



Working the Web

Ellie Becker and Bernadette Nelson | April 2011

Paying Attention To SEO Pays Dividends

It's amazing how many websites we see where no attention has been paid to Search Engine Optimization – SEO. Yet it's one of the most important aspects of attracting business through your website.

We've written about various aspects of SEO in the past, including keyword research, but it's a constantly evolving practice. Let's take a fresh look at where on a web page you have the opportunity to provide words that tell search engines what that page is about.

If you know where they look and what they look for, along with a few rules of the road, you'll be closer to page one search results and more web-generated business. Here's how a hypothetical leather furniture retailer "Hides and Seats" might optimize.

Domain Name

If at all possible, try to get a domain name with at least one of your keywords in it. Leatherfurniture.com belongs to an ecommerce site. Our retailer was able to get hidesandseats.com. Cute. But it doesn't help much in SEO.

Meta Data

Search information that goes into the source code of your pages - not directly visible to a visitor.. On any Web page click on the View menu and click Source to see the code.

1. Title Tag – This is prime SEO real estate. It's the information that shows across the very top of a web page and as the first clickable link in a search result. Our SEO guru Dave Lostracco says that only the first 69 characters of the title tag show in Google results. Put the most relevant search words first, geography and company name last, i.e. Leather sofas, chairs, ottomans | Fairfield County | Hides and Seats (68)
2. Meta Description – These are the words that come up in search results under the title tag link. Google no longer pays much attention to it. It's more to influence searchers to click on your link. Here you have 156 characters to work with, says Dave. Leather sofas, chairs, ottomans, love seats, recliners, fine designer imported leather furniture, low price guarantee, Fairfield County, Hides and Seats. (153)
3. Keywords – Google doesn't look at these anymore but other search engines do. Limit them to ten or so or you may get demoted by Google for 'keyword stuffing'.
4. Alt Text – The words that explain images to search engines since they only 'see' text.

URLs

Except for your home page you can optimize urls on your site. For example, instead of squandering SEO turf on www.hidesandseats.com/products, try www.hidesandseats.com/imported-leather-furniture. If you optimize an existing url have your web designer do a 301 Redirect to point the new name to the original page.

General Content

Create a page headline that includes at least one keyword. Repeat the keyword several times in the copy that follows.

Parting Tips

Optimize each page for no more than one or two keywords that are specific to the copy on that page. SEO is a continuous part of online marketing. Check your progress in search rankings, tweak accordingly and enjoy the extra traffic and business you'll surely achieve.

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