

Page Ranking For Designers

Your website is indexed by search engines on the basis of a number of factors including popularity (# of hits), links to your site from other sites, the ranking/popularity of those other sites, the validity of your code, and the validity of your key words. When a search engine sends a "spider" to check your web site, it determines the pages' keywords by counting the words on the web page it is visiting. The words that appear most frequently or considered most significant (Words that are mentioned towards the top of a document and words that are repeated several times throughout the document are more likely to be considered important.) become your keywords. When a user searches for a particular term, the ranking of your site in the results are influenced by the weight of that search term on your site.

Sources for Keywords

- Your client should have a list of obvious choices,
- The page copy should provide obvious choices.
- Use phrases. General terms don't work as well. There are millions of sites with general terms like "book" "publish" or "self." But the phrase "self publish book" will put you much higher in the ranking.
- Include obvious misspellings, like "recieve."
- Search your possible keywords in Google. Then visit the top ranking sites that come up. Use "View Source" to check out the keyword meta tag of each site.

Meta Keywords

Your meta keyword tag should include about 12-20 words. Don't include any words that don't appear in the body of your text.

Don't fill "meta keywords" with useless words such as "business" if your site is about "computers". It's virtually impossible to be placed for "business" if your site is about "computers"! Narrow your focus.

Don't use the same keyword list, and "title", for every page! Each one of your pages can get placed for a different keyword. Don't "sell your pages short". Besides, one page on your site might be seen as more relevant for a particular keyword when compared to another.

Keywords in Copy

The density of keywords in your content should be around 15% to 20% maximum.

Write at least 200-250 words of visible text copy based on your chosen keywords. The search engines need to "read" keyword-rich copy on your pages so they can understand how to classify your site. Write the copy based on your keyword phrases, and not the other way around.

Always write relevant, useful content that pertains to your web site and its keywords. Whatever you do, make sure that writing educational, informational, and useful content is your FIRST priority. Search engines cannot read your clever web design, graphics, or FLASH. The only thing that

is of use to them is your content text, and the code that verifies what each page is about ("meta keywords", "description", "title", "alt tags", and so on.).

Be Specific! Tell your users in your page copy what each page is about, and include the keywords a few times within the copy. Do not repeat your keywords excessively- but make sure to include them.

Keywords in Other Tags

Weight is also given to keywords that are included in certain sections of a page. These sections include the title tag, meta tags, header tags, image alt tags and formatting tags (e.g. keywords in bold or italicized) of your text. However, with image alt tags `` and hyperlink title tags `` it is important that you don't simply fill these with keywords because this will be ignored at best, and penalized at worst.

Create an effective title tag. Title tags are given a lot of weight with all of the search engines. Try to put your keyword phrases into this tag and not waste space with extra words. The title should be between 10 and 50 characters and include one or more keywords while still being descriptive.

Create an effective meta description tag. This is probably more important than the meta keywords tag. Put a couple of your keyword phrases into the description tag. The description should be between about 10 to 30 words and include one or more keywords while still being descriptive. Of course this is what the user sees first in the list of results when searching.

Site wise

Make all pages accessible to the search engine spiders within 1 or 2 levels (clicks) of the home page. Even better, if you make a web page with a list of every page on your site (a "site map"), then the search engine spiders have a way to find all of your content.

Put different keywords on different pages of the site.

Attempt to get reciprocal links between your site and other sites in the same industry. This should be easy, as it will benefit both your site AND theirs. Link popularity is one way in which some search engines judge what your site is really about. Web site's with more "link popularity" can place higher on some major search engines.

Keep your site updated. No one likes to go to a page that never changes or that is obviously out of date because of non-working links. Make sure that the data in your page portrays the message that you want to send.

And tell your client to be patient! The site will not achieve top placement overnight. It might not even get placed at ALL for months!

Sources: *Braukmann - Anthony Kavas - Jill Whalen - John Calder - Susan Miller*