

Optimizing Your Site

There are many things you can do to improve your chances of being ranked well with search engines, so we'll try to keep things simple and just cover a few of the most important elements to consider when optimizing your site for search engines. The **title tags**, the **text**, the **keywords**, and the **description meta tags** are all sections where a little bit of extra work can result in substantial/significant improvements in how search engines list your site. With the exception of the text, none of these components will be visible on your Web site; they are contained in the fabric of your site--HTML Source Code--the way browsers see Web pages. To view the Source Code on any Web page, select "View" at the top of your browser, and click on "Source", or simply right-click anywhere on the page (except on an image) and select "View Source". Don't be intimidated. You don't have to learn HTML (since your Web site comes equipped with special tools to simplify the process for you), but knowing how to optimize important elements like title tags and meta tags will go a long way in helping you improve your site's effectiveness.

Meta Tags

Meta tags are special lines of HTML code that help the search engine determine what your site contains. Many search engines use meta tags to index and rank sites because they provide additional information that spiders are not able to collect. The meta tags will look something like this:

```
<META NAME="description" CONTENT="a description of your page, including a few keywords or phrases">
```

```
<META NAME="keywords" CONTENT="your keywords or phrases">
```

Creating good meta tags can help improve your listing with search engines, and make it easier for customers to find you. Your tags should reflect the actual content of the page, and should be no longer than 150 characters (about 25 to 30 words). Do not waste space with your company's name, promotional words (like "best" or "greatest"), or trivial words (like "and"); do use correct grammar, and capitalize proper nouns and the first word of a sentence. If some of your keywords or descriptors are commonly misspelled or occur in a plural form, don't forget to include these variations in your meta tags. Also, be careful not to overdo it and include *all* the words possibly associated with your site. This is a strategy commonly employed by spammers, and will not reflect favorably on your site.

Title Tags

The title tags on your Web site are one of the most important factors that contribute to your ranking with search engines. The search engines assume that your title contains the most relevant description of your site and its contents, and rely heavily on the title tags to help determine what your site is about. This is what your title tags look like:

```
<TITLE>Your title and a few key words will go here!</TITLE>
```

The first 60 characters of the title are the most important, so make sure that you start with the highest priority words, and don't waste space with trivial or promotional words. This is what the search engine will use to list your site if it comes up in a user's search, so

spend some time coming up with a well-written title. Try to include a few of your more important key words, but be careful-excessive use of keywords will solicit a negative response from search engines (loading title tags with keywords is a spamming technique). Try to make your title as descriptive and enticing as possible; it can be the difference between a customer clicking on your site or choosing another listing.

Text

The overall design of your site is important, but it is not a substitute for content. The actual text in your site plays a large part in your site's ranking with search engines, so make sure that your text contains the same keywords and phrases used in your meta tags (many search engines compare meta tags to page text to prevent cheating). When search engine spiders visit your site, they rely upon the readable page text to collect information about your site; "under construction" text or other wording that makes your site seem incomplete or unready will hurt your ranking.

Keywords

The keywords that you choose play a large part in defining your site and its contents. You want to use specific words or phrases that accurately reflect the content of your site. Using inaccurate or overly broad keywords will hurt your ranking with search engines and effectively "hide" your site from customers. Too many sites will be relevant for general keywords; maximize your chances for success by using keywords that are as specific as possible! If you choose your keywords carefully, you can help drive highly targeted customers to your site.

Your list of keywords can be up to 1024 characters long, but not all search engine spiders will read that far, so make sure that you start your list with the most important words, then the next most important, and so on. Separate your keywords with a comma followed by a space; in some instances, you can group several words together before the next comma (e.g. "sugar free candy"). Include plurals and other variations, including common typos, and separate very similar keywords or keyphrases with dissimilar ones. Try to avoid repeating the same word more than three times in the list, not counting its variations such as plural versus singular.

When you are making you list of keywords and phrases, ask yourself: what are my customers searching for? What keywords will they use to find my product or service? (Remember, be specific!) If you are struggling to come up with some keywords, a good place to start is with your competitors. Go to a search engine, enter your keywords, and see what sites come up. The number one site is number one for a reason: check out their site, see what they've done, and look at what keywords they are using (go to "View Source"). Choosing the right keywords can make the difference between Internet obscurity and a tidal wave of traffic.

Your Web site platform gives you an easy way to edit all of these elements in your Web site's administration section. Under "Site Modifier", select the page that you want to optimize, and go to "You Can Adjust Page Characteristics" to make changes to your title,

keywords, meta tags, and more. Once you have finished editing these elements, click “Apply Change”, and remember to update your site to make the changes active.

All of these elements can improve the way search engines view your site, but none of your optimization work will matter if your site has broken images or links. Sites with broken links or images are not properly indexed, and are categorized as poor, inferior sites-regardless of how great your site might actually be. Please use the Link Analysis Tool to fix any broken links or images before you submit your site to search engines. This is an easy step that will help you avoid frustrating problems and ensure that all your efforts will not be in vain.

Be on the lookout for the third and final part of the series, where we’ll give you a couple of tips on promoting your Web site with the major search engines, as well as a recap of the do’s and don’ts of site promotion and optimization. If you missed the first installment, please contact us at newsletter@RESELLER_DOMAIN_NAME, and we’ll gladly re-send you a copy!