

Optimize Your Website

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Note – This is one from a sequence of exercises from the Search Marketing subject outlined in the Strategic Marketing Process eBook. Download the free e-book www.growthpanel.com/marketing-tools/index.html and subscribe to this subject at www.growthpanel.com/versions/get-started.html to download from Growth Panel’s Intelligent Marketing Platform.

Some of the graphics in this PDF might not display properly.

Search Engine Optimization or SEO: The process of improving your website to rank higher in search engine results.

In SEO, your ultimate goal is to get your site listed in the top 10 Google results (the first page) for a few targeted search terms that your prospects are using. Most keywords have a great deal of competition so the task is challenging, but you should still try to rank for very targeted terms. At the very least, your prospects need to find you in the top 10 when they enter your company’s name in the search bar.

To optimize your site, you’ll need to make sure its content, design and underlying coding are attractive to search engine spiders, the programs that crawl the web, decide what each page is about and rank pages against other.

PROJECT PLAN

Here are the steps to follow:

STEP (CHECK THOSE THAT YOU’LL TACKLE)	NOTES	DUE DATE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. Identify potential keywords that prospects would use to find you	Use 479-A	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. Evaluate your rankings against your competitors for keywords		
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. Optimize the architecture		
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Write keyword-rich content		
<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Program your site ; make sure it doesn’t use technology that isn’t search-engine friendly		
<input type="checkbox"/> 6. Register your site in the key directories and search engines	See 475 – Submit Your Site to Search Engines & Directories	
<input type="checkbox"/> 7. Launch other programs that can help	See 474 – Build an	

STEP (CHECK THOSE THAT YOU'LL TACKLE)	NOTES	DUE DATE
<input type="checkbox"/>	generate more organic traffic	Inbound Link Program
<input type="checkbox"/>	8. Monitor the sources of your traffic , your rankings and your competitors; tweak your site as needed to produce the best results	

Search engines are evolving rapidly and there are many good online resources for keeping track of the latest developments and how they impact your site's rankings.

MEASURE YOUR CURRENT RANKINGS

Do you rank for any of the keywords on your list?

You can manually check your rankings in each search engine and record them in **479-E**. You can use the sheet to estimate the number of impressions you're receiving on each engine and track your progress over time.

To estimate your impressions, you'll need the following estimates:

		Enter your estimate
Current market share for each of the top 3 search engines	Google	%
	Yahoo!	%
	MSN	%
Estimated percentage of total searchers who go beyond page 1 results	To page 2 (11-20)	%
	To page 3 (21-30)	%

As your list of keywords grows, it can get tedious to check your rankings. Search Google to find software or services that can automatically track that information and show you how you rank against your competitors.

IDENTIFY TECHNOLOGY BARRIERS

Search engine spiders can't read some website technologies because they read static HTML text. If you're serious about generating traffic through search, minimize the use of these technologies as much as possible.

Technology that prevents spiders from accurately reading your content (check any that you use)	Explanation
<input type="checkbox"/> Macromedia Flash	Spiders can't read flash, so if your site is built in flash or uses a lot of flash content, it's invisible. Consider using flash for very small presentations only when necessary.
<input type="checkbox"/> Heavy graphics	Spiders read HTML text, not graphic images. You can use keywords in

Technology that prevents spiders from accurately reading your content (check any that you use)	Explanation
<input type="checkbox"/>	the image tags, but if you have valuable information stored in graphics, it's better to have that information in body copy on the page.
<input type="checkbox"/> Dynamic pages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ URLs containing question marks ▶ ASP ▶ Session IDs ▶ Cookies ▶ DHTML 	<p>These pages are “dynamically generated” rather than static. For example, the page may display product detail from a table based on the user’s choice on a previous page. Spiders only follow links, so they can’t get to this dynamic information.</p> <p>You can solve this problem by creating static versions of important dynamic pages and including them in a robots.txt file for the spiders to read. (Your webmaster should know how to do this.)</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> JavaScript (especially in your navigation)	<p>If you use JavaScript or Flash in your menuing system, the spiders won’t be able to read the links through your site.</p> <p>You can solve this problem by including text-link navigation at the bottom of your pages. Then add a link to a text site map on your home page.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Frames	<p>Frames divide the navigation and body of a page and prevent spiders from accurately reading either area. Consider revising your programming to display the “frame” area statically on every page.</p>

If you use any of these technologies, how extensively are they used?

How do you recommend solving the problem?

What are your next steps?

NEXT STEPS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DUE DATE

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OPTIMIZE YOUR SITE ARCHITECTURE

When you have a list of prioritized keywords, make sure your site architecture is designed to use them as effectively as possible.

Step one: Review these tips and check any that you should address.

HOME PAGE TIPS	NOTES/NEXT STEPS
<input type="checkbox"/> Your home page should be content-rich. The spiders “weight” this content over the content on the rest of your site; if your home page is mostly graphics or flash, spiders can’t read it.	
<input type="checkbox"/> If you regularly add press releases or articles to a NEWS section, add the headline, date and a short blurb on your home page too. Search engines like pages that are updated more frequently, and it gives you more keywords and relevant content for your home page.	

NAVIGATION TIPS	NOTES/NEXT STEPS
<input type="checkbox"/> Figure out which pages are the most important for users AND search engines, then make sure you can access them directly from your home page. The farther a page is from the home page, the greater the chance that the spider won’t get to it.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Make sure you offer text-based navigation (text links to each of the subpages) throughout your site. Search engines can’t follow Flash or JavaScript menus, so add a text version to the	

NAVIGATION TIPS		NOTES/NEXT STEPS
<input type="checkbox"/>	bottom of your pages.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Add a link to a text-only “site map” to every page in your site. The site map is a plain HTML page with text links to each page, and it helps spiders effectively crawl your site.	

TIPS FOR INDIVIDUAL PAGES*		NOTES/NEXT STEPS
<input type="checkbox"/>	Create static versions of important dynamically-generated pages	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Include keywords in your URL strings whenever possible	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Add pages that are very focused on particular subjects and keywords. [Use 307 if you need help brainstorming new content.]	

*The next step will help you with these tips.

Step 2: Determine how you’ll optimize each page in your site.

1. Use **320-A** and **320-B** to record each of your navigational “sections”. These sections should all be accessible from your home page.
2. Then use the **320-D** to list the pages in each section and the content of each page. You’ll also note whether the page is static or dynamic (i.e. pulling from a database) and whether the content is important to your searchers.
3. Finally, use **320-G** to “assign” keywords and phrases to pages. You may find that you need to modify some existing pages, add pages or move things around.

When you finish these steps, document what needs to be done:

NEXT STEPS	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DUE DATE

Now that you have a plan, you're ready to rewrite copy for individual pages. **308** can you with your website content.

CALCULATE YOUR BUDGET AND ROI

You can use **480-A** to create a budget for programming and other organic search efforts. You'll enter your investments in the following categories:

INVESTMENT	NOTES
Website: Writing, design, programming	
Directory listings	These investments are addressed in 474 – Build an Inbound Link Program
Purchased links	
Paid search programs	

You can also use **480-B** to project the increased traffic to your site, then use **537-A**, **537-B** and **537-C** to produce a detailed budget, revenue projection and ROI analysis.

To generate an estimated ROI, you'll also need to develop the following projections:

PROJECTION	NOTES
Number of new customers you will generate via your SEO program	Use 480-B as a basic guideline.
Lifetime value of the new customers you'll generate	Or if they'll only buy once, you can use Gross Profit (Revenue – Cost of Goods Sold). [Customer Lifetime Value can help]

PROGRAM YOUR SITE

If you don't already have a developer or vendor to tackle the actual programming creating an RFP to measure apples to apples. [Vendor Selection can help]

Make sure your developer isn't using any of the "technology barriers" from earlier in this exercise.

TRACK YOUR RESULTS

To evaluate the success of your optimization program, make sure you're tracking your site traffic before you implement any changes. If you don't have a web analytics program in place, here are several low-cost options:

ANALYTICS PROGRAM	NOTES
Google Analytics	www.google.com/analytics Program is free if you have a Google AdWords account (for paid search). Enables you to insert a tracking code on each of your pages to measure traffic and patterns through your site.
WebTrends	They offer a low-cost "on-demand" analytics service as well as a more comprehensive software option: www.webtrends.com/Products/WebTrends7.aspx They also offer an SEO tracking product: www.webtrends.com/Products/WebPositionGold.aspx
ClickTracks	ClickTracks also offers hosted and software solutions with several product versions based on your needs: http://www.clicktracks.com/

You can use **480-D** to enter your average daily traffic, sources of traffic and your daily revenue projections for your site. There are six "post-optimization" dates in the sheet; it's important to give your SEO program 3-6 months to really take effect.