially type you web site name into Google rather than typing it directly in the address bar. You can also boost traffic by:

- Writing and syndicating articles.
- Joining related forums and making postings
- Posting comments to related blogs

Marketing

Include your web site URL on:

- Business Cards
- Emails
- Stationary
- Flyers or posters
- Press Releases & PR
- Advertising and any promotional goods