

VERTEXERA Lead Generation Programs™
Targeted, Current, Profitable

Benefits of Search Engine Optimization

Vertexera Inc.
2116 Marshallfield Ln, Redondo Ca., 90278
Email: sales@vertexera.com
Phone: 310-318-8934
Fax: 310-388-4602



Benefits of Search Engine Optimization

Introduction

Businesses spend hundreds even thousands of dollars to develop aesthetically-pleasing web sites. They spend even more on banner ads and other forms of web marketing. However, those same businesses often neglect the one area that could be the most beneficial to their site's success: search engines.

A recent Georgia Tech study discovered that 85% of customers looking for vendors or suppliers used search engines to find them, but only those listed in the top 30 results ever generated a sizable stream of traffic.

Here is what few well known third party analysts and Scientific Journals are saying about the value of Search Engine optimization

- Search engines create more awareness about Web sites than all advertising combined including banners, newspapers, TV and radio (IMT Strategies, a division of the Meta Group, February 2000).
- For an average day, Web users report searching the Internet (57%) and looking for product information (46%) more often than any other activity except email. (Statistical Research, Inc. Feb 17th, 2000) <http://www.sriresearch.com/press/pr20000217.htm>
- NPD Group study shows search engine positions are 2 to 3 times more effective in generating sales than banner ads (<http://www.overture.com/d/about/advertisers/slab.jhtml>).
- Internet users ranked search as their most important activity, awarding it a 9.1 on a 10-point scale. The next most important activity ranked only 6.3. (Jupiter Research, 1999). <http://info.go.com/press/search.html>
- 42% of those who bought from online retail sites arrived via search engines (NFO Online Retail Monitor, October 1999). <http://info.go.com/press/search.html>
- The real proof: The single most highly rated Web site promotional method as voted by Webmasters is search engine positioning. (September 1999, ActiveMedia Research)

The key, then, is getting the site at the top of those lists, but with hundreds of new sites coming online every week that can be more difficult than it sounds. Higher rankings require search engine optimization.

What Is Search Engine Optimization?

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is a plan implemented to increase a site's visibility. It involves selecting keywords that will generate targeted traffic, researching search engine policies and guidelines, and understanding customers. In addition, SEO involves dealing with design and content problems that might hinder a site's results ranking.

SEO is not a one-time job. It requires trial and error testing, regular updates, and periodic performance enhancements so the site will continue to appear high in the results. Because of the demands of SEO, many companies outsource these needs to individuals or businesses who specialize in providing those types of services.

After all with more than 500 billion documents online right now, the competition for Internet visibility is fierce and a knowledgeable expert may provide just the edge a site needs.

Why Optimize?

Before exploring why sites should be optimized, one must first understand why so many aren't. For one, many companies fall for the "If we build it, they will come" approach and most of them have gone under within a year. Others believe their strength in the brick and mortar world will be enough to bring them online success; they are quickly proven wrong. Still more underestimate the importance of search engines and fail to understand the ranking process so they end up ignoring what may be the most important ingredient of their Internet marketing strategy.

SEO provides a number of benefits that are often overlooked or undervalued, including the following:

Long-Term Visibility

Obviously, a site needs more than flash-in-the-pan exposure if it is to generate a significant stream of revenue. Banner ads or paid search engine placement may work wonders for a while but once the marketing budget is depleted, the site disappears. Another factor is that consumers tend to ignore or distrust blatant advertising; they are more likely to purchase from a site ranked high in the search engine results than from a conspicuously placed advertisement.

Increased Brand Awareness

A high ranking in major search engines means more people see the name of that company and become familiar with its products even if they haven't made a purchase. In fact, a study by NPD found that consumers are twice as likely to recognize a business ranked in the top three in search engine results than those appearing in prominent banner ads.

Targeted Traffic

Because keywords determine when a site will appear in search engine results and because those keywords are carefully (or should be) by the business, the type of traffic generated is highly targeted. For example, a site selling music could use key words, such as "classical music" to weed out people interested in jazz, rock, or pop. The higher the conversion rate from browsers to buyers.

Affordability

SEO services are frequently sold cafe style so companies only need to pay for what they

really need which, in turn, keeps costs low. In comparison to less effective banner ads which could cost anywhere from \$2500 to \$35,000 a month, an outsourced SEO plan can cost as little as \$1000.

All of these reasons show why SEO provides a high ROI for most companies. In fact, the results generated by an effective SEO campaign can be quite dramatic. For example, a gastric bypass surgeon who had his site professionally optimized saw his number of new Web-generated patients jump from 2-4 to 50-70 per week. Another site reported commission increases of almost 70% after completing its site's SEO.

How SEO Works

In order to understand Search Engine Optimization, one must first understand how search engines work. Actually, the term “search engine” refers to two types of engines: crawler-based and human-powered.

A crawler-based search engine sends what is called a spider to go through web sites. The spider's findings are then added to the engine's index. The spider returns to the web site periodically and brings updated information back to the index. When a search is conducted, the engine sorts through the entire index looking for matches. Google is one example of this type of engine.

Human-powered directories require a short description (written by either their reviewers or the company running the site) that is included in the directory. Updating pages on the site does not alter the listing and searches only look through those descriptions for matches. LookSmart is an example of a human-powered directory.

Today, many search engines, such as Yahoo and MSN, present both crawler-based and human-powered results. These are known as hybrid search engines.

When people discuss site ranking, they are generally referring to the crawler-based search engines which list search results based on relevancy. But how is that relevancy determined?

Search engines determine relevancy by applying a set of rules known as an algorithm. Which each engine's algorithms are different, they all look for similar things:

Location of Keywords – Search engines first check title tags, headlines, and the first two paragraphs of content for keyword matches

Frequency of Keywords – Search engines look at how often a word appears on a page. The more frequently the word shows up, the more relevant the site.

Avoid Spamming – These are elements that cannot be controlled by SEO, such as link analysis and clickthrough measurement

With this information in mind, these are a few tips for SEO:

- *avoid designing sites with frames or ColdFusion which may prevent sites from showing up in search engines
- *create a unique 4-5 word title for each page
- *write a meta description tag for each page (no more than 200 characters)
- *submit entire site properly
- *monitor search engine traffic – the higher the numbers, the better the ranking
- *avoid spamming

These tips are a good start for in-house SEO, but professionals also use a number of other techniques to keep rankings high including:

1	Keyword Identification	The right keywords have to be identified first. The right keywords are the words that are related to your website and are “USED” by surfers while finding your service or product.
2	Competition Analysis	Here the websites ranking high for the keywords selected are reviewed for their link structure, optimization method and incoming links.
3	Page Optimization	In this stage your website is thoroughly optimized with meta tags, body text, internal links.
4	Link Building	Qualified incoming links are generated in this step
5	Submissions	The web pages are systematically submitted to various search engines and directories
6	Analysis And Tweaking	The results are observed over a period of time and depending on the rankings and traffic trends the website is tweaked up
7	Reporting	Throughout the course of the optimization, web stats have to be observed and tactics have to be changed based on the traffic trends.

What About Pay Per Click (PPC)?

Pay Per Click (PPC) engines are separate from both crawler-based and human-powered search engines. To list a site with a PPC engine, the lister selects certain keywords. For each keyword, the lister bids on how much he or she will pay per click. A “click” occurs

when a searcher goes to the site via the link listed in the results. The higher the lister's bid, the higher the site's ranking.

These types of engines do have advantages:

- 1) Pay only for actual traffic
- 2) Generate targeted traffic
- 3) Track traffic easily
- 4) Bring new traffic to site quickly

However, PPC can become expensive rapidly, especially for those who do not use specific keywords or who do not understand how to bid effectively. Nor can PPC engines provide a site with long-term visibility because it is dependent on a company's marketing budget.

Yet, this type of search engine can be a nice compliment to the more traditional ones. For example, being indexed at Google may take a couple of weeks while listing through Overture, Google AdWords Select and the likes, will bring about instant results. PPC also gives a company more control over the traffic its site generates because the lister, not the spider or a reviewer, determines the most relevant keywords.

Part of a successful marketing is not pulling all the eggs in one basket, so a wise SEO plan will also include some PPC activity.

Why Vertexera

In-house SEO is always an option, but it may not be the best one. Outsourcing simply makes more sense in most cases for a number of reasons:

- *Marketing budgets do not allocate sufficient funds for SEO
- *SEO experts get faster and better results which they can also maintain long term
- *Resubmission errors can get a novice barred from a search engine
- *SEO providers know the latest tips for high rankings
- *SEO firms are more cost-effective in the long run than in-house efforts

Vertexera's staff of highly trained SEO experts can help companies improve their rankings, increase their traffic, and boost their site's profitability.

Vertexera provides all the SEO services a company needs, including:

- developing keywords and descriptions
- analyzing competitors' sites

- evaluating current web logs
- submitting sites to major search engines
- following up on rankings after 2-4 weeks
- making adjustments as necessary during first month
- maintaining search engine optimization

These services and others are available individually and as parts of cost-effective packages.

Few Case Studies

Description: Finance-related Web site with improper keyword focus.

- Original positioning: Web site was positioned on the top search sites for keywords that were not consumer-friendly.
- Actions taken: Keyword research was performed to determine how targeted visitors for the site were searching. A list of appropriate keywords was identified, whereupon the site was re-optimized, including making text revisions to incorporate the new keywords. The site was submitted to the search sites.
- Results: Site traffic began to increase within three months of submission, with visitors being referred to the site using the revised keywords. Over the past year, traffic to the site has continued to grow, and the site holds many key top-10 positions.

Description: National chain, consumer-products retailer e-commerce site; not built by Vertexera

- Vertexera received site pre-launch, but no optimization had occurred. Testing showed that site was not search-engine friendly.
- Actions taken: Optimized the site, created alt and meta tags, identified additional keywords, and registered—all of which is included in our Basic optimization package. Client contracted for ongoing reporting and optimization as needed.
- Results: In seven months of optimization, monthly traffic grew from 236,737 visitors to 359,829 visitors—an increase of 66%. No-referrer traffic (users who typed in the name of the URL) totaled 164,819 visitors. Search engine referrals for the same time period grew from 5,410 to 27,406 per month—an increase of 506%. Search engine referrals accounted for 8% of the site's overall traffic, as well as 14% of the traffic that came in via methods other than users typing in the URL based on its brand recognition.

Description: Increase traffic to a fashion web site while reducing monthly pay-per-click expenditures.

- **Original positioning:** Company's initial strategy was to use pay-per-click advertising to draw visitors to their sites, but it seemed like they could do better. Even when daily unique visitors which reached nearly 10,000, those visitors weren't buying. The company was paying top dollars for every visitor to their home page, whether they made a purchase, or hit the home page and then departed.
- **Actions taken:** First, we wanted to get rid of all affiliate marketing. There's nothing wrong with a good affiliate campaign, but it just wasn't working for this company. Sponsored listings, link exchange services and banner ads were costing thousands and bringing uninterested, unqualified visitors to the site. To test our theory, we began recording where did the buyers came from, Pay-per-click advertisers or other means. Guess how many and dresses sold because of paid marketing? None. Once we established that pay-per-click wasn't working, we aimed for search engines. Over the year we registered the company's website with the major search engines. Each month, we measured incoming traffic from each search engine, the keywords used, and the position or 'rank' of the site on each major engine for specific keywords. Then we made adjustments to the site and re-registered.
- **Results:** When Vertexera launched the search engine campaign, the company received 3300 search engine visits each month. That number rose steadily over the next year, with search engine traffic reaching over 7000 visits per month by September, and to 15000 search engine-powered visits in October: A 5X increase over the previous year! After further optimizations the company site now averages 17-20,000 visits per month from visitors who use a search engine to find them.

Conclusion

Search engine optimization is an integral part of web site promotion and no company can afford to ignore it. While handling the complexities of an SEO campaign can be done in-house, outsourcing these needs to a qualified firm can generate greater results in less time and can sustain these results over time.