

# An Overview of Search Engine Optimisation – SEO



*A detailed PDF on best SEO techniques required for a successful SEO campaign. Maximise your online presence with practical search marketing techniques*



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## 1. - SEO – Search Engine Optimisation

Search Engine Optimisation or SEO is the process of raising a website's rankings through a series of intelligently implemented techniques both on-site and off-site. This PDF is going to provide a brief overview of various techniques and strategies that go in to an SEO campaign. Both on-site and off-site SEO must be carried out together in order to achieve the maximum benefit. It is a very complex industry and one that is continuously evolving due to the constant algorithm updates from the search engines. It is absolutely vital that SEO companies keep on top of these updates so that they may be able adapt their strategies accordingly as not to lose rankings.

### 1.1 - About Weblinx

Weblinx Ltd are a professional Internet marketing and SEO Company offering cost effective search engine promotion solutions. They work to the very highest of standards when implementing their ethical optimisation techniques both on and off site. Weblinx have a vast array of satisfied clients in a number of industries. Having 8 years of experience within the industry has helped Weblinx develop their skills to become specialists in all areas of search and Internet marketing. As a transparent company, clients of Weblinx are told exactly what is happening with their campaign at every stage. Nobody is ever kept in the dark.

## 2. - The 3 Steps of SEO

Although there are no strict structures as to how an SEO campaign should be organised, there are a number of guidelines companies follow. Due to the varied nature of the industry, each SEO company will vary their techniques. As a rule of thumb, a lot of companies will stick to the most commonly known 3 steps of SEO:

- **Keyword Analysis**
- **Webpage Layout**
- **Link Building**

### 2.1 - Keyword Analysis

The keyword analysis is the first and foremost factor of any SEO campaign. It is the foundations of the campaign; you wouldn't build a house without foundations. There are a number of keyword tools out there, although we've found that one of the best is direct from Google. The main outcome of the keyword analysis stage is to produce a list of keywords with which your whole campaign is oriented around. Before choosing the exact keywords, a lot of research has to be carried out to determine certain criterion is met.

For example, you need to ensure that the selected keywords are all relevant to the campaign. There's no point optimising for keywords that aren't relevant to the business and industry as this will just get punished by the search engines.



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In addition to the relevancy factor, the keywords must be chosen with the competitiveness in mind. It should go without saying that the more competitive a keyword is, the more difficult it will be to optimise for. When a keyword is more competitive, it will usually take longer to get results for and cost more in terms of investments.

When carrying out the keyword analysis, we also look at the search volume of each keyword. This is to get an idea of how many people are searching for that keyword. The figure can be viewed in local searches as well as global. It's always good practice to compare the search volume against the competitiveness of the keyword in order to get a measurable and realistic figure.

Another important aspect of the keyword analysis is identifying whether the keywords selected will be nationally or locally targeted. This can be dependent on either the industry or the budget of the campaign. Locally targeted keywords are usually cheaper due to the competition being lower. Not only this but local keywords are generally used for companies offering local services ("plumbers Manchester" for example). National keywords target larger audiences and so will usually cost more to optimise for due to the high level of competition.

## 2.2 - Webpage Layout

The second stage of any SEO campaign is ensuring that the website is search engine friendly by changing certain aspects of the webpage layout. When a website is first published, it is very rarely (unless specifically designed) fully compatible with the search engines. From time to time, search engines will struggle to read a website because they don't see them in the conventional method that we do. Search engines only see the coding that goes in to a web page which is why it's important to strategically place the keywords in the correct locations.

When adapting the website for search engines, the look and feel of the site isn't affected. It is just the background code: the bits that the search engine sees. These areas can include elements such as the Meta tags, title tags, alt tags, linking titles and more. This will help the search engines see the keywords in the right places and increase the relevancy of the site towards that specific keyword or list of keywords.

As part of the web page layout, an intelligent page and folder structure should be implemented with relevant parent and child pages. This helps the search engines see which pages are related through the same topic. For example, you could have 2 child pages within a parent page, this is telling the search engines that the two child pages are related to the topic of the parent page. The page and folder structure plays an important part of the webpage layout.

In addition to the page structure, an intelligent linking structure should be planned out and implemented. This is in the form of internal links located throughout the content. These links will have anchor text keywords in an attempt to identify the related keywords to Google and the other search engines. These keywords will then get related to the link they follow when the search engines crawl the site.

The final ingredient in the web page recipe is the inclusion of unique content right through the site. Having unique content can be the difference between ranking well and not appearing at all. It's



vitaly important that all content on site is unique as search engines will penalise a site if it has copied content throughout the pages.

### 2.3 - Link Building

Link building is an imperative factor of any search engine optimisation campaign. This is for many reasons. To begin with search engines see links from other sites almost like a popularity vote and so the more links you have, the more popular you are in the search engine's eyes. Obviously there are conditions that affect how true this statement is. If your site is receiving thousands of spammed and unrelated links then the search engines will realise and penalise the site accordingly. Search engines may be robots, but they're not stupid.

As with everything in SEO, it's all about relevance. For example if you have a website for a dentist in Manchester and you have thousands of links coming from unrelated car manufacturers in India then you will suffer in the rankings for this. This is because the search engines will see this as a cheap attempt at pulling the wool over their eyes and fooling them. Links are only beneficial if they are relevant to the site or to the industry.

This factor goes double for if you're providing a localised service such as a plumbing or boiler repair service. A surprising truth that not many know of is that the IP of the source of the link is actually taken in to consideration by the search engines. When you're a company offering local services, you will benefit more by having links from local sources than you would from other countries. This has actually been stated by Google themselves and works in conjunction with the maps service Google offers.

Links from high authority sites will also be more beneficial to your campaign. A high authority site is one with a high PR (Page Rank) or a recognised and respected brand. People are sometimes put off accepting links from deep inside a site (such as an article folder) even though the site may be a recognised brand like a news site. You should always accept these links because authority is still passed on with the link juice, a site can still have domain authority even if the exact linked page has a low PR.

Getting links can help get your pages cached a lot quicker as it encourages more crawling from the search engine spiders. Your pages can only appear in the Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs) once they have been cached, which is why this is so important. A cached page is much stronger than one that isn't cached as then the page will get crawled and ranked appropriately against the competition.

Social search is evolving and this is why social linking is such a useful technique to apply. Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and LinkedIn are affecting search results in different ways to each individual. Especially within the Google rankings, this is due to its most recent social endeavour – Google+. Content that is shared by your friends is shown predominantly above other results when signed in and browsing. There are hundreds of social signals that affect search and they must be explored in order to benefit from them. It's important to raise your online presence and exposure.



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It is worth noting that when you are linked to, if the link has a “nofollow” rel tag then it is pretty much useless in terms of rankings. This is because the “nofollow” rel tag is a command to the Google spiders to let them know not to follow that link, meaning that the page will not get cached or receive any link juice. It doesn't mean that you won't benefit from the link though because even though you won't get a ranking boost, it may still provide leads and extra traffic through to your site.

The search engines want to rank the sites with the most relevant and useful content the highest. This is to increase the overall user experience. Going off this, it's worth planning some link baiting techniques. Link baiting is providing something that people are going to want to share and link to. Encouraging people to link to your website by giving them something truly useful is a very cost effective and ethical method of link building. This can be done by putting in true hard work to an article, a PDF, a video or other user interactive features. After all, it's giving the search engines exactly what they're looking for.

### **3. - Is SEO for you?**

SEO can be for anyone that wants to rank higher in the SERP's and receive more traffic. In general, more traffic will mean more business and more business will inevitably mean more Return of Investment (ROI). Due to the diversity of the industry, SEO can be fit for everyone as there are so many customisable packages fit for any budget. You don't have to be a massive company to afford and benefit from an optimisation campaign. Many SEO agencies have one man bands that rank higher than globally famous brands for their top industry keywords. In that sense, it is a very unusual field of Internet marketing.

If you have an ambition to rise above the competition and develop your business in the online world, then SEO is for you. Most people are sceptical about taking out a campaign due to the fact that page one results can never be guaranteed (see “Why can't you guarantee page one results?”), but once you make the decision, it can be a massive boost for your business.

Promoting your business across the search engines will allow you access to business opportunities and advertising channels previously unknown. It's surprising just how many doors it opens for the business. If this is something that intrigues you then SEO is definitely for you and your business.

### **4. - White Hat and Black Hat SEO**

These two terms are thrown about quite a lot but what do they actually mean? They are two different kinds of SEO that is determined by the specific techniques used and how ethical the techniques are in the eyes of the search engines. White hat SEO is considered to be ethical optimisation as opposed to Black Hat. This is because White Hat SEO adheres to the webmasters guidelines by providing the search engines and users with exactly what they're looking for. The difference with Black Hat SEO is that this form is the form that attempts to fool the search engines in to ranking the site higher and is done from a robot's point of view, not a human's. Ethical SEO is favoured by the search engines and is often rewarded instead of penalised. Black Hat SEO is known to be beneficial but only in the short term and it isn't worth the risk of being blocked out of the results permanently. More often than not, Black Hat techniques are realised after some time and the site suffers greatly from this, setting the SEO campaign back years.



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## 4.1 - Black Hat SEO Techniques

There are many Black Hat techniques that are rejected by search engines. One example of which would be keyword stuffing on the home page. This is where the home page is basically just packed full of keywords in hope that the spiders will see these and then rank the page higher due to this. Sometimes a website may have these keywords packed in to the content but in the same colour as the background. This is so that humans can't see them but the robots can still read them. In actual fact, this never works for longer than a month or two as the search engines always realise and then bar the site because of it.

Another well known Black Hat technique that should be avoided like the plague is the spamming of links towards a site. It's easy to get thousands of links pointing to a site, but these links are usually just full of spammed content from unrelated and low PR sites. In most cases, these do more damage than good for the rankings of that site. This is because as soon as the spiders realise where these links are coming from and the unusual volume, the first thing they do is disregard the links and penalise the site in the rankings for it.

Black Hat techniques are usually the quickest, laziest and easiest to carry out as they are mostly automated and have very little effort put in to them. The content produced using black hat techniques is usually reproduced and copied. Sometimes it has been put through automated software that changes the odd word using synonyms although this often reads terrible. Although this does sometimes fool search engines, their rankings algorithms are continuously improving and changing meaning that it doesn't work for long.

## 4.2 - White Hat SEO Techniques

It's basically possible to classify White Hat Techniques as techniques that adhere to the guidelines stated in the search engine webmasters. White Hat techniques focus on providing useful, relevant and unique content to the site readers. Not only this, but white hat links are always genuine and from industry related sites. When a search engine notices that a site has White Hat SEO techniques, it is usually rewarded in the rankings.

Usually, it is the larger SEO agencies that implement White Hat SEO. This is because it takes a lot more time and effort to carry out a successful campaign than Black Hat. It usually also takes longer for the techniques implemented to provide results when using white hat SEO. It's worth it though as the techniques cement the results in place and they last a lot longer than the Black Hat counterparts.

All of the top SEO companies are strong users of ethical White Hat techniques as it is the only real way to benefit in the rankings long term.

## 5. - Choosing an SEO company

Due to the complexity of the industry, there are a lot of different approaches to carrying out the work and so all SEO companies offer different services and prices. It's important to understand



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exactly what you are getting for your money before taking out any SEO campaign. Some companies offer monthly packages with a modest start up fee, these (on average) seem to be the most popular packages sold.

A respectable Search Engine Optimisation company will offer you a range of monthly benefits. One of these may be ranking reports. Receiving a monthly ranking report will show you exactly where your website is positioning and for which keywords so that you are able to see for yourself exactly how well your campaign is going.

Another form of reporting could be through linking reports. A linking report should display a list of links that the SEO Company has gotten on behalf of your company. This allows you to check the links to see if they work, find the PR, check the relevance. Although this may seem like a lot of work, but when your trusting your SEO campaign with another company, it's better to be safe than sorry.

As part of a monthly package, an Internet marketing or SEO company may provide you with monthly analytics. This is a very useful way of noting the (hopeful) increase in traffic through your site. Analytics lets you know accurately how well your SEO campaign is going as well as analyse where it can be improved.

It's always good to shop around before deciding on a company to go with due to the range of packages and prices out there. Always ensure to take note of the monthly services offered by a company before signing the contract. White Hat SEO companies are usually very good with this as they stick to the ethical webmaster guidelines and wish to monitor the progress themselves anyway.

### **5.1 - Why you can never guarantee page one results**

As previously mentioned, there are a lot of people that are sceptical of SEO as an industry because no (ethical) company can guarantee the page 1 results we are all after. This is for a variety of reasons. To begin with, the search engines ranking algorithms are changing literally every week, some minor changes; others are massive such as the famous "Panda" update from Google. The Panda update took place in February 2011 and is still affecting the results today. The update was originally designed to rid the Internet of the many link farms (Sites that were just blasted with spammed links for cheap backlinks) that Black Hat SEO's were using so much.

Nobody knows the exact algorithms used to rank pages, we can only go off the guidelines providing and our own initiative. This is another reason as to why nobody can promise top results. There are various updates and announcements from Google's Matt Cutts that tell us varying ranking factors and how to adapt our campaigns to meet them. Although we are never told everything, for the search engine's own protection from companies that would attempt to abuse the system.

The competition in the industry is another reason. This is because you could be doing everything possible for your client and following all the guidelines, but if a competitor targeting the same keywords receives an extremely high quality link then that could push your results down the list. After all, competitors aren't going to be telling the online world about their plans and techniques are they?



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When choosing an SEO agency to go with, it's important to check the company's track record and find information off their current clients to get an idea of how well that company would do for your campaign. It's also worth taking note of that company's positions because if they can't get rankings for their own business, how are they meant to get them for yours?

## 6. - Miscellaneous

Most of the SEO methods implemented in today's market fit in with the 3 steps, although that's not to say that there aren't a few platforms and techniques that remain outside the normal niche. These techniques all aid your campaign in differing ways dependant on how well they are carried out. It's important for an SEO company to ensure that they have an arsenal of varying techniques as they need to be continuously adapting.

### 6.1 - Blogging

As part of the onsite SEO, a blog is strongly recommended. This can be located either on site or on a sub domain. Most professional agencies will install this for you, regardless of the platform. Having a blog can really help your SEO campaign, when used correctly. Google and the other search engines are always after new and fresh content and there really is no better way of doing this than having a frequently updated blog.

A blog is a means of providing the search engines with a regular stream of fresh content. The more you update the blog, the greater you are seen in the search engines eyes and the more chance of getting accepted in to Google News. Google News has the potential to send a lot of traffic through your site and not only this, but the traffic going through your site will be people interested in your particular product or service.

You can use any blogging platform you wish to help with your SEO but Wordpress is often the favoured. This is purely due to the simplicity of the platform. Wordpress originally started out as a blogging CMS but then was developed further to support web pages and more. It offers everything you need for creating quick, easy and effective blog post.

It's advised that a blog is updated at least 3 times during the working week. This is at least, if more can be done then it definitely should be. As with anything in SEO, it's all about relevance though, the posts have to be relevant to the company, the industry or the search engines will just disregard them.

### 6.2 - Google Maps

Everyone knows about Google Maps, but not many people know just how big the service has gotten. For example, not many people know of the new "helicopter view" that's now available. There's also a lot more that you can add to your business listings such as coupons, opening hours, promotions, videos, photos and more.



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These maps work very well with local SEO as they allow you to target very specific areas. This is if you ensure to include the NAP (Name, Address and Phone number) within the map listing. Google recognises these when they are together and identifies the business to the search engine. It works in conjunction to help raise rankings when the NAP is displayed on your website.

Once the map listing is fully optimised and verified, it is possible that the listing will appear within the natural search results in the form of a rich snippet. This will give your site another channel with which to attract traffic. A rich snippet is a smaller fragment of content taken from another page that is displayed within the natural results.

Although not a ranking factor in the natural results, reviews can be left for your company on your map listing. These help raise the company profile and help you raise the positions within the map rankings. For example, if a clothes shop has 10 positive reviews then it is more likely to rank above a clothes shop with only 5 in the maps listings.

### **6.3 - Redirects**

When you want a new company image and website, there are various steps you must take in order to ensure that Google and the other search engines don't register the site as duplicate content and penalise the site. These actions are usually in the form of redirects, a way of telling the search engines where to find the new site.

#### **6.3.1 - 301 (Permanent) Redirects**

When you move sites, you will more than often need to implement 301 (permanent) redirects for your specific pages. This is used to prevent the search engines caching two versions of the site and classing them as duplicated content. For example if a 301 redirect was placed on [www.domain.com](http://www.domain.com) to go to [www.domain2.com](http://www.domain2.com) then anyone going to the URL [www.domain.com](http://www.domain.com) will automatically be sent to [www.domain2.com](http://www.domain2.com). This also applies for search engines so that they don't cache the original [www.domain.com](http://www.domain.com). 301 redirects are quite time consuming as every individual page must be redirected to its corresponding page.

#### **6.3.2 - Canonicalization**

Another method of eliminating duplicated content is canonicalization. This is used when there are multiple entrances to a page. For instance:

- [www.domain.com](http://www.domain.com)
- [Domain.com/](http://Domain.com/)
- [www.domain.com/index.html](http://www.domain.com/index.html)
- [Domain.com/home.asp](http://Domain.com/home.asp)



All of the above URLs are often considered to be the same when in fact they may actually take you to different pages. Even if they take you to the same page, search engines may still cache them as separate pages and mark them down for duplicated content. The process of canonicalization is choosing the URL you want to use and ensuring that the search engines and visitors are always sent to that one. This can be done by always using the same URL within your internal linking structure.

## 7. Conclusion

Search Engine Optimisation is a very profitable and cost effective method of raising your online presence. It helps drive more traffic and business towards your site, in turn this will aid in raising the conversion rate. There are a lot of differing techniques that go in to an SEO campaign, so much so that no two campaigns are ever the same. Methods must be adapted based on the industry, budget, location and other factors.

Optimisation can help you rise above your competitors to be found by all the search engines. You could have the most interactive, genuine content filled and attractive site on the internet but if it's not being found then all that time and money has gone to waste. SEO won't change the look or feel of your site, it's just the background code that's altered, to make the site more search engine friendly.



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