

NetworkSolutions®

Guide to Getting Found Online



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Building a Web site is not enough. How do you get it found?

You've invested countless valuable resources into starting your Web site. Your doors are open, and now you are just waiting to receive a flood of customers – but where are they?

Many potential customers who are looking for the products and services you offer are searching for them at their favorite search engines (i.e. Google® or Yahoo®), but unless your site is near the top of the search results, customers are not likely to see your listing or to learn about your business. In fact, 62 percent of searchers click on a link within the **first page** of results, according to a report from iProspect and Jupiter Research.¹

You cannot simply build a Web site and wait for visitors to come. You need to market your site online – meaning you need to take action to make your site highly visible to search engines so it gets found by potential customers.

You need to market your site online

The good news is there are many cost-effective steps you can take to improve your Web site's search engine ranking. There are also a few key mistakes that you should avoid.

In this guide, we focus on search engine optimization (SEO) and provide essential tips to help you make your Web site more naturally visible to search engines like Google®. These results won't happen over night, but when you begin to effectively optimize your Web site, you will start to notice higher and higher rankings on the search results pages.

"Organic" vs. "Paid Search"

Search engines provide two primary methods of displaying Web site listings on the results page: one is known as "organic" or "natural", the other as "paid search."

Online Search Engine Marketing	
Search Engine Optimization (SEO)	Paid Search Advertising or Pay Per Click (PPC)
Free listing in a search engine via "organic" or "natural" results	Paid listings generated through paid advertising programs

When you enter a term in a search engine, you will see a list of results (10 at a time) displayed in the center of the search engines results page. These sites are called "organic" search results because they appear after search engines search and index the Web looking for sites that best match the keyword entered. These organic results are also sometimes called "natural" or "free" results, because you don't pay for these listings; they appear because the

¹ iProspect Search Engine User Behavior Study, April 2006

search engines found and ranked your site as having valuable content in relation to the keyword entered. This is determined based on hundreds of criteria in the search engine's "algorithm", or search formula, that your site was a relevant result for the search term entered.

The other method for appearing on the search engine results page is to pay to have your site appear in the "sponsored links" section of the results. You'll typically pay for each click that you get on these links, so this is often called "pay per click" advertising.

The following illustrates the difference between "natural" or "organic" search results and "sponsored" or "paid" results.

Search Engine Optimization – For Natural Search Results

Search engine optimization is the process of making changes to your Web site to improve its chances of ranking well on search engines. This includes keyword selection, putting the keywords in the right place of your site's content, and having sufficient content on your Web site pages.

Before we can offer specific changes to help you optimize your site, we need to explain how search engines work.

Search engines use "spiders" to find Web sites. Spiders are programs that read through all the text of each page that they find, "index" that information as a search result, and follow the page's links to other pages and Web sites. A search engine spider is sometimes referred to as a "bot" or a "robot." These programs are busy crawling across the Web every day at all times.

The screenshot shows a Google search results page for the keyword "domains". At the top, there are navigation links for "Web", "Images", "Maps", "News", "Shopping", "Gmail", and "more". The user's email address "frelin@gmail.com" and "Web History" link are visible in the top right. The Google logo is on the left, followed by a search bar containing "domains" and a "Search" button. Below the search bar, there are links for "Advanced Search" and "Preferences".

The main content area shows search results for "domains". The top result is a sponsored link from GoDaddy.com, titled "Save - \$6.85 Domain Name". Below it is another sponsored link from Google, titled "Register Your Domain". The third result is a sponsored link from Domain.com, titled "Domains".

The organic search results begin with "Domains.com", followed by "Complete Web Solutions: domains, hosting, site builders and SSL", "Domain name - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia", "Domain - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia", "Yahoo! Domains: Secure Domain Name Registration", and "Domain Name Registration - Search, Renew, Transfer and Register ...".

On the right side of the page, there are two columns of sponsored links. The first column includes "Sponsored Links" with results like "\$6.95 Domain Names" and "Domains". The second column includes "Sponsored Links" with results like "Register Domain Names", "Top 10 - Web Hosting", "Buy Domains - Sedo.com", "\$2.99 Web Hosting Special", "Domain Registration", and "Domains".

Spiders travel, or crawl, through the Web via links. For this reason, if no other page on the Web is linking to your site, it will be difficult for the search engines to even find your site.

Step One – Get your Web Site in Shape for Visitors

Before you try to increase traffic to your Web site, it's important to ensure that it is ready to receive new visitors. If you start generating hundreds of hits per day, but your pages look like they are still under construction, you'll be making a poor first impression.

Ensure that your site is streamlined, easy to navigate, and attractive. Check your links to ensure they work, and check your images to make sure they display correctly in a Web browser. Read carefully through every line of copy, searching for inaccurate information and spelling or grammar problems. Review the terms of your Web hosting package to make sure that your site can handle an increase in traffic without crashing. Once you're completely satisfied with your Web site, you can take the next step.

Step Two – Optimize your Site's Content for Keyword Phrases Specific to your Business

A keyword is a word or a phrase entered by users into a search box when they want to find information, or products and services

online. Search engines are designed to look for keywords or phrases in specific areas of your Web site. To rank higher in search results for your target audience, you must identify the most effective keywords and then place them in the right areas of your site's content and HTML code.

Quality keywords describe what your business offers and should include both general and specific terms. For example, if your company sells flavored coffee, good possibilities might include "flavored coffee," "flavored coffee beans," "Columbian coffee," and "coffee variety packs," rather than simply "coffee."

Generating keywords can be done by brainstorming your own list or by using online keyword suggestion tools. Google® offers a free keyword suggestion tool:

<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>.

You can also open your competitors' Web sites and view their keywords by selecting "View" and then "Source" from the menu. The third line in the source code typically says "Keyword Content" and then lists the keywords used for that page.

Once you've identified your keywords, you should use them in the places of your Web site where the search engines will look for them. Search engines will look at emphasized text like titles, headings, and subheadings. They will also notice if the keywords are spread throughout the content of your site. Some of the most important locations are within your "Meta tags," or the actual HTML coding of your site. Here are some key Meta tags where your keywords should appear:

- **The title tag**

The TITLE tag is part of your Web page's HTML code. The content in the TITLE tag appears on the top of your browser window. A TITLE tag is an important introduction to your Web page and is like the heading of a book chapter. You should customize the TITLE tag on every page to describe the contents of each page. The TITLE tag should be the first tag in your HTML and should convey the message in about 40 to

150 characters. Be sure to always use keywords in your TITLE tag. A TITLE tag can be inserted between the <head> tags in your HTML like this:

```
<title>Title copy goes here</title>
```

- **META description tag**

The META description allows page authors to determine how they would like each page described when the search engines view a page. Some search engines show the content in this tag as part of the search results. Your META description tag should be between 50 and 250 characters. Do not repeat any single word more than four times, and do not repeat any keyword phrases more than once. The first letter of each word should be capitalized. Keyword phrases should be separated by commas. A META description tag looks like this:
<META name="description" content="Web Hosting, Web site design, domain names and SSL certificates from Network Solutions.">

- **META keywords tag**

A META keywords tag is part of your Web page's code inserted on top of each page of your site. The keywords used in this tag are not viewable in a Web browser, but can be viewed as part of the source code. This is where you will insert any keywords that are relevant to each page's content. We recommend 75 to 125 characters. You should avoid repetition and the use of stop words (a, the, and, or). The HTML for the keyword tag looks like this:

```
<META name="Keywords" content="Add your keywords here">
```

- **Page content**

Each page of your site should contain about 250 – 600 words of unique content with four or five occurrences of your targeted keywords. You should generally use no more than three keywords per page. Using too many keywords in one place can hurt your ranking, as can overstuffing your pages with too many instances of your keywords.

Step Three – Get your Web Site “Crawled” by the Search Engines

The best way to be sure that the search engines can find your site – and that they come back to index your site frequently – is to have other Web sites link to your site. If you have a lot of other Web sites linking to your site, the search engine spiders will visit your site more frequently and find new content quickly.

In fact, one of the most significant factors determining your site's search ranking is the presence of links from other sites to yours. Every site that links to yours is a vote for your site. The more high-quality, related sites you have linking to you, the more votes you have, potentially increasing your ranking.

The number and quality of links leading to your site from other Web sites is referred to as “link popularity” and there are several ways you can increase it. The key is to get high ranking sites in your industry to link to yours because search engines will use the sites that link to you to help determine what your site is about. You can find out who links to you already by typing “Link: yourdomainname.com” in any major search engine.

Also, be sure the text used in the link itself is a keyword phrase you are targeting.

Here are some methods for increasing your site's link popularity:

- **Ask for links**

Talk to other Web site owners in your industry, and ask them if they will link to your Web site. Another idea is to contact the manufacturers of the products you sell, the local businesses in your industry, other companies you do business with, online media relating to your business, and even organizations you may belong to like your local Chamber of Commerce. Ask each of them to link to your

site, and explain how providing the link will be of use to their Web site visitors.

- **Directory links**

Submitting to directories helps increase your link popularity as well as targeted traffic because they place links to Web sites within specific categories. Some good directories include Yahoo!® Directory. A directory is considered an unbiased authority and links from directories are considered high quality links by search engine algorithms.

- **Press releases**

When your company reaches a major milestone, takes part in a charitable event, hires a new employee, or has some other newsworthy item, craft a professional press release that contains popular search keywords. Posting the press release on your own Web site will add to its searchable content, while also distributing it via an affordable online distribution service like PRWeb.com will help it spread throughout the Internet. You can also have a company like Network Solutions® write and submit a press release for you.

- **Blogs**

Host a blog on which you provide useful information and updates about your business and industry. Blogs, short for Web logs, are composed of a series of dated entries presented in reverse chronological order. Once made part of a Web site, they're extremely easy to update and can be used by businesses to share news, feature products, promote sales, thank customers, and interact with visitors to the site.

Any time you can create something useful and interesting on your site, like a blog that generates buzz, you are bound to get other people to link to your site. For these reasons, blogs are good for more than just improving search engine ranking; they can be a powerful marketing tool.

Step Four – Tracking and Measuring Results

Use a keyword ranking program to see how your keyword phrase ranking positions go up

and down over time. This will give you a strong indication of your site's overall online visibility. Make sure you check your rankings in more than just Google®. Google® can sometimes take more time than other engines to rank your site for its targeted keyword phrases, so be sure you're getting the big picture by checking your rankings in a variety of search engines. Knowledge is power, so measuring results enables you to make changes to exploit what works and eliminate what doesn't.

Use Web site visitor tracking to see what your visitors are doing on your site. Using a free analytics tool like Google®Analytics, you'll be able to see how many visitors you get each day, which search engines your visitors are using to find your site, and which keyword phrases they are using to get there – as well as a wealth of other data about your site's visitors. The tool is free, and if you aren't tracking your site's traffic, you are missing out on a key measurement of your Web site's success.

You should expect to see a gradual increase in both your keyword rankings and your traffic over time, and if you do not see results within three months, do more keyword research or consider seeking the advice of a professional.

Step Five – Maintain Good Results and Use Best Practices

The last step is to maintain good search engine optimization and to continue to tweak and change the content on the site. A Web site should be kept fresh and up-to-date by adding new content or updating the content that exists.

Add new keywords occasionally, and constantly add new content. Aim to add a new page of content every day or at least a few pages a week. If you have an e-commerce site, try writing a new detailed long description for

a product once per day. Your results should be closely monitored using your ranking reports and analytics.

Some tactics to avoid:

- Don't concentrate all your efforts and budgets into only one tactic
Becoming prominent online requires a balanced approach. Tactics like optimizing your Web site for popular keywords, sending optimized press releases, and even investing in the pay per click advertising packages will have some positive effect when used individually, but are most effective when combined. Remember to vary your tactics and evaluate them periodically to see if changes are needed.
- Do not advertise what you cannot deliver
Using keywords on your site that don't apply to your products or services may generate more traffic, but you generally won't be able to make a sale from someone who expected to see something that you don't offer. Your customers may feel deceived, which can lead to poor reviews and merchant rankings. If the deception appears to be intentional, search engines can penalize you by reducing your ranking or blocking your site entirely.
- Do not attempt to deceive the search engines
Search engines don't like sites that are flooded with keywords, use "hidden" text that is the same color as the background, or that automatically re-route traffic from a well-optimized page to another page. The more sophisticated engines can detect practices like these and block offending sites automatically, while other such offenses are often detected during a manual review of a site.

Summary – Be Patient and Consider Professional Help

Be Patient

Search engine optimization is a gradual process of testing, measuring, and refining. Once you have optimized your Web site, it can

take weeks to months before you start to see an increase in your site's rankings for the keyword phrases you targeted.

Do not expect a top ranking in Google® overnight or even within a few months. Achieving high rankings can take as long as three to six months. Once your rankings kick in from search engine optimization, it can be extremely rewarding, so it is worth the up front initial investment to do it now and do it right. If you need more immediate results, consider a paid search campaign (pay per click) while you wait for your search engine optimization results to grow.

Finally, search engine algorithms are constantly evolving. As a result, search engine optimization specialists must keep up-to-date on the latest developments in the field and modify their Web site and search engine optimization strategies accordingly.

Here are some recommendations for blog and Web sites that you may find valuable in order to stay on top of industry changes:

- <http://www.mattcutts.com/blog/>
- <http://www.searchenginewatch.com>
- <http://googlewebmastercentral.blogspot.com>
- <http://developer.yahoo.net/blog/>

Get Professional Help

A Web site's placement within a search engine is derived from hundreds of variables including link popularity, density and frequency of keywords in page content, HTML code, site themes, and more. If you'd prefer to have a professional do the keyword research, content writing, HTML code optimization, and more, then consider professional search engine optimization services.

At Network Solutions, for example, we offer a Top 10 Search Results package which is a search engine optimization service that guarantees our clients Web sites will be listed on the first page of search results. Our SEO experts have been professionally trained and are here to help you navigate the sometimes confusing, but often beneficial world of online marketing. To speak to a Network Solutions search expert, call 1-877-438-8599.

About Network Solutions®

Network Solutions, a leading provider of Web solutions and the pioneer of the domain name registration service, draws on decades of experience to make it quick and affordable for customers to build and manage an online presence. Our full range of Web-related services includes:

- [Web Hosting](#)
- [Web Design](#)
- [E-Commerce Software](#)
- [Search Engine Marketing](#)
- [SSL Certificates](#)
- [E-mail Services](#)
- [Domain Name Registration](#)

Network Solutions backs its products and services with free, award-winning, J.D. Powers certified customer service. A quick e-mail or toll-free call for help will be answered promptly by a trained Network Solutions Customer Support Representative – 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

For more information, please visit www.networksolutions.com.