

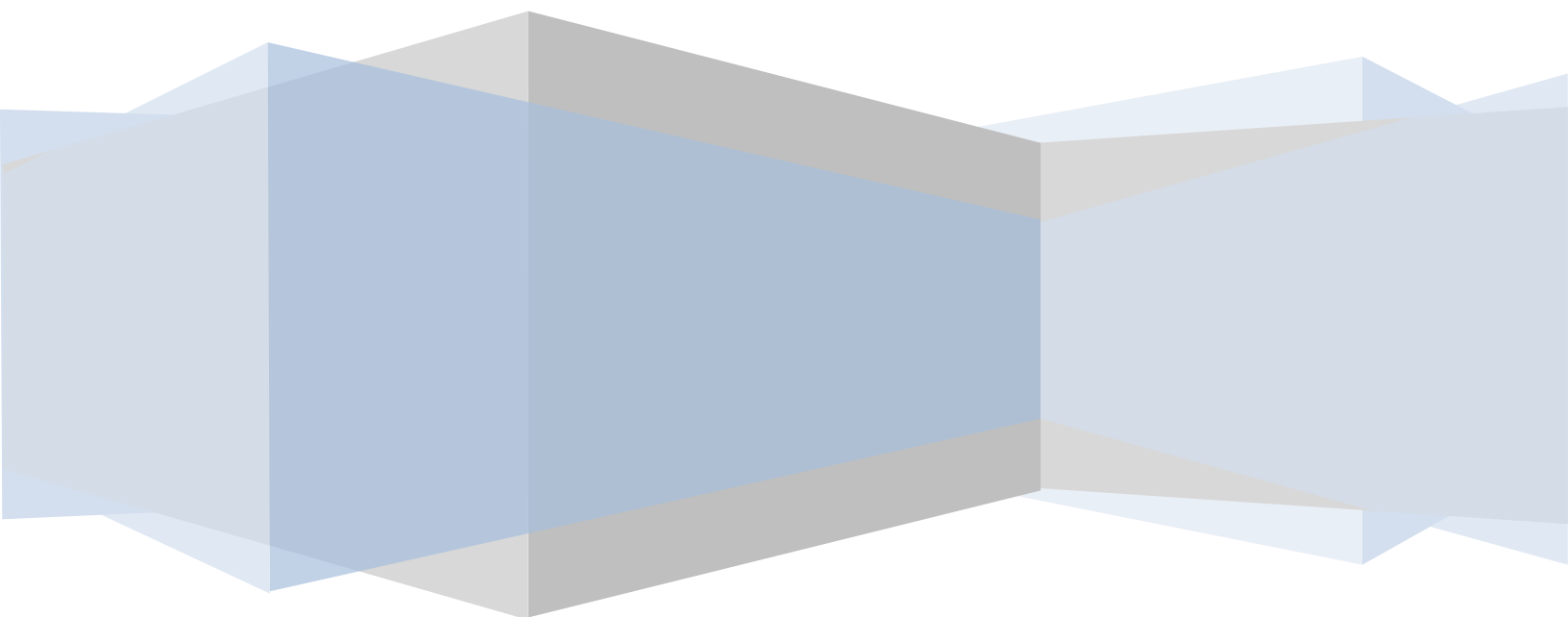
Written by Aji Issac when he was heading DA web warkting team

Web Marketing

Be web business educated

[Weekly Educative series – I]

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The practical parts of SEO and how one can achieve better rankings

(This is based on the common practical issues we face. I am not covering the theoretical part.)

Before going to SEO, let me force you to rethink on our perception towards web marketing. There was a time, when most of the traffic used to come from search engines and **web marketing was synonymous to search engine ranking**. It is no longer true. With the social media and various other web tools, Search engine marketing (SEM) and Search Engine Optimization (**SEO is a subset of bigger web marketing**). For **some business** SEO/SEM is more significant (*like an online mortgage broker*) but for some it may be **totally insignificant** (*example Facebook or Orkut*). So, please don't confuse web marketing with SEO and SEM; there is more that one can do and achieve on web than just focusing on SEO/SEM.

Here, I want to focus **on the practical parts (that are commonly faced by our department) of SEO** and how one can achieve better rankings:

SEO aka Search Engine Optimization is a term left with no proper definition but many definitions. According to me, **practical parts of SEO can be divided into following phases:**

1. Avoid search engine penalties
2. Improve search engine practices to help dumb search engine algorithms
3. Strengthen onpage and offpage factors for better search engine ranking
4. Repeat 1 to 3 sequentially.

Let's look at these phases one by one:

Phase I - Avoid Search Engine penalties

There are few things that can cause bad effects on search engine indexing and ranking, which generally happens because the client is not aware of such things. Here are some of the common mistakes we see with some of our clients.

1. **Multi websites with same content:** Search engines take duplicate content very seriously. Say, if you have two sites, Site A and Site B with same content, then only one will be given value and the other will be termed duplicate. The worst situation can be a mix of both. Some pages of Site A will be considered duplicate and some pages of Site B will be considered duplicate based on the strength of the page. Suppose, if some people link to Site A and some to Site B, then our strength is getting divided across many domains. We need to make sure that there is only one site offering a particular content or service for better result.
2. **Duplicate content inside site:** A lot of pages (with different URLs) inside the site having the same content. This will harm the site too.
3. **Linking to bad websites:** If we link out to bad websites, it will harm our reputation.



4. **Frames:** If we have frames and call other pages inside them, then it will devalue our site's reputation.
5. **No value services:** Search Engines promote those websites that offer some unique services. Websites that are purely affiliates or exist to promote others will not be valued.
6. **Over Optimization Penalties (Oops):** Sometimes the pages are keyword-stuffed. Overdoing some of the good things can cause Oops.
7. **Others:** There are other issues like blocking search engine bots, time outs, less text, dynamic urls etc. These issues are not quite grave and are uncommon.

Phase II - Improve search engine practices to help dumb search engine algorithms

Sometimes, search engines are not able to value the pages because it is based on an algorithm. These are some of practices that help search engines:

1. Blocking unimportant pages using **robots.txt** <http://www.robotstxt.org/> .
2. Checking and removing **duplicate content** using Google and <http://www.copyscape.com/> .
3. Adding **Meta description** (for better search engine result pages snippet) and keywords <http://www.google.com/support/webmasters/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=35264> .
4. Making proper arrangement of content with **keyword based title, h1, h2 tags**. Content arranged and highlighted properly.
5. **Sitemaps** <http://www.sitemaps.org/>
6. Adding the site to **webmaster console** so that they can communicate with us and show the errors <http://www.google.com/webmasters/> .
7. Proper **navigations**.
8. **Removing bad pages** from the listing using webmaster console.
9. **Others:** Adding the right keyphrases, creating more pages for various keyphrases, keeping templates consistent.

Phase III - Strengthen onpage and offpage factors for better search engine ranking

Search Engine ranking factors can be divided into three:

1. Onpage – The things that are done on the page (or site) like keywords on H1, h2 tags, making bold etc
2. OffPage – Things done outside the page which includes links, anchor text, signals etc
3. Others – There are other factors like Stickness (visitor satisfaction), geo location of traffic, hosting location etc.



Some good resources that will help you understand various onpage and offpage factors and their strength:

1. <http://www.seomoz.org/article/search-ranking-factors> (This is very helpful to understand the factors)
2. <http://www.vaughns-1-pagers.com/internet/google-ranking-factors.htm> (A compiled list with some details)

Phase IV - Repeat 1 to 3 sequentially

Every time you add some strength to your site by improving onpage and offpage factors, it increases the risk of being penalized. Therefore, one must go back to phase- I and check for possible penalties and improve the practices. Also, with time the content does change, more pages get added and thus one needs to go back and check for penalties and improve the practices.

How one can achieve high Ranks

Now when we know all these things, what is the key to achieve high ranks (and thus traffic and sales)? Almost all (at least 80%) the required knowledge is available on web. We will be listing all the search engine patents on our new site <http://www.dawebmarketing.com> , which will help you understand more about the recent algorithms.

Success will depend on:

1. **How well can you integrate all the parts?** That's one reason we keep on writing, *"In successful buildings, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, so is with successful web businesses."* For this, you need a lot of experience. I am glad our team has people who are experienced over 6 years in integrating various things together.
2. **How one can generate more links?** This is very important. We are working very hard to get this one done. The more links we generate the better will be our rankings. We will be partnering with various others in the industry to generate more links for our partners. We need to do some link bait to generate more links.
3. **How can one generate proper signal?** Many SEO companies still work on data. They acquire 1000s of links in the first month, this helps their client climb the ranks (sometimes) but because of inconsistency in generating links they fall a fall of Goliath. It's important to generate natural looking signals. Getting consistent links per month, diversified anchor text, consistent addition of content etc.
4. **Improving stickiness:** End of the day "Visitor is the king". Even after getting good ranks if visitors bounce out of your site, then the ranks will turn out to be penalties (just a strong indirect sentence).

Other resources to understand more about SEO

1. <http://www.seomoz.org/article/beginners-guide-to-search-engine-optimization>
(Beginner's Guide to Search Engine Optimization)
2. <http://www.webmasterworld.com/forum10003/2010.htm> (Successful site in 12 months
by Brett)

