

How to create:

Search Engine-friendly websites

By

Jens Peter Nielsen

CEO

Dynamicweb Internet Marketing

www.dynamicweb-seo.com

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Introduction

This guide is created to help web designers and CMS-developers plan and construct websites and systems with the largest possible considerations to the search engines on the Internet.

What are search engines?

Search engines are portals like Google, Yahoo, and Bing which construct their searchable databases using programmes, called agents or robots. These programmes automatically "scan" the Internet and read the many web pages they come across, either by using the available links or through links on other websites or web pages registered in the search engines own website.

The information that the search engine finds on the individual pages is registered in the search engine database. When a user performs a search in the search engine, the request is sent to the search engine database and the returned result are the pages which the search engine finds most relevant according to the keyword(s) used in the search.

Even though these search engines do have submission-forms, it is not necessary to submit your website. Instead consider being linked to from other websites already in Google and other search engines.

Search directories

Other portals like Dmoz.org (Owned by Google), operates solely with human editors who waits for you to submit your website manually through a form on their website. You must then wait for them to evaluate and, hopefully, accept your submission and the inclusion in their directory.

Search directories are no longer as important as they used to be due to the heavy competition from the automated search engines like Google. Nevertheless it is recommended to seek out your local portals for submission. Google does seem to pay attention to whether your website appears in local search portals or not. In the UK it could be a directory like www.business-directory-uk.co.uk/ or www.yahoo.co.uk. Be aware that search-directories do seem to shift in market-size and reach why these examples should be revised on a yearly basis.

Creating search engine friendly web solutions

In order to achieve high rankings on the search engines you need to know the patterns / algorithms which the individual search engines use to rank your website. If you know which standards the search engines use to evaluate a page, i.e. you know how the search engines "think", you can create your own/your customers websites according to these standards, thereby getting an advantage in comparison to other websites and CMS developers.

As there are a lot of variables that help determine whether a website is found on the Internet in relation to relevant keywords, I will show you the most important areas to work on in the following.

Correct HTML-settings

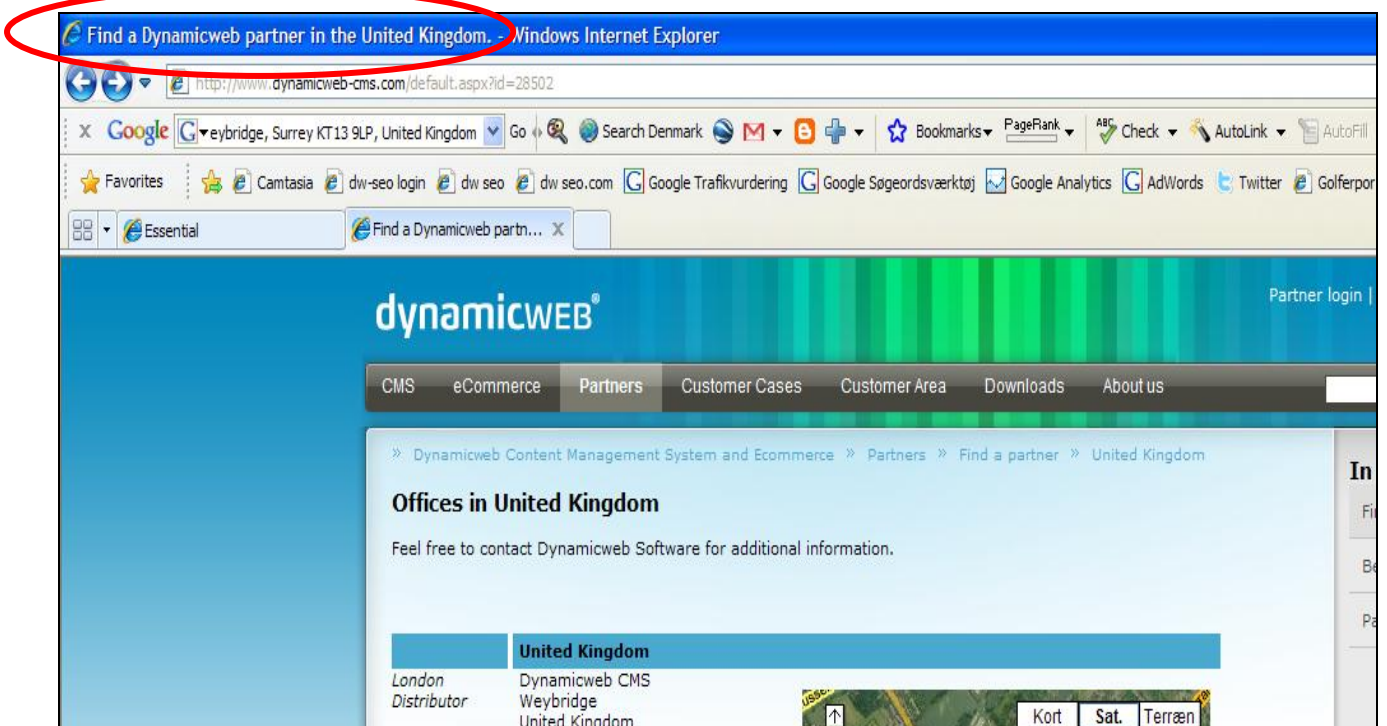
(not directly visible for the visitors to your web page).

Titles:

The most important code/code-tag in connection with search engine optimisation is the title of the page. It is written as part of the header on the page in the following way:

<title>page title</title>

You will often see the title here:



Our Title-tag recommendations:

No more than 70 characters (5-9 words) in you title-tags or Google and other search engines will tend to cut your title short in the search engine results.

The title-tag should always be placed as the first line in the page header or as close to the beginning of the page-code as possible. Begin your title with the primary keyword (the term chosen as the key topic of the text on the web page) and add 4-8 words. Put yourself in the users place and try to create a title that makes him or her want to know more.

Make individual title-tags on every page on your website or make it at least possible to construct individual titles. Avoid repeating your company name etc. in every title on the website. Your potential clients are more interested in knowing how you can help them rather than learning your correct company name...at least to begin with.

Meta-tags

Meta-tags gives you the possibility to describe the individual page to the search engines. This is to avoid letting the search engine "guess" for itself what the page is about on the basis of the body text on the page alone. This way you can actually control how your company is being presented on the search engines.

Our meta-tags recommendations:

Meta-Description: 130-155 characters

Meta-Keywords: 5-8 words

The entire head-tag incl. meta-tags can be designed in the following way:

```
<HEAD>
```

```
<TITLE>Title that contains up to 65 characters and includes the key "term" as the first in the sentence</TITLE>
```

```
<META name="DESCRIPTION" content="A description of the content on the page that includes the key term as one of the first words">
```

```
<META name="KEYWORDS" content="keyword1, keyword2, keyword3, keyword4, keyword5, keyword6, keyword7, keyword 8">
```

```
</HEAD>
```

¹Most search engines use the "TITLE" and "DESCRIPTION" to present the search results to the user. So apart from containing the most important keywords, the title and description must also be created in a "catchy" way to attract your potential clients

Visible sections of the web page

It is important that you use the primary keywords of each web page not only in the title and description but also on the rest of the page, i.e. in the body text, according to the same principles as in the title and description. This means that the primary keywords must be placed as early as possible in sentences, sections and on the page in general.

Search engines pay very much attention to how and where relevant keywords/phrases are placed in the visible part of your web pages, also known as the "body-tag":

- In the headlines (preferably formatted with H1-H2 HTML text or defined as cascading style sheet as long as they are shown as <H1> <H2> etc.)
- In the text – preferably in the first 15-20% of the text – avoid repeating the keywords/phrases all over the page
- In ALT texts for illustrations/pictures
- In link-text on the web page

Try not to have too many headlines (less than 4) on a web page as it might confuse the search engines in their effort to determine the most important "theme" on your web page.

The ideal length of a body text seen from the search engines point of view is between 250-450 characters, or more.

If possible the illustrations/pictures on your web page should include an ALT-tag, which reflects the page topic as well as the picture. Avoid repeating the ALT-tag text for every illustration if there are many illustrations on the page. Vary by using different important keywords.

If you want to check the number of times a keyword has been used compared to other words on a web page, you can click on the following link to get access to a free tool:

<http://www.webconfs.com/keyword-density-checker.php>

¹ Note: not all search engines uses the Description-tag. Keyword-tags have very little influence, if any, on the ranking-results for competitive keywords/phrases.

Link popularity / Page Rank



Search engines use linkpopularity (the quality and number of websites that link to your website) to rank your web pages.

At <http://toolbar.google.com> you can install Google's toolbar and this way at all times be able to see Google's evaluation of the website you are visiting also known as PageRank.

The Page Rank of a website is measured on a scale from 0 to 10, where 10 being the highest obtainable rank.

Due to the importance of having a good linkpopularity, you should put some effort into working to improve it.

Power Tip:

Sometimes working with improving your link popularity or PageRank can seem rather time consuming, but a good tip on how to get started is to begin by making sure that all the pages on your website has a possibility of being indexed on Google.com or other search robots. Sometimes your website can climb 2-3 ranks on the 1-10 scale simply by making sure that all your pages can be reached by the search engines robot crawlers

Check your link popularity with this free tool:

www.linkpopularity.com

or

<http://siteexplorer.search.yahoo.com>

What you should aim for with linkpopularity

When it comes to improving your websites linkpopularity we recommend that you aim at getting “quality” incoming links to your **website**² and/or aim at achieving a PageRank in Google of at least 4 on your websites front page.

Check your competitors in the above tools and contact your cooperating partners, customers, suppliers and everyone else you think might be interested in linking to your website. You could suggest that you exchange links or you can simply ask the other website for at link from their website. One-way links into your website seems to give the best results in the search engines.

Once the link has been placed on the external website this is often automatically registered by the search engines that are now able to see the changes and follow the link.

Database generated URL-addresses

We do not recommend that the database part of your content management system generate URLs in the following way:

http://www.your_domain.com/index.asp?ID=1 (or similar)

To prevent this it is usually necessary to perform a so called “mod rewrite” on your web server. Most skilled web programmers should be able to set this up via the server and it is generally not a problem.

The reason why such dynamic URLs are not recommendable is that even though most search engines today are able to index pages with long dynamic URLs, the pages with long, un-readable, URLs are often placed lower in the search results than those web pages that have been fitted with readable urls.

This could be due to the fact that search engines are unable to connect the theme of the rest of the page with the URL and/or the fact that fewer of your visitors would like to link to your web pages if they are very long and difficult to remember and write on a web page or in an e-mail.

² Quality incoming links can be defined as links from theme-relevant websites, which in the link text to your website uses important and relevant keywords. Avoid “Free For All” link databases or other offers whose only goal is to “cheat” Google and other search engines.

The best URLS

The ideal solution for the individual web pages on your site about product information would be a URL that contains the product name *or* the theme of the page.

For example:

http://www.your_domain.com/products/ID?-1103.asp

or

http://www.your_domain.com/company/product_name.asp

For more information on Search engine optimization, visit www.dynamicweb-seo.com or contact us at:

info@dynamicweb-seo.dk