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"GUARANTEED TOP 10 SEARCH ENGINE PLACEMENT!"

And other Internet Lies

You have surely seen a couple of these messages in your inbox and the guarantee is about as realistic as the other spam hawking pills to enlarge body parts. Search engine technology has become more advanced over the past few years, though improving your search rankings has become more difficult. There are some techniques and services, however, that you can leverage to increase your odds in getting higher rankings.

To optimize your site for search engines, start with these techniques in your development cycle:

Meta-Description and Meta Keywords — The metatags are embedded into the HTML of your website. Some search engines use the metatag description next to the title of your site as the site's summary, and some search engines rank the relevancy of your site for a given key word by the metatag keywords they find in your site's code. Always include metatags for site description and keywords in the pages of your site.

Copy on your Home page — It is key to have text (copy) on your Home page with the terms under which you would like to be ranked. Because search engine spiders comb Home pages for keyword text, avoid using graphic text or putting copy in Flash animations, most especially on your Home page. Your Home page should be where you describe exactly what your business is, and search engines will only be able to use that copy if it is HTML text.

Use your title, image alt, and header tags effectively — Make sure the title, image alt, and header tags of your site contain terms that will help your search engine categorizing. Search engines use the copy between these tags, and the header tags, in their site rankings.

Get linked — Some search engines look to see how many sites link to your site and how high those sites rank in their existing listings. The more sites that you have linked to yours, the higher you may rank. Coordinate with your partners and industry sites to link to your site.

After you have optimized your site, you should make sure the search directories know where you are. There are several tools to help:

Pay to be searched — There are only a few major search engines on the Internet and several of the search directories — MSN, Lycos, HotBot, and AllTheWeb, for example — use Fast and Inktomi to power their search results. For a nominal fee, you can pay to have your site indexed by Fast and Inktomi. To find out more information on such indexing, visit

<http://insite.lycos.com/inclusion/searchenginesubmit.asp>.

Submission tools — There are many submission tools on the market and they all do about the same thing: They automate the submission process to all the major (and not so major) search engines. These submission tools also provide reporting that allows you to see how highly you rank under specified keyword terms.

This reporting provides an excellent gauge on how successful your ranking efforts may be paying off month to month. A good submission tool to start with is Web Position Gold at

<http://www.webposition.com>.

Pay-for-Placement — Finally, a tool that is often overlooked in search engine strategy is pay-for-placement. Both Overture (<http://www.overture.com>) and Google (<http://www.google.com>) allow you to pay for top-three rankings. Overture's engine powers the very popular Yahoo, MSN, Lycos, Altavista, and InfoSpace search sites, and Google has its own engine. With the pay-for-placement model, you bid for the top display positions in a keyword search, and are billed for each click-through at your winning bid rate. This is an extremely effective method to drive targeted traffic to your site, though price per click can range from \$0.05 to \$1.50 and higher, depending on the popularity of (and competition for) the keyword. Such methods may impact your marketing budget, but provided guaranteed traffic for the price.

In short, search engine placement is something you have to continually manage and there are no silver bullets. However, these coding techniques and search engine tools are a necessary start, and can be combined to effectively raise your site's rankings in the various search engines on the Internet.

For further information on search engine placement, or for help in executing these techniques and tools, please feel free to contact Digital Dogs at info@digital-dogs.com.

About Digital Dogs, Inc.

Digital Dogs is a Scottsdale-based Internet services company. Founded in 1998, Digital Dogs provides professional, personalized Web consulting and development services for clients across many industries and U.S. locations. Additional services include Internet marketing, Web site hosting, search engine placement strategies, multimedia development, and Internet surveying. Clients include Avnet, EDT Learning, Hard Dollar, and Tadiran Telecom. For more information, visit www.digitaldogs.com.