

WEB SITE OPTIMISATION

Consider this: many of the web sites that we review on behalf of our clients are totally invisible to the outside world unless the exact URL is known. You may be happy with this especially if you site is there for validation only – to prove you are a credible supplier for example – but it is estimated that up to 80% of web site traffic comes from user searches and you will be missing this potential source of new business. So what do you have to do to make sure your web site is listed highly in the search engine rankings? This briefing gives you a shortlist of actions you or your web developer can take to give your site a chance of being seen. It's not exhaustive, and the rules of the game keep changing as the search engines keep changing their algorithms.

Priority	Action
1	URL – having a strong brand name which is well known or a name which says what you do in your URL will save you £££s on promotional costs during the life of your web site.
2	Navigation – make sure the search engines can read your navigation menus.
3	Site map – a site map to help the search engines index all of your content.
4	Frames – avoid them if you can; search engines don't like them.
5	Meta tags – whilst some commentators are dubious about their value we still think that they are important in helping your business to be indexed by the search engines. Also remember to register your business in the source directories such as the Open Directory and Yahoo.
6	Focus – focus is all important in devising your web site and focus means writing your page content around a single keyword. Don't mix grommets with widgets; search engines don't understand the difference.
7	Landing pages – use your signposting promotions (such as Adwords) to direct traffic to a customised landing page. A landing page will address the specific issues of interest and lead to better conversion rates.
8	Keywords – single keywords are often ineffective in competitive markets. You may need a keyword phrase or even long tail keywords (3 words).
9	Images – search engines can't yet index images so make sure the file description (alt) repeats your keyword.
10	Refresh your site regularly to convince the web crawlers that yours is a serious site (there are over 234 million URLs in use so you need to stand out!). If you keep amending the site the crawlers will visit more frequently and you will get higher rankings in the SERPS.

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