

# Optimizing Your Web Site for the Search Engines

One of the best and most obvious ways to gain new clients is by ranking better in the search engines. If you can't afford to hire a professional search engine optimization (SEO) company then read this article all the way through because I'm about to teach you a few strategies that we've personally used.

## What is Search Engine Optimization?

Search engine optimization (or SEO as it's affectionately called) is the ongoing process of tweaking and modifying your website in an effort to rank competitively in the search engines for one or more keywords that people will use to search for your business.

As a business owner I'm sure you'd agree that if more people were able to find your site in the search engines then you could dramatically increase the number of clients/customers you have, right? Well it's the same for most businesses, and a good SEO plan is where you should start.

## The "One Hour a Day, 30 Day" SEO Plan

Search engine optimization is part science, part art and part luck. The good news is that we can use a proven scientific approach to help your website rank better in the search engines, but you first have to decide which keyword(s) you want your site to rank for.

If you're a caterer in Los Angeles, then here are a few examples of keywords you absolutely would want to be on the front page of the search engines for:

Los Angeles Catering  
Catering California  
Catering Los Angeles  
etc...

To determine which keywords you want to rank for just ask yourself: "If I were one of my potential customers, which words would I use to find my company?". You should be able to come up with at least a handful of keywords.

If you can dedicate just one hour a day (for 30 days) to the search engine optimization plan I'm about to show you then there's a great chance that you'll be able to significantly improve how your web site ranks in the search engines for the keywords people are using to find you.

## #1: Getting Links Back to Your Website

This is hands down the most important search engine optimization strategy you can spend your time on. When another website links back to yours, Google sees this as a positive vote for your website, and as such will take this into account when determining which sites should be at the top of the pile.

The more sites you have that link back to you, the higher your site will appear in the search results, however there is one main factor to consider with this strategy, and that's the credibility of the sites linking back to yours.

Google's PageRank algorithm is a measure of the popularity of a website. If you download the Google toolbar you can see the PageRank of any site you visit. It's just a measure between 0 and 10 - 0 means the site is new and has no popularity and a PageRank of 10 means the site is one of the most trusted and popular sites on the Internet. Yahoo.com has a PageRank of 10. CNN.com has a PageRank of 9, Business.com has a PageRank of 7, etc. When looking for sites to link back to yours, the higher the PageRank the more "points" Google will award you for having that site linking to you, thus pushing you higher up in the search results for your keywords.

The quickest and cheapest way to get sites linking back to your site is to send them an email and just ask for it, but what type of sites should you request links from? In general they should be similar in topic to your site, so as a caterer you might request links back from sites that talk about weddings, marketing, attracting new leads and customers, etc. A link acquisition strategy over the medium/long term is to get serious about publishing high quality articles on your web site that others will link back to.

So what should you write about and how often should you write? One article a week is a great start. Aim for 500-1,000 words and write about what you know: how to choose a caterer, why it's important to have a event catered, how to create a appealing menu, etc. These are topics your potential customers will expect you to know about and after reading your articles they will come to respect you as an authority on catering.

## #2: On-Page Search Engine Optimization

On-page keyword optimization involves making changes to existing pages on your website so they include the keywords you want to rank in the search engines for. On-page optimization includes a number of different "sub strategies", which are:

**Keyword density:** How often do the keywords you want to rank for appear on your page? This is measured as a percentage, such as 5.8%. So let's say you want to rank on Google for "red sports cars". On most pages of your site you'll want to include the text "red sports cars" and also variations of this phrase, such as "red cars that are sporty", "sports cars that are red", "sports cars", etc. There's no hard and fast rule, but you generally want a keyword density of about 7-12% for the keywords you want to rank for. That means that if you have 100 words on your page, 7-12 of them should be "red", "sports" or "car". You can check your keyword density at <http://www.ranks.nl/>.

**Header tags:** You absolutely **MUST** include the keywords you want to rank for in a tag on your site. H1 tags tell the search engines that the text between them is important, and you should aim for just one tag on each page as close to the top as you can. In our example you might use Red Sports Carson one page and Luxury Red Sports Cars

on another page.

**Page title:** This is the most important on-page thing you can optimize. Your page title is the text that's used to form the link back to your site from the search engines, so it needs to include the keywords you want to rank for, and usually in variations, such as

**Internal linking structure:** You want to use the keywords you want to rank for to link between pages on your site. For example, on your home page you might link to a category page using the text "sports cars" and on that category page you would link back to your home page with the text "red sports car". This is an internal two-way link, and although internal links don't hold nearly as much weight as external ones, you should link to different pages on your site using a few different combinations of your keywords.

**Keywords at the very top of the page:** You should always include your main keywords as close to the top of the page as you can, because Google will look at the text on your site from top-to-bottom and will treat the text closer to the top of the page with a higher importance.

### Conclusion

There's a lot more to search engine optimization than I've talked about here, however what I've mentioned above is a good place to start if you can't afford to hire an SEO company or want to get started learning about SEO so that you can eventually offer it to your clients as an additional paid service.