

SEO & the Lead Generation Website

Best Practices

BY MONTEREYBAYDESIGN

Overview

This document is meant to be used as a guideline. It is by no means a complete listing of everything that can be done to ensure a site is the most visible, has the best page ranking on Google, etc.; however, everything in this document will contribute to that end.

Your Website Goals: Brochure vs Lead Generation

Websites serve multiple purposes. While a smaller, mostly static *brochure* style website mainly exists to provide a presence on the internet, *lead generation* sites actively promote the business.

- ❖ A brochure site is essentially just an online brochure. It is there to provide information about your business and services, offer contact options, show off a portfolio, sell products, etc. It is an excellent starting point for a business that wants to establish that online presence but doesn't intend to actively – or *aggressively* – update content or attract new business – at least not immediately.
- ❖ While social media plays a large role, a lead generation website takes an active part in promoting the business. While it can start small or as a brochure site, it can grow into dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of pages.
 - As frequently as possible, content is updated or new content is added, often through writing blog articles, adding announcements or events or offering promotions, and most of the content is geared toward the customer and how the business can serve that customer.
 - New and useful content drives the site and its ranking in the search engines and is essential to growing visibility.
 - Building a lead generation site involves, among other things, leading the consumer through the site through calls to action which drives them toward purchasing a product or service, signing up for more information, or contacting the business.
- ❖ The business's active and consistent participation can be conservative to aggressive, but the more work that's put into a site by the site owner or designated individual, the more the customer (or potential customer) is served. This is essential to visibility of the site and the acquisition of new business.

While both types of sites can be a valued online presence, it is the lead generation site that requires **constant tending** in order to promote new products or services, gain new clientele, and generally grow the business.



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SEO/SEM - Search Engine Optimization/Marketing

Once a website goes "live" it is immediately available on the internet by typing in or clicking on the website address. If your site is a new presence, don't expect to see it in search engine results right away, but once the site is "crawled" by the search engines, it will begin to show up naturally within organic search results.

Where the website shows up in these organic listings is a much more involved process.

Site visibility in organic search listings is cultivated with time and effort put into the growth of the site, an active social media presence, and promotion and advertising. There is no magic bullet for getting your site listed on page one – or even on page ten. Your website – just like your business as an entity – requires tending, coaxing, and tweaking. Legitimate advertising coupled with quality of service and of content will help enhance your site's visibility, build its reputation, and in turn, your business.

While all of the mentioned SEO methods and suggestions will contribute to your visibility, there is *no guarantee when it comes to page ranking and placement on Google/search engine listings.*

IMPORTANT: *Because SEO/SEM (Search Engine Optimization/ Search Engine Marketing) is an ongoing process, I don't consult for it or offer it as a separate service, and, as a discipline, it is not my primary area of expertise. Monterey Bay Design is NOT an SEO or Marketing company. Monterey Bay Design does not independently write copy such as blog articles or offer data monitoring or social media management, nor do we perform independent SEO/SEM **except** what may be included naturally during website creation – such as blog setup or setup and configuration of requested applications or plugins; however, while we do not independently manage any ongoing settings or changes, we will be happy to make specifically requested updates and adjustments. Additionally, Monterey Bay Design does not setup services in 3rd party accounts such as Google, Facebook, etc.*

SEO DURING SITE CONSTRUCTION

During a site build, Monterey Bay Design implements best practices for search engine optimization, including offering refinements or suggesting content, and generally ensuring the site will perform well in the search engines after it's built.

How It Works

ORGANIC LISTINGS (or natural listings) are search engine results directly presented because of the user's search query. Their position on the page is determined by the site's relevance to the search terms.

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When people “Google,” that is, when they type in something to search for, the search engines take the single keywords or keyword phrases entered and match them to the most relevant sites for those keywords. They do it by “crawling the web” with what are called “bots” or “spiders” – what are essentially automated programs. These search spiders look for several things including the in-page code (the underlying code that creates what you see in your browser) such as alternate text for images, meta tags for page description, title tags, etc. It also notes changes to existing or new content and broken links.

PAID LISTINGS which display above and/or below organic listings are ads that occur because they are **1)** relevant to the search and **2)** are paid to be shown – their display position is based on the keywords assigned to it and the amount bid for each click. Google now labels all paid listings. They are always prefaced with the word “Ad.”

Google AdWords, which are Pay Per Click ads, are a good way to target an audience looking for something specific. You can set a monthly cap (as low as \$1 per day) or use other criteria to determine the amount you spend on advertising. Google Ad setup can walk you through some of the best options for a higher listing, including estimating the best amount for CPC (cost per click) for your ad.

Pay Per Click means that you only pay when your ad is clicked on. If you set a monthly cap of \$50 on an ad campaign, the ad will stop showing once that ceiling is reached.

CONTENT/PAGE COPY

The most important searchable portion of the page is the actual copy – the text on the page. It is not just important for the search engines, but it is primarily the most important feature for people searching. In Google's own words: “Google's aim is to give our users the most valuable and relevant search results.”

The copy on each page of the website should be grammatically correct, well-written information that is relevant to the page and engaging for the visitor.

KEYWORDS: *Keywords should be used in such a way as to enhance the copy and inform the reader. Write copy not for the search engines, but for your clients and potential clients. By thinking of your audience and what search terms they might enter when they “Google,” this will help you write more search-friendly copy. Knowing your audience is key. Understanding your audience – who they are, what interests them and what they need from you – is essential to writing good copy for your site.*

Blogging is an essential component of a site's visibility and exposure. If you have anything at all to say about some component of your business – advice you might give or

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commentary that may be helpful or interesting to your audience – a blog gives you the platform to perform this function. Constantly updated, interesting and relevant content is good for the public and excellent for search engine exposure.

Blog entries can take most any form – such as event announcements, new products or simply helpful or entertaining information.

Page Code

Title tags and description tags are primarily the job of the web designer. Adding custom tags to a WordPress site requires an SEO plugin and additional work to customize the tag copy. However, if custom tags are NOT written, this does not mean that they won't exist. Browsers naturally use the title of the page and use existing copy on the page to fill in the description.

TITLE TAGS - OPTIMAL LENGTH: 60 - 70 CHARACTERS

Each page's title tag should be unique to the page, though it is always best practice to keep the brand name in the title tag along with the primary keyword for the page. Keep it to between 60 – 70 characters. (Remember to include spaces.)

DESCRIPTION TAGS - OPTIMAL LENGTH: 50 - 300 CHARACTERS

Descriptions pull from page copy to display on Google if there are no description tags specifically written for a page. Setting the description tag with your own copy ensures that you control exactly what the viewer sees in a search listing. Descriptions (which are specific to the page) should be between 50 – 300 characters including spaces. Search engine displays vary, but by adhering to the general rule, you ensure your copy doesn't get cut off. (See the graphic on page one.) **(See Figure 2)**



Figure 1: Google Search Engine Organic Listing

Methods

COPY WRITING

When you create content for your site, your goal should be to write intelligent, grammatically correct, relevant copy.

When you write your text, you should consider keywords including your location. It is likely you will naturally add relevant words and phrases, but by thinking of your audience and

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what search terms they might enter when they "Google," this will help you write more search-friendly copy. Understanding your audience – who they are, what interests them and what they need from you – is essential to writing good copy for your site.

Additionally, write what is relevant to each page within your site. Narrow down the essence of the page and write unique, engaging copy. If the page is featuring doorknobs, focus the writing on that and particularly on what you have that people may want from a doorknob and what may set you and your doorknobs apart from others.

Often a brochure-type (mostly static) site will not necessarily separate all they have to offer on multiple pages. In this case, a single page full of content about multiple and diverse services is acceptable; however, it should be logically arranged.

The more keywords that are used, intelligently and relevantly without overdoing it (see *Keyword Stuffing* below), the better. The density of keywords is not as important as the overall quality of the content. The ultimate goal is not to write for your audience, not the search engines.

In your search for keywords, ideally, you're looking for *relevance* (words and phrases that describe the product or service on the page you are writing for) and *low competition*. Competition refers to the number of sites that are using that same keyword or keyword phrase. Consider, also, not just one- or two-word key phrases. The "long tail keyword" typically describes a phrase of 3 to 5 keywords which you might develop to refine traffic to your site. While a long phrase may not generate as much traffic, it will generate much more specific results.

Location-based keywords can be a critical aspect of copywriting, particularly if your focus is on a mostly local clientele. If you primarily serve clients in Pocatello, ID, including the word "Pocatello" in your copy would be wise.

LANDING PAGES are pages which have a singular and unique purpose: to offer a specific product or service or to attract a visitor to sign up or register for something. For example, a Google Ad might promote a new product, service, or a sale. The click on that ad would direct the visitor to the specific landing page where they can take advantage of it.

LINKING

Also, quite important in determining a listing position are not only on-page, internal linking, but external linking factors (backlinks: links to your site from other sites).

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The more links from other places back to your website, the more visible you are. Google places more importance on *relevant, high quality* sites with links going back to you. The operative idea here is *relevance and high quality*. Taken directly from Google's page:

"The quantity, quality, and relevance of links count towards your rating. The sites that link to you can provide context about the subject matter of your site and can indicate its quality and popularity."

Link building, as Google explains "is a long-term effort."

You can't successfully build a link campaign overnight and expect it to do any good. If you could, everybody would be on page one.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD LINKING:

1. Inbound links from a site that has relevance to yours with information that enhances your own and vice versa.
2. Not all links are created equal:
 - Links from high ranking and well-respected sites
 1. For obvious reasons, a link to your page from the New York Times website has more quality than from a pornographic site or "link farm."
3. Links to your site that are NOT reciprocated.
 - A one-way (quality) link to your site is a ringing endorsement
 1. If you submit a legitimate review, Monterey Bay Design will post it and it will include a one-way link back to your website.

WRITE CONTENT ON YOUR PAGE WORTHY OF LINKING TO:

1. Create a FAQ or Knowledgebase on your site that answers questions in and around your topic.
2. Create a blog and offer useful information that you can update regularly.

Domain Names

A domain name is the human-readable internet address of websites. It is a translation of IP numbers to words such as **google.com** that is associated with an Internet Protocol (IP) address (i.e. 64.233.191.255). In choosing a domain name, you should consider several factors:

- readability
- memorability



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- keywords

Also, consider possible confusion with domain names that are too similar. example.com and examples.com are two completely different websites that can be easily confused.

The addition of a keyword into a domain name can be helpful, but you want to avoid the look of spam which Google frowns on. A domain like example-monterey-salinas-carmel-cheap.com is an obviously spammy attempt to acquire search engine traffic through location-based keywords.

The following is from moz.com:

"Ideally, webmasters should strike a balance between finding a catchy, unique, brand-friendly domain name and having a domain that contains keywords they are trying to target. The benefit of a keyword-rich domain is two-fold. First, the domain name itself is a ranking factor that the engines consider when calculating ranking order. Second, having relevant keywords in a domain name is beneficial because the domain name is the text that other Internet users will use as [anchor text](#) when linking. Since keywords in anchor text are an important ranking factor, having these keywords in a domain name can have a positive impact on ranking."

Multiple Domain Names

Is pointing multiple domains to a single website beneficial for SEO or not? Whether it's a domain that varies in keywords or whether it's multiple TLD's* of the same domain name, there is really no benefit to SEO. The only times it is of benefit is:

- when these domains are set up as landing pages WITH UNIQUE CONTENT AND FUNCTIONS that then link to the main domain
- if the additional domains are being purchased in order to protect the brand
- if the domain previously had content and it is now being redirected in order to preserve some of the *link juice*

*A TLD is Top Level Domain: .com, .net, .org – all these extensions are known as TLDs.

If multiple domains are purchased and there is no intent to create unique landing pages or sites, then a 301-permanent redirect* is what should be used to point to the main domain name.



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**A 301 Permanent Redirect is code that tells the search engines that "this is not a fly-by-night scheme to redirect a page" – that it is permanent and meaningful.*

Social Media Management

It's a chore, but if your goal is to be more visible and to rise in the search engine listings, some form of social networking must be done.

The SEO/SEM aspect of creating a new website is often overlooked as optional or just an extra expense. While some of it, certainly, includes an optional collection of features, it's important to the ongoing process of visibility on the internet; however, setup of social media channels should not be taken lightly. A presence on social media *without* activity is arguably worse than no social media presence at all.

To aid your management of social media profiles, there are 3rd party platforms that have varying flavors of capabilities. By connecting your social media profiles to these services, you can manage them from one location. The following are generally rated amongst the best of them, and they all include the following options and capabilities:

- support at least the top 3 (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
- allow you to schedule posts in advance
- offer analytics
- cost effective
- have free plans with limited capabilities

Social Media Management Platforms: [Hootsuite](#), [Buffer](#), [Sendible](#), [SocialPilot](#), [MeetEdgar](#)

Advertising

1. Set up a Google Account where you can begin a PPC (pay-per-click) advertising campaign with AdWords. *
 - a. <https://adwords.google.com>
2. Consider submitting your website into sites that offer free business listings. Yelp, etc.
 - a. It is likely a default listing for your business will be created *automatically* on a multitude of sites. You have the option to claim these businesses as your own in order to refine or correct information; however, there may be limitations if you don't pay them a fee.
 - b. Yelp can be a double-edged sword. You have to be open to the possibility of bad reviews. While there is nothing you can do to remove reviews, you can and should be prepared to respond to them with A+ customer service.

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3. Facebook and X - formerly known as Twitter - also have PPC advertising capabilities.
 - a. <https://www.facebook.com>
 - b. <https://twitter.com/>

*GOOGLE

Google is a recommended account to establish *regardless of Social Media marketing intentions* as it provides multiple functions beneficial to a website such as:

- Google Map access (if you wish to reveal a location,)
- Google Drive (for remote backup if the platform supports it)
- Google My Business is another feature that enables you to claim and customize your presence on Google Maps and Google Search.
- Google Analytics is a service geared to getting detailed information about the users who visit and interact with your site
 - Suggested use only if you intend to analyze your site visitors in detail. More complex and stringent privacy compliance configuration is required

No Nos

Often termed Black Hat or Gray Hat SEO, the practice describes manipulating how your site is perceived by internet users and the search engines in order to boost page ranking and attract more website "hits." (While *Black Hat* is the blatantly illegitimate and illegal use of optimization tactics, *Gray Hat* is somewhat less obvious and may avoid search engine penalties, but it is still recognized as improper.) Search engines may ban you from the search index if they find you are abusing the system and the internet user by practicing unscrupulous methods of search engine optimization (SEO). These are just a few examples of techniques to avoid:

- **Duplicate Content**

Duplicate content on a site is not grounds for action on that site unless it appears that the intent of the duplicate content is to be deceptive and manipulate search engine results.

~ Google

Google also says: "There's no such thing as a "duplicate content penalty." If you intentionally create duplicate content – for example, for location-based pages where you create a page with duplicate content and just swap out the city – the intention here is technically "*to be deceptive and manipulate search engine results*". While this practice may technically work in SERPs (Search Engine Result Pages), ideally, tweaking the content at least partially on each duplicate page should be a goal.

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- **Keyword Stuffing**

Which means if you sell donuts, you do NOT write copy like this: "Our donuts are the best donuts of all the donuts and non-donuts in the world. Taste our donuts - dollars to donuts, you'll think they're the best donuts, too."

- **Irrelevant Keywords**

If your site sells donuts, don't fill your copy with irrelevant search terms simply to attract people searching on particular words or phrases. e.g., iPhone, Brad Pitt, etc. If it's a natural comparison or legitimate reference, this is fine, but there should be at least a tangential relationship to your donuts.

- **Doorway Pages**

This is a way of stuffing a page with highly searchable terms and then redirecting the user through the underlying code to your target page. Don't confuse this with a solid, information filled landing page.

- **Link Farms**

Don't let an unscrupulous SEO "expert" bait you into paying for placing your link into a link farm. They won't call it a link farm, but you have to be aware of what it is before you can recognize it. A link farm is a page or website or multiple websites that lists link after link after link in no order or relationship to each other or the website. It is solely used to generate inbound links.

The consequences of being listed on a link farm could be page rank suspension or removal from the search engine index – sometimes manually by Google and without notification. Worst case scenario: penalized for the life of the domain.

The Beginning of SEO for your site

The foundation is the key to how long your house will stand.

1. Make sure your site is mobile-friendly, user-friendly, and easy to navigate.
2. Repair broken links.
3. Know your audience. Make sure each page has relevant content using quality keywords and key phrases and that it targets the specific page as much as possible.
4. Does your location figure into your business? If it does, consider including location-based keywords to your copy.
5. Can you add other pages that people would be interested in? Can you add a FAQ? A blog?
6. If it's a sufficiently large site, consider incorporating a site map into your site.

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