The only Guide you Need to...

Improve your Rankings and your Business

Google™

BEST PRACTICES GUIDE

The Tested and Trusted Google Optimization Guide

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DISCLAIMER

This guide is not endorsed, supported or blessed, etc. by Google. All information contained in this guide is based on my testing results.

It should be noted that there are no theories presented in this guide.

It should also be noted that there are quotes from Matt Cutts and other engineers from Google. I don’t profess to have a relationship with any of these individuals over and above any other webmaster or SEO who has attended Webmaster World or Search Engine Strategies. I simply asked questions, wrote down their responses and then tested their answers.

I can hear you now ... “You tested answers given by Matt Cutts?”

Of course. My number one rule is that I trust no one. I only trust data. Even if that person chokes me (see below).

All information presented here is based on nothing more than test results.

Blah.
Why This Guide Is Different

I’ve been an SEO since 1996 — before the term was cool. This guide is based on the testing, not theory or observations, of my 700+ test domains. Using working examples, this guide will help you build organic traffic with Google to create a long-term traffic solution for your business.

Organic traffic? Isn’t that dead?

No. Organic traffic is alive and well. You may have consulted a “guru” who stated “SEO is dead.” Anyone who says that doesn’t understand the simple concepts of SEO or how traffic is driven. Misunderstanding breeds fear.

That fear causes them to try and “kill” SEO. No one has succeeded.

Why? The Guru’s plan is to quickly turn and pitch their new “silver-bullet-cure-all” marketing package with an inflated price tag. The end result: The “cure-all” is full of information you already know or it doesn’t work.

Organic traffic is; increasable, sustainable, reliable, slow to build, high-quality, natural, and free. Period.

Why is everyone obsessed with Google?

Google rules the Web. Yahoo! and Bing, despite a recent partnership, aren’t even in the same ballpark; yet, Google isn’t perfect as there are always “exceptions” with Google. You may see “tests” conducted that
reference a new methodology but what you don’t know is that the theory is often tested on only two domains. Two domains is hardly a test.

Allow me to illustrate:

I can show you results in Google where a #1 ranking can be achieved with a 26% keyword density. That example is the exception, not the rule. Ignore exceptions. You should demand methodologies that work on the MAJORITY of websites. That is the essence of this guide.

As I previously stated, when it comes to organic traffic, Google rules all. While Bing and Yahoo! claim to outpace Google in conversion ratio within the Pay Per Click (PPC) field, they are no match organically with Google.

While they may have a better conversion ratio in terms of a percentage, Google supplies a lot more traffic. This means you are going to make more money with Google. Isn’t that why you have a business online?

This brings me to a vital point. You aren’t reading this guide to increase rankings or traffic, you are reading this guide to increase your revenue. Increased revenue should always be your primary focus. Too many SEOs and webmasters brag about their rankings or traffic levels but if sales don’t follow, it means nothing.

You want the HIGHEST quality traffic with the LEAST amount of effort.

Obvious Fact: It doesn’t matter how many people walk into a store. If the cash register never rings, the business will soon be:

OUT OF BUSINESS!

The same is true for your website. Don’t be like other SEOs who fail to understand this concept. Change your mindset to “top conversion” instead of “top ranking.” You will be amazed at what you can achieve.
Google Control

Google controls over 3 billion unique searches per day — that’s more than 121 million searches per hour. And get this; Google earns an average of nine cents per search. Nine cents times 121 million an hour. Nice.

My estimate places the index at over 120 billion pages. Here are some of Google’s stats:

**Market Share:** 65.5%

**Click Through Market Share:** 78.34%

**Primary Results:** Own index

**Secondary Results:** Google Supplemental Index

**Inclusion Time:** About 4 – 6 weeks by request, 1-10 days by GoogleBot finding the page/site on its own, including XML Sitemap

**Paid Inclusion:** Not currently available

**Indexed Pages:** Not posted, but estimated at 36 billion pages

**Robots.txt Key:** GoogleBot

**Summary:** Google powers Netscape, AOL and others. It has a 70+ % market reach with their primary search results. Google’s directory is a direct feed of the Open Directory Project (ODP)

**Sponsored Partners Include:** Google AdWords, AOL and Netscape

**User Agent:** Googlebot/2.1

**Frame Support:** Yes

**Web Media Support:** HTML, SHTML, XML, CFM, DOC, XLS, PDF, ASP, JSP, PPT, RTF, WKS, LWP, WRI and SWF
In SEO, there is no tomorrow, there is only today. Too many marketers focus on “tomorrow” to gain their rankings and, unfortunately for them, it never comes. Live for today. Get it done. Just do it. All the cliches are alive and well when SEO is discussed.

I first wrote “SEO in a Box” in February 2008 and it proves one simple truth: SEO isn’t complicated. Many claim it is. I claim it is not. In fact, to me it is easier than it was ten years ago. Why? Back then you had to optimize for eight different search engines. Today, you just have to optimize for one: Google. While there is much more competition today than there was ten years ago, the majority of marketers are lazy and you can use that to your advantage by following my methodology.

How is SEO easy? Let me show you.

I’m not going to lecture you on how to do this, or speak in “code” or “theory,” to try and impress you. The methods you’ll find here are ones I’ve used, tested and profited from, repeatedly for over a decade. It’s a system and it works. I’m going to teach you in a very easy to learn way so you can benefit from that knowledge. Work along with me on your own site, and you’ll begin to see improvements almost immediately!

So, let’s roll up our sleeves and do it. I’ll even use a real example that I’ll pull from my own site. The term for this example will be “meta expires.” When I first started this article, the phrase ranked #8 in Google. One month later it was at #4 with an indented (double) listing at #5. It’s now #1 with an indented listing at #2.
Do you want those types of results for your site? Achieving this was easy and I am going to show you right now how you can do it too.

At the start of this process, I chose this keyword phrase because it brought semi-decent traffic at #8. My thought process at the time was if it was in the “top three” that should at least triple the incoming unique visitors to the page.

I missed the mark initially, going from #8 to #4, but wasn’t discouraged and did ultimately get it to #1 with limited work. Let’s run through the process again so you can really see how easy SEO is. Take a look at a screenshot below. It shows where this page initially ranked in Google:

Now, here is the current screenshot with the double indented listing:

I know you’re more than eager to get started, so here is the step-by-step guide on how to properly optimize a page:

**STEP ONE**

When you choose keywords, how do you know it will convert visitors into buyers and make a good profit? How do you know if a phrase is worth your time? Please don’t say that you 1) only use a keyword tool and pick phrases with a high number of daily searches; or 2) that you pick a word, do all the work of optimizing and ranking and just “hope” it converts.

Wrong, wrong, wrong. Yes, of course you could do the above—but I thought you wanted to make money, not waste years losing money.
Here’s what you should be doing. Success online isn’t measured in traffic, it is measured in **conversions**. You don’t want just any traffic, you want buyers. Don’t make the mistake of relying on surveys or data that suggests a certain keyword phrase has a “96% positive commercial intent.” You need to test search traffic against your offer to see if it really does convert with YOUR offer. How can you do this? Pay Per Click (PPC).

“Wait,” you ask, “I’m going to use PPC...to test my SEO?”

Exactly. Testing and verifying with PPC will answer the question: “Does this phrase convert? Will it make me money or achieve an objective?” Think about it. Do you have keyword phrases right now that bring you good solid traffic, but little to no conversions no matter what changes you make to the landing page? Often, the problem isn’t your offer, it’s that the traffic just isn’t “convertible” traffic.

That is why we use PPC.

Let me put it to you this way. Would you invest in a company that didn’t test their market? One that spent money and resources building ideas based on misinformation? Sounds like a financial disaster waiting to happen, doesn’t it? So why would you run your business the same way? Don’t skip this step. Setup a campaign in AdWords with 50 or fewer keyword phrases, set the tracking code and start driving the traffic. Within a few hours or days, you will have results which will help you determine what keyword phrases are really worth optimizing for.

**Note:** The example phrase I’m using here, “meta expires,” isn’t a “converting” phrase due to obvious competitive reasons. :)

How do you measure if a keyword is good or not?

One of the best indicators, in terms of popularity, isn’t the cost per click in PPC, but rather in the number of advertisers. The more advertisers in PPC for a keyword phrase, the more likely someone is making a profit for that term. Think about it, if there are 30 advertisers for a keyword phrase, do you think someone is making money? Yeah. So that would be a great phrase to start your test.

**Major Tip #1:** Use Your Analytics Data
For sites that already receive a measurable amount of traffic, Google Analytics can be a very valuable source for keyword research. You can identify and build on the success of keywords that are already performing well for you. For instance, you might have a phrase sending pretty decent traffic that’s ranked on page 2 of the SERPs. A focused optimization effort to move that phrase to Page 1 could triple or quadruple that traffic.

If you have ecommerce tracking, check the conversion rates for your keywords. You can also view the revenue for every keyword that produces a sale. Using this information will help you to identify winners and prioritize your keywords. Even without ecommerce tracking, you can setup goals and see keywords that led to a completed goal on your website.

Additional analytics metrics to look at include bounce rate and average pages per visit. A high bounce rate and low number of page views might indicate a problem with your content or optimization.

**Major Tip #2: GWT Search Queries Report**
The Search Queries reports in GWT will show you keywords that are relevant to your website, your average ranking position, and the click-thru rates for those keywords.

**STEP TWO**
Check the cache date of the page in Google. It used to be that two weeks was an acceptable cache date, but since the Google Caffeine update, you’re looking for a cache date within the last week—ideally within the last five days. A quick way to see the cache date is to search for the site, and then click “cache” under the search result. The cache date will appear in a grey box near the top of the page.

The page is fresh and has a strong history of consistent indexing. Keep the cycle going where Google is indexing your site regularly and picking up changes quickly. If the cache date is old that means Google isn’t finding the page on its own. It’s a red flag. It could be that the link campaign to the page is stale and not doing its job. The bottom line: Your marketing needs a “caffeine injection.”
If your page’s cache date is old, there’s no need to panic. Just follow these three steps for your instant “caffeine injection.” Getting a fresh cache date just means you need Google to reindex the page. Here is my three-pronged approach to do just that:

1. Re-read the content. Does it need updating? How’s the Title? The Description? Make the appropriate changes to improve the marketability of the page.

2. Go out and get 5-10 really good links to the page. What is a good link? One where your page isn’t buried between links to Viagra and Free Casino Chips. Oh, and don’t forget to make sure the pages that are linking to you also have fresh cache dates or they just may be worthless.

3. Write a blog post and reference your page. Blogging is a great way to get Google to re-index content. Use it to your advantage. This is also assuming that your blog is getting indexed consistently.

**Lesson Learned:** Good SEO isn’t just about good and original content it is about MARKETING your content. A lot of site owners create content, do nothing to promote it, and then wonder why their campaigns failed. When it comes to your sites’ content, you can’t just set it and forget it—Google is not a slow roasting oven. It doesn’t do all the work for you. Good SEOs market their content by going after links, posting in forums, commenting on blogs, guest blogging, etc. **Market your content — always.**

**STEP THREE**
Verify the Projected Traffic Levels for the keyword phrase. WordTracker, reports there are no searches for the keyword phrase “meta expires.”

However, if I use Google’s Keyword Tool and set the query to “Exact Match,” it tells me “meta expires” had 590 search queries over the last 30 days. If I pull my stats over the last 30 days this is what I get:
My #8 ranking in Google pulled 108 unique per month. How has that changed now that the page is #1 with a double listing? Remember, my initial goal was to triple traffic? Well, results were better than that.

We had a six-fold increase in traffic levels, which is impressive, but the keyword phrase went from #67 to #14 in terms of driving the most traffic to my site. The number of pages viewed per visitor increased while the bounce rate decreased.

Let’s go back to keyword data. The estimates that you get from keyword research tools are just that – estimates. Keyword research tools don’t have perfect data.

Google really beefed up their keyword tool and I’ve found the data to be more precise and accurate than any other third-party tool on the market. Plus, the tool is free. I highly recommend you use it, but don’t forget to incorporate knowledge you’ve acquired about your market’s search behavior, visitors’ content preferences, insight from website statistics, and keeping up with new and upcoming terminology/trends.

Other Good Keyword Tools (Free)
- Google Trends
- Google Insights
- Microsoft Advertising Intelligence (Add-on for Excel)
- Yahoo Clues
- SEO Book Keyword Suggestion Tool

Note: Google Sets and the Google Wonder Wheel were discontinued.

STEP FOUR
Look at the search results in Google. What’s between you and #1 rank? Look for:

- Premium PPC ads near the top
- Local results
- Universal Search (Shopping, News, Video, etc.)
- Brand links
Don’t forget to look at who is in the top three. If there are sites like Wikipedia, Amazon, eBay, or brands like Apple, etc., you should probably stop your analysis and move to the next keyword phrase. While these companies can be moved, your time is better spent focusing on a different keyword (more specialized, long tail version, etc.) and optimizing for the more competitive ones later.

This is often when the SEO’s who think with their heads and those who think with their egos part ways. As you perform research you’ll develop a list of phrases with varying degrees of competitiveness. Swapping a competitive phrase, with added obstacles, for an easier one is not a weakness—it’s a business decision. It makes more sense to rank for a less
competitive term, generate revenue quickly and then optimize for the more challenging terms.

**STEP FIVE**
Verify there is room for you in the market. I suggest analyzing the Anchor, Title and Text to verify how competitive the keyword phrase really is. I know you are probably saying to yourself, “Why not just take the number of pages listed in Google to find the competition?” Here’s why: that isn’t your competition.

Let me give you a quick example of what I mean. Let’s use the term “impact words.” Typing the term into Google we see that there are over 97 million “competing” pages.

A lot of people would just assume there are 199 million pages about “impact words.” The problem is, Google is telling you how many pages in its index contain both “impact” and “words,” but not necessarily together. So, a page that reads, “The impact of the truck was so intense there are not words to describe it,” would be counted among the 199 million pages. A page with that content would NOT be a real competitor obviously.

So, who are your actual competitors? They are the pages listed on Page One of the SERPs (Search Engine Results Pages). More specifically, your competitors are the top three pages. Period. It doesn’t matter how many pages show up in the index, all that matters is; does the phrase convert and are the top ten pages in the SERPs SEO’d, and SEO’d well.

That’s it, that’s all, make sense? It should. By doing an SEO analysis of the top ten, we can determine how easy top ranking will be.
Here is a portion of the output. I used my Keyword Competition Tool, but you can use a free tool such as NicheWatch to analyze your target phrase:

These three indicators, Anchor, Title and Text, which refer to Advanced Searches in Google (allinanchor, allintitle and allintext) are the key for us to determine, very quickly, if the keyword has been SEO’d or not. While these indicators aren’t perfect, they do the job quickly.

Here are the basic definitions of the three columns:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anchor</td>
<td>Which pages have the best link campaign for the keyword phrase (Off-Page SEO)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Which pages are the best in terms of the Title Tag and PageRank?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Which pages have the best On-Page SEO for the phrase?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Look at the above chart. As you compare the columns, you should notice that the Anchor and Text columns are mostly filled in, compared to the sparsely populated Title and URL columns. This suggests incoming anchor text and on-page factoring are most important in terms of ranking for this particular keyword phrase.

**Paid Tool:** SEOmoz Keyword Difficulty Tool

SEOmoz offers a number of great, paid SEO Tools starting at $99/month. In particular, the Keyword Difficulty Tool is very help in determining the competitiveness of a keyword phrase. It’s a good compliment to NicheWatch if you have the budget.
*This tool has been recently update and now features a SERP Report function that provides in-depth analysis of URL Link Metrics, Domain Link Metrics, On-Page Optimization, and URL Anchor Text Metrics.

**Major Tip:** Every keyword phrase is different in terms of what it needs to rank well. It isn’t always all about the links.

**Tip:** No matter what tool you use, take time to verify the data and ensure it is accurate before you commit hours to marketing.

**STEP SIX**
*Verify* on-page SEO. I highly recommend using **IBP (Internet Business Promoter)**. It is my personal SEO program of choice. Is their info perfect? No. But they have the best information out there in terms of an SEO package and it is easy to understand and execute.

Granted, we are running this check on a generic page about meta tags, not one specific to just Meta Expires tag. The result of the IBP report: a pathetic 69% (100% being perfectly optimized).

Okay, so the optimization sucks for that term, which is to be expected since it is a generic page. Now, if I rank #8 with that score on a general page, it would make sense that I could nail a double-listing for this term...
after creating a more focused page. A double-listing is highly coveted because the click-through rate skyrocket. So, let’s do it.

**STEP SEVEN**
We create a focused page on the definition and proper use of the “Meta Expires” tag that links to the general page. We make sure we create a compelling Title, focused Meta Description, use the Keyword Phrase in a Heading and throughout the page. Then we upload it to the server.

**STEP EIGHT**
Now we need to get the new page indexed. For fast indexing, I wrote a blog post outside of this domain and used the keyword phrase in the Title. I like to use the keyword phrase in the beginning of the Title Tag, as it gives more “push” plus my testing shows that it helps increase rank. If you have Google in your ping list, GoogleBot should index the post in about three hours, which really gets the ball rolling in your favor.

**STEP NINE**
Let’s rerun IBP on the new page and see what affect our changes made.

We’re now at 87%: an improvement of 18%, much better. IBP will show you a lot of items that are “wrong” (in RED) with your page. I advise you to just skim these items and ensure there aren’t any BIG issues. Most of the RED issues IBP finds are minor. In this case, there were no links detected, which makes sense because this is a new page.

**My Advice:** If you get a rating of 80% or better move on. The page is good enough. You can spend an hour on a page and only get a 2-3% increase. There are better uses for your time.

**Update:** When I reran IBP the page scored an 82%. Why the drop when nothing had changed on the page? IBP scores sites based on findings from the top ten results. When the top ten changes it affects your score. In this case, Google had a few algorithm changes, so that may have factored into
the decline too. I fixed a few issues, mainly on-page Content related, and the score went up to 88%.

Alternative Optimization Tools: You might want to try these and compare the results to IBP

Website Auditor  
Web CEO  
SEM.S.C.O.U.T.

STEP TEN  
Tools for link analysis you can use are Yahoo Site Explorer, Majestic SEO, and Open Site Explorer from SEOMoz.

From my analysis when I first took on this project, there wasn’t a competitive page really focused on the keyword term. What does that mean? If we pick up about a dozen or so good links, we should be able to capture a top three spot inside of 30 days.

STEP ELEVEN  
This is one of the most overlooked aspects of SEO in my view – internal linking. If you have set up your link campaigns properly, you have built up strong authority to your homepage, which in turn, distributes to the main category pages of your site.

How does this help your SEO efforts? It will make them a breeze. The trouble with internal linking is that most webmasters do it wrong. Proper internal linking is as easy as typing a query into Google. That is exactly what you are going to do.

site:YourDomainName.com keyword theme

The above query asks Google to list all pages within your site with a certain theme. Google will return, in order, the pages related to that theme. The page listed in the #1 position should be the page you are optimizing or your homepage. If it isn’t, you’re either optimizing a new page or the wrong page. Focus your efforts on the #1 listed page.

All you do next is take 3-4 of the pages listed in the top ten in Google and place a link on those pages to the page you are optimizing using your targeted anchor text. Just doing this simple technique should increase your ranking for the term.
**Major Tip:** Here’s a cool Yahoo! search query to finds pages within your site containing your target keyword phrase that DO NOT link back to your target page with that phrase in the anchor text

```
site:YourDomainName.com "keyword phrase" -link:’target page’
```

Example: `site:webmarketingnow.com "keyword research" -link:http://www.webmarketingnow.com/tips/keyword-research.html`

This query looks within `http://webmarketingnow.com` to find every indexed page (in Yahoo!) that contains the phrase, “keyword research.” Then it returns the pages that are not linking to `http://www.webmarketingnow.com/tips/keyword-research.html` (my target page) using “keyword research.”
30 Day Update
Traffic levels with the increased ranking and the double listing are 156, which is a 44% increase over previous levels — nearly a 200% improvement. While I didn’t achieve the #3 ranking that I wanted, the total time spent on optimization was less than one hour. If I did any type of link campaign, better results would have been achieved. However, with the investment of less than one hour, 48 new visitors come to the site each month, which is nearly 600 new prospects per year. To me, that is success.

Currently, with the #1 and #2 double listing, traffic is up six-fold plus there have even been conversions with this phrase, which is excellent.

While the traffic levels are off the charts, other factors remain curiously similar. For example, the keyword remains our 13th most popular keyword phrase. A year ago, visitors entering my site searching for this keyword phrase were viewing 1.3 pages per visit, now it is nearly 1.6 (a 19% increase). But the result I love the most is that they are spending 28 seconds longer on the site than before. That’s more than a 50% increase. I have more return visitors as “new visitors” dropped by 10%, which is also positive. Plus my bounce rate dropped by 13%.

All of these numbers show improvements across the board and are numbers you want to see a year after doing an SEO campaign. But what about the spider-ability of the page, has that improved?

Let’s check.
On May 25, 2011, I checked the cache date of the page by clicking the “Cached” link in the SERPs. Google returned a page with a header at the top showing the cached date.

In this case, it was cached a mere three days ago. According to my log files, it was indexed weekly for the last six months. That means the page has a strong link campaign and Google is finding the page often.

The “Secret” Behind the “Double Listing”

It’s been called the loneliest number. It’s the number “one” and not as in “Hey, you’re #1,” but as in, “really, you only have one?” Get it?

Here is the secret to a double listing: All you need are two pages that rank on the same page in Google. That’s it. So if you already have a page in the top ten, all you need to do is get another page from the same domain onto page one. Once there it will stick to your preexisting listing like a magnet creating a double listing. If you’re already at #1 and your additional listing is only #7 worthy, it doesn’t matter, it will become an indented listing with your first page taking the second highest ranking on the page.

MetLife | Life Insurance and other Financial Services

MetLife offers life insurance, annuities, disability insurance, retirement products, auto insurance, dental insurance, employee benefits, banking, and more.

Show stock quote for MET
Dental Center from MetLife - Contact Us - Careers - Sign In
www.metlife.com - Cached - Similar - ☎️ 📥 ✖️

Life Insurance from MetLife

MetLife offers several life insurance policies: Term Life, Whole Life, Universal Life, Variable Life and Survivorship.

www.metlife.com/.../insurance/life-insurance/index.html - Cached - Similar - ☎️ 📥 ✖️
More results from www.metlife.com »
How close are you to getting a double listing? Let’s check. First, turn off Google Instant. You can do this by clicking the “Google Instant On” link next to the Google search button. Switch it off, and then return to the main search page.

Next, click the Advanced Search link, enter your keyword and change your “results per page” option to “100 results.” Then use Ctrl+F to find your domain within the results.

Make a note of how many pages are listed in the top 100 and how far they are from your page one listing? This gives you an idea of how much work it will take to get your next highest ranking page onto page one. This can dramatically increase your clickthrough rate and the process takes just about 30 minutes or less. A good investment of your time.

Over the years, testing has proven that the page title (<title>) has lost a lot of influence when it comes to Google rank. The real power comes from incoming links. You want to work smarter, not harder, so as you check rank, as outlined below, make sure to perform “SEO in a Box” on top ranking pages, before you strive for the double listing.

STEP ONE: Check for second listings in the Top 100, as described above. If you have multiple listings, skip to Step Three.

STEP TWO: Create a new page on your site (this will be your “second page”). The topic should be the same as the first page, but with a very specific angle. For example, my page on “meta tags” was already ranking, so I created a page with a narrower topic: the “meta expires tag.” It’s very important that you don’t duplicate the content from the current ranking page. Yes, you’re using the same keyword phrase, but the content needs to be original.

STEP THREE: Look at the second page you have ranking within the Top 100. Is the page title compelling? Is the target keyword phrase at the beginning of the Title AND different than the page with the higher ranking. Why does this matter? Similar or near-similar page titles are the biggest reasons for internal duplicate content.

STEP FOUR: Now you want to link the two pages. Use the same anchor text on both pages. The anchor text should be the keyword phrase you want to rank for. This will help solidify the relationship between the pages and increase the rank of the secondary page.
STEP FIVE: Use the power of internal links by using what you previously learned in this book about the “SEO in a Box” technique. This will help you determine which pages on your site are best optimized for the topic you are trying to get a double listing for. Then, focus the links on the secondary page.

STEP SIX (Optional): Write a blog post on a blog that gets indexed daily. Include a link to your secondary page using the anchor text you are targeting. This could be your own blog, a guest post on another blog, or a new blog you create.

STEP SEVEN (Optional): Write an article and submit it to a few article directories including EzineArticles.com. If possible, get one of the links using the keyword phrase you’re targeting and a link to the secondary page.

Reminder: Many article submission sites don’t allow HTML within the article. This means you’ll want to edit the link at the bottom of your article instead of using your typical anchor text.

The Work Around: When you create your second page, name the file using the keyword that you want the page to rank for. For example: – www.YourDomain.com/Keyword-Keyword.html.

Why This Works: The anchor text will be the URL, which will include the keyword phrase with a dash between each word. Search engines treat dashes as spaces. The anchor text would be seen by the search engine as “keyword keyword,” just as you intended with an HTML tag.

You don’t need a #1 and #2 double listing to significantly increase, or in many cases double your traffic. Any double listing on page one will make a significant improvement. Though, we’re all in this to be the best we can, so you do want to aim for the #1 and #2 slots.
ON & OFF PAGE FACTORS
GOOGLE ALGORITHM UPDATE

"I'd rather be mad with the truth than sane with lies."  ~ Anon

Google’s Algorithm Explained
“Algorithm updates” are rare, instead they are updates to Google’s filters. For example, one well-known filter is often referred to as the “Holiday Season Filter.” It occurs when the homepage of a site disappears from the search results. SiteLinks for the domain also disappear. This only affects e-commerce sites, not informational sites. There are some conspiracy theorists who believe this happens to small and medium-sized businesses to force them to use AdWords in order to maintain their traffic and revenue during the holidays. I have tested and researched this theory exhaustively and found that it is absolutely NOT true.

Google Algorithm Update
While the Summer of 2009 and the initial Caffeine updates really shook things up, those were mere warm up periods compared to what Google had on the horizon. I’m talking about the May 2010, “May Day,” update and the Panda updates this year.

It’s just those types of search engine challenges that I love. Through testing, research, analyzing and just having been through every update with Google, I was able to find trends and solutions. I’ll walk you through the updates so you better understand them, and then we’ll discuss specific techniques you can use to counter any negative effects from the update and thrive in this new online climate. Let’s start with the 2009 changes. The following will give you a great view at what is really happening with Google because the data is taken from real results from real domains.

I took a small piece of my automated research process, manually looked at the results, and did screenshots for your review. The keyword phrases
used, along with the amount of searches they had in Google in late 2010, are listed below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Las Vegas hotels 5M</th>
<th>car rental 16.6M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>work from home 1M</td>
<td>cheap airline tickets 673k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>online dating 2.2M</td>
<td>travel tours 246k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>free insurance quotes 7.4M</td>
<td>find a job 301k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>antivirus software 3.4M</td>
<td>Canon digital cameras 1.8M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buy phentermine 550k</td>
<td>cell phone deals 110k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>credit card application 246k</td>
<td>online computer store 110k</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What You Need to Know:** A complete manual check was done for every site in the Top 10. Here is that data from Linkscape:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Trust</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Top Ten</td>
<td>6.38</td>
<td>6.61</td>
<td>+3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>+10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PageRank</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>-8.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What This Means:** Look at these two columns simply as link quantity (rank) and link quality (trust). I have concluded that while the Rank column is important the Trust column really carries a page upward in the SERPs. When you looked at the #1 ranking sites, both Rank and Trust increased nearly threefold over just Rank. Trust is vital.

Of all the manually checked sites, only two scored less than 5.0 in Rank. Only one scored less than 2.0 in Trust. If your home-page scores below a 5.0 (Rank) and a 2.0 (Trust) you have work to do.

The following data is taken from real results from real domains and from top ten positions in the SERPs for HIGHLY COMPETITIVE terms.

Note: THESE RESULTS ARE NOT TAKEN FROM TEST DOMAINS. The results are taken from the top ten results in the SERPs (Search Engine Results Pages) for HIGHLY COMPETITIVE terms.
Let’s go over a few points on how the information was compiled.

1. Data is gathered from the top ten search results for competitive keyword phrases.

2. I “sight verified” 20% of the data. (I went to Google, typed in the query and compared what I saw to what was pulled. If it didn't match, I dropped it and pulled another keyword phrase).

3. For each top ten data set, I dropped the high and low number. This was done to remove “abnormalities” in the data sets.

4. I compiled the data. The averages reported are across dozens of industries and hundreds of keyword phrases.

5. I took the figures and compared them to my affiliate sites and test domains to verify that the data was not “outside of the set.”

Aside from the algorithm update, you might ask, “How do you test?” Due to competitive advantages, I will not give exact specifics, but this will give you a good overview:

**My Testing Setup**

- I have five test servers. Note: No Windows servers.
- Each server is located in a different part of the US.
- Each test server has at least 32 test domains.
- Domains are matched in pairs for A/B testing.
- All domains are .com, .net and .org; no testing is done with other extensions.
- Testing is done with at least 8 pairs of domains and configured as follows:

  * 3-7 pages
  * 25-49 pages
  * 100-149 pages
  * 300-499 pages
  * 8-24 pages
  * 50-99 pages
  * 150-299 pages
  * 500+ pages
All the pages on each domain contain real content. The sites “naturally” grow with new content, and when a site grows from the 3-7 pages in size to 8 pages, a new test domain is created.

While performing a test on a pair of domains, one of the domains in the pair is tested, while the other remains constant. This is A/B testing. Once I see something unusual, I can verify it, not just on one testing pair, but across at least a dozen testing pairs. This method is unlike other testing models on the Web and I never trust the results from just one test. Never.

Due to varying issues within the algorithms, it can take up to six weeks in order to formulate an accurate conclusion. This is why you rarely read “breaking news” from me on a certain topic. Yes, I have heard about it and I go right to work testing it. For breaking news, see the SEO Revolution Blog.

So there is no confusion: You should not use the data below as guidelines for your site. Keep in mind, each industry is a little different in terms of the criterion that is used; however, these figures will give you an understanding of how Google is changing. If you read and follow the commentary, you should see good results with your sites.

The following twelve areas are analyzed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keyword in Title</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Words in Title</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyword in Meta Description</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Words in Meta Description</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyword in Meta Keywords</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Words in Meta Keywords</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keywords in Content</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Words in Content</td>
<td>549</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyword Density in Content</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyword in Link Text</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backlinks</td>
<td>2,101</td>
<td>1,277</td>
<td>662</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>588</td>
<td>481</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google PageRank</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Total Words includes ALL words on the page. Keyword Density percentage calculated with "stop words" removed.
Legend

Keyword in Title – How many times does the keyword phrase appear as an exact phrase in the Title? 0.5 indicates that 50% of the top listings have the keyword phrase in the Title.

Total Words in Title – How many words are in the Title Tag? 7.8, rounded up to 8 words on average, appear in the Title Tag in the top listed pages.

Keyword in Meta Description – Does the keyword phrase appear in the Meta Description? 0.8 states that 80% of the top listings have the keyword phrase in the Meta Description.

Total Words in Meta Description – How many words are in the Meta Description Tag? 16.4 indicates that on average, 16 words appear in the Meta Description for the top listed pages.

Keyword in Meta Keywords – Does the keyword phrase appear in the Meta Keyword Tag? 0.6 infers that 60% of the top listings contain the keyword phrase in the Meta Keywords Tag.

Total Words in Meta Keywords – How many words are in the Meta Keywords Tag? 17.1 indicates that on average, 17 (rounded down) words appear in the top listed pages for the Meta Keyword Tag.

Keyword in Content – How many times does the keyword phrase appear within the content? 5.1 signifies that the keyword phrase will appear on a top ranking page an average of 5 times (rounded down). This is found in the content of the page, what you can see.

Total Words in Content – How many words of content are on the page? 511 denotes the actual number of words (including stop words). The major engines do not index the stop words, but they are counted and figured into the density numbers.

Keyword Density in Content – What density percentage is the keyword phrase in the content? 1.2 refers to 1%, or one instance of the keyword phrase per 100 words of text (stop words removed).

Keyword in Link Text – Does the keyword phrase appear in the Link/Anchor Text on the page? 1.8 refers to 180% of the top sites contain the
keyword phrase in Anchor text on the page. In other words, it appears more than once on the page.

**Backlinks** – How many backlinks does the page have? 481 indicates the number of qualified pages that Google recognizes as linking to the page. Note that this is determined with the “link command,” which is not as accurate as the link information in Google Webmaster Central. And even Google Webmaster Central is not giving a clear reading of the number of links. We are only using this as a way to gauge rises and falls in this area.

**Google PageRank** – What is the Google PageRank of the page? 5.1 signifies a PageRank of 5 as the average PageRank for the top sites.

**Google Caffeine Update: The “Google Mess” Fix**

In one of the wackiest algorithm updates I have ever seen in my career, Google announced on June 8, 2010 that Caffeine, its new Web indexing system, was officially live. When Caffeine was launched, things were still relatively a mess from the initial algorithm update six weeks earlier (dubbed May Day by Webmaster World).

Caffeine is an architecture update, not an algorithm update (according to Google reps). That’s what Matt Cutts said the last time they had a major architecture update (BigDaddy) and they still made major changes to the algorithm. My only guess is they are trying to “pass” these updates by us to limit the amount of public questions they have to answer.

**Fresh Content Killing Spree**

Now, back to this update, it’s concentrating on “fresh” content, killing sites with good content that has been around for a long time, and rewarding SPAM sites that have scraped content and just “mashed” it up.

**Translation**: You can have a well-ranking site that’s been around a long time and some “upstart” can come along, scrape your content, re-work it and rank along with you. I have run a ton of test queries and have never seen this much SPAM in Google’s index. I am confident it will get cleaned out, but how long will it take?

**Let History Repeat Itself**

History shows that Google will get it done. I’ve been through every major update from Google, and with every update a lot of quality sites get nailed and SPAM seems to “float” to the top. This leads to people screaming that
the sky is falling, but then Google’s engineers make a few adjustments and suddenly everything is back to normal with slightly better quality to the SERPs. Hang tight! Things will get better. Follow what I have listed here and I am very confident that within 30-days your site’s traffic will not only return, but increase.

So, with that said, I am going to ignore the politics of it all and dive right in to what you should be doing RIGHT NOW for your sites. The bottom line is these updates have greatly affected long-tail searches.

**SEO Prescription Fix for Algorithm Update**
Here is my prescription for fixing this issue. Even if you are not affected by the algorithm update, I strongly suggest performing a check up on your site and follow these steps. It will boost the performance of your site.

1) **Check the number of indexed pages in Google vs. the number of pages you actually have.**

**How:** Log in to your Google Webmaster Tools account and click on the “sitemap.xml” file in the Sitemaps section (lower-right corner) and compare. For example, my site has 619 total pages, but only 461 are indexed. That means 25% of my pages aren’t indexed. This didn’t used to be the case, but it is now. I need to fix it. One of the biggest reasons for drops in site traffic is loss of pages indexed.

**Tip:** An alternate method for determining the number of indexed pages that you have is by using Google Analytics. You can use this method to see the actual pages that are indexed.

Log into your Google Analytics account and do the following:

**Choose** Search Engines from the Traffic Sources section
Select Google as the Search Engine
Filter by Landing Pages
View the number at the bottom

The bottom number tells you the number of unique pages on your site that received at least one visit during the specified time period.

1a) **Easiest fix for lowered indexed pages: update your XML sitemap.**
Yeah, you are probably saying this is too easy but you’d be surprised how well it works, just make sure to custom set the pages’ priorities:

Homepage: 1.0
Main Category Pages: 0.7
“Money” Landing Pages: 0.6
The Rest: 0.5
About Us, Privacy, Contact Us, etc.: 0.1-0.3

After updating the sitemap and resubmitting to Google via Webmaster Tools, indexed pages increased by 15% going from 461 to 548.

Sitemaps

Sitemap: http://www.webmarketingnow.com/sitemap.xml Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Submitted URLs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sitemap</td>
<td>619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>548 URLs in web index</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sitemap errors and warnings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No errors or warnings found.

1b) Fix all missing, duplicate, long, short, etc. Titles and Descriptions.

How: In the left side menu of Google Webmaster Tools go to Diagnostics –> HTML Suggestions. This will list all missing, duplicate, long and short title issues that Google has found.
Duplicate Titles are the main cause of internal duplicate content and keyword cannibalization (self-competing pages) will result in lower rankings and pages dropping out of the index. Fix any issues here immediately.

Start by clicking the Duplicate Title tags link, if the page indicates you have errors. This will show the URL of the page that needs to be fixed. Review the page content, keywords targeted, page name, and header tags and come up with a unique Title relevant to the content. Once done with Duplicate Title tags, fix errors under the Missing Title tags link. You can usually get 20-30 title issues corrected per hour.

2) Check for 404 Errors and Crawl Errors
One of the biggest issues with the Caffeine update is that sites with a large number of crawl errors identified in Google Webmaster Tools really got nailed. Most of the errors were old and no longer valid. They had been flushed from the system; however, the log files I analyzed for these sites showed a correlation between a lower number of indexed pages and the amount of crawl errors.

**How to Fix:** On the main Google Webmaster Tools Dashboard, you’ll see Crawl Errors listed in the top-right section. You can also access this information by clicking Diagnostics –> Crawl Errors, from the left side menu. Start with the Not Found issues and either fix the error or do a 301 redirect to a live page.

Run a Link Rot Check too.
Additional Crawl Tools:
XENU Link Sleuth – Free (Desktop Tool)
Screaming Frog SEO Spider – Free (Desktop Tool)
Audit My PC – Free (Online Tool)

3) Link your most important landing pages and category pages off the homepage.

Why: Don’t rely on the XML sitemap to get your site completely indexed, you need good link structure too. Using your homepage to pass solid link juice to important pages is the most elementary internal linking method you can employ. If your “long tail” pages are not linked to any main category page, this could be the reason they dropped out.

4) Check your domain authority with Open Site Explorer. If your Domain Authority is below 50, you have major problems and need to boost Domain Authority through new HIGH authority links. If the score is above 50 and you were nailed, the issue is probably lack of strong authority for your homepage. Implementing an additional link campaign to your homepage and only targeting your company name may pull you out.

5) Check your anchor text distribution.

With Open Site Explorer still open, click the Anchor Text Distribution tab. Review the anchor text. Is it spread around your homepage and other
main pages of your site? If you notice that your anchor text for a targeted keyword phrase is more than 40%, consider running a new link campaign to water down that percentage and lower any red flag that may have been raised. Do this by using the domain name as the anchor text.

6) Submit your site to Best of the Web
It has been quite a ride for directories over the years and they have really taken a beating; however, the one directory that continues to shine and produce is Best of the Web. Not only can you submit your site, but they have a special blog directory as well. I highly recommend doing the one-time payment. You are paying a little less than a Yahoo! submission and you are getting STRONGER benefits according to my testing.

If you are having issues with Linking Foundation, this submission will greatly help you.

There you go – six steps which will help correct issues within your site, so Google can spider deeper, index more of your pages, and pick up those long-tail phrases once again.
Whenever on-page factors are discussed, the HEAD section is ALWAYS referenced. Let’s dissect it first and then I’ll show you what I recommend based on the testing results. Go ahead and right-click your mouse on your homepage and select View Source. A new window will open showing your page’s source code. You’ll see the HEAD section near the top of the page.

1) DTD Statement
The DTD Statement isn’t within the <head> tag, but it is usually the first line in the source code. DTD stands for Document Type Definition. Your page was written in code, but was it HTML 4.01 Strict, XHTML 1.0 Transitional, or one of the other versions? The DTD declares the type of code so that browsers, tools and search engines can properly process and spider your site. That’s why it’s important that you use the CORRECT tag.

For example, if your code is written in HTML 3.2 and you insert a 4.01 tag, that can cause problems. If you’re unsure if you have the correct tag use the [W3C Markup Validation Service](http://validator.w3.org) (free), or consult your web designer.

2) Character Set Tag
The Character Set tag tells the browser how to display the text. Since the character set should be defined BEFORE any text appears in the browser, you want the Character Set tag to precede the Title Tag.
3) The Title Tag
All major search engines index the Title Tag. It will appear at the top of the browser window. In search engines the Title is the most prominent part of your result—decisions are made based of it.

In terms of SEO, the Title Tag is considered average in importance for competitive phrases in Google. Google will only display up to the first 65 characters, so be succinct. A good Title will grab attention, create curiosity and get the click through.

Make sure each of your pages has a unique Title.

**Hot Tip:** Using duplicate, or near duplicate Titles across a site has been shown to have the same effect as duplicate content, thus harming a site’s ranking power. To see if your site has duplicate Title tags log into Google Webmaster Tools and review the Diagnostics -> HTML Suggestions section.

4) Meta Description Tag
The Description works with the Title to attract prospects. When a prospect performs a search, the results displayed are usually the Title Tag and the Description. Keep this tag to 155 characters or less.

Invest the same amount of time thinking about and writing your Title and Description as you would writing an important ad. If you don’t include a Description, by default most search engines will use the first 30-40 words on the page, which may not accurately describe your site and lead to increased bounce rates. Include your focused keyword phrases, but don’t stuff your keywords into the tag.

**Note:** If you’ve included the keyword phrase being searched in the Description Tag, Google will display the tag contents, but if the keyword is absent, Google will use a snippet from your page.

5) Meta Keyword Tag
Even though Google still ignores this tag, use 6-8 keyword phrases in the Meta Keyword Tag, but leave all of your “money phrases” (highest converting phrases) out. Why? The Keyword Tag is the first place competitors look to steal information. Ten years ago, you might gain something by keyword stuffing this tag, but not anymore, so don’t do it.

**Hot Tip:** If you don’t use this tag, there is no change in ranking.
6) Meta Robots Tag
New, unskilled or outrageously pessimistic webmasters use this tag. For example:

```html
<meta name="robots" content="index,follow">
```

The Robots Tag gives direction to bots. You don’t need to tell Google’s bot to crawl your site—it does that by default. It’s not on “stand by” and doesn’t need to be told. There are real uses for this tag; however, like preventing a robot from indexing a page or using a snippet.

```html
<META NAME="ROBOTS" CONTENT="NOODP">
```

The tag above disallows the use of the ODP’s description in any search engine that supports it. Currently, the Big Three (Google, Yahoo! and Bing) support it. If you just want to do this for Google, you can use this Meta tag:

```html
<META NAME="GOOGLEBOT" CONTENT="NOODP">
```

If you want more information on this, can read Google’s information all about the Title and Description.

7) Meta Author Tag
This is an area for the author to place their name. The Author Meta Tag is required to meet Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) validation. It does nothing for your SEO or usability, but I highly recommend that you at least have it on your homepage.

8) Meta Image Toolbar
This is not a widely used Meta Tag and isn't required. This tag is useful if you have larger images. It removes the “context icons” that appear in IE so your site looks cleaner. If you have images that are greater than 100 pixels in height or width, I recommend using this tag.

9) Google Sitemaps
This is hands down the best way to get a site crawled and deeply indexed. While I have seen Google Sitemaps to be effective in regards to a new site; it does not help you avoid the Google Sandbox (natural new site filter). Using Google Sitemaps allows for more of your site’s pages to be found, which is a good thing.

**Tip:** If you have a large site with a lot of categories, it’s best to divide those categories into several smaller sitemaps, and then list them all in on Sitemap Index file.

**Example:**

```xml
<sitemapindex>
  <sitemap>
    <loc>http://www.pricereview.co.in/sitemap-electronics.xml</loc>
    <lastmod>2011-06-08</lastmod>
  </sitemap>
  <sitemap>
    <loc>http://www.pricereview.co.in/sitemap/air-conditioners.xml</loc>
    <lastmod>2011-06-08</lastmod>
  </sitemap>
  <sitemap>
    <loc>http://www.pricereview.co.in/sitemap/televisions.xml</loc>
    <lastmod>2011-06-08</lastmod>
  </sitemap>
</sitemapindex>
```
Too many SEOs have the false belief that all you need to do is throw a keyword phrase in the Title and buy a couple of links with the phrase in the anchor text and they’re done.

Wrong. You can rank at the top for a phrase without including it in the Title—as long as you’re effectively using certain off-page Factors which we’ll get into later.

Titles just don’t carry the importance they once did, when it comes to influencing rank. “But I can get a #1 ranking for a long tail keyphrase just by using the Title Tag” you say? And anyone can outrank you WITHOUT using the keyword in the Title or ANYWHERE else on the page. All they have to do is use incoming links.

Still don’t believe the Title Tag has lost its value? Example: “job search”

Even though over half of the top ten results contain the keyword phrase, it still isn’t a vital component.

In the image above, JobSearch.com has the term “job search” in the Title, while Monster doesn’t. The image below shows the top two results for “search engine” and neither have the keyword phrase in the Title.
Okay, I know you’re thinking, well sure, if you were a Monster.com or a Dogpile you’d float to the top too. Well, take a look at these searches: “Hotel discounts” Only 1/10 use the phrase in the Title.
Other Examples of Exceptions

“Online computer store.” Only 1/10 of the top ten pages use that phrase in the Title.

“Find a job.” Only four of the top ten sites uses that in the Title.

“Online transcription service.” None of the top ten sites are using that keyword phrase.

“Discount books.” Only four of the top ten contain that phrase in the Title.

“Disney vacation Orlando.” None of the sites on page one use this phrase.

“Home repair.” Two sites in the Top 10 use this phrase in the Title. On the other hand, there are phrases where all the entries use the keyword in the Title, for example with the phrase “used cars.”

I’m not suggesting that you no longer use the keyword phrase in the Title. If you see the competition not using a keyword in the title, it could be an opportunity for you. Think “outside the box.” How is your page going to stand out if everyone in the SERPs uses the keyword in the Title and in the same order?

Total Words in Title
I highly recommend keeping the Title at eight (8) words or less with a 67-character limit to avoid ellipses.
“Why only eight? I can't keyword stuff my Title with just eight words!”
Two words: Click throughs. You need the clicks in order to be successful online, not just a top ranking.

A top position is worthless if it isn't clicked. Click throughs happen when the prospect is compelled by the Title. Master the art of writing compelling page titles and you will always have an advantage over the competition.

**Proof:** Do you have a site that ranks in the bottom half of the page, but still has a good clickthrough rate? That usually means you have a better Title than the higher ranking sites. Do you always click the #1 listing? No? Yeah, me neither. Why? We’re always looking for the best match because we don’t want to waste our time. Now, according to my testing, if I “keyword stuff” the Title of the #1 listing, but make a STRONG compelling Title in the #2 spot, the #2 site out pulls the #1 **EVERY SINGLE TIME** in clicks. And what’s most important? Yeah, clicks, because you can't pitch the customer if they never see your offer.

“Give the user what they want and they will click.” Remember the three-step process to successful SEO: Ranking, Click through and Conversion. Start a conversation with your prospects by using the Title Tag and keep it flowing with your landing page.

**Keyword Stuffing is Lame and Boring**

Title Tags that are keyword stuffed or boring have poor clickthrough rates. According to David Bullock, a prospect has a conversation in their head before they start searching. This conversation creates a rough idea of what the solution looks like and how much it may cost. Therefore, when the prospect starts their search, they scan the search page looking for results that match their pre-search conversation. Titles longer than eight words make scanning more difficult and are often bypassed by searchers, as they are not perceived to continue their conversation.
What Makes a Good Title

You’ve heard advice to make sure that the title is “READABLE and COMPELLING,” but how? What I do is open my business journal and map out what I think the typical prospect is like and break down their needs. What words grab their attention and gets them clicking? How can I phrase it as a question and really peak their curiosity? How does it solve a problem or make the user’s life better? I then look at the titles of the competing sites for possible inspiration.

Ever see SERPs where the majority of the Top 10 all started with the same keyword phrase and looked identical? That is why I also look for ways, through arrangement of words and formatting, that will make my Title stand out.

One of the biggest mistakes made by webmasters and SEOs is in not treating the Title like an ad. Titles in organic search results are, in many ways, no different than those in paid search results. I don’t know many PPC managers who “keyword stuff” their ad titles. Organic SEOs shouldn’t keyword stuff for the same reason. Keyword stuffed titles bring either the wrong traffic or are ignored by prospects or both.

Key Tip: While the Title itself is not as effective in getting your page well-ranked, it is VERY effective at gaining the click through.

Note: Google has been going back and forth in showing the site’s title, versus showing the title in DMOZ. To prevent this, you can add the following Meta tag to your page:

```
<META NAME="ROBOTS" CONTENT="NOODP">
```

```
<META NAME="GOOGLEBOT" CONTENT="NOODP">
```

Good Example: A search for “discount online furniture” produces a #3 result with a Title that reads, “Discount Online Furniture with Free Shipping.” That is near perfection. The Titles of the #1 and #2 sites run off and it is proven through testing that if a Title has ellipses due to too many characters, the click throughs decrease.

Example of What NOT to Do: Search “mortgages” in Google and read the Titles. Not ONE of the results is compelling. For example, “Chicago
Home Loan Details and Information.” “Details” and “Information” aren’t really words that evoke any emotion are they?

**Exception Example:** Doing a search for “search engine optimization” brings a listing in the top ten that contains 13 words (three stop words) in the Title for [www.bruceclay.com/web_rank.htm](http://www.bruceclay.com/web_rank.htm). It is a subpage that is keyword stuffed.

**Other Examples of Exceptions:**

Wirefly.com: This 14 word Title ranks #2 for the keyword phrase “cell phone deals.”

DiscountTireCenters.com: The Title has 28 words and 12 stop words, but ranks #10 for “discount tires.”

**Meta Description**

Google shows unique text found in the Meta Description within the SERPs, but according to my tests, it is *not* factored into their algorithm.

**Total Words in Meta Description**

Use 25 words or less, that are highly focused and compelling, with a 155 character maximum. Your goal is to convert the “searcher” into a “clicker.” Keyword proximity, meaning how close it is to the front of the description, is not as important as it once was.

**Recommendation:** As with the Title, make the description short and compelling to improve the clickthrough rate. Make sure you use the targeted keyword phrase in the description at least once. My testing shows that unless the words that make up your keyword phrase appear in the Meta Description, Google won’t use it for the description in the SERPs. Instead, it will pull from the content of your site and often “Frankenstein” it (pull two different sentences of content and “mesh” them together into one).
The above example by Avis is very clear and concise. This is a great example of what to do. Keep it simple. However, using initial caps would have made it far better.

**Example of What Not to do:**
The example below is from a search for “discount online furniture.” The Title is good, and the description starts off well “lowest price guarantee,” but it goes downhill from there. Do you see how HTML is included (bfont color...)? Someone tried to use font formatting and an image within the Description Tag. This doesn’t work. It needs to be plain text.

![Discount Online Furniture with Free Shipping](https://www.oneyewayfurniture.com/pricopro.html)

The Title stinks, but the description for a “Chicago virtual office” site started really well! Someone searching might also be wondering, “Is the office staffed,” and this description answers that question. Unfortunately, they didn’t end the Description Tag correctly, and as you can see below the description was cut short.

![Office Space Chicago, And Virtual Office Chicago](https://www.chicago-office.com/)

**Meta Keyword**
Google does NOT index this tag for ranking purposes. While more top sites are using this tag, I do not see any pull in Google's algorithm.

**Total Words in Meta Keyword**
Even though 20-40 words is a common amount, it is not recommended.

**Recommendation:** It’s a toss up whether to use this tag or not since none of the [Big 3 search engines](https://www.google.com) still support it. If you decide to use it, be mindful not to include your “money phrases,” since there are more and more software programs hitting the market that will “hijack” the meta keywords to compile fast keyword lists. Don’t allow your competition to steal your hard earned keyword research.
Key Point: Any phrase used in this tag must also be included in the body text, or it may be perceived as Spam.

Keywords in Content
This is an area that separates the "on page" factor engines and the "off page" factor engines.

Content: The highest keyword density measured in Google this year was 15.23%. Compare that to the highest last summer of 7.9%. There were dozens and dozens of double-digit keyword densities that came up on the radar. It has been years since I have seen something like this.

Bad Example: Search “term life insurance” and the densities returned from the top ten results are over recommended density.

How is this possible? It’s not just different industries, it’s major companies getting a “free pass” with Google. This is why Amazon can cloak and not get penalized by Google. This is also why I throw out results from these types of sites as they have no factor in the real algorithm.

Content Density
Keyword density is the percentage of times that keyword is used on the page, compared with the total number of words. Keyword density has to do with the density of the content – what you see on the screen. It does not include the Title, Description, Keyword, Comment Tags, Alt Tags, etc.

Warning About Keyword Density Tools
There are many “free tools” available that claim to check keyword density on the fly, but they do not compute it properly. This is a “warning” if you use one of those tools. It’s also why we still do things manually.

Here’s an easy way to check the reliability of a keyword density checker. In your tool of choice, run a search for a specific keyword phrase. Now, open a browser window and go to the same page you just checked. Click <ctrl>+F to find all occurrence of the keyword phrase with the content. Does the number of times the phrase appears in the document actually match the percentage you were given using the keyword density tool? If not, it’s not a tool you can rely on.
None of the tools are perfectly accurate. For our testing, we do all of our checks manually to verify accuracy. For example, we discovered massive amounts of redirects with and without JavaScript (browser-side cloaking). If you were to use an automated tool, you may be analyzing the wrong page, thus throwing off the data. There are also many times we throw out data because it is so far off, and including it, would flaw the data. We can’t have flawed data, can we?

Many criticize me for throwing out data, but as a tester, that is what you do. You are looking for accurate data, and when a single result is so far away from the averages of hundreds of samples, there is a definite error. By removing the bad data, the overall figures are more accurate and are not affected by the “spike.”

**Note:** Ranks.nl has a nice [PAID, Keyword Density Analyzer](#) tool that also checks for keyword prominence.

**Different Sections of the Page Have Different Values**
The “words on the page” do not include the left and right gutters or the top and bottom navigation. According to our testing, this area is NOT figured in the density. What we count as “words on the page” are the same words that are counted in Google’s algorithm. Google utilizes sophisticated, [Page Segmentation](#) techniques that allow it to read page design better than you think! Google can read page design better than you think! A lot of people don’t take that into consideration, nor are they aware that the actual content area is graded at a *higher level* than the content contained in the gutters. That is very important to remember when designing and optimizing your pages.

This change is also why webmasters who achieved top rankings with keyword-rich anchor text in the navigational areas and the footers are starting to struggle for highly competitive keyword phrases.

Using the highlighter tool in the Google Toolbar is a great way to see where specific keywords fall on the page. I highly recommend it.

**Content Still Rules**
If there has been one aspect of SEO that has not changed since I began in 1996, it is that content, good [MARKETABLE](#) content, is vital. High ranking pages in Google average over 400 words.
Based on this information, the following are recommendations we are giving at this time. Please note that these recommendations are based on the averages and your industry may be different:

· Keep your Title Tag compelling and short (8 words or less).
· Use the full targeted keyword phrase in the Title only once.
· Use only one Title Tag.
· Include Meta Description Tag: Make it compelling 25 words or less.
· Use the full keyword phrase only once in the Meta Description.
· Include a Keyword Meta Tag, but be generic. Remember, your competition may hijack your keywords from this tag.
· List five or less keyword phrases in the Keyword Meta Tag.
· All words in Keyword Meta Tag are actually within page text.
· Avoid unnecessary Meta Tags like a robots follow tag.
· Add content (viewable content) so there are at least 450 words per page. This will bring consistent search engine referral traffic.
· Do not keyword stuff your content. Incorporate the keyword phrase into content naturally, so the text flows.
· Integrate a few variations of the keyword phrase into the content.
· Break content into sections by using H1, H2 or H3 Tag to start.
· Use a variation of the keyword phrase in the H1 Tag
· Use of ALT Tags is recommended ONLY to describe an image.
· Don’t use the HTML Comment Tag for SEO purposes.
· Appearance of the full keyword phrase in the URL (i.e. domain name, sub folder, file name) gives only a slight increase in Google, but can be used to spam in both Yahoo! and Bing. Headings, anchor text, bold text, etc., all give slight increase in the SERPs and should be used in moderation. Add relevant interior links within the body of the page.

Odds and Ends

ALT Tags
Using ALT Tags to boost your positioning is officially a thing of the past. I recommend them only in terms of aesthetics to help the user navigate
your site better. It’s good to add some keywords here (i.e. discount cruise deals logo). More than half of top ranking pages do not use their keyword in any ALT tag on the page. This has been consistent for over a year and is the reason why we stopped tracking it. There has been some talk in the forums that the ALT tag text is coming back. However, according to my testing, the only thing I can see it working for is “low hanging fruit” and most anything works for those keyword phrases.

**Comment Tags**
Comment Tags continue to not count in the algorithms of the major engines; however, they are indexed, inconsistently. Therefore, I must place them in the “not indexed” category. If you use Comment Tags, use them as they were intended, to leave yourself, or the webmaster, notes of the construction of the website – don’t use them for SEO purposes. It’s ok to add keywords (i.e. start discount cruise deals for October).

**Domain Name**
Using a keyword-rich domain name is still very overrated and is losing juice with Google. Branding with a good domain is a better option. If your keyword-rich domain is something like “latest” this or “free” that then in order to rank high you need to out-do all competitors who buy links and use the keywords in your generic domain as anchor text for inbound links.

In testing, the increase in a keyword-rich domain is so slight that it is barely measurable for the “money keyword phrases.”

Search “discount cruises” in Google. Only (1) site has “discount” and “cruises” in the domain and it ranks #4. All other sites only use “cruises” in the URL. The point: having the full phrase in the domain or sub folder doesn’t guarantee top rank—or even page one.

Subdomains are starting to falter as Google has begun treating them as one domain. Subdomain spam with Bing still works very well however.

**Internal / External Links**
Link text coming from quality sites continue to bolster sites in Google; however, “spam” and “link farm” sites continue to be ignored and penalized.

**PageRank**
What is interesting here is that while PageRank doesn’t have the power that it once had, the top ranking pages in Google generally have a good
PageRank of 5 or better. I am seeing fewer and fewer “PageRank 0/10” pages in the top ten.

**Conclusion**

Based on the finding through analyzing the top ten results for on-page factors, it is still clear that on-page factors don’t account for 40% of Google’s algorithm as some SEO experts state. According to my tests, the percentage is more in the 15%-20% range. While on-page factoring still carries weight, off-page factors are the ones that drive the rankings.

Knowing the above will help you compete more effectively by knowing exactly which on-page factors to concentrate on.
OFF-PAGE FACTORS

Backlinks
The importance of Link Popularity and Link Reputation (Backlinks) continues to rise, despite the page numbers dropping. This is a direct result of the partially indexed pages being dropped from the indexed list, but they are still being counted and this includes the links. A solid link campaign is vital to your success online with Google.

A link campaign is not just to get links for your homepage. I have been stressing for years that link campaigns for category pages, articles and press releases is an excellent idea. It will help funnel back PageRank to your homepage if you use the dynamic linking strategies.

Note: Yahoo! used to be the place you want to monitor your backlinks, and it’s still a good, free source for link analysis. Now Majestic SEO is highly recommended if you have the budget. Their Fresh Index has 40 billion unique URLs and updates daily.

Internal/External Links
Link text from quality sites continues to bolster sites in Google, while, “spam” and “link farm” sites continue to be ignored and penalized.

Hot Tip: If a solid link profile doesn’t exist, using obvious paid links can hurt the page you’re trying to promote. If you buy links, be smart, don’t use a Gmail address.

From my analysis, here is what I know about the off-page factors:

• Backlink numbers tell you nothing – ignore them.
• PageRank data has not been updated since April, don’t allow it to influence your decision.
• Only target keyword phrases that convert and which cost 50 cents or more per click. Never target a keyword phrase organically that doesn’t convert or have supporting traffic.
• Use NicheWatch to verify that you can get into the Top 20 in 30 days or less. What you are looking for are “gaps” in the AllinAnchor column. If the
numbers start falling out of order quickly, it means there are openings for you to jump in. If it is “stacked” then you may want to put that keyword on hold for now.

• Once you have a keyword phrase to target, write down where your page ranks overall, allinanchor, allintitle and allintext.

• Rewrite Your Title Tag (if needed).

• Analyze the top ten sites for the keyword phrase using IBP. It isn’t perfect, but it will tell you how your page stacks up against the top ten. Make adjustments to your page according to the recommendations. Be careful as not every suggestion is correct. I would concentrate on the keyword density and the proximity of the keyword phrase.

• After you make the changes, upload them to your server, make 10-30 link requests, write blog/forum posts, send out a press release, post articles, and place advertising, etc. wait 2-3 days and then run the report again in NicheWatch.

• If you increased in any of the columns you should have also increased your overall ranking for the keyword phrase. Keep getting more links but wait a week before checking again. However, if you dropped in ranking, either overall or in the AllinText column, restore your old page and go back and concentrate on links.

• Often it takes Google 5-7 days to take the content they have indexed and integrate it into the SERPs. Be patient and don’t check your rankings every day or you could make incorrect decisions. You want to check them once a week maximum, see where you are weak, and then make the necessary changes. Do this until you are number one. Then check the listings once every two weeks. Just remember, when you are #2 not many SEOs are gunning for you. When you are #1, every SEO in your industry is gunning for you. You have to stay on your toes.
I. Domain Names

Branding with a good domain is recommended, but a keyword-rich .org domain can rank well fast and drive traffic to your main money site. Subdomains are starting to falter as Google has begun treating subdomains as one domain. Subdomain Spam with Bing still works very well.

Buy an Existing Domain

Before you purchase an existing domain for the PageRank value, be sure to verify it is legit. Domain fraud occurs on a large scale and you need to be aware and learn how to combat it.

Google performs the update to their toolbar about once every three months. Due to this gap in the updates, it can be easy for con artists to fake the PageRank.

Methods include:

• Hijacking the PageRank of another domain so a PR0 page will show as PR6 (or whatever the con artist wants it to show).

• Buying links from other sites or networks to drive up the PageRank to a 5, 6 or 7. Then, once the toolbar updates to show
the new higher PR value, the purchased links are cancelled and the domain goes on the market.

• The con artist will use an extensive network they have built that sends hundreds of links to the domain. Once it is sold, all the links to the domain you purchased are cancelled, thus making the domain worthless.

In all three examples above, the PageRank for the domain will drop to a PageRank of zero after the next toolbar update.

To verify a domain's PageRank:

1) Always visit the site and check the PageRank yourself.

2) Check the Google Cache. If the PageRank is “fake,” you will often see the cache from another site. If the domain is not in Google's index, the PageRank is probably faked, or Google recently banned the domain.

3) Verify the site is live. If it's a placeholder page, chances are the domain is dead and has lost most, if not all, of the PageRank.

4) Use archive.org (The Way Back Machine) to check the history of a site. You must know what its past history is. It may have been a child porn site, a hate site, a gambling site, etc.

5) Check Google to see if the site is still indexed. To do so, simply do a search in Google for:

   site:domain.com

Registering a Domain Name

I personally recommend that you register your domain name for multiple years, not to gain any favor with Google, but to “lock up” your properties and have no worries about renewals. I’ve lost more domains than I care to admit because of expired credit cards on file, a wrong address and a myriad of other reasons. Lock them up for an extended period and you’ll be glad you did.
Recommendation: I use [GoDaddy](http://www.godaddy.com) for all of my domain registrations.

**Hot Tip:** Always use real contact information, or use a Privacy Service to protect your WHOIS data. Using false information is grounds for revocation of the domain.

**.Com vs. Other Extensions**
Based on my research, only 6% of the top ten results are non-.com domains. This has less to do with the actual domain extension than it does with the domain owners. The majority of corporations own .coms, while spammers and low-level marketers attempt to compete using the same root name but with a different extension. I always recommend a .com over other extensions because people tend to type in the .com.

**Hyphens, Underscores, or Neither?**
Do domains with dashes rank better than those without? No. My testing concludes that only about 4% of top ranking domains contain dashes. The reason – Google may see it as SPAM. Please don’t take this to mean that getting a domain with dashes is a good way for your site to stand out, since such a low percent of top ranking sites have them. The reason there is such a low number is probably because they’re being viewed as spam which is not a good thing.

For example, when Google was asked if they look at every domain that contains hyphens as SPAM, a Google Engineer replied, “While just having lots of hyphens in the domain name does not automatically indicate Spam, it does raise our ‘alert level.’”

If you need to use a hyphen, I recommend you keep the number of hyphens in your domain name to 1 or 2. The obvious preference is none. While dashes in domains and URLs don't widely affect ranking, the absence of dashes in top ranking sites is evident at 96%.

If you want to target a keyword phrase, use hyphenated filenames. Of the subpages that rank in the top ten, 22% of them had hyphens or underscores in the folder and file names of the URL. Bruce Clay mentioned that he tested up to 14 hyphens and Google still indexed the pages. Just watch the number of hyphens, as it tends to make the URL look “ugly.”

**Subdomains**
Should you stop using subdomains as a part of your site structure? Of the top ranking pages, 11% are from subdomains. Personally, I am moving
away from using subdomains. Just a few months ago, Google's SERPs would contain, on average, 4-6 subdomains in the top ten. If you have subdomains in use right now, continue to use and market them, as 11% presence is still solid.

For new sites, I suggest you move away from this structure, simply because it is more difficult to manage. Google is taking aggressive measures to combat the high level of subdomain Spam and has begun to treat subdomains and subfolders the same. If you are questioning which to choose for your site, go with the subfolder structure.

**Proxy Hijacking**
The days of having your domain hijacked through a proxy in Google are over. This was a huge problem for years and looks like it has been resolved. All of my domains that had the 302 hijack issue are all responding correctly.

Google and Microsoft have recently released a new supported tag to allow their spiders to know which “real” version of the page you want indexed, if you have dynamic content.

The syntax behind this is simple: A lengthy or “ugly” URL such as: http://www.example.com/page.html?sid=asdf314159265

Can be specified in the HEAD part of the document as the following:

```
<link rel="canonical" href="http://example.com/page.html"/>
```

This tells search engines that the preferred location of this url (the “canonical” location, in search engine speak) is:

```
http://example.com/page.html
```

Instead of:

```
http://www.example.com/page.html?sid=asdf314159265
```

This is great news and it should also take care of Proxy Hijacking. [Learn More about the Canonical Tag](#).
Large domains
You’ve got a large site? Hey, good for you. Larger domains are holding their ground better in Google despite all the recent fluctuations. If you have a large domain, check your Google Webmaster Tools account to ensure the pages that you need indexed are indeed indexed. It might be time to create a new XML Sitemap. I strongly suggest regenerating a new XML file every quarter and resubmitting.

II. Site Hosting

According to testing, Google spiders sites regardless of where they are hosted. Of course, there are exceptions. If you are concerned, it is recommended that you have your own dedicated server and plenty of clean IP addresses. Use a reputable hosting company that does not recycle banned IPs, or puts too many websites on a single IP address.

III. Site Design

Your text content should outweigh the HTML code, meaning that what you see in the browser should not be dwarfed by what you see in View Source. Search engines determine the relevance of a page’s “Text to Code” ratio. More code can equal more errors.

Check your code using SEO Chat’s Code to Text Ratio Tool. Keep in mind that 40% or better is good. Anything lower should prompt you to review your code. Cut down on code bloat by using External CSS and JavaScript.

One of the most important factors in getting your site on Google’s good side is to make sure your code is search engine compliant. This is different than being W3C compliant. The W3C is often too restrictive, and a lot of code they deem “non-HTML” is actually fine.

To be search engine compliant, I strongly suggest the following:

DTD Statement (Document Type Definition)
This tag will go in or above the <HEAD> section for every page of your site. According to test results, using a DTD (Document Type Definition) Statement allows for faster and deeper indexing by GoogleBot. Using an incorrect DTD Statement can hurt your site. For example, if you use a 4.01 statement, but your code was written in HTML 3.2, the engine
will make note of it and there is a strong likelihood the page (or site) will be dropped or penalized.

I also strongly recommend the Transitional Tag, as it allows you flexibility with code, especially with the use of HTML editors.

\[ Mind Crime Exposed: \]

Many "gurus" will tell you that registering your domain name for 10 years will show Google that you are a legit business. Really? Since when does a $50.00 investment prove a business legit? A business license costs more.

Don't try to fool GoogleBot. If you don't know what's good practice and what's out of bounds, hire someone who does. It is worth the fee.

Examples of a DTD Statement:

XHTML 1.0

```xml
<!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0//EN">
```

HTML 3.2

```xml
<!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD HTML 3.2//EN"> <!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC"-//W3C//DTD HTML 3.2 Final//EN">
```
Warning: If you currently use HTML 3.2, I STRONGLY suggest you upgrade your code. Test results show that HTML 3.2 does not rank as high as HTML 4.0 or 4.01. This is mainly because W3C killed 3.2 in December 2004. Google follows the W3C's regulations closely. Note, I said “regulations” not “compliancy.”

For more information on DTD Statements, see the W3.org.

Character Set Tag
Test results have shown that the Character Set Tag, not the Title Tag, should be the first tag of your document FOLLOWING the <HEAD> tag. The Character Set Tag, or encoding tag, is in the <HEAD> section of your webpage and instructs the browser what to do when it encounters certain characters.

So, which tag should you use?

```html
<meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset=UTF-8">
<meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset=ISO-8859-1">
```

Most experts recommend the UTF-8 tag, but they can’t tell you why. Allow me: What if you had someone type foreign characters into your form? Without the UTF-8 tag, the information would probably be lost.

If you are using MySQL to store your data, upgrade to the latest version which handles UTF-8 data correctly. Google sends and accepts UTF-8 encoded data. The top Web browsers handle UTF-8 properly as well.
Google has an easier time indexing a page with the ISO-8859-1 statement, as GoogleBot will not have to encode any data, which can be a lengthy process.

**My Official Recommendation:** Use the ISO-8859-1 tag on all US-based pages that will NOT serve foreign characters. For pages that may serve foreign characters (i.e. forms), use the UTF-8 tag. If you do this, place all of your pages with forms in a separate folder. You can exclude that folder from being indexed via the robots.txt file.

**Why You Should Do This:** Using the ISO-8859-1 tag on your content pages will allow the spiders to index your site quickly and correctly and allowing the browser to display your code properly. Using the UTF-8 tag on your forms will allow any foreign data to be passed to your database correctly.

**Validate Your Code**
Use the [HTML validation](http://validator.w3.org) from W3C, but remember that it is not perfect. Before making any radical changes, discuss them with your webmaster. Remember, there is a difference between “search engine compliancy” and “W3C compliancy.”

**Site Structure**
Plan your structure on paper *before* you start to build your site. This starts with organizing your content into logical sections that are intuitive for humans to navigate and for search engines to understand. You should start by a establishing hierarchy that flows from the home page and top level categories down to your sub-categories and article pages. Always group related content together in the same folder/category. You can also use your keywords in your folder and file names, as well as, in the navigation.

It’s also very important that the site have text links and not just graphical links. You need something for the search engine spiders to eat, so ensure that each page is reachable by at least one static text link. Ideally, every page should be three clicks or less from the homepage. You should also inter-link relate pages using keyword-rich anchor text.

Be spider-able. Of course it’s important that search engines are able to find you, but that’s not the only thing that matters. Rankings don't matter, conversions do. We all know there are other ways of making a sale online...
— specifically PPC, referral traffic, etc. You need to remember, in the world of SEO, if search engines can't index you, you have problems.

**Here is what you should do:**

- Make sure the DTD statement is present and correct.
- Verify you have a correct and valid robots.txt file. Check your Google Webmaster Tools account for errors.
- Run the [Spider Test Tool](http://webconfs.com) which will crawl your site and show you what the spiders see. If the tool chokes on your site, you have spidering problems.

### IV. Page Size

**Mind Crime Exposed:**

*Despite information on forums and other sources, Google does NOT have a page size limitation. The myth floating around about a "101kb limit" is absolutely false.*

Over the years I have asked dozens of Google engineers about this issue. I have also verified through testing numerous pages over 500KB across numerous domains, all fully indexed by Google, that there is no size limitations in relation to being indexed.

Should you take advantage of the fact that there is no size limit? Heck no. Keep the page size around 50KB or below. Remember, speed is now a ranking signal and you want to ensure that your pages load quickly in your visitor’s browser.

**Hot Tip:** If your site takes longer than 4 seconds to load, you can lose up to half of your visitors!

**Reduce Your File Size**

Moving JavaScript and CSS to external files will not only help your code to text ratio, it will also help decrease your file size. Why clutter your code and increase the page size? Using the same JavaScript and CSS repeatedly on every page not only takes up server space, but also increases your transfer rate, not to mention you’re cluttering up Google’s index.
**Hot Tip:** You can use the Firefox Extension YSlow or Google’s [Page Speed Tool](#) to check variables which are slowing down your load times.

**Example of external JavaScript:**

```html
<script src="ExternalJS_1.js" language="javascript" type="text/javascript"> </script>
```

**Example of external CSS:**

```html
<link href="style.css" rel="stylesheet" type="text/css"/>
```

My testing shows very positive factors with clean code. “Clean code” also means avoiding keyword stuffing of your CSS file because Google crawls and indexes CSS scripts to evaluate for possible Spam. You can [validate your CSS code](#) through the W3C.

**V. Content Creation**

Are you unsure about what to write? When dealing with general topics, there are rarely any new ideas, just old ideas rewritten. Check the news, press releases, blogs, Google Alerts, and even your competitors’ sites for hot topics. There is always something to write about, it is just a matter of finding it.

Here is just a sample of ways to find inspiration for content:

**Understand Your Audience**

- What websites does your audience visit online? What are their interests?

**Audience Intelligence Tools**

- Google Ad Planner (Free)
- Quantcast (Free)
- Compete (Paid)

- What are your audience’s pain points, concerns or questions?
- Q&A Sites
Question-based Keyword Research

- Wordtracker Questions
- Keyword Discovery
- Google Analytics Advanced Segments

News and Industry Research

- Trade news. Who’s buying who? What companies have merged? Has a company relocated? Downsized? Are there any new laws, lawsuits, patents applied for, branches formed, etc.?
- Are there any new government regulations that affect your readers? There always are and if you doubt that check out the Federal Register.
- Is there any new medical news that your readers need to know about?
- Any new legal news that affects your readers?
- Discuss how a company solved a problem (case studies).
- Write an industry, company, or individual profile.
- Q&A series and interviews with industry insiders.
- Ask people! Call business owners and ask what the issues in their industry are.
- Research publications and journals are a great source for ideas. For example, research journals with recent medical studies and the latest medicines are great sources for “filler” articles.
- Be alert. If a new and interesting site goes up. Interview the owners.
What’s happening with **people in the industry**? Promotions? Transfers? If this information is of interest to your readers, write about it.

What **sites, software, tools and resources** are people using to be more productive or efficient in relation to your site’s topic?

**News Sites for Research**
- Google News
- Business Week
- New York Times
- Forbes
- CNN
- Yahoo News
- BBC

**Social Buzz/Pop Culture**

What’s popular right now? What are people talking about?

**Hot Tip:** Try to tie a popular story/event/scandal to one of your products or services in a creative way.

**Search Based**
- Google Hot Trends
- Google Insights - Rising Searches
- SEOmoz Popular Searches
- Yahoo Buzz Index
- Youtube Trends Dashboard

**Blog Trends**
- Google Blog Search: Hot Queries
- Technorati Popular
- IceRocket: Popular
- BlogPulse Featured Trends
Real-time Social Tools

- Bing Social: Hottest Social Topics
- Social Mention: Trends
- Addict-o-matic: Hot Topics
- 48ers – Trending Topics
- Twitter

Bookmarking Tools (check most used tags)

- Stumbleupon
- Digg
- Reddit

Are there new products on the market you can **review**? Keep tabs on new books, apps, tools, movies, music, etc. What are people buying?

Consumer Products/Shopping

- Ebay Pulse
- Google Products
- Amazon Best Sellers
- Trend Watching
- Amazon Most Popular Tags
- Shopping.com

Other Ideas

- Check your competitors’ websites. See what kind of content they have on their site. Look at their blog posts
- Look at your Referral traffic in Analytics. What kind of informational/blog sites are linking to you naturally?
- What **sites, software, tools and resources** are people using to be more productive or efficient in relation to your site’s topic?

**Hot Tip:** When all else fails, surf YouTube or other video sites to see what the most watched topics are.
Don’t get so hung up on *what* you’re going to write that you overlook *how* you’re going to present it. The following are just a few ideas for creating unique content.

- Video (original or YouTube videos)
- Screenshots and presentations (Record your screen to create instructional videos using free services like Camstudio.org.)
- Custom comics (try sites like customsigngenerator.com)
- Mind mapping (unique diagrams and charts)
- Flow charts (use MS Office or Flowchart.com)
- Interviews
- Quizzes
- Giveaways
- Widgets and Apps

I can’t emphasize enough that a great way to add original content is to become an industry know it all. Interview executives and well known people in your niche/industry, track and write about trends, develop case studies about how a site/company overcame a problem, follow company movement (promotions, issues, mergers, acquisitions, etc.), write company profiles, Q&A interviews, etc.

Sources for content are all around you:

- Associations
- Government documents
- Data and statistics
- Diaries, journals and oral histories
- Online periodicals
- Radio and podcasts
- Special collections (libraries, museums, private, etc.)
- Government census information (Census.gov)
- Autobiographies
- Political cartoons/comics
- Speeches

**New:** Google’s Keyword Suggestion Tool has been upgraded and now gives search volume numbers, which makes WordTracker and KeywordDiscovery basically obsolete.

**Keyword Suggest Tool for Content Ideas**
Try [Google’s Keyword Suggestion Tool](https://www.google.com/webmasters/keywordplanner) for ideas. When you log in to Google’s Keyword Suggestion Tool, choose “Keyword Tool” from the top-left menu, type your keyword phrase into the box, enter the CAPTCHA and click the Search button to continue. If you’re researching adult words, click the “Advanced Options” link and choose to include adult content. Now you’ll see various columns. These can be hidden or displayed by clicking the Columns button and making your selections.

For SEO, all you need are the Keyword, Monthly Searches, and the Search Trends. You can also learn something about the value of a term from the Estimated Avg. CPC. If you don’t see this in the results, click the Columns button and add it to your search.

Some experts tell you to ignore the “Competition” column, as it has nothing to do with SEO and refers only to PPC; however, it is still a strong indicator. The more competitors for a keyword phrase, the more likely that keyword phrase is making money.

Make sure you set the Match Type to “Exact,” otherwise the search volume will include phrases and variations of your keyword, not just the exact keyword or keyword phrase.

**Hot Tip:** Look at the terms Google is suggesting for new ideas. They’re giving you free customized advice. As with all keyword tools, use common sense when evaluating the data, it may be inaccurate or sometimes even poisoned by other SEOs.

When researching, always look for phrases and variations of your main terms. Do not focus solely on the big two-word term in your industry. Focus on what makes money, and that is found by testing via PPC first.

Remember, landing page design and copy is NOT universal. What you think will work, often will not. It is best to use your top three ideas and test which one the market likes best.

An option of finding content ideas or additional keywords is using the WordTracker Keyword Questions tool. It’s free and here’s a screenshot:
Niche Sites
A niche site is one that focuses solely on a specialized topic within a category or industry. For example, an mp3 download site is a general topic. A niche site is one that covers only songs heard in commercials. A niche site normally has significantly less pages than the average-sized site in that industry. For example, if the industry average is 1,000 pages, a niche site might have 100 pages or less.

Headlines
When writing content, spend quality time on the headline. It is said that the best writers spend the same amount of time on the headline as they do on the actual article. Good headlines are also known as “scanner stoppers.” This will get the reader’s attention to read your article.

When it comes to your sites’ content consider the following tips:

1. The actual content area is graded at a higher level than the content contained in the gutters. Remember this when optimizing your pages. Naturally incorporate your main keyword phrase in the first 25 words of the page. The closer the keyword phrase is to the top of the page, the better. This practice isn’t solely for the search engines, but also to help the reader see what the article is about and that it is relevant to what they are searching.
2. If you use a Content Management System (CMS) the text must be “seen” by the search engine spiders to index it. Some CMSs make the text “invisible” to search engines.

3. Content Tagging refers to bolding or italicizing your keyword phrase in the content. Be careful with the overuse of this method. Most “spammy” sites do this; however, it can be beneficial if used correctly and in moderation. This also applies to heading tags. I recommend no more than one H1 and one H2 Tag per page.

   **Tip:** If you are in doubt, have someone else read the page and give honest feedback about the layout and style of the page.

4. Referencing your own pages as an additional source of information is highly recommended. I recommend using absolute links (http://www.fulldomain.com/page.html) as opposed to relative links (pages.html). See my article on [Absolute vs. Relative Linking](#).

5. Don’t forget, people will actually read your content, so check for proper grammar, spelling errors, sentence structure and style.

6. Don’t forget the *nuts*. A “nut graf” is journalism speak for a sentence or two that focuses the article, draws readers in and lets them know what the article/content is about (aka in a “nutshell”). If done correctly and in the first paragraph, you can lock a reader in.

7. Write irresistibly. Tie your content together with anecdotes, statistics, humor, charts, quotes and even the horrors of what not to do.

**Google Instant and Scroll To Search for Content Ideas**

On September 8, 2010, Google announced the launch of Google Instant which was created to help people search faster by providing predictions and instant feedback.

   - Instant speeds up the process by:
     - Completing what it predicts the user is searching.
     - Refreshing the SERPs per prediction without clicking Search.
Making results relevant by accessing local IP information (i.e. your local weather, not just weather).

You’ve probably noticed that as you begin to type a keyword into Google Search that it finishes the word for you, trying to predict what you’re looking for. At the same time it refreshes search results. This is Google Instant in action. You’ll also see a pull-down menu of suggestions. You know this as Google Suggestions, but it has been renamed Scroll to Search.

Now that you know how Instant works, you may think, big deal looks like Google Suggestions (now called Scroll to Search) to me. True, but Google Instant forces the searcher to notice suggestions by appearing as an extension of the word the person is already focused on typing. The old version of Suggestions was a pull-down menu out of their life of vision. Let’s look at an example by searching for “South Haven rental homes.” As you begin to type, letters you enter will appear as black text, and what Google Instant predicts follows in grey.

**Note:** Google Instant is designed to give predictions per character, not per word; however, how fast you type affects how many predictions you actually see. In the example that follows, suggestions were made based on how fast I type and may differ by searcher.

1. Type in: “South” Google Instant Predicts: Southwest Airlines

   ![Southwest Airlines Predictions](image)

2. As we enter the “H” for “Haven” Google predicts “South Haven Michigan.”
At this point, you might drop down and scan the results which automatically refreshed, but at this point results aren’t too relevant. If someone was performing this search to find an actual rental, they may glance at Scroll to Search and click “South Haven Rentals” which is extremely relevant. In addition, the user might build off this prediction and alter their search from “South Haven Rental Homes” to “South Haven Michigan Rental Homes.”

**Google Instant Tip #1:** If you wanted to include the full phrase that was predicted, or build off that, there is no need to continue typing, just hit the TAB button.

3. For our example, let’s continue with the original search (South Haven Rental Homes) and enter the entire word “Haven.” The prediction remains “South Haven Michigan” with “South Haven Rentals” suggested again in Scroll to Search which may divert the searcher.

Let’s continue and type the letter “r” for “rental.” Google predicts “South Haven Rentals.” This is the third time this phrase has been presented and could alter a person’s search—especially since results for “South Haven Rentals” now populate the SERPs which has been dynamically updated and is now relevant.
4. Let’s stick to the original query: “South Haven Rental Homes.” Once the full word “rental” has been typed and a space added to continue, Google predicts exactly what we’re looking for, “South Haven Rental Homes,” and refreshes the results.
In this example, we were able to get results for a four-word phrase after typing in just three words, and in that very short amount of time were presented with four different results and multiple Scroll to Search suggestions before getting results for what we originally set out to search. Ben Gnomes, Google engineer, stated at the launch of Instant that rank will not change for the keywords or phrases, but that’s like saying we’re going to put a bunch of detours on the path to your house, but don’t worry, your address won’t change. Who cares if rank for a phrase hasn’t changed, if the searcher never makes it that far. See what I’m saying? Since this tool is live in Google Search, it has changed the way people search. Aggressive steps to market your keyword phrases should be taken.

**How?**
You want to be proactive when it comes to both Instant and Scroll to Search suggestions.

For example, with Scroll to Search, someone may start to input one phrase, but when the drop-down box appears with a list of “suggested” keyword phrases, the searcher may see a phrase that makes more sense and select it instead.

**Google Instant Tip #2:**
There’s some cool ways to create question-based combinations by using one or multiple wildcards (*) within your search. Below are a few examples based on “dog training”. Using words like when, what, why, how, and can and varying the position of the wildcard opens up many ideas that you might not have thought of before.

```plaintext
how you* train * dog
how you train dog
how to train your dog
how to potty train your dog
how to train your dog to stop barking
how to train your dog not to pee in the house
how to train your dog not to bark
how to train your dog to sit
how to train your dog to come
how to train your dog to stay
how to train your dog to walk on a leash
```

**Google Search**  **I’m Feeling Lucky**
What You Should Do Right Now
You should be adding **at least** one new page per day on a highly relevant topic to your site.

With Google Instant, you’ll want to:

- Run manual character-by-character searches with Google Instant “on” for your #1 keyword phrases.
- Write down terms that appear as predictions in the search bar and within Scroll to Search.
Create content pages for chosen phrases, with calls to action for high conversion, and then optimize them accordingly.

Add the new pages to your sitemap and resubmit to Google. The new pages should be listed in Google’s index in about 5-10 days.

After two weeks, start on your next set of top keyword phrases and continue the process.

**Keep in Mind When Performing Your Research**

- Take a look at relevant terms **suggested early on within the search.** Are there other phrases you should be optimizing for? Is there an opportunity to **get in front of the user sooner?**

- Have page two rank and beyond? It’s time to get serious and bump them onto page one. If users get results faster they may be **less likely to browse page two** and beyond.

- If you are on page one, it’s time to **get above the fold.** In usability studies, Google found that users were looking more at results just above the fold as the SERPs were updated with Instant.

- Make a note of **repetitions in predictions and Scroll to Search.** In our example, “South Haven Rentals” was a phrase repeated and would definitely be worth exploring from an SEO standpoint.

- Google is favoring speed in every way. Continue to make sure your pages render fast.

Remember, this is SEO. Things are always changing and you need to adapt to succeed. Don’t ignore Google Instant or disregard it. Ben Gnomes, an engineer with Google, called Instant a “massive change” within Google and the future of search. When a massive change to search is made you can assume there will be, at the very least, some minor tweaks to your existing SEO strategy.

**VI. Google Internal Linking Strategy**

Google's algorithm is generally quite simple: If you build a solid topic-oriented website with a relevant title, text and quality incoming anchor
text, you can rank well. While simple in understanding, getting there can be complicated, due to the varying degrees of competition out there. Sometimes, it can be quite brutal.

So, on your way to a top ten ranking, you follow the process you have been using for years: directory submissions, posting articles in article databases, submitting press releases, reciprocal linking, buying links, etc. You know that linking with your internal pages is important, but there really hasn't been anything solid which shows you which pages or how effective it really is.

Until now.

In order to maximize the power of your site you need to link the RIGHT pages together. But which pages? It is as simple as asking Google. Seriously, it’s that easy.

Here’s how:

**Step One**
Verify the keyword you are optimizing for converts. In other words, before you waste your time optimizing for it, make sure it delivers what you want – revenue. Recently, a colleague of mine optimized her site for the keyword term “eBay phone number” due to the traffic levels she found in her research. Unfortunately she didn’t take the time to test the traffic first.

The result? Zero sales.

But the zero sales weren’t the worst part. She received dozens of angry complaints each day by email and even over the phone which has led them to “pull the plug” and remove the page from Google. Why? Because people called her direct, not the phone number she listed.

Don’t skip this step. The best way to test a keyword is via PPC. Period.

**Step Two**
Search Google for your current organic ranking. I suggest changing the default setting from ten results per page to 100. This way you can search the Top 100 quickly for your site. To do this, you’ll have to turn Google Instant off (click the link next to the Search button) and then click the Advanced Search link to choose 100 results per page.
Write down your current ranking (and make sure you aren’t logged into your Google account when you perform the search)!

**Tip:** Using a proxy tool like Proxify saves you the trouble of signing out and turning of personalized search options.

**Step Three**
Ask Google which pages on your site are relevant for the keyword you are optimizing. Just use the site command. For example, if I was optimizing for the keyword phrase, “professionalism tips” I would search in Google:

```
site:webmarketingnow.com professionalism
```

So, why did I search for “professionalism” and not “professionalism tips?” That’s easy. I’m looking for relevant pages not exact pages. This is generally helpful if your site has than 500 pages indexed by Google.

Okay, so now you have search results staring you in the face, so now what? Well, the first page listed in the results should be the target page—the page you are optimizing for, normally a sub page of your site, which, in this case it is.

The page is: professionalism.html which ranked #12 in the SERPs before this test. What I have are three additional pages and will use the #2, #4 and #5 ranked pages. If you have Privacy Policies, sitemap files or anything like that (as I did with #3), or any unrelated content, don’t use them. Why? We’re after buyers here and improving our sales funnel. Those pages don’t achieve that.

**Step Four**
Place your targeted keyword phrase as anchor text on the relevant pages listed in the search results. Target the BODY of the page and not just the navigation, breadcrumbs or the footer of the page – it MUST be in the BODY of the page.

That’s it.

**Result:** I tested this with 80 keyword phrases across my affiliate sites and 72 of them increased in ranking in just five days following the reindexing by Google. In the example, the phrase went from
#12 to #5, from just one internal link. After adding the link on the other two pages, this page went to #3 and is now #1.

Of course the example I showed above is for a phrase that doesn’t convert – it is just used as an example.

Here is another way you can use this method. Let’s say you have a webmaster who wants to exchange links with you. Do the search above using their domain with the keyword phrase you want to target and Google will tell you which page(s) on the webmaster’s site is the best one for your link. Doing this takes the guesswork out of linking, which is good.

site:SiteRequestingaLinkExchange.com target keyword.

VII. Keyword Density

Please keep in mind that this will vary by phrase, but I advise using your exact keyword phrase as follows:

- Once in the Title (do NOT use two Title Tags)
- Once in the Description Tag
- Once in the Heading <H1> and use only one H1 Tag
- Once in the URL (as the filename, domain or subdomain)
- Use the keyword phrase in bold, but sparingly
- Overall density should be somewhere between 1-5%
- Don’t go after misspellings (clickthroughs have dropped significantly due to the auto-correction feature)
- Please keep in mind that I’m referring to use of the exact keyword phrase, for example, “Discounted Disney vacations.” Using the exact phrase once doesn’t mean you couldn’t repeat “discounted,” “Disney,” or “vacations” either singularly or in other combinations.

VIII. ALT Text and Comment Tags

According to a Google engineer, “What you should do is create an ALT [text] Tag that is relevant to the picture, so it gives the user a good experience, including the visually impaired.”
According to my testing, the ALT text is indexed, but it is downgraded in the algorithm. The reason? “We see ALT text as relevant as the Keyword Meta Tag,” said the Google engineer. Google has never indexed the Keyword Meta Tag due to the high spam rate of the tag.

IX. Linking Structure

Your internal linking structure should be consistent throughout your website. I prefer to use absolute links.

Absolute Link Example:

```html
<a href="http://www.webmarketingnow.com/page.html">Page</a>
```

Relative Link Example:

```html
<a href="page.html">Page</a>
```

Links to the following pages — About Us, Contact Us, Privacy Statement, Terms of Use, etc., — should be assigned as nofollow links (rel="nofollow"). You only want to pass PageRank to the traffic pages.

Every important page on your site should link back to your homepage via text and graphic link. The graphic link should be your logo (compliancy).

You should link to one or two authoritative sites on your topic (directory or portal). The Yahoo! or ODP directories are solid choices, or an article on About.com. Don’t always default to Wikipedia as a place to link. **Very important:** Use anchor text containing the keyword phrase or theme you are targeting. Do not use, “click here” or “read more.”

You should link to all of the sites in the top ten for your keyword phrase, right? WRONG! All that does is further solidify THEIR rank in the Top 10. This “tip” has been passed around for years and is bad advice. What I recommend is linking to authoritative sites within your industry.

What about linking to your internal pages in your body content?
Yes, absolutely. If your site is about flowers, it would be wise to link your flower page to your wedding arrangements page. On-topic internal links are a vital and efficient way of sharing PageRank within your site. Doing so will boost your site’s overall link reputation.

Remember, you don't want an “All-Star” page that receives all the traffic. It's better to have 50 pages that get one visitor each, instead of one page that gets all 50 visitors.

X. Google Webmaster Tools

Google Webmaster Tools have been discussed heavily since they were first released back in the summer of 2005. In 2010 it got some massive and welcomed updates which we’ll discuss throughout the rest of this book. Let’s start first with the Sitemaps section.

The problem most webmasters have with Google Sitemaps is with the submission format. It has been estimated that 90% of the webmasters out there don't know the proper way to compile an XML feed.

Sad, but true.

I’ve tested nearly all software packages and scripts that claim to create an XML sitemap file for Google. The solution from Google? They want you to install Python scripts on your server. Take my advice; you don’t want to go there. There is an easier solution.

To begin, go to Google Webmaster Central, choose Webmaster Tools and log in to your account. If you don’t have one, create one.

According to testing, the best program for creating sitemaps is SOFTplus GSiteCrawler. If you don’t want the hassle of installing a program, use the online version of XML Sitemaps. The free online version will crawl a maximum of 500 pages. If you choose to use SOFTplus, install and launch the program. In the lower left-hand corner, click the "Add" button and choose "Yes" to run the New Site Wizard.

Next, in the Main Address section enter the domain that you want the sitemap for and then name your project. The next screen to appear is based on the server check. I highly recommend NOT skipping the server check. This process helps in compiling the sitemap correctly. Other programs that do not have this feature often produce incorrect feeds.
If it detected that you are on a Linux/Unix server, it will automatically select the “URLs are case sensitive” option. It uses a filter to detect Session IDs, which come in handy for dynamically generated sites. It also has an area to include the file extensions you use for web development. I remove everything except for .htm and .html.

The next section shows “other file extensions.” Uncheck all of these. Personally, I have no need for images, videos, or Office files, etc., to be indexed; however, you might. Your images or videos may be great advertising pieces for your products or services. If so, allow the appropriate images to be included.

Next, you have the option to upload the new sitemap files to your server via FTP. I highly recommend this option as it saves time.

The last screen prior to sitemap creation will check the following:

**Robots.txt**
There are some domains that exclude GoogleBot. This ensures yours aren’t excluded.

**Check for custom "File Not Found" error pages**
If you have your domain setup with custom 404 pages, Google may not verify the sitemap. You may need to disable this function until the sitemap file is verified.

**Don’t allow the program to pull already indexed files**
Often, you may have older files that you want purged from the index. Just let the programs find the files on their own.

**Scan your website now**
Make sure this is checked. This is why you came here in the first place, right?

Click “Finish” to start the process. When the program completes, it saves the files in a project folder:

- The Aborted file is a list of all the URLs that the crawlers attempted to crawl, but couldn’t. These could be bad links, old pages or just some general housekeeping that needs to be done.
The Robots.txt file is a copy of your robots.txt file, nothing more.

The other three files have to do with the sitemap.

Upload all three files to the root of your server. Sitemap.xml is the file you want to submit to Google through Webmaster Tools/Google Sitemaps; however, if your site is HUGE, give Google the compressed file (sitemap.xml.gz). If it is over 500kb, I recommend compressing it.

Once the files are uploaded, go into Google Webmaster Tools. From the Dashboard, click Site Configuration → Sitemaps from the left side menu. From the main Sitemaps page, click “Submit a Sitemap” button and enter the location of your sitemap.xml file. It will then appear in the table below, showing the file name, status, date downloaded, URLs submitted and URLs in the index. In the future you always want to monitor the URLs submitted vs. URLs in the index. A big difference in those numbers is usually a red flag.

If you just signed up for Webmaster Tools, or your sitemap file still needs to be verified choose the “Meta Tag” option for verification. Google will generate a Meta Tag that you place in the Meta area of your index page to verify. Once the file has been verified, Google will grab the file and spider it again, usually every few days to a week. You will start to notice GoogleBot on your site more frequently and spidering pages that it hasn't visited in some time.

If you make constant site changes, I advise you to update the sitemap file every week. By resubmitting the file to Google, it alerts GoogleBot of a change and will come back and re-index your site. This is a better way to get your modified pages re-indexed.

**Tip:** If getting all of your pages indexed is a challenge, I recommend changing the “Priority” Levels within your sitemap. As a default, the index page receives a Priority of 1.0 and every other page receives a Priority of 0.5. If you assign true Priority to each page (marking pages above 0.5 and pages such as “Privacy” a 0.1) you should see improvement in the way Google indexes your site.

**A word of caution:** Don’t be greedy and place high Priority on all files. Google engineers aren’t Kindergartners, they’re smarter than you—sorry.
Too many website owners are struggling with their linking campaigns by following outdated and useless linking strategies. For example:

"Hi, I saw your site at domain.com and I really liked it. Can you link to my site because I made some half-pressed compliment on your site?"

So, what do we do to get links for new and existing sites?

1) Go to ODP or Yahoo!, search for your competition, and do a backlinks check on them.

2) **Where are they linked?** Sites that link to your competition are the ones you want to contact. If a site is already linking to competing sites, they’re probably willing to link to your site too. Create a great offer to either replace the competing link or share space with it.

3) I recommend using Yahoo! rather than Google, since Yahoo! shows all the backlinks in their index while Google shows only a sample.

4) When sending **link request emails**, be brief. Make it obvious your message is not spam and you’ve seen their site. If at all possible, find an error on their site and mention it in your email. The easiest way to do this is to use a bot to check for broken links like Xenu. Most sites will have a few and you can politely mention them to the webmaster as a “way in.” Anytime you help a webmaster, they should be more than receptive to your offer.
If you don’t hear back within a week, pick up the phone and talk to the webmaster. Their reaction is almost always very positive.

Offer to “article swap” with your link partner. Include your comments in the article (in a different color to distinguish authors). Disagreeing with the author is okay. It's more important for you to voice your opinion and be loyal to your visitors since your link partner will never buy from you. Of course, use good judgment. You don’t want to offend or lose your new contact.

Another effective method is body text link exchanges. Linking from the body text is very effective with Google.

- **Verify** all links **quarterly** for quality and ensure they're still live.
- Be sure to remove **links** to any site that may hurt your **rank**. For example, a site that places your link on a page with 100 or more other links and is NOT an authoritative site.
- According to Traffic Estimate, if a site isn’t getting at least 30,000 visitors per month, consider dropping the link or moving it down the page. Target links for traffic first and link popularity second.

**Backlink Check**

Why does Google show different backlink counts with different syntax options? For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>link:</th>
<th><a href="http://www.domain.com">www.domain.com</a> (3,910 backlinks)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>links:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.domain.com">www.domain.com</a> (128 backlinks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>link:</td>
<td>*domain.com (100,000 backlinks)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Which is correct? Google uses *current* backlink information for every site in its index, but it does not show you the current information. What you see is often 2-3 months old.
Prepare your brain for this: Google has publicly stated that it counts some links that do not show in the backlinks count and does not count some links that do show in the backlinks count. Confused? It’s a downright riddle. Basically, Google is possessive of the real link count on any website. Even if you go into your Webmaster Tools account, you won’t see the true number.

Why the paranoia? It’s a business decision. Unlike Bing and Yahoo!, Google prefers “quality” links. What does Google consider a quality link? Ah ha! That is exactly why Google guards links — they don’t want you to know. That is why they don’t make their criteria for accepted links public. If the information were public, testers like me would figure out their criteria fairly easily.

**Quality Backlinks**

According to Google engineers, a quality link is one that is on a page with a solid PageRank of 4/10 or above. So, you should search for only PR4 and above sites for backlinks, right? Not necessarily! Don’t forget that what you see is old data. A page that Google engineers see as a PR4 might show on your toolbar as a PR0. They have the current data and you do not, which is the problem with their statement and why you can’t rely solely on toolbars and their PageRank indicators.

There have been many times when I approached a site owner with a PR0 site, gave them some tips, received a link and a year later their rank darted up to a PR7. Where is my link? It’s on their homepage. That’s a quality link, right? Now, if I targeted sites with “PR4 or better” that opportunity would be lost.

Conversely, if I saw a site that was low quality, but had a PR5, would I want a link from it? No! I want to surround myself with quality sites because my testing has shown that the majority of high PageRank, low-quality sites lose their PageRank overtime, making the benefit of linking with them virtually immeasurable.

I highly recommend using [Yahoo! Site Explorer](http://siteexplorer.yahoo.com) to check the number of links to your site. To really get aggressive, I suggest [Open Site Explorer](http://www.opensiteexplorer.org).

Here is the syntax for Google:

```plaintext
link: www.domain.com — This is the default link list and the one that the Google Toolbar uses. This is the approximate
```
number of links that Google counted for your page (heavy emphasis on “approximate”).

**links: www.domain.com** — This is improper syntax, and even though it works once in awhile, most often, the values shown are invalid.

**link: *domain.com** — This syntax may seem valid because it gives you a number, but it returns an incorrect number. We know this because it does not list every link to your site.

Many SEOs will point to the hack below as a way to find ALL the links Google has to your site, as they openly admit that even the link count in Webmaster Central isn’t complete:

If I was checking my site, I would type:

```
.domain. - www.domain.com
```

**Note:** Do not type in “link” at all, just follow the example above.

This will give you the complete number of links and references that Google has in its index to your site. The number is going to be inflated since any (non-link) text reference to your domain will show in the results. Since this distorts the number of links, I generally avoid this option. When I do an analysis, I look at the link counts from Yahoo! and the Google links listed in Webmaster Central. It isn’t perfect, but I don’t want to cloud my judgment with “links” that are not really links.

**Reminder:** According to a Google engineer, there is not a filter for new sites, nor is there one for new links. The number one reason new sites struggle is their lack of authoritativeness. By increasing the link authoritativeness of the pages that link to you, the page will look more authoritative to Google, thus increasing your value.
Google puts a tremendous amount of emphasis on diverse, quality links and link reputation when determining your ranking. This is determined through their PageRank system. Remember, it is **PageRank** not **SiteRank**, which determines the importance of your site.

In Google, each page has its own PageRank, which is a numerical rating from 0-10, and signifies its importance. “10” is considered the highest ranking of importance. This number is determined by the quantity and quality of incoming links. For example, let’s say your page contains a link from the Yahoo! Directory and a link from an obscure website. Each link will count as one link; however, there is a difference in quality.

**One quality link can carry the same benefit as a hundred or more poor quality links.**

To gain maximum benefit from a quality link, it is extremely important to use your keyword phrase in the link text (anchor text) for incoming links. You want important and related links, *not just any links*.

**Good Anchor Text**

Make sure you vary your anchor text. Too many incoming links with the same anchor text can trigger filters, especially if they have “money phrases” attached to them.

Make the anchor text, or surrounding text, descriptive of both the target and host sites. (For example: a link from a shoe site to your bed site should have both “bed” and “shoe” either in the anchor or the text surrounding it).
You can use links from sites that are not related, as long as they are of high quality. If you do use unrelated links, make sure the linked page has a current Google cache date.

**Hot Tip:** Always check that you’re linked from a page that has a current Google cache (within two weeks).

**Outbound Links and PageRank**

According to Google, outbound links to good sites do not help with link analysis; however, from a search engine standpoint, if your site is theme based — where everything coming in and going out of your site is focused on one central topic — outbound links *may indirectly help*.

**Key Point:** The more outbound links on a page, the less “credit” each link will be given in terms of link popularity. Focus your time and effort where it will create the biggest impact. For example, if your plan is to increase the authoritativeness of your site, then focusing a link campaign on your subpages and article pages is a great idea. It will boost your ranking and put you on the path to becoming an authority.

**Are Bad Sites Dragging You Down?**

If a bad site links to you, such as a site that participates in spamming, can your site be penalized? No, but only if your site has a solid link profile. Google’s algorithm and filters are designed so you shouldn’t be penalized by bad links.

**Conflicting Advice?**

It may seem like conflicting advice to recommend that you alter anchor text, while stating nothing a competitor can do will hurt you, since a competitor could just fire a bunch of links at your pages, increase the anchor text percentage and cause your rankings to drop. Is that true?

Not necessarily. This area is one of the most difficult to test as there are many variables to check. There are some issues which are consistent. Let me briefly summarize what makes a “solid link profile.”

- At least 10,000 links per [Yahoo! Site Explorer](http://siteexplorer.yahoo.com)
- mozRank of at least 4.0 in [LinkScape](http://www.linkscape.com)
- Listing in the [Top Directories](http://www.topdirectories.com)
An average of ten links or less per domain to your site (avoid too many ROS linking opportunities)

**Important:**

*Computers determine the search results, but humans decide whether or not to click on the links. Be sure the link text makes sense and is compelling to drive the “click.”*

---

**PageRank Tested**

Ever since Google released their toolbar showing PageRank in the browser, webmasters and SEO professionals have developed “Green Bar Addiction.” In my view, the addiction has become unhealthy. Why? Decisions are often based on inaccurate PageRank data shown in the toolbar. For example, links are sought after or accepted of sites that appear to have high PageRank when they really don’t. Looking at the numbers for the last five years, one thing is clear: *PageRank may still be considered a factor in the search results, but it has far less effect than it once had.*

Check out these results from my tests:

- **Keywords Tracked in Study:** 52
- **Minimum Daily Queries (via [WordTracker](#))** : 1,100 (per keyword)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PageRank Avg.</td>
<td>6.21</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>6.18</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>4.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. Backlinks</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>1433</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>1081</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. Results of PR3 or lower</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>4.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. Results of PRO</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The consensus from looking at the data is that PageRank has drastically changed. This is not a glitch, but an actual change in the way Google is figuring Link Popularity and Link Reputation. The biggest issue is still the number of 0/10 PageRank sites that rank well for competitive terms. That alone reflects the drop in PageRank significance.
**Basis of the Test**
Would content rank faster and/or better if it were placed on an existing page with established content, in comparison to a brand new page?

**Results**
There were no measurable differences with either option in terms of when the pages were spidered, if one was faster than the other, or how well they ranked. However, new pages had a higher clickthrough rate than existing pages.

**Conclusion**
If you were craving Mexican food, and a restaurant’s sign said “pizza” would you stop in or drive by? You’d drive by. Likewise, if you try to recycle the PageRank of a dead page by adding new unrelated content, no one is going to click it. Why not? Because they’ll still see the old page name which advertises something different.

The next time you have a dead page and no relevant content to replace it with, delete it and all internal references. By deleting dead and irrelevant pages, the internal PageRank, which was being fed to that page, will be redistributed to other internal pages.

**Is it Wise to Delete a Page That Has PageRank?**
I have been testing the method of never deleting a page with PageRank. Most people just insert new content, even if it doesn't match the file name. The thought is this: If you delete the page, you are also deleting the PageRank, especially if there are links coming in from other sites. My testing shows that keeping the page and simply altering the content isn't a good idea.

Instead of changing the content in a page, use a 301 redirect to your homepage to recapture the incoming links. If 301 redirects make you nauseous, just delete the page and move forward. Of course, if you delete a page, make sure you have a custom 404 error page with a "site search" available.

**Reminder:** Stop the “Green Bar Addiction!”
Google supports search query filters and if you take advantage of them, you can pinpoint areas that need improvement on your site.

**How to Use the Google Search Filters**

By using the filters below, you can see which sections keywords appear on pages.

Most of the filters will be pinpointing “On Page Factors” and Google is mostly an “Off Page Factor” engine.

```
“allintitle:keyword”
Confines the search results to those pages that have the keyword phrase in the page’s Title. By using this filter, you can determine where your site ranks for the keyword phrase in the Title Tag. For example, if your site ranked #8 in Google’s index for a keyword phrase, but it ranks #7 in the “allintitle” filter, this means that the Title is acceptable as it ranks higher than the site does in the regular search. On the other hand, if it ranked #14, you'd know the Title was not pulling its SEO weight. Simply make changes to the Title to improve the ranking. Changes may include length, density, positioning of the keyword phrase, etc.

Also, look at number of words in the Title and the Keyword Density (KWD) in comparison to the sites that rank above yours. Often, just a slight change will mean a climb in the SERPs. A great program to help you with these calculations is IBP.

Another use for the allintitle filter is as a research tool to find keyword phrases. It is best to track this with Excel, using four
columns and sorting the list. To start, choose a keyword, retrieve search volume data from Google’s AdWords tool, locate the amount of pages indexed, and record the number of pages that were returned for the allintitle query. Look at the ratios of pages indexed/allintitle. The ideal terms will have low allintitle counts or larger gaps. This is a great way to compare keyword phrase, and target those with less competition and decent search volume.

“allinanchor:keyword”
The allinanchor filter ranks sites that have the keyword phrase in anchor text backlinks that are pointing to the site. Even though this advanced search is buggy, it still provides great insight into how sites are ranked.

This filter will indicate if your anchor text is sufficiently promoting the keyword phrase. A listing higher than your “straight up” listing means that it is working well for you. Any listing that is lower shows that your link popularity and link reputation efforts need to be stepped up. A good rule of thumb is to target at least a dozen quality links for every position you want to advance in the Top 20. This is above and beyond your regular link count.

“allintext:keyword”
Allintext ranks sites that have the keyword phrase in the index-able body text of the page. This filter refers to the total number of words on the page and takes into account the Keyword Density (KWD). The KWD is the number of times the keyword phrase appears in relation to the total number of words on the page.

“allinurl:keyword”
Allinurl ranks sites that have the keyword phrase in the URL — including sub folder names. Not much can be done here, as the domain would need to be changed, or a subdomain (http://keyword.domain.com) could be created, but only use subdomains if you have a very large site.
I'm not satisfied with Google’s search results.
Scroll down to the bottom of the search results and click on the link “Give Us Feedback.” Select, “Google's search results weren't helpful” on the form, choose a more specific reason from the list and enter the information. It is NOT advisable to state, “I couldn’t find my site in the top ten.”

How do you create a theme-based page?
One of the biggest issues that most website managers have is: “How do I know if my page is theme-based after completion?” I have found a solution, and while not perfect, it gives you a quick and easy way to be considered theme-based in Google.

The Easy Way: Google AdSense. Use the Firefox Plugin for Google AdSense Preview.

After installing, this plugin will add the “AdSense Preview” to your FireFox menu bar. Choose which ad size you wish to view and it will serve ads based on your content. If the ads match your “target theme,” then you have done a good job creating targeted content.

Hard Way: Add AdSense code to the page and upload it to your server. Check the page. The Google media bot will immediately index the page, and serve relevant content.

Important Tip: Make sure that you have the following code in your robots.txt file to ensure the media bot can index your site properly. It does make a difference, so make sure it is in there.
In Google we trust, but does Google trust us?
Breaking trust with Google is one of the major causes of penalization. The problem is in knowing exactly what you did to break Google's trust. If you are guilty of SPAM or black hat tactics, don’t play the victim. The penalty fits the crime, meaning that if you are guilty of something major, the penalty will be more severe. It won’t be as easy to get your rankings back or even be re-listed in the index.

One of the most publicly discussed Google penalties is the -30 Penalty, where your site takes a dive 30 positions. That’s a stomach tosser. Penalties will come and go. The bottom line is, as long as you adhere to my advice from my testing results, you won’t get hit with penalties.

Watch for sudden spikes or surges in your PageRank or links that are out of step with your site's history. These can raise a SPAM flag and alert for Google to inspect. During this inspection, some other factors or reasons for giving your site a penalty, might get noticed, such as link acquisition, link retention and link removal. If you have two straight months of massive link acquisition, and then three months of little or no activity, that isn’t good. Neither is a mass link removal at the end of the month, which indicates expired paid links.

If there is a glitch in Google's index and you do lose rankings for a period of time, history has shown that the index usually sorts itself out and rankings come back to normal. That is all well and good, but what about the loss in traffic? Be sure to bring traffic to your site in more ways than just the SERPs. Use blogs, PPC, email marketing, etc. The more diverse your business is, the better it will be able to stand up in the event that rankings are lost for a period of time.

I think Google dropped my site.
First of all, you want to verify it has been dropped. Your first step is to do a search in Google for site:domain.com (replace “domain” with your site name). If there are zero results, then your site has been dropped. Next, log in to your Webmaster Tools account. Often there will be a warning message.
If your site is listed in Google’s index, but doesn’t rank for keyword phrases as it once did, then your site probably has been penalized. To verify the penalty, run the search again but this time choose “Advanced Search” and change the results per page from “10” to “100” (you’ll have to turn Google Instant off to do this). Google uses a limit of 1,000 on results, so go to page 10. Scroll down to the bottom of page 10 and click “repeat the search with the omitted results included.” If your site appears in these results, you’ve been filtered.

**I think I have a duplicate content penalty.**
The “duplicate content penalty” only exists on your own site and is usually caused by duplicate, or near-duplicate, Title Tags.

**Hot Tip:** What may look like a “duplicate content penalty” could just be “thin content penalty.”

**Hot Tip:** Blekko provides a excellent duplicate content analyzer.

1. Go to blekko.com  
2. Search for your domain name  
3. Click the SEO analysis tab  
4. Click duplicate content on the right hand navigation

**Example:**  

**Content duplication for domain:** [www.webmarketingnow.com](http://www.webmarketingnow.com)

| Domains that duplicate content from this site: | 164 (153 offsite) | Duplicated sections: | 993 (987 offsite, 6 onsite) |

urls in red denote offsite duplicate content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Host</th>
<th>Dups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><a href="http://www.zeromillion.com">www.zeromillion.com</a></td>
<td>whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><a href="http://www.noplace.us">www.noplace.us</a></td>
<td>whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><a href="http://northseek.com">northseek.com</a></td>
<td>whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><a href="http://webprofittrainee.com">webprofittrainee.com</a></td>
<td>whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><a href="http://www.theinternetdigest.net">www.theinternetdigest.net</a></td>
<td>whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><a href="http://www.madhatwebsolutions.com">www.madhatwebsolutions.com</a></td>
<td>whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td><a href="http://madhatwebsolutions.com">madhatwebsolutions.com</a></td>
<td>whole</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It’s more helpful in showing off-site duplicate content (especially sites scraping your articles and blog posts) but it’s a helpful tool for on-site duplicate content as well.

**What does Google say about duplicate content?**

An interesting article by Sven Naumann, from Google's Search Quality Team, indicates that there are two kinds of duplicate content:

- **Internal** — Identical content appears in more than one location on your site.

- **External** — Your content appears on other sites.

Sven states that the duplicate content, whether internal or external, doesn't negatively affect a site. My testing shows otherwise. Let’s look at an example. Most "duplicate content" issues revolve around your site and your site only. External duplicate content is rare, regardless of what Google says. For example, do a search in Google on a recent news story. Hundreds of results carrying the exact word-for-word story from the AP will be displayed.

If you have two pages on your site with different content, but identical titles and descriptions, Google will mark them as duplicate. On the other hand, if you have two pages with the exact same content, but unique titles and descriptions, Google will treat the pages as unique.

Here is what you can do to combat internal duplicate content:

- **www-Protection**: This is a must fix in your .htaccess file.

- **Use 301s**: If you have modified your site, use 301s in your .htaccess file to redirect users, Googlebot, and other spiders to the proper page.

- **Block Bots**: Never give Google the power to make a decision for you. Choose which version of the document you want indexed and block their bots (using the robots.txt file) from indexing the other versions, such as "Printer Friendly" versions.

- **Link Consistently**: Use relative or absolute links for your internal linking, but not both.
**Top Level Domains (TLD):** TLD helps Google serve the best version of the document for country-specific content. For example, www.mydomain.de indicates a German document better than www.mydomain.com/de.

**Preferred Domain Feature:** There is a settings feature in Webmaster Tools that allows you to indicate to Google which version you prefer to show in the SERPs. This is not a replacement for the non-www redirect.

**Avoid Repetition:** If you have a lengthy copyright, disclosure or other text that is required on every page of your site, think about putting the text in an image and serving it via external CSS or JS.

**Understand your CMS:** Be familiar with how content is displayed on your site, blog and/or forum. Be aware that your CMS may show the same content in various formats and locations. Work with your provider to find different ways of solving this duplicate content problem — whether it is by disallowing bots to spider a page or removing the option to view in another format altogether.

**Syndicated Content:** Include a link back to your site.

**Titles & Descriptions:** Confirm that you have unique titles and descriptions on every page.

For dealing with the latter, Sven claims that Google looks, “…at various signals to determine which site is the original…,” and, “…that you shouldn't be very concerned about seeing negative effects on your site's presence in Google for site scraping.” According to my testing, Google doesn’t make an attempt to determine the original owner of the document, the only consideration that matters is who markets it better.

In more instances than Google would care to admit, the scraped content outranks the original content. Here’s what to do:

- Confirm that your content and pages are accessible and have not been blocked by your robots.txt file or any Meta Tags on the page.
• Ensure your site is well within the guidelines set forth in the Webmaster Guidelines.

• Review your sitemap to see if you had made any changes for the content that was scraped. In Google's eyes, changes to the original could make it appear as the counterfeit version.

• File a [DMCA Request](#) if you have fixed the above and see no change in the rankings.

**If my site has been banned from Google, will using Google Sitemaps lift the ban?**
No. You must clean up the site and correct any wrong doings, then do a re-inclusion request.

**Will using Google Sitemaps increase my SERP ranking?**
According to testing, it will not.

**If I clean up bad links and errors, will GoogleBot index my site better?**
Absolutely. It pays to run a clean ship. Make sure you check your site periodically for broken links and fix them.

**Why is my website ranking worse?**
There have been many claims as to why there was a loss of ranking. The claims range from affiliate content; US-centric sites that are hosted internationally; Google Analytics bounce rates; paid link penalties; an act of the Google gods; etc. There have even been discussions of a manual update, algorithm tweak or a bug fix that caused the mess for many sites. If this happened to you, here are the basic steps you can take:

• Check Google Webmaster Tools and verify that the Titles on every page have no duplicates or near duplicates.

• Check and correct internal duplicate content issues by adding content or updating title and description.

• Do a "Link Audit" and remove any links pointing back to devalued and inactive pages.

• Review top ten sites and verify changes.
If you don’t know already, the canonical issues with Google indexing both non-www and www versions of sites that don't have the rewrite in place can be very problematic. Make sure you have the rewrite in place.

This is something completely different and has hurt my sites more than the non-www issue. So, is your internal linking structure or lack of mod_rewrite hurting your site? My testing shows it is a good possibility, the issue is with subfolders.

Believe it or not, the third example will hurt your site. I know it sounds crazy but it is true. Here is where it gets downright stupid. The URL will exist, but Google will not have it indexed, even if the second example is indexed. To make matters worse, the rankings go down in the SERPs and the cache date gets old. Ouch.

Example:

This URL is not in Google's index:
http://www.webmarketingnow.com/top-tools/index.html

This URL is in Google's index:
http://www.webmarketingnow.com/top-tools/

When I was researching this, the cache date of the page in the index was nearly 30 days old. The average cache date on the site is less than two weeks old. What is amazing about this finding is that it doesn't affect the homepage, just the folders.

The problem is that the page loses all of its PageRank and all of the pages in that folder lose PageRank, meaning rankings in the SERPs and traffic is basically nothing.
Okay, how can you fix it? Well, you could fix it by linking to the root folder and NOT including the filename (i.e. index.html, index.php, index.htm, etc.). Even then, it doesn't fix the issue of other sites linking to the filename and causing duplicate content on your site.

Here's the global fix. This goes in your .htaccess file (Apache servers):

```
##### Begin Code ######
Options +FollowSymLinks
RewriteEngine on
RewriteCond %{THE_REQUEST} ^.*\index.html
RewriteRule \(^.*)\index.html\$ http://www.webmarketingnow.com/$1 [R=301,L]
##### End Code ######
```

Just replace my domain for yours and you're all set.

**Mod_Rewrite Tutorial**

I have gotten most of this information out of books and from different sites that I have built over the years. What about those on a Windows server? Sorry, I got rid of mine years ago due to many hacking attempts. Tell your admin what you want done on your Windows server, and they should be able to comply quickly.

The .htaccess file needs to be placed in the root directory of your website (i.e. the same directory where your index file is placed) and can be created in a program like Notepad.

Now, if you go into your server via FTP and find that you don't see the .htaccess file, it could be due to the filtering used by the FTP client. All you need to do is right-click in the File Window, choose Filter and enter "-a" as the filter (minus the quotes). You will now see the .htaccess file.

**Problem One**

I have a URL that looks like this:


Instead, I want it to look like this:

http://www.domain.com/cars/toyota.

**Solution One**

Use mod_rewrite in the .htaccess file.

```
RewriteEngine On
RewriteRule ^/cars/(.*) cars.php?$1 [PT]
```
**Why This Works**
Anything after /cars/ is removed and placed as a folder.

**Problem Two**
I have a URL that looks like this:
http://www.domain.com/cgi-bin/product.cgi?bottle=shampoo=oily.

Instead, I want it to look like this:

**Solution Two**

```
RewriteEngine On
RewriteRule ^/product/([^/]+)/([^/]+) /cgi-bin/product.cgi?bottle=$1&topic=$2 [PT]
```

**Why This Works**
It requires that the requested URL look exactly like the URL that is described in the pattern. This allows for a cleaner URL for Google to spider more easily.

**Problem Three**
I used an HTML editor and it named all of my files .htm but I want to go to .html as a standard on my site. I need the old URLs to work because my site is heavily bookmarked, but I don't want to get hit with the duplicate content penalty.

**Solution Three**

```
RewriteEngine On
RewriteRule (.*)\.(htm) $1.html [PT,L]
```

**Why This Works**
The "$1" passes the entire URL back and only the extension is changed. Any query string from a dynamically generated page will be passed as well.

**Problem Four**
I want all non-www URLs to go to their www version to protect against duplicate content issues with Google.

**Solution Four**

```
<IfModule mod_rewrite.c>
RewriteEngine On
RewriteBase /
```
RewriteCond %{HTTP_HOST}!^www\.[^\.]\.[^\s]+[\s]+[\]] [NC]
RewriteRule ^(.*)$ http://www.domain.com/$1 [L,R=301]
</IfModule>

If you have subdomains, you will want to use the following code. You only want to use one instance of this code, so use either the one above, or the one below, not both.

RewriteEngine On
RewriteBase /
RewriteCond %{HTTP_HOST} ^domain.com [NC]
RewriteRule ^(.*)$ http://www.domain.com/$1 [L,R=301]

Why This Works
Regardless of what the user types or how another site has linked, your homepage and any subpage will appear with the "www."

Follow-up
What if you want the exact opposite and have the www URLs to redirect to the non-www version? Use the code below:

RewriteEngine on
RewriteCond %{HTTP_HOST} ^www.domin.com
RewriteRule ^(.*)$ http://domain.com/$1 [R=301,L]

Problem Five
I just checked my log files and I am getting a ton of websites that are hijacking my images and referring to my site for theirs, thus using my bandwidth for their theft. What can I do?

Solution Five
Block the use of your image files directly on the server.

RewriteEngine on
RewriteCond %{HTTP_REFERER} !^$
RewriteCond %{HTTP_REFERER} !^http://domain.*$ [NC]
RewriteCond %{HTTP_REFERER} !^http://www.domain.com.*$ [NC]
RewriteRule .(gif|jpg|png)$ - [F]

Why This Works
Any image file (gif, jpg, png) is rewritten to a forbidden status from any outside request, thus protecting your bandwidth. Of course, the dirty way to solve this is to change out the images to something that is a huge file and in turn the thief's website will take forever to load.
Jake Baillie was made famous for swapping the images to porn images, but that got him into trouble, so be careful.

Problem Six:
I want to be able to redirect visitors to the root of the folder, not to the index file. So they would see www.domain.com instead of www.domain.com/index.html.

Solution Six:
`Options +FollowSymLinks
RewriteEngine on
RewriteCond %{THE_REQUEST} ^.*\/(.*)index.html
RewriteRule ^(.*)index.html$ http://www.domain.com [R=301,L]`

Why This Works
This takes the "index.html" file and rewrites it to the root. If your main file was "index.htm" or "index.php" you would put that in there instead of the "index.html" as shown.

Problem Seven
Google is indexing both our http and https versions of our site. Will this cause duplicate content issues?

Solution Seven
The problem with allowing GoogleBot to index your secured pages is that it is more taxing on your server and for GoogleBot. It's never a good idea. There is no reason to index those pages anyway. You could do exclusion in the robots.txt file, but I wouldn't trust it. Instead, use your .htaccess file to redirect anything from useragent googlebot to "http://" link instead of "https://."

```
RewriteEngine on
RewriteBase /
RewriteCond %{HTTP_USER_AGENT} ^.*googlebot.*$
RewriteCond %{SERVER_PORT}443
RewriteRule ^(.*)$ http://www.domain.com/$1 [R,L]
```

The first rewrite condition checks to see if the useragent is Googlebot. The second rewrite condition checks to see if the port is 443 (the SSL port), to which Google is trying to get. If both of these match it will redirect to http://www.domain.com/etc/etc.

If Google keeps screwing up, this redirect won't allow them to jump to your secured area anymore.
Problem Eight
I am renaming files or changing their extensions on my site. What can I do so I don’t lose the traffic?

Solution Eight
You need to use a 301 Permanent Redirect. A 301 redirect is the most efficient and Search Engine Friendly method for webpage redirection. The code "301" is interpreted as “moved permanently” and it informs the search engine that the page is no longer at this location, but it is now at this other location. In other words, it is much like a forwarding address at the post office for your mail.

It’s simple to implement once you understand the process. It should also preserve your search engine rankings for a particular page. If you have to change the file names or move pages around, it's the safest option.

301 Redirects - How and When

The 301 Redirect is a "Permanent Redirect." I never advise doing a 302 "Temporary" redirect, but do a meta refresh instead. The best way to understand the process is very much the same as a "change of address card" at the Post Office. You were living in one place and you have moved to another, so you tell the Post Office, "This is my old address, and this is the address to which I am moving to." You do the same exact thing in your .htaccess file when you want to move traffic from one page to another. Here are some examples:

Example One
I want to move this page
http://www.domain.com/long-privacy-policy-url.html

to

http://www.domain.com/privacy.html

Redirect 301 /long-privacy-policy-url.html http://www.domain.com/privacy.html

Notice in the redirect, that I used the “old” location without the domain name, since it isn't needed. Only the part of the URL following the domain is needed. The “new” location needs the entire
URL. The old location is a relative link and the new location is an absolute link.

**Example Two**
We stopped carrying a certain product, so I want to send the traffic to our sister company's website instead.

*Redirect 301* /discontinued.html http://www.siscomp.com/current-product.html

**Example Three**
I want to send my PPC traffic to my site first, do a bounce and then send it to the merchant's site so they can't track that it came from a PPC campaign.

First, in your PPC campaign, send the traffic to /product-ppc-landing-page.html (where the product is listed.) Once the PPC editors have reviewed the page, you can do the redirect.

*Redirect 301* /ppc-landing-page.html /product-redirect.html

If you want to test to see if you did a redirect correctly, you can download the add-on for Firefox “Live HTTP Headers.” If you have a different configuration than Apache, see the info below. I cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information below, as I have no way to verify it.

**IIS Redirect (Windows server)**

- In Internet Services Manager, right-click the file or folder you wish to redirect
- Select the radio button titled “a redirection to a URL”
- Enter the redirection page
- Check “The exact URL entered above” and the “A permanent redirection for this resource”
- Click on “Apply”

**Redirect in ColdFusion**

```html
<cfheader statuscode='301' statustext='Moved permanently'>
<cfheader name='Location' value='http://www.new-url.com'>
```

**Redirect in PHP**
Redirect in ASP

<!--asp@ Language=VBScript --><%@ Language=VBScript %> <%Response.Status='301 Moved Permanently' Response.AddHeader 'Location', ' http://www.new-url.com'>

Redirect in ASP .NET

<script runat="server">
  private void Page_Load(object sender, System.EventArgs e)
  {
    Response.Status = "301 Moved Permanently";
    Response.AddHeader("Location","http://www.new-url.com");
  }
</script>

Redirect Old Domain to New Domain

Create an .htaccess file with the below code, which will ensure that all the directories and pages of your old domain will be correctly redirected to your new domain.

Options +FollowSymLinks
RewriteEngine on
RewriteRule (.*) http://www.newdomain.com/$1 [R=301,L]

In the code above, REPLACE www.newdomain.com with your actual domain name.

In addition to the redirect, I suggest you contact every backlinking site to modify their backlink to point to your new website.

**Note:** This .htaccess method of redirection works ONLY on Linux servers that have the Apache Mod-Rewrite module enabled.

That's it! All you have to do is a simple cut and paste job with the code that you want, modify the domain to reflect your own and you are done. After doing this a few times, you will have full confidence using the .htaccess file and will wonder why you didn't do this sooner!
Google has two indexes: The Main Index and The Supplemental Index. There are various reasons why a page ends up in the Supplemental Index. It could be a “stale” page, or it could be due to Google’s difficulty in completely indexing the page. You can also look at the Supplemental Index as the last “holding ground” for a page before it gets dumped from Google’s index completely.

How can you tell if your site has pages listed in the Supplemental Index? All the “hacks” that have worked over the years have been blocked by Google; however, one still works, but it will take some effort on your part. Google supplies the search results to AOL, but AOL does not allow for Supplemental Results to show in their search results. Therefore, if you compare the pages in Google’s index vs. the ones in AOL’s, you can determine which pages of your site are in the Supplemental Index.

Let’s clear up a major misconception and talk about what the Supplemental Index (SI) isn’t: It is NOT the Google Sandbox new sites get thrown into. It is something completely different. Sites young and old get pages thrown into the SI, even I get pages in the SI and not always on purpose.

Pages in the SI don’t rank well, period. This is why you want to get your pages out of the Supplemental Index — especially if you run an aggressive AdSense campaign. Having just one page in the SI could be costing you hundreds, if not thousands of dollars a month.

What is one of the main reasons pages are routed into the SI? Answer: a lack of internal links. For example, when Google performs a deep crawl on
your site, it compares the pages it found with those in its index. If there are pages in the index that GoogleBot didn’t fetch in the deep crawl, Google knows that those pages are no longer accessible through an internal link; therefore, Google sees them as being “phased out” by you. Those pages are then moved to the SI.

Of course, this is just one of the many ways your pages end up in the SI, and it is one of the most common, based on my testing.

**Myth**
If you have pages in the SI, they contain “SPAM elements,” you should clean up your site.

**Fact**
Pages do not get placed in the SI for “SPAM elements.” They get removed or penalized from the index for SPAM. The SI is not a SPAM repository.

Here are samples of test results and what you can do in order to get your pages, or your entire site, out of the SI. I have included the main reasons why pages get placed in the SI, the methods I used to get the pages out, and the success rate of each. The success rate is based on the status of the page 30 days after making the changes.

1. **Page not updated**
Pages that have not been updated for one year or more have a 68% chance of being placed in the SI.

   **How to get out:**
   Update the page so the file size changes +/- 1% (42% success rate). This wasn’t as successful as I thought it would be and it has gotten worse. There are many forum posts and articles out there that state this is all you need to do to get out of the SI. Test results show differently. You have more work to do.

   Change the heading tag, update the Title, and add significant changes to the body content. You may want to invest in a rewrite of the article. Chances are that things have changed and the article is out-of-date. Now, what if you do a complete rewrite and there is no change in the file size, do you need to make more changes? No. File size is not the issue here. The issue is new content (93% success rate).
2. Direct link missing
The page is no longer linked directly from the homepage or a main category page. Pages that lost their link within the site itself (not backlinks) have a 72% chance of being placed in the SI.

**How to get out:** Put a link on the homepage or a main category page to the page in question (95% success rate). If you place a link from a main category page, verify that the page is listed in the Google index.

3. Complete Prescription
By following the information below, you will have a 96% chance of getting ALL of your pages out of the SI within 30 days or less. Keep in mind, this will take a solid effort from you and it is time consuming; however, it will pay off in a big way as your traffic levels will spike by getting out of the SI.

Why am I so confident? Of the 400 Supplemental Pages I tested on 47 different domains, only 16 pages remained in the SI. That means I am 96% sure. That is confidence.

**Change the Title**
Make it more compelling, update it, and treat it like an advertisement. Remember, you are after a click through here. You may consider using the ‘pipe’ symbol ‘|’ instead of a hyphen in the Title. I have seen some good movement by doing this, plus it seems to command attention and improve clickthrough rate. Do not have more than one Title Tag and do not repeat your targeted keyword phrases in the Title.

**Domain Name/Server**
Make sure your domain is either on its own IP address, or you control every domain on that IP. If you still virtually host, kick the habit and get your own server. Only have one domain? Get with some friends and go in on a server for all of you to share. If you want to take control of your business, this is where it starts. Sharing an IP address with a webmaster with a warped mindset is just asking for trouble. Don’t virtually host.

**Robots.txt File**
Verify that your robots.txt file is compliant. View [my robots.txt](#) to get an understanding of what your file should contain.
Crawlability
How easy is it for a search engine to crawl your site? Do you use dynamically generated content? If your URLs have lots of “&,” “%,” etc., then you may have quite a bit of trouble. The good news is there are mod_rewrite scripts available to handle the problem and make your site more crawlable.

CSS
Do not place any hidden text or hidden code in your CSS file. While GoogleBot can’t detect many CSS tricks, the number one reason for bans on sites with CSS tricks are from competitors filling out SPAM reports. Don’t take a chance.

Ensure that your CSS file is an external file and place it in a separate folder. Exclude that folder from being spidered in your robots.txt file.

Why? Because Google grabs the CSS files during their indexing.

Heading Tag Change your heading tag. If you don’t have a heading tag (either a H1, H2 or H3) add one. Do NOT under any circumstance use more than one H1 Tag. Why? For the same reason the front page of a newspaper will not have two headlines. It isn’t effective.

Hot Tip: The heading tags should be descriptive of the text below it.

Content
Severely modify the content on the page. Update the text and add new relevant content. Change the formatting. Make sure you use CSS, so you don’t have a slew of font and other formatting tags that tend to bloat the file size. That is a bad thing.

Directory Submissions
Submit your site to all relevant directories in your category/industry. Reference my updated directory guide for a complete list and grades. Make sure to review the Top 5 Directories to submit to.

Press Release
Submit a press release and have the release posted on a major news feed such as Yahoo! News. Why Yahoo!? Because Google actively spiders Yahoo! News.
Which press release distribution should you use? The best one for your money is PRWeb. Don’t get suckered for the free press release distribution networks. While the statement “promotion can be found that is free” is true, the statement “all good promotion comes with a price tag” is also true. Promote your business the right way; it will pay off in the long run.

**ALT Tags**
Change your ALT Tags so that they are not optimized for the search engines, but describe the graphic instead.

**Meta Description**
Ensure that you have a unique, compelling Description Meta Tag. The Keyword Tag is optional.

**Character Set Tag**
While the Character Set Tag is recommended, it does not affect the SI.

**XML Sitemap**
Create a sitemap and submit via Google Webmaster Tools.

**Link Campaign**
Launch a link campaign which assigns 25 or more links to your homepage and/or subpages. Make them solid links — and not garbage. Work at this. Make it pay off. Ever wonder why you do a backlink check on a solid site and they have a PR6 with 40 links and then you see another site with 400 links and a PR4? There is a reason for that. It is called quality.

The above tips will allow for more of your pages to be removed from the SI and will also give your site great long-term benefits with the other search engines as well.

**Paid Link Alert**
If you buy links for PageRank value, here is a major warning: Over half of your ad buys are no longer worth what you’re paying. I highly advise you to go through your account(s) and look at the new PageRank levels.

With all the testing that I do, we have over 200 paid links going to a variety of websites through brokers and thousands with direct buys to the website owner.
Hard Data: Over 85% of the paid links through brokers had a PageRank reduction. Twenty-one percent of those brokered links lost ALL of their PageRank. Only 4% had a PageRank increase. Out of the links I obtained from the webmaster, only 37% had a PageRank reduction and none lost all PageRank. Eighteen percent had a PageRank increase.

Non-scientific Conclusion: Don’t use a broker to purchase paid links. Paid links are not a problem as long as you don't go through a Text Link broker and the site doesn't advertise that they sell links. Contact the webmasters directly, or use webmaster forums for threads titled “sell me links” and note who responds.

Q&A

Q: My site lost one point in PageRank, but I haven't bought any links, nor do I sell them. What did I do wrong? Was I unfairly punished?

A: If you don’t buy/sell links, then you got nailed with the “trickle down effect.” Sites that link to you were downgraded for buying or selling links, thus their lower PageRank doesn’t give you the “juice” it once did. Collectively, this caused your site to drop.

What to Do: Get more links.

Q: What are ROS links and are they bad?

A: ROS stands for Run of Site. It basically means that your link is placed on every page of a website. So, if you advertise on a site with 15,000 pages, you are, in essence, getting 15,000 links.

New Testing Data
I’ve taken many top ranking sites with good PageRank and acquired ROS links from Blog Rolls, appearing as the "Webmaster/Web Designer" for the site, listed as resource, etc., and there was no case of a penalty being applied. In fact, each ROS campaign slightly improved the SERPs positioning for the targeted keyword phrase. The test included being "smart" about the situation. I ensured that the ROS link would not count for more than 8% of my total link count. If you have 30% of your links coming through one IP address this isn't a smart idea.
Distraction Tip: This works very well with Bing.

Q: What is the one thing that I could do that would help me the most?

A: Perform a Link Audit. I like to use Xenu. Essentially I want to make sure the links on my site are still going to the correct sites and to places that are live. This will help clear up any "link rot" on your site. Remove any link that doesn't fit your "quality" guidelines. It is better to clean your house than try to get someone else to clean theirs.

Q: I heard a new tip on how to get links every day, especially with all the new Web 2.0 stuff. I know you don't do any Web 2.0 marketing, so what do you suggest?

A: Web 2.0 has the reputation of generating lots of traffic but the sales conversion ratio is very poor. I always advise to concentrate on what sells, not what drives traffic. Test it for your market. Don't apply the Web 2.0 tip that you read in the back alley of a forum to all of your sites until you test it. How?

Let's say you want to rank better for the keyword phrase “blue widget waterproof.” Find out where you rank for that anchor text in Google by searching: allinanchor:blue widget waterproof. It helps having the FireFox extension which counts the results and shows 100 per page. You can also use NicheWatch. Find your site and record where you rank. Since this search constrains the results to the best ranking based on anchor text, you can test any linking strategy.

If you ranked #82, you know that you are the 82nd best site for that keyword phrase counting only incoming anchor text. So, you go to social marketing sites and post a paragraph about your new waterproof blue widget using the correct anchor text. You check the cached date on the page where your new link appears. Once the page has been cached, you want to wait another 3-10 days for the link to be calculated in the formula. If your site doesn't move upward, it is a strong indication the social marketing site is worthless. Of course, there are many factors weighing in on this, but you should get the general idea of what to do here.
**Hot Tip:** It’s easier to get Digg, HubPages or WordPress pages to rank for long-tail keyword phrases than a new site. One simple solution is to create a few of these Web 2.0 pages, get links, and then link to your “money page” from the Web 2.0 pages.

**Q:** You mentioned before about using bloggers to drive both traffic and links; can you go over that again?

**A:** Search engines may drive more clicks, but bloggers control more buyers. Top bloggers are trusted. They can help “frame your offer” which will greatly help in sales. By getting them to review an article you wrote and linking to it, the smaller bloggers will follow their lead and you end up with a few dozen to a few hundred links initially, with about 90% of the links “evaporating” after about four months.

**Hot Tip:** Contact niche-related blogs and try to get them to host your original content. Guest blogging is a great way to generate traffic-driving links.

**Q:** What are some “hidden gems” that you can pass along that helped your site improve during this last update?

**A:** Ezine Sponsorship/Advertising (Archived). If an Ezine allows sponsorship or advertising, check to see if the webmaster archives old issues online and whether they have a healthy PageRank of PR4 or higher. If they do, it is worth sponsorship every quarter or so. That will get a fresh set of links to your site to be crawled. Make sure their links are live. Many are not as they send out text-based Ezines.

**Q:** What is the best tool for getting links?

**A:** Your phone. It is very effective with link building. About once a month, I discover a great resource (a webmaster who controls 50+ solid websites). Just one contact can do more positive work for you than a dozen outsourced link builders who send out “spam” emails requesting to exchange links. Using DomainTools.com is a solid way to get the webmaster’s direct phone number, as they are the ones who often register the domain name and you can by-pass the front desk.
Q: You had an article about targeting keyword phrases with AdWords, the title of the ad, and the landing page. Can you clarify this?

A: Absolutely. The advice in the article was:

Create custom titles and descriptions THAT MATCH THE TITLES & DESCRIPTIONS on your page. (You will want to test how they will look in the SERPs).

The titles and descriptions in your ads have a lot more constraint than they do in the organic SERPs. Here is an example: I did a search for “mortgage insurance.” Below are the top three ads in AdWords.

Example One

**AdWords Title:** Mortgage Insurance

**Page Title:** Mortgage Insurance from the Mortgage Protection Center at NAA Life

**Commentary:** PASS. See how Mortgage Insurance appears in both the title of the ad and the title of the page?

**AdWords Description:** Pays off your mortgage in the event of your death. Get a free quote!

**Page Description:** NAA Life is America's top source for mortgage insurance and mortgage protection. We offer a wide variety of mortgage protection plans to meet every budget and coverage need.

**Commentary:** FAIL. The description of the ad does not match the description of the page. Even though the page text also
contains the description above the fold, in my testing group, no one noticed it.

Example Two

**AdWords Title:** Mortgage Protection

**Page Title:** Mortgage Protection Center: America's #1 Provider of Mortgage Life Insurance

**Commentary:** FAIL. Even though I'm not in the mortgage business, I know that Mortgage Insurance and Life Insurance are two different products. Whoever is in charge here should be fired. Not only is it not a match, but the title and description do not match the search. I searched for "mortgage insurance" not "mortgage protection,"

**AdWords Description:** America's top source for mortgage protection insurance. Free quote.

**Page Description:** The Mortgage Protection Center is focused on protecting families against the loss of their home due to illness, disability or death.

**Commentary:** PASS. The description of the ad matches the description of the page. Even though the page text also contains the description above the fold, in my testing group, no one noticed it.

Example Three

**AdWords Title:** Mortgage Insurance

**Page Title:** Mortgage Protection: A service Mark of Family Direct Insurance Services, Inc.

**Commentary:** FAIL. See how they have "Mortgage Insurance" targeted as a keyword phrase, but the landing page has "Mortgage Protection" as the title? Then they have a plug for their company. This title fails.
AdWords Description: Affordable Mortgage Insurance. Request Your Free Quote Today!

Page Description: One of America's Leading Term Life Insurance specialists. We're committed to making it as easy and convenient as possible for you to protect your family. To save time, you may apply over the phone, or through the mail.

Commentary: FAIL. They switch from "Affordable Mortgage Insurance" in the ad, but then push "Term Life Insurance" on the page.

The purpose of this exercise was for you to realize that you need consistency with keyword phrases when creating your ads. Ensure that the ad matches what is on the landing page and that includes the Title and Description. This, in turn, allows the "conversation" to flow from the ad to the landing page. Make this a habit and you will start writing more effective ads and landing pages.

Q: I saw an article on SE Roundtable regarding what a competitor can do to your site to get it penalized by Google. I am concerned over this since we do a lot of article marketing.

A: Here's what I am seeing on my test domains:

- Inbound Links from "Bad" Places: If your site is not at least a PR5 site, you run the risk of getting your site damaged by an influx of links; however, if you have a solid foundation, the new influx will merely be dismissed — no gain, no loss.

- Hundreds of links from one IP address: I have actually seen this work and IMPROVE ranking in many areas. Similar to the previous point, if your site is not an authority site, Run of Site (ROS) or Run of IP (ROIP) links can cause major damage to your site.

- Duplicate Content: A competitor scraping your entire site and using the content as their own: This only affects non-authority sites, and is especially effective against new sites.
  - A competitor stealing your articles and submitting them to an article submission service: I have not seen any confirmed
backlash on using article marketing as a way to take down a competitor's site. Chalk this one up to the "rumor mill."

- **Bogus search queries sent to your URLs:** This can cause issues, but it is resolved by blocking the IP range of the offender. Most of these bots are just plain stupid, so it would be a non-issue.

- **Getting your site spidered under SSL:** This should NEVER happen. If it does, check the redirect section which detects access to your SSL port. If it is GoogleBot, redirect access to your http version of your site instead of the https.

- **301/302 hijacking:** This is a small scale problem. There are some nasty exploits out there, but I have never seen proof of anything that wasn't traced back to server security, or the lack thereof.

Hopefully that will ease your mind regarding what a competitor can do. If you don't have a strong site, work on getting one. The better your foundation, the less likely a competitor will be able to harm you.

**Q:** Can you go over more specifics of the Google Guide that was leaked to the public recently? What does it all really mean?

**A:** Personally, I think the document is legit. If you haven't read it, I have a copy posted online. The back story is that this Google document is from Google and written for hired contractors. They review websites ranked high in the SERPs for competitive keyword phrases. What is their purpose? To evaluate the sites against the criteria set forth by Google. In other words, Google wants these “hired guns” (mostly overseas) to grade websites so that Google can make changes in their filters to get rid of the unwanted sites in the SERPs.

So, while this document may be “official,” you are still up against someone’s opinion. Opinions are very different from person to person.

The first “takeaway” you need to understand from this document is that Google wants the reviewer to classify websites into the following five categories:

1. Vital
2. Useful
3. Relevant
4. Non-Relevant
5. Off-Topic

1. Vital = Brand Searches (including personal names).

Vital sites are most commonly the official sites of a product or service. For example, if the keyword "Nike" was entered, nike.com would be considered "Vital," as it is not only #1, but is listed with SiteLinks as well. Also, notice in the example below that while #1 and #2 results are coming from nike.com, the second listing below that while #1 and #2 results are coming from nike.com, the second listing is NOT intended. This is because Nike is doing a redirect to their jhtml version of their homepage through a 301 and not redirecting to the root.

2. Useful = Highly satisfying, comprehensive, high quality and authoritative site.

For example, a well-known shoe store like Zappos may get a "Useful" grade for the keyword search "Nike;" however, just because the site is well-known, the grade could be lessened if there are problems with the site in terms of being difficult to use, broken links, too many redirects, slow loading, etc.

3. Relevant = Supplies good information but doesn't have the authority to be considered for the Useful label.
A lot of smaller shoe stores/outlets would fall into this classification. Even affiliate sites, which take the time to build a quality site, would be given the "Relevant" label. An example would be MyAirShoes.com, which appears on the 10th page of the SERPs.

4. Not-Relevant = Normally on-topic related, but often the content is outdated.

Affiliate sites that just don't quite "make the grade" are lumped here too. Once you get back the top 100 results in the SERPs these types of sites are littered.

5. Off-Topic = Could be Spam but essentially the page provides no value according to Google.

Thin affiliate sites and MFAs can be included here. It is Google's goal to keep these types of sites out of the Top 100 for competitive terms.

Be prepared for a manual review if your site is ranking in the top ten for anything competitive (i.e. $1.50 or more per click in AdWords).

Q: How can my site add value in Google's eyes?

A: Google does give suggestions, but often what they say is not what they want. Ever since Google came out with their suggestions, I tested them. Here are my results:

1. Add price comparison functionality: Let's say you are selling travel services and even though the visitor has to go to another site like Travelocity through your affiliate link to book their trip, Google says there is value to have the price comparisons.

   Test Results: This is a tough one because Google never states their definition of "Price Comparison." Most price comparisons in the travel industry are done through feeds. This means the actual context is not indexed since often the information is injected into the page via an iFrame.

   Regardless, having a Price Comparison isn't enough and neither is just having distinct content. In my testing, if you use the same or similar template for your site that is provided by the merchant, you
can get hit. I did one test with the templates from Joe Bucks and used price comparisons from another industry just to see what happened and my AdWords campaign was SmartPriced.

2. **Product reviews:** Google says pages that provide original reviews offer added value.

   **Test Results:** I will assume that the key term here is "original," but is it that easy? I tested it. I took the templates above that were SmartPriced, scraped reviews, and posted them in the content. Bingo. The SmartPricing went away. Now, this doesn't mean that if the page gets manually reviewed there won't be a problem, but for now, Google isn't detecting duplicate content externally.

3. **Recipes:** Pages that provide recipes offer added value.

   **Test Results:** Really? Recipes add value? I scraped a few thousand recipes and posted them in a custom template with images, AdSense, and banners. I was proven wrong on this one. The pages are doing very well.

4. **Lyrics and quotes:** Pages that display lyrics or quotes add value.

5. **Contact information:** Pages that provide contact information — especially physical addresses and phone numbers — offer added value.

6. **Coupon, discount, and promotion codes:** Affiliate pages that provide coupon, promotion, or discount codes for the consumer offer added value.

Google states they label most scraped content as spam; however, according to my testing, pages of scraped content can rank well both in the short and long term.

**Q:** What about Parked Domains? How does Google feel about those?

**A:** Google considers Parked Domains as Spam, but I have dozens of parked domains, which do very well in the SERPs. I think this is another "old wives' tale" which most webmasters believe because they read it somewhere. Now, this may still be true. Google may consider Parked Domains as Spam; however, the issue is, do Parked Domains appear in
the SERPs? The answer is "yes." One key point, Google has its own parked domain program with AdSense. These domains mostly rank for long-tail keyword phrases.

**Test Results:** Parked domains were never intended to rank well in the SERPs. Instead, they’re used for direct traffic. I've never seen Google treat a parked domain as Spam.

**Q:** How can I keep from being looked at as a "Thin Affiliate?"

**A:** Here is what Google suggests and I have included commentary based on my testing:

- **A shopping cart system that stays on the same domain.** In my testing, I have never seen Google penalize a site as a “thin affiliate” for this, as many of the top e-commerce solution packages out there, such as 1AutomationWiz, handle the secured transactions on their server.

- **A return policy with a physical address.** This is a no-brainer, but only comes into play if your site is manually reviewed, which is rare. In my testing, P.O. Boxes or UPS Store locations are just fine as a physical address; however, they aren’t good to use if you want to be listed well in Google Local.

- **A way to track orders (FedEx, UPS, USPS, etc.).** Again, I have never had one of my affiliate sites downgraded by not having these. It is GREAT for the customer and I feel it is needed, but it seems someone is trying to earn a commission.

- **A user forum.** How is having a forum a way out of being a thin affiliate? Especially in the age of forum scraping? I see no need for this and I don’t see a lot of activity in the Crest White Strips forum these days.

- **The ability to register or login.** You mean like a Blog? A member’s area? No. Not according to testing.

- **A gift registry.** Now this is starting to get funny.
An invitation to become an affiliate of that site. Seriously, I can be seen as legit and not as a thin affiliate if I have a link to invite someone to become an affiliate? Um, no.

If you really want to be seen as legit and not as a “Thin Affiliate,” here is what I suggest:

1. Don't use the content feed straight from the merchant. Rewrite it. Make it better. Improve it. If you have a hard time understanding what unique content is, you need to learn. I always suggest following the top 2-3 Bloggers in your industry. They crank out unique content on a daily basis, which is why they are the top Bloggers. Learn by following them.

2. Don't use content that is not unique. Think, "I am one of 5,000 affiliates, so I must distinguish myself."

3. Get out of the mindset of, "Well, site XYZ does it, so I can too." Nothing is further from the truth. There are many sites which are "white listed" and can do no harm. It is highly unlikely your site is white listed.

4. If you are building an "Amazon site" with books and products straight from Amazon with your affiliate links, you must be able to answer the question, "Why would someone visit your site instead of going straight to Amazon.com?" If you can answer that question and it makes sense, your site could do well over time.

5. Remember the "Doorway Pages" that Web Position Gold used to crank out? Google hates those because they add no value. Look at Thin Affiliate sites as the new Doorway Pages.

6. Buy BRANDABLE domains instead of keyword-rich domains with tons of hyphens. I always prefer to buy an existing domain that is currently indexed and brandable over registering a new one.

7. Use redirects for your affiliate links. For example, if you are promoting a red widget, instead of sending the link to:
You would link to:

http://www.yourdomain.com/redwidget/

That would then redirect to your affiliate ID. I highly suggest this as it will give you an edge when a program changes. Instead of having to hunt all over in your pages, autoresponders, banner ads, PPC campaigns, etc. for outdated links, you make the change just once in your .htaccess file.

8. If you want to "Get Fat" as an affiliate, you must add value to your pages or risk being punished by a manual review. Believe me, the more popular your site gets, the more likely you are to get attention. Think of it as being audited by the IRS. They tend not to audit those on the lower income bracket levels.

9. Also consider creating an Affiliate Program page (even if it is bogus), since these Quality Evaluators are looking at affiliate sites as needing to add value. Having an affiliate program (or a page referring to it) will give the perception you are the merchant.

Q: Are keyword-rich domains still recommended?

A: There are webmasters who swear by them. In my testing, unless it is a small niche, you can rank well, but the revenue won't be great. So what does Google think of domains such as:

http://www.apply-bankruptcy-credit-card-payday-loan.com

Matt Cutts has said they send a strong Spam signal. I recommend avoiding them because they just cry out, “Give me a manual review.” If you are buying these types of domains, chances are you’re probably doing some other things that you don’t want Google to see.

Q: What is Google Webmaster Central? Should I sign up?
A: Get an account ASAP, as it will give you a great edge on figuring out potential problems with your site. In the meantime, Google is doing something ultra cool, and that is, if there are problems with your site in terms of properly indexing it, Google will store the warning messages for you. So, when you do register, you'll have some mail to go through. This could be cool with expired domains. I haven't tested it, but it makes sense that if there were problems, you'd be notified, but only after you purchased the domain. One thing that isn't clear: What if there is an "archive" so the new owner of the site can see all past messages? If that is available, that could turn the tables on domain buying. I can see new clauses in contracts already.

Q: How often is PageRank updated?

A: PageRank is continually updated, at least once a week. Google only posts the data for public view 3-4 times a year and it is old data. PageRank is logarithmic, meaning that each numerical value is more difficult to achieve up the scale. For example, if a PR1 was valued at 0-100, then a PR2 would be valued 101-1,000.
Getting nailed and booted from Google is every webmaster's worst fear. It doesn't take long for your client, the owner of the business, to start asking questions, and not long after that, the screaming starts.

First, I will define a reinclusion request. According to Matt Cutts, senior engineer at Google, “If you've been experimenting with SEO, or you employ an SEO company that might be doing things outside of Google's guidelines and your site has taken a precipitous drop recently, you may have a spam penalty. A reinclusion request asks Google to remove any potential spam penalty.”

First things first:

Analyze your site. Is there hidden text, hidden links or cloaking on your site? If these items appear on the home page, you are more likely to get nailed than if they are on sub pages. Do you employ “doorway pages” that do a redirect via JavaScript or some other redirect, to a different page on the site or another domain? Were you trying to use some automated program to get links or scrape Google for content or results? Review Google's Webmaster guidelines and ensure that you are in compliance with their rules and regulations PRIOR to the reinclusion request.

How do you check for hidden links?

With malware infections becoming more common online, sites and blogs are being “compromised” without the webmaster knowing it. Typically, the Spammer will place dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of links “hidden” in your code pointing to their Viagra, Casino, Porn, etc., sites.
How can you check? It’s pretty simple. Just do a site command in Google. For example:

```
site:patioshoppers.com casino
```

This will check the domain for any reference to the word “casino.” If you get a few hundred pages returned and you are NOT in the casino business, chances are VERY good you’ve been hacked. Other phrases you should check would be: porn, Viagra and Cialis.

It takes less than two minutes to run the check on four words. If you find evidence of a hack attempt and this site is a prospect’s site, guess what? You’ve probably just landed their business. For future searches, I would highly recommend setting up a Google Alert.

Once you have made the changes, do a reinclusion request. Log in to your Google Webmaster Tools account and on the right side, under the Help With box should be a “site reconsideration” link. Click the “Request Reconsideration of your site” link and select the site to reinclude. Acknowledge that you have read Google’s Guidelines and that the site currently does NOT violate any guidelines and that you will follow the guidelines in the future. Basically, Google wants to know you won’t be a repeat offender.

Also, according to Matt, Google wants to know two things:

1) That any spam on the site has been removed or fixed.
2) That it's not going to happen again.

Matt also recommends giving a short explanation as to what happened from your perspective. Include what actions may have led to any penalties, as well as any corrective actions that have been put into place to prevent SPAM in the future. If you employed an SEO company, it indicates good faith if you tell Google specifics about the SEO firm and what they did. That will help them evaluate the reinclusion request.

**Note:** SEO and mostly-affiliate sites may need to provide more evidence of good faith before a site will be reincluded; such sites should be quite familiar with Google’s quality guidelines.
How Long Does Reinclusion Take?
It largely depends when a Google engineer reviews the reinclusion request. For small stuff like hidden text, you are looking at about 2-3 weeks, but the heavier stuff can take 6-8 weeks, and this is AFTER it has been read and dealt with. The big issue is if the reinclusion request is APPROVED! Many are not, so keep that in mind.

A couple things that Matt feels you should keep in mind when doing a reinclusion request:

- Don't bother mentioning that you spend money on AdWords or are an AdSense publisher. The person who will look at your reinclusion request doesn't care if you have a business relationship with Google. Remember, Google needs to know that the SPAM has been corrected or removed, and that it won’t happen again.

- Request reinclusion for one domain at a time. It looks bad if you had 20+ sites all thrown out at once and you request reinclusion for 20+ domains.

The second point is very important. Only make one reinclusion request at a time, and make sure you are actually banned or penalized before you request a reinclusion. As previously stated, be humble, admit to everything, accept responsibility, and fix the issue before completing the reinclusion request.

Google Panda

So what is Panda?
Google Panda is a new ranking factor that was added to their algorithm back in February 2011. Panda is not technically a completely new algorithm; it's more of a tweak similar to ones Google has used to address algorithmic deficiencies in the past like "Google Bombing". Make no mistake about it though; Panda is a seismic shift in the way that Google evaluates websites for ranking. If you have been hit by Panda, you know how devastating it can be. With the exception of Update Florida, there hasn’t been an update this drastic to the Google algorithm ever.

What’s the purpose of Panda?
Google made its name and reputation in Organic Search by having the highest quality index on the web. However, as the index grew, it became
increasingly difficult to maintain the overall quality. Despite their public statements that their index was high quality, a simple sampling of the results could be blatant all through its index. So the purpose of Panda is to restore the integrity of Google’s index, and even though many quality sites were hit, the actual quality did increase.

Historically, SEO techniques and strategy focused on on-page optimization and external linking. Basically, if you created a lot of content, used keywords in proper proportions, and built a lot of links on quality sites, you had a good chance of being found in search and ranking well on page one of the SERPs.

With Panda, Google wants to provide better search results -- pages that offer the highest quality and engagement for searchers. According to the Google Blog post that Amit Singhal and Matt Cutts published on February 24,

“This update is designed to reduce rankings for low-quality sites—sites which are low-value add for users, copy content from other websites or sites that are just not very useful. At the same time, it will provide better rankings for high-quality sites—sites with original content and information such as research, in-depth reports, thoughtful analysis and so on.”

In other words, they want to weed out the webmasters who are simply playing the SEO game – creating lots and lots of unique and super-optimized content to drive traffic and reward sites that people truly like the most.

How does Panda Work?
Initially, analysis is performed by human quality raters who look at hundreds of websites. Computers, using machine learning, are then brought in to mimic the human raters. When the algorithm becomes accurate enough at predicting what the humans scored, it’s used to evaluate the content in Google’s index and filter out low quality content.

It’s is important to note that Panda starts off from a human point of view, instead of a machine’s point of view as you might expect when we discuss algorithms. This makes it much harder to “game the system” as people have done in the past with link popularity and anchor text manipulation.
Who’s affected by Panda?
Throughout the past few months there has been a lot of chatter as to what sites have been hardest hit by Panda. From that conjecture, a common pattern has emerged. Many of the affected sites fall within the following categories:

- E-commerce sites with poor product pages
- Thin affiliate sites
- Content Farms (eHow)
- Article Directories (eZine Articles)
- Sites designed to host ‘Ad-sense’ (Advertising)
- Article sites with low quality or duplicated content
- Price comparison sites with thin content
- Travel sites with poor or duplicated reviews
- Websites with poor usability and branding

Remember that Google is seeking to prevent low quality content from ranking. Some of the signals that they seem to factor most prominently in the analysis of content quality include:

- Duplicate content
- Scraped content
- Thin pages
- Heavy template footprints
- Redundant articles
- Content with high ad ratios
- Auto-generated content
- Spammy content (obvious SEO manipulation)
- Content with lots of grammatical errors
- Content with low user engagement
- Weak pages that lack authority
- Content that does not provide value to users
- Broken links
- Crawl errors

Now here’s the **BIG kicker**, Panda evaluates your website as a whole when it comes to rankings. So if a certain percentage of your pages fall below Panda’s quality algorithm, it can negatively affect rankings across the entire website. And that can just suck if you have a few pages that are the issue.
Conducting a Panda Analysis for your website

Whether you know for certain that you've been hit by Panda or not, it's a good idea to perform a quick diagnostics. The items listed below are good Panda compliance checklist. Fix enough of these pages and you may recover.

- Check for Internal Duplicate Content (*CopyScape*, *Blekko*, *SEOmoz App*)
- Check for Duplicate Page Titles and Meta Descriptions (*Google Webmaster Tools*)
- Identify Sites Scraping Your Content (*CopyScape*, *Blekko*)
- Identify Thin Pages (by Page Size) (*Xenu Link Sleuth*)
- Identify Low Authority Pages (Page Authority, mozRank, # of Links) (*Open Site Explorer*)
- Identify Low Quality Content (Check Pages Not Indexed) (*Google, ScrapeBox*)
- Check for Broken Links (*Google Webmaster Tools*, *Xenu*)
- Check for Crawl Errors (*Google Webmaster Tools*)
- Check Page Speed (*Google Online Page Speed Tool*)
- Check for Rankings Losses (Google Webmaster Tools, Any Rank Checker)
- Check for Traffic Losses (Google Webmaster Tools, Google Analytics)
- Check Link Density (Outbound Links on Your Pages > 100) (*Xenu*)
- Identify Your Deep Linking Ratio (% of Links not to Home Page) (*Open Site Explorer*)
- Identify User Engagement Levels (Avg Time on Site, Exits from Page) (*Google Analytics*)
- Check Anchor Text Distribution for Backlinks (*Open Site Explorer*)

Strategies for combating Panda

The strategies provided below are based on own research within the SEO community, actual analysis clients, and testing of personal websites.

- Eliminate Duplicate Content: Use Rel Canonical tags and 301 Redirects OR completely revise old content
- Report Sites that scrape your content to [http://www.dmca.com](http://www.dmca.com) and Google
- Clean up duplicate title tags and meta descriptions on your website
- Clean up broken links and crawl errors
- Add content to thin pages: start with at least an extra 150 words
- Create new internal links to affected pages from your highest authority pages
• Consolidate redundant pages that overlap on the same topic: combine pages that target the same core phrase as part of your long-tail strategy
• Improve page speed performance
• Improve text to ad ratio: make sure it's quality content that visitors will find useful
• Reduce link density: make sure that there are no more than 100 outbound links on your pages
• Remove boilerplate content/template footprints: Wordpress and other platforms are notorious for leaving these behind
• Remove low quality pages from Google’s index: Use NoIndex tags and Robots.txt
• Flatten your site architecture if pages are more than 2 clicks from home page
• Improve internal link connectivity between related pages: Link from within the content to other topically related pages
• Improve your On-Page Optimization with a tool like IBP
• Add authority to your domain by acquiring high quality links
• Improve deep linking within your website: add more links to your interior pages
• Improve Site Usability and Design for better user engagement
• Add fresh content on a consistent basis
• Enhance your Social media presence
• Add social sharing buttons to your article content (Twitter, Facebook, Google +1, LinkedIn)
Google Universal Search Uncovered

Universal Search is expanding its reach within Google. When it was first released, it was only shown in very targeted, niche-type searches. I have seen it in the e-commerce space more and more.

Universal Search allows Google to inject results from its other databases, such as Google Video (including YouTube), Google Base, Google Places (formerly Google Local), Shopping, Realtime Results, Blog Posts, etc.

What is the goal of Universal Search? According to Google's VP of Search Products, Marisa Mayer, it is to create "...a seamless, integrated experience to [provide] users the best answers."

What I have witnessed:

· Google Shopping results added within search results.
· Realtime Search results embedded in SERPs.
· Links to the brand included before organic search results.
· A section for related Blog Posts given a dedicated section within SERPs.

· Google Video embedded in the search results — with the ability to watch the video without leaving the SERPs page.

· Google Places (formerly Google Local) embedded right into the SERPs.

· Google News contains images if available.

Since these additions are happening right inside the SERPS, searchers can select these options from the left sidebar: Images, Videos, News, Shopping, Books, Places, Blogs, Updates and Discussions.

This will affect where your sites are currently positioned. Unless you jump in, it could mean your sites will more than likely take a fall. If you notice that Universal Search is being used for your main terms and your traffic is dropping, you should start looking for keyword phrase variations which are not triggering Universal Search results, while you are working on increasing your ranking.

Google Places (Formerly Google Local)
Google Places hit the mainstream search on April 6, 2009, when Google announced they were going to integrate local search results into the regular SERPs more frequently. Here is what this looked like back in 2009:

Since then, over 50 million businesses have been monitored by Google Places and in August and October of 2010, Google made some major improvements.
For starters, the name was changed from Google Local to Google Places. You’ll also notice more locations listed on the map with smaller red circles as seen on the map below. Both map images (2009 and 2010) are for the same search: “flowers” near Hickory, NC.

Changes were also made to help streamline results, making it easier for the searcher to use Google Places. Take a look at where Google Places appears in a search for “flowers.” Notice that the top businesses listed in Google Places are inserted where you’d normally see the #4 ranking site in the SERPs. Those have been pushed down even further to make way for Places. In the very near future, Google will be adding images and reviews to the Places listings in SERPs.
Google Places at Work

Google Places gives you a “broad” geographical location based on your IP address. Note that most of the AdWords ads displayed are from areas 200 miles away, so Places can be much more relevant. You can change your location by clicking on the “Change Location” link to the left of the results.

There are quite a few factors that come into play regarding a local listing. Keyword relevancy, content relevancy and customer reviews are showing a trend in influencing how important Google views your site and how it
lists it within the SERPs. Another factor influencing your position in the local SERPs is the proximity of your location to the center of the city you are located in.

So, how do you get into the search results with your local listing?

**My Google Places BluePrint**
This is my system for getting a good listing in Google Places. This method has always succeeded in getting any business I have targeted for a local market in the top grouping, and often the top spot.

1. Find a great market. If you don’t know how to do this, learn.

2. Pinpoint a hot local area for the market that you chose. It does NOT have to be your local city. You want the best possible location for your market. Use [Google Trends](http://www.google.com/trends) to find hot countries or cities to market to.

3. Locate the City Center by going to Google Maps and typing in the city you are targeting.

   **Note:** While Google used to designate with a red arrow where the “City Center” is, they now designate it with a balloon “A” as shown below when I do a search for “Seattle, Washington.”
You can’t really see too well what the “City Center” is so let’s zoom in.

Notice what Google has marked for the City Center of Seattle. Of course, the first thing that is obvious is that it is close to the Central Business
District. While there are going to be exceptions, the rule is, what Google marks as the City Center is where you want to concentrate your marketing efforts.

1. Go to Google Places and type in the main keyword phrase with the local city (e.g. Seattle mortgages).
2. Note the top three listings.
3. Print out the map.
4. Draw a triangle connecting the top three listings on the map.
   a. Note where the red “A” bubble is.
   b. Find out where the Post Office is located for the main ZIP code of the city.
   c. You want to be as close as you can to the red “A” bubble and the Post Office, while also being ‘centered’ in the triangle.

While this isn’t an exact science, I have “hit” far more than I have “missed” using the above strategy.

**Note:** If you are traveling and you don’t have a printer, or access to a printer, you can visit a local Kinkos or UPS Store, or fax the page (using eFax) to your hotel’s fax line. They may charge you $10.00 per page, but it will be worth it.

5. If you haven’t already, register your site with Google Places. Not only does it validate your business and help build trust in Google’s eyes, but registering with Google Places also protects you from someone else using your business name. You will need to have an active Google Account.

6. Wait about 2-3 weeks for your listing to show in the Google Places index and possibly the regular index as a Google Universal Search inclusion.

**My Process for Google Places and Local Search Optimization**

**On-Site Checklist**

1. Make sure your location (Geo) and keyword are in the title tags
2. Use a variation of your Geo keyword in the H1 tag
3. Use your Geo keywords in the internal anchor text when linking between pages
4. Make sure the body copy is geo-focused
5. If you service multiple areas in a region or big city, create an optimized, location page for each one
6. Create a **KML sitemap** and upload it to your site (http://www.my-website.com/locations.kml)
7. Create a **GEO sitemap** and upload it to the root directory of your site (http://www.my-website.com/geositemap.xml)

**Off-Site Checklist**
1. Optimize your Google Places profile to 100% or as close as possible -- add photos and video
2. Upload your Geo sitemap to Google Webmaster Tools
3. Submit your site to local directories/advertising sites. Use a service like UBL (relatively cheap) to do it faster
4. Target local sites for inbound links; Local chamber of commerce, directories, blogs, business associations
5. Get family, friends, and customers to submit positive reviews to sites like Yelp, Angie’s List, Kudzu, Judysbook, etc.
6. Create weekly blog posts that link to your home/location and service pages that you’re trying to rank organically
7. Submit articles to get deep links to the home/location and service pages that you’re trying to rank organically

**Other Factors Google Looks at for Places**

- **Business Listing Address**
  For those near the center of the city being searched, this particular factor plays in your favor. While it is not the only determining factor, it does have influence in which position you achieve in the local business SERPs. Depending on your market, this could cause a few headaches. For example, let’s say your business is plumbing and your physical address is three miles from where Google considers the center of the city and you have four competitors, all within a few blocks from the center point (as designated by Google). If your competitors have established themselves with Google as valid businesses (in the Google Places business center) they will more than likely be listed in the top three of the local results – all due to the proximity of their physical address.

  On the other hand, if your business was closest to the center of the city (as designated by Google), your listing would most likely appear towards the top of the Google Places SERPs. In other words, while the actual address of the business is considered, the amount of data that Google has also plays a part. Fewer competitors = fewer data results = a higher listing result for your keyword.
· **References from Yellow Page Portals & Industry Directories**
  Having your business listed in Internet Yellow Pages Directories, and industry specific directories may also help you achieve a higher listing. These types of listings help to further solidify the trust with Google, just be careful to make sure that the information listed in these directories is consistent with the information contained on your site.

· **Properly Categorized Places Listing**
  This just plain makes sense. Using your keywords in categories is not only an organizational must, but it will also help keep the search engines from incorrectly categorizing your business. Not to mention, when a business is correctly categorized, it is more easily found.

· **Keyword in Google Places Listing Title**
  In the local SERPs, keywords found in the title are bolded and help the listing stand out. Just remember, especially with your business listing title, you want to make sure it is compelling, sounds natural, and is not stuffed with your keywords.

· **Quantity of Customer Reviews**
  Unlike links, Google looks at the quantity of reviews left by customers for a listing – even if the reviews are bad. Having reviews is another way for Google to see your business as relevant and legit. One review is better than none.

· **Ratings**
  From a business standpoint, this is one area you do want to factor in. I think it also goes without saying, but I’ll say it anyway, the higher the rating, the better chance of getting the click. After all, who really wants to see a dentist or a veterinarian with a low rating?

· **Off-Page Factors**
  Geo-links, or links that are from other sites within the same location as your business, also have influence over your position listing. The key here is relevant, quality links linking to your business. Areas to consider here would be user-submitted photos, customer reviews, local directories and Web references. You just want to make sure that the sites linking to you are quality sites.

Keep in mind, while there is no magic formula (at this point in time) in achieving a top listing in Google Places, by working on the above factors, you will increase your ability to get that top ranking. As with organic
search results, there isn’t just one factor you can implement, but a series of factors.

**Google Image Search**
While the use of images on your site for illustrating your products and services is a no-brainer, can you use them to get traffic? Many say “Yes.” Since Google has their own image database they will tell you to optimize your images with descriptive, keyword-rich file names and ALT Tags. This will index your images properly by the image bots and allow for your images to appear on the first page when an image search is done. Sounds great, doesn’t it?

You think...“Someone will search for an image, see my cool widget and buy it!” While that is a nice dream, the chances are about as likely as a lightning bolt striking your head.

Unless you are in the porn industry, people searching for images are NOT your customers. Just as visitors who arrive at your site by typing the "site:" command are not your customers. Remember, this is not about traffic, but about conversions. Image traffic doesn’t convert.

**Advice:** Deny Google and the other search engines access to your images by excluding them through your robots.txt file. Here is the entry you want:

    User-agent:*
    Disallow: /images/

If there is an image that you would like Google to showcase for your site, place it in another folder, such as “appimages”, and allow the folder to be indexed. This way, you are in control of what images Google can and cannot index.

This next example shows how pictures are incorporated into the search results in a search for “Audrey Hepburn.”
Google Video
From the testing I have done in the past, it is easy to get a great deal of views using video, but very difficult to convert the traffic into sales.

For example, I took the keyword phrase that converted the best for an affiliate program and created a video, optimized it, and then uploaded it. It was short and showed a great use for the product.

When doing a search for the product, my affiliate site ranked #2 (right behind the merchant) and my video ranked #6. Conversions are up nearly threefold. Based on what I did, the key is in optimizing the video for a keyword phrase that converts the best through a search to ensure that those who typed in that particular query are the most qualified buyers. Sounds simple enough, but search alone wasn't doing it.

At one time, Google used to embed video results, as shown in the example below. Notice the keyword phrase “evolution of dance,” which at the time of this writing was the #1 all-time video watched on YouTube. It was embedded as the #2 and #3 listings on Google. Not in a “One Box” off by itself, but embedded right in the search results. You can see the #2 result contained a link “Watch Video” that allowed you to watch it without leaving the SERP page.
Video is another area Google has been fine-tuning. In the screenshot below, notice that the top of the SERPs is labeled “Video results for evolution of dance” with three image previews of the matching video, with the organic listings directly below. While it appears that you are able to view the video results directly in the SERPs window, this particular view actually sends you directly to the video link, taking you off the SERPs page.
Also notice that to the left of the video results is a link for “Videos.” Clicking that opens a new SERPs page of strictly videos related to your search. You can narrow your search by length of video or date posted, using additional options in the left sidebar.

I used a descriptive, keyword-rich file name using dashes between the words for my video file. I spent a lot of time on my Title Tag and the Description Tag fully supported the Title. I optimized the video page as I would any other page. I then submitted it to Google Video and YouTube.

**Advice:** If you use video as a way to promote your business or your products, make sure you have your logo and/or website URL in plain sight at the beginning and end of the video.
Since there is no way to push the visitor automatically to a URL like Camtasia does, you will have to rely on “branding.” If you have software that can “watermark” your logo, URL, or something to distinguish ownership, I highly recommend using it. I made the mistake of recording some videos for affiliate products without doing that, and they are now hosted on competing affiliate sites.

If you brand your videos, you can become an authority and those videos will help increase your conversion. For example, I did a two minute video on a product where, at the end, I mentioned if they wanted to see the best feature of the product they should go to the website on the screen and signup to see the full video for free. That way, I was able to do a huge name capture. The follow-up resulted in a conversion of 6.3%. The key is to have a “Call to Action” at the end of the video and to give them a reason to visit your site for more information.

I was still offering the video for free (pushing the free line to the visitor’s favor), but I was also using a name squeeze page for future follow-up. The process was good, as it led to a very good conversion ratio. The feedback received indicated the information presented in the "full version" of the video was excellent and they wanted the product right then and there. Of course, the full version allowed me to push them to the order page after the video finished.

In my opinion, the tutorial or teaching industry is wide open. Very few good companies are taking the time to teach their customers how to best use their product. Create “how to” or “tutorial” videos on tasks made easier by your product. With a simple video camera, the right knowledge, and a connection to the Web, you can increase your market share and become recognized as the residing expert in your field.

Also, since you are hosting the “full version” of the video, can you imagine how many links you could obtain? This could solidify your hold in your market. The full version of the video that I was offering received over 700 one-way links just ten days after it was launched. That number continued to grow even months after it was released.

**Google News**

Google News is one way you can become a trusted source of information. While you can submit your press releases for display as “news” and subsequent indexing, that is the lazy way to approach it. There have been too many Spammers who take this approach, causing “clogging” in the
system. Get your site known, become an authority and provide real news, not just regurgitated information. Separate yourself from the masses and the Google editors will take note.

Google only accepts multi-author sites, and they have requirements on the URL structure before inclusion is possible. Each URL must have a unique number (three digits or more) in the file path.

Let's see how Universal Search effectively implements Google News.

In the example below, you will see that a search for “golden globes” brings back Google News results first. You can tell this by the "News results for golden globes" heading along with the numerous references to the latest news and when it was posted. The first listing was 27 minutes before the search was performed.

The next handy feature is located near the bottom of the page where Google offers “related searches.” This is an excellent place to research other possible keyword phrases to target, just as you do with Google Instant and Scroll to Search. This would be a good companion.

**Google Maps**
This is a vertical engine that has been included in Google search results for quite awhile. If you aren't listed yet, just go to Google Places and follow the steps. It's easy. You should be very familiar with how Google Maps and Google Places work, so I didn't include screenshots.
Google Best Practices Guide

Google Blog Search
If you don’t already have a blog on your site, get one. It is NEVER too late to get started. As one Chinese proverb states, "The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The next best time is today." It doesn't matter if it is on its own domain, a subdomain or a folder, just get it out there and start blogging. You'll be glad you did.

Make sure you integrate images, video, etc., into your blog. This will give you a wider reach in Google’s updated Universal Search. Linking videos from blogs is the fastest way I have seen for videos to get indexed by Google. If you have submitted videos to YouTube, those with a lot of comments make it in quicker as well.

Here is a checklist of what you should do:

☑ Analyze your top producing keyword phrases; rank the top five.
☑ Look for ways you can use Google Video, Blogs, Places, News, etc., to further your exposure in the market.
☑ If you have a blog, write a post on each of the top five key terms and have it “drip” every other day on your blog. You want multiple pages and posts per keyword phrase targeted.
☑ Make sure you setup accounts with “pinging” services, so people know when you have new posts.
☑ If you are a local business, get listed in Google Places.
☑ Start writing a script for a short video (2-6 minutes) on a “how to” or instructional subject regarding a product or service you sell. Plan on having it live on YouTube one week from today.
☑ Read other blogs in your market and post comments which add value to the topic and/or conversation.
☑ Write posts referring to other blogs.
☑ Disable comments on your blog until you have a steady flow of readers, as “no comments” looks like a dead blog, and getting that “first comment” is often difficult.
☑ Get to know the “A-List Bloggers” in your market. Do them a favor, request an interview, follow them on Twitter, etc., basically anything to get their attention. Don’t just jump in and ask for a link, work on the relationship first.
☑ Get the blog listed on Technorati and other blog search engines.
Consider using WordPress as a platform. It is free, easy to use, fairly SEO friendly, has a ton of plug-ins, and a huge, active community.

Optimize your posts! With Google Blogs, users can now search by blog, or individual posts!

Google Updates (Realtime Search)

Realtime Search results can be seen by using the “Updates” link in the left sidebar. Realtime Search shows blog, webpage, and social media posts related to your search, as they become available—in real time. Results can further be filtered by using the geographic location link to see what is going on in your area. Just click the “Nearby” or “Custom Location” link in the left side menu.

To see the rise and fall of interest in the topic, check out the “Conversation Timeline” under the search box just above the results.
Remember the following items and keep the big picture in mind:

- Google uses an incremental index. Expect changes daily.
- Google does a lot of testing during the summer and US holidays.
- Visible backlink updates occur every 3-5 weeks.
- Visible PageRank updates occur every 3-4 months.
- The Visible PR and backlink numbers are often months old, and they have NO effect on the current ranking in the SERPs.
- There is no penalty for the use of iFrames or JavaScript.
- Focus less on ranking, more on quality traffic and conversions.
- Build a site with your target market in mind.
- Focus on Web Analytics parameters (bounce rates, page views, time on site), as these will help your SEO efforts, as well as your overall marketing efforts. By knowing which keyword phrases are causing the most “stickiness” of your site, you will know where to concentrate your SEO efforts.

**Beware of the "Fad of the Month"**

_I don’t know how to emphasize this enough: Stay away from fads, as they usually go as fast as they come. According to Matt Cutts of Google, “People who concentrate on how to fool us will never make it long-term in this business. We will find them and punish them.” If you serve good content, Google will do its best to rank you at the top of the SERPs. “Black Hat SEO” will be harder to do in the future._
The following is a list of “Must Have Links and References”:

- **Webmaster Information** — Review this page once per quarter.
- **Webmaster World** — The best forum, hands down.
- **Webmaster Guidelines** — Great tips and information from Google.
- **Matt Cutts Blog** — The “Spam Czar” at Google.
- **SEO Information** — Google’s advice & warnings about hiring SEO firms.
- **GoogleBot** — Solid information about GoogleBot.
- **Google Removal** — How to remove your site or pages from the index.
- **Google Spam Report** — How to report a site.
- **AdWords Blog** — The official blog for Google AdWords.
- **Google's Official AdSense Blog** — Enough said.
- **Browser Cam** — View your site in every browser imaginable.
- **Copyscape** — Search to see if your content has been plagiarized.
- **Search Engine Roundtable** — Barry Schwartz’s Blog.
- **Search Engine Watch** — Danny Sullivan’s site.
- **Dr. Nunley** — Get your press releases written here.
I was born and raised in San Jose, California. My technical career began at General Electric in their nuclear division. That was very cool, as “spare parts” for nuclear plants ran in the $4-$6 million range. Makes you wonder what the “big stuff” costs. Following a move to Utah, I began to work for WordPerfect where I served as a software tester.

While working on a new add-on to the product called the Internet Publisher, I came up with some ground-breaking ideas. The result was the seamless export of a WordPerfect document to not just HTML, but into an entire site, including links.

At the time (1995), it was a great development. This prompted one of the developers to suggest that I do Web publishing and design on the side. He saw a talent in me that I hadn’t.

I started my first company a short while later. I called it West Web Design, but I didn’t register the domain name for a couple of years. Why? Because, I didn’t know I could! I did the design work for local businesses and all was going well.

Then it happened. One of my clients asked if I could get them ranked higher in the search engines. I told them, “No problem.”
The truth is: I had no idea.

I started devouring pages on the Web, but there wasn’t much information available. In fact, it was 1997 and there was very little out there. At the time, Alta Vista was the king of search engines and had the largest index of about 80 million pages. Wow! Think of that. Estimates are that Google has over a TRILLION pages indexed.

With nowhere to look, I turned to myself and decided I would use my skills as a software tester to determine what search engines were doing and how they ranked pages.

If you weren’t around back then, it was pretty cool. Infoseek, which had a great share of the market, offered “instant indexing,” which allowed you to submit your page to its index and within two minutes it would be live. So, I created my testing grid, started uploading pages like a crazy fool, checked the rankings, performed A/B testing — the works.

The testing paid off. My client achieved hundreds of top rankings and went from an 8-person company to 30 people in 90 days. They were thrilled and someone said to me, “Looks like you have a new career.”

Cool.

About two years later, I landed my first big corporate client. I remember clearly hanging up the phone after finalizing the contract and out loud saying: “What am I going to do now?”

I didn’t feel I had the skills to work with a large company.

I searched the Internet looking for answers. When I couldn’t find any, I called Brent Winters, President of First Place Software (makers of Web Position) and explained my situation. He recommended a training course and a short while later I earned my certification in SEO.

In just one month, leads were pouring into the company. In two months, they were literally drowning in leads. My client had top rankings across the board and their website traffic had reached an all time high.

I later discovered that the Senior Vice President of Sales had three years to achieve a certain level of sales. With the help of the SEO work I did, he
achieved that level in seven months, was given a large bonus and released from his contract. He was hired to do the same job with the Internet startup company, Netgateway. He made me his first hire and paid me my first six-figure salary. I had reached my dream: Doing SEO full-time and getting paid well for it. Web Marketing Now started as a subset of Netgateway in 1999.

The ride didn’t last long, as the “dot com” bubble burst in February 2000. The company’s stock dropped below a dollar a share. In June of 2000, I was laid off on a Tuesday and served divorce papers, from my then wife of twelve years, on Thursday — just two days later.

I remember vividly, I woke up the day after, unemployed and living with my parents. I said, “I’ve become George Costanza.” I knew right then and there, I had to make a choice. I could either feel sorry for myself, or I could believe in myself and do things on my own. Obviously, I chose the latter.

As part of my severance package, I was given Web Marketing Now. I moved into a killer apartment and started out full-time on my own and haven’t looked back since.

We all go through difficult times in our lives, and we always have choices. The easy choice is always to lie down and wait for someone to pick us up and help us. The hard choice is to work when you don’t want to, wake up when you are tired, and complete a task when you would rather be doing something else.

Effective SEO isn’t about “hard work” or “working smart.” Those are just masks for excuses. Effective SEO is about accomplishment and results!
The following is a compilation of conversations that I have had personally with Google engineers at Webmaster World Conferences. Note that only current, relevant information is included.

**Question:** I’m helping a friend try to push some bogus extortion site “complaints” off his first page on the SERP. How can someone rid themselves of a bogus complaint on sites like RipOffReport.com or ComplaintsBoard.com?

I know we can work on the SEO, but in some cases they are very well entrenched and are trying to charge the victim money to take the “complaint” off the site. In some cases they have even gotten .edu and .gov links and have leveraged their SEO power for “evil.” And the pages or posts are often “closed” so you can’t even add your side of the story.

You would think Google would have a way to deal with that. It can cost an individual or small business a lot of money in lost business and in hiring an SEO pro to combat bogus complaints which leaves this client with a bad taste for internet marketing. I wonder how many business owners have decided never to advertise in AdWords or online after an experience like this?

**Answer:** Google has remained very consistent on this issue. They aren’t a censor. While they can sympathize with you, if they began to act as a censor, the line begins to get fuzzy. The best you can do is to promote your company the best you can. Keep in mind that customers realize that there aren’t always going to be favorable things said about your company. In fact, a company that has a spotless record is always a red flag in my book because no company can satisfy every person.
**Question:** What is the best way to file a SPAM complaint so that it will be read and acted upon?

**Answer:** Log in to your Google Webmaster Central account and file the complaint there. Since your identity has been verified, SPAM complaints filed there are more likely to be read and action taken.

**WTD:** I have been frustrated with submitting through GWC as more often than not, my SPAM reports are ignored. Instead, I have been posting in the Webmaster Central Help Forum. Usually, an engineer will see the SPAM post in 2-3 days. Not everyone gets attention, but I have a better record of getting sites removed from the index by going through the forum rather than through Webmaster Central.

**Question:** What are the total number of information searches for a given topic vs. product searches?

**Answer:** This information wasn’t available.

**Question:** What are the least important ranking factors?

**Answer:** This question is too generic and Google isn’t really going to answer this accurately other than to say they ignore the Keyword Meta Tag and Spam content (which they don’t really ignore).

**Question:** What is the most reliable way to achieve and retain high search engine rankings?

**Answer:** According to Matt Cutts, it is creating unique content and getting good, quality links to your site.

We all know that answer won’t get you a top ranking. The best thing to do is use my SEO in a Box technique along with my Keyword Competition Tool or comparable techniques that I outline within this book.

**Question:** Is the value and merit of links different for each industry?
**Answer:** It isn’t the value of links that is different, but rather how the keyword is scored. Since Google has access to keyword pricing (through AdWords), they know the dollar value of a keyword and will rank them accordingly. Higher value keywords have more off-page factors and lower value keywords have more on-page factors attributing to the ranking process. Even though on-page factors do not give as much benefit as they once did, if you get them wrong you won’t reach your rank potential.

**Question:** What is the best strategy when it comes to link building?

**Answer:** From Google’s perspective, they want to publicly state that they aren’t out to “get” any ad network, link network, directory, etc. They have discounted the PageRank for many sites and networks that were selling links, which they see as purposely manipulating their search engine rankings. What many webmasters saw as a PageRank penalty, actually wasn’t. Google simply raised the bar. As the Web continues to grow, the values for PageRank will grow too.

**WTD:** Follow the linking advice in either the Linking Quick Reference Guide or on the Web Marketing Now site.

**Question:** Are pull-down menu links that are hidden in search engine friendly CSS as strong as links viewed normally through the page load?

**Answer:** I haven’t tested this and Matt Cutts stated there is never a time when “hidden links” are search engine friendly. Never take what Matt Cutts says as an absolute truth. Always test it first.

**Question:** Do links going through a redirect click tracking script count?

**Answer:** The answer is “yes” from Google, but I don’t have testing results to back it up. My viewpoint is worry about real links and if you get extra juice from a redirect, then you are getting something extra.

**Question:** What about three-way links: Site A links to Site B, Site B links to Site C, Site C links to Site A?
Answer: Google has a "network graph" in scoring which shows the linking structure of a site. Granted, there are instances when a three-way link will naturally occur, and that is fine. What is not fine is when there are dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of these three-way links occurring. While the average person may think, "This is great, Google will never know," that’s not really the case. They can see it. Don't do it.

Question: Does Google make a distinction between a Postweb page and Pageweb page in WordPress? Which is better for SEO?

Answer: Lisa Brown, with WordPressAngel.com handles all of my WordPress issues. There was probably a time when this mattered, but I don’t see any issues now. Just make sure you have the SEO Plugin.

Question: Is it still true that most searches don’t bring the results that people are looking for?

Answer: Google didn’t have any hard data to share, but Microsoft said they have a 25% “back” trend (hitting the back button). So, a quarter of all searches result in a refinement of some sort.

Question: Does the clickthrough rate influence the SERPs?

Answer: While Matt Cutts stated there is currently no correlation between clickthrough rate and rankings in the SERPs, I am seeing some evidence of this.

Question: How much does bounce rate and average time on site affect rankings? What about a blog or internal pages?

Answer: Even though Matt Cutts has stated that this is NOT part of the algorithm, I am seeing some evidence of it, although nothing conclusive. I would assume the reason for this is to get rid of the “Made for AdSense” sites which typically have high bounce rates because that is their business model.

Question: Will the PageRank be preserved if all pages are redirected to the homepage?
**Answer:** There is some “PageRank” leakage, but details were not given. Personally, I don’t find this to be a big deal. Leakage is going to happen. As long as the homepage is spidered often, you should be able to use the authority to push link power to your other properties.

**Question:** Can a site “lose” its history if it has a “noindex” tag on the homepage for an extended period of time?

**Answer:** Yes. I have tested this, including a PR6 site last year. I took the site down so Google had nothing to index for four straight months. Then, I put it back online and Google has treated it like a new site ever since.

**WTD:** How long has the site been in the Google index? When was it first indexed? I have also proven, through testing, that you can register a domain name and sit on it for years, but Google doesn’t count its “age” until it indexes the homepage.

**Question:** Is Google giving more weight to keywords in the domain name?

**Answer:** Yes they are, especially in .org domains.

**Question:** Which is better: Hyphens or underscores in domain names or filenames?

**Answer:** Hyphens are better, as they will allow for a broader search. While Google will read underscores as word separators, Matt Cutts suggests, and testing confirms, that filenames with dashes perform better in search.

**Question:** How many hyphens can a domain have and still be indexed by Google?

**Answer:** While having a lot of hyphens in the domain name does not automatically indicate Spam, it does raise Google’s “alert level.”
**WTD:** Keep the number of hyphens in your domain to one or two. The obvious preference is none. If you want to target a keyword phrase, use hyphenated filenames, not a hyphenated domain. Don’t forget to seek out .org options for keyword targeted domains.

**Question:** If you buy an expired domain, what do you do with the non-existent pages so you can capture the backlinks?

**Answer:** You can use mod_rewrite or 301 redirect to point them to the correct page. It is not recommended that you just do a blanket 301 redirect to the homepage.

**Question:** Does Google treat a subdomain (http://keyword.domain.com/) differently than a subfolder (http://www.domain.com/keyword)?

**Answer:** This has been asked for years and the answer is the same. Subdomains are treated the same as subfolders. They are a part of the same domain and are treated as such.

**WTD:** Testing and simple searching shows that while Google may want to move in this direction, it isn’t a reality. Matt Cutts stated that Google has treated subdomains as a separate domain, but they were moving to include them under the same “domain umbrella.” To date, we see subdomain ranking in Google, ranking fairly well in Yahoo!, and dominating in Bing.

The bottom line: Subdomains still work well and if you want to do well by owning multiple spots in the top ten, creating subdomains is a good idea. “But, if it is going to change in the future, should we still do it?” As Dan Thies says, “In the future, I will have a flying car, but right now I don’t. So, I will live my life as if I don’t have one.” Don’t let the threat of the future discourage you from marketing properly today. You will suffer ZERO penalties for having a subdomain. I have never had any indexing issues.

**Question:** If I am not using a domain, should I forward it? How? 301? 302?
**Answer:** You should always use a 301 redirect to a domain you are currently using. From an SEO perspective, do not use domain forwarding, Meta Refresh tag, etc. Instead, use a 301 Redirect.

**Question:** What date does Google see as the registration date of expired domains that are re-registered?

**Answer:** Google doesn’t look at the registration date. Instead it looks at the “first time spidered” date. If there is a significant time where Google cannot index the site, it will “reset” the age of the domain. I have found in my testing, that if you build the site on your server as soon as you obtain the domain, you can switch the DNS and be ready for Google’s next crawl. (You can use WinHTTrack or Archive.org to get the previous content of the site). That is usually very effective in saving the domain; however, if you spend a week or two developing the site and Google comes back, they will often de-index much of the site making it worthless for the reason you bought it. Haste definitely prevents waste in this case!

**Question:** How do I better optimize for Google Places, not in Google Maps, but in the regular SERPs?

**Answer:** Matt Cutts admitted to a hole in Google Places that I have been reporting for the last three years or so. You can focus on an address near the City Center and the local Post Office for the ZIP code you are targeting and get a top ranking – even if you use a fake address. They state they are going to start using their own collected data in order to be more accurate.

**Question:** What about personalized search?

**Answer:** This is becoming more and more of an issue. If you notice when you are logged into your Google account, your search results will be different than if you are not logged in. However, even when you are logged out, Google is tracking your search behavior through the IP address you are using and will begin to give you personalized search results based on your search behavior. They are getting good.
Question: When will Google Caffeine be rolled out?

Answer: On June 8, 2010, Google announced the completion of their new indexing system: Caffeine.

Question: What should be done with the upcoming Caffeine update? Are traditional SEO techniques going to become useless? Are they being replaced with semantic-optimized pages?

Answer: Even though it is stated that Caffeine is NOT an algorithm update, there are enough changes in the SERPs to believe that there is a change in the algo.

In terms of it being replaced with semantic-optimized pages, I am not seeing that in my tests. I think this is more hype and rumor. What my tests are showing is that the authority on the homepage is mattering more and the total number of domains linking to you is becoming more of a factor. This is making “run of site links” less effective; however, internal linking is getting more powerful. So, if you have a large authoritative site, your advantage will greatly increase.

Question: What is the future of the Blogger platform and how might it integrate into their other app developments? Do they see Blogger having a vital future? Or is it one of those channels that may be left on the back burner?

Answer: This is on their radar for 2010. It is still an important part of their business strategy; however, no details were shared.

Question: How is the influence of social sites working with the Google algorithm?

Answer: With Caffeine, the impact of Web 2.0 properties has been lessened. That doesn’t mean they won’t be as effective, it just means it will take more effort to get them to rank.
**Question:** What will happen to the Yahoo! SSP campaigns when the merger with Microsoft occurs?

**Answer:** The SSP (Search Submit Pro) program will be discontinued.

**Question:** Will the SERPs appear more like Bing or Yahoo! rankings?

**Answer:** When the merger occurs, they will be Bing results. Ever since they took the directory listings out of their algorithm, Yahoo! has never been able to serve quality search results.

**Question:** How is Sidewiki going to be policed?

**Answer:** As with any user-generated content, they are monitoring for spam. Since it is still new and the traction hasn’t been fully realized and there are still some growing pains.

**Question:** When will integration of Google Docs with Google Wave happen?

**Answer:** The plug has been pulled on Google Wave.

**Question:** How do I know if I’ve been “slapped” by Google? How do I avoid it?

**Answer:** The “Google Slap” is only for AdWords and does NOT affect the organic listings. You will know if you have gotten slapped if your Quality Score has tanked and/or your minimum bid has been raised to the $15-25 per click range – just to be on the first page. Read that again, not the first position, *the first page*. That’s a slap.

Here are some options to go through to **correct the Slap**:

1. If you’re an affiliate and you are linking directly to the merchant’s page with your affiliate code, change the CTA to /yourdomain.com/buy/ and do a 301 redirect to the merchant.

2. Make sure your Title Tag is unique and contains the targeted keyword phrase.
3. Ditto with the Meta Description.
4. Ditto with the H1 Tag.
5. Get the Privacy, Contact Us, About Us, Terms, etc. links on the page if they aren’t already there.
6. Put the keyword phrase at the bottom of the page, just above the footer links, but don’t link it to anything.
7. Use the keyword phrase at least twice in the body of the page.
8. Get some good solid links (5-10 or so) to your landing page. As strange as it sounds, getting links from pages that are cached and spidered by GoogleBot has helped in the slap – but not consistently.

**Question:** How do you lower the keyword costs in AdWords?

**Answer:** Simply put, you can lower your bids, which will of course, lower your position. That isn’t what you want. What you are probably asking is how to increase your margins, and that comes with solid landing page designs built on “continuing the conversation” the prospect has in their mind.

**Question:** If there is one thing we could do for Google so it would be 100% greater, what would it be?

**Answer:** The answer was very political and not worth reporting.

**Question:** According to Google Webmaster Tools, my site hasn’t had a deep crawl in months. How come?

**Answer:** It is probably because you are using the default priority in the XML file you have posted. Rebuild your sitemap, check the priorities, adjust if needed, and then resubmit using Google Webmaster Tools.
Years ago, David Bullock and I basically mapped out our combined strategy for getting into and dominating a market. It was so successful I wanted to share what we went over.

**Step One**
Do you know the “language” of your market? Do you know your prospects’ “hot buttons?” Do you know what frustrates and keeps them up at night? You should. While you can do an online survey with Zoomerang, or another survey company, I recommend you to get out of the office, away from your laptop and just go talk to people.

Taverns are often the best places to find people since there are always groups of people sitting around having a few beers and talking. Offer to buy the next round if you could get their opinion on a project you’re doing. Be honest. My favorite approach is, “Hey, I’d like to buy the next round if I can get your opinion on a project I’m doing for work. I swear I’m not selling anything. I’m just stuck. My friends are no help. All they say is how good it is, and I really need some honest feedback.”

Not many say no to that. Make sure you buy the round AFTER you get the feedback. If you buy the drinks first, what often happens is that the table clears out fast and you end up feeling stupid. I speak from experience. Sometimes you get lucky and the group is very friendly. If the ideas are flowing, keep up the pace. It's okay if you buy a few rounds. As long as the ideas are great, keep the drinks coming! However, I highly advise you not to drink. You want to remain alert and focused.

**Why This Approach Works**
You get better information from people with whom you can interact and spend $50.00 for a couple of rounds of drinks, than you can by spending $2k for an online survey. Sure, it isn't scientific, but you don't care — this isn't the Presidential Race — you want ideas you can test in your PPC campaign. Some ideas will fail and some will be golden. Some you may rework and turn into gold. For the time it takes to get an
online survey setup and approved, I could be back from the tavern with my feedback.

**Tip:** Don't just walk into the tavern with a blank pad of paper. If you're considering an affiliate offer, print out the merchant's sales copy and bring it with you along with a couple of Sharpies. You want to lay them out in front of everyone and have them tear it apart. If you are doing different landing pages, bring the pages (three max), lay them out and let them rip those apart. If you are just performing market research, bring an article or a printout of a site you like. You need to have something for them on which to concentrate, besides you.

**Non-Bar Example:** If I were looking to sell a house-training guide for dog owners, I'd skip the bar and go to a city park. Dog owners frequent the park. If you have a dog yourself, bring him/her along. If you don't, go with the intention of asking about their dog because "you are in the market for one." Ask the dog owners in a non-survey manner about their dog.

- Who trained their dog?
- What was frustrating about the training process?
- What they would do differently?

**Step Two**
Take the feedback you received and begin to write your headlines. Look for 2-3 problems that were expressed by multiple dog owners and then look at your product and find a way you can solve each problem. Look for stress points. As one of my mentors said, "Find their pain and apply sufficient pressure until they buy." It sounds bad, but most marketing is built around this concept.

For example, a dog owner said a reason he was so frustrated training his dog was because all of the dog training guides were too difficult to understand. He complained that there weren't any pictures. He talked about how the live trainers were too expensive and what he really wanted was a step-by-step process. The follow-up on that complaint could be, "Would videos have helped?" His face would have lit up and he would have responded, "That would have been great." Do you see how this process works now? Your headlines just came together with very little effort.
Maybe it is a little long, but it is a work in progress and I can test it pretty easily to see if it is effective. The key is to take the frustration that the market is dealing with and offer the market a solution. It's really that simple. Think about it. If every time you complained about something and a person with a solution to that very complaint rang your doorbell, would you slam the door shut? Of course not! You want your problem to go away. They would have your attention. That is effective marketing.

**Real World Example:** My daughter ran for Class President when she was in the Fifth Grade. I was so proud. She asked me for some advice and I taught her about the “Points of Difference” in what sets her apart from those she is running against. She told me about a great idea of collecting “Box Tops” from cereal boxes so the school could get new playground equipment. To adults it sounds good, but to a fellow classmate? Not so much. Box Tops — who cares?

Then, the moment happened.

At recess, some kids in another 5th grade class who didn’t know my daughter well, were playing with a ball and it suddenly went flat. "I hate this!" One student yelled. "This always happens!" My daughter walked up, introduced herself and said that she had an idea to get new playground equipment, including new balls, which won't go flat. Did she get their attention? Yes. She learned that people are more likely to listen to you when you have a solution to their problem. While she didn’t win, it was a close race.

**Step Three**

“Speak Your Copy.” This is a phrase that David came up with and I love it. Don’t get bogged down with writing copy. Sometimes, you can spend days and accomplish very little. Did you know some of the most
successful copywriters on the web today are successful because they write the same way they speak? It's true. While that could get a few people into serious trouble, for most of us, we know if we could just talk to the prospects, we'd sell them. This is your chance to do just that, using your sales copy.

**Note:** Be sure to read my "Kitchen Table Copy" eBook which outlines some simple, yet effective techniques for writing copy.

**Step Four**
Keyword Phrase Research. Why should you do the keyword phrase research AFTER you have written the copy? Simple. Your mind can be tainted to what the market wants. Don't fool yourself into thinking you are too smart to ask the public what they want. I still make this mistake from time to time and I pay for it in failed campaigns.

Use tools such as [KeywordSpy](https://www.keywordspy.com) or the keyword tool in Google AdWords. It seems the more the keyword market grows, the more difficult it is to get reliable data. This is why it is always smart to use at least two sources.

**Step Five**
Take your keyword phrase list (you can also hijack your competitor's keyword phrases) and setup a PPC campaign. (Recommended: Google AdWords) Be mindful of what type of budget you have and the bids you make. Don't go completely nuts, because you can go through a lot of money quickly if you aren't careful.

**Step Six**
Create landing pages based on the keyword groups you've compiled. Don't send the traffic to your homepage; you need to have landing pages created so your Quality Score is high. The higher your quality scores, the lower your CPC.

**Step Seven**
Install your analytics code on your “thank you” page to track sales/conversions. According to Bullock, 97% of PPC advertisers don't do this. Yes, 97%. If you want an easy advantage over your competitors, get the code on your “thank you” page. This is vital because you want to know exactly which keyword phrases convert so you can concentrate on those and ignore the rest.
Step Eight
Install “heat mapping software.” David recommends CrazyEgg to test and track your main webpages. Yeah, I know Google has an overlay on their Analytics, but let's face it; their Analytics lack key features. The “heat map” is one of them.

Set the heat map so you can accurately see — through color — what areas of your site are attracting the most attention and which are being ignored. You may be in for the shock of your life. “You mean the great graphic I paid a lot of money for isn't attracting anyone?” The truth hurts.

Tip: Get the free version first. If you like it, expand to more pages. The free version allows you to track up to four pages. You don’t need the heavy-duty version until you have used it and can commit to using it at least every other day. If you can't commit to that schedule, don't do it. Analytics only works when you take time to look at the numbers, make a decision based on the figures and then follow-through. If you don't follow through, you are just wasting time.

Step Nine
Watch the campaign for any “out of control” keyword phrases and pause the campaign to analyze and make changes. David suggests waiting until you have a minimum of 100 clicks per keyword phrase to get fairly accurate data. I agree. The more clicks, the more reliable the data will be. Never make a decision based on 10-12 clicks. It just isn't enough.

Step Ten
Keep the profitable keyword phrases. Test and tweak the marginal ones, if you have time. Kill (or pause) the ones that aren't making any sales. You can always come back later and make adjustments. For now, focus your energy on what is working and look for ways to make it even better. Look at rewriting a better Title, improving the headline, the landing page, the offer, etc.

Step Eleven
Now it’s time to start the SEO campaign on the site. Take your five most profitable keyword phrases (not by percentage, but by dollars) that have at least a 50-cent per click charges in AdWords and do a "spot check" to see if you can quickly get in the Top 20 organically.
You want to know what you need to do SEO wise, to get a keyword phrase into the Top 20. Keep in mind that it’s not the same each time. Do you need just links? A better Title? More PageRank? Better on-page optimization?

You can use NicheWatch to get a good feel for the market. It uses the three main key ranking factors: allintitle, allintext and allinanchor. Here is an example for what you are looking for:

Let’s take a look at the highly competitive term, “insurance auto.” This term is quite expensive and runs about $30.00 per click. Estimates are that a site ranked at the top can enjoy 12,000 clicks a day. That's good traffic from one keyword phrase. Taking into account what it costs for a top ranking in PPC, a #1 organic ranking could be worth as much as $360,000 a day. That is serious money.

The following screenshot was captured while doing an analysis of the top twenty sites. The area outlined in red highlights the “allinanchor” search. As a reminder, this search “constrains” Google's search results to return the pages which have the highest quality and quantity of incoming anchor text with the phrase "insurance auto."

Search Query Used: allinanchor: insurance auto
Google heavily favors off-page factors. Many SEOs mistakenly look only at PageRank and the number of inbound links as the source of strength of the page. What matters most in ranking is the actual anchor text. If ranking was based on PageRank (the number of incoming links and the "authoritativeness" of a page) why does State Farm have more backlinks (1290 vs. 424), a higher PageRank (8 vs. 6) and more pages indexed (20,000 vs. 200) but ranks lower than Progressive?

Simple. Progressive's site ranks at the top for the main key factors: It is #1 for the anchor text, #1 for the Title (which includes PageRank) and it is also #1 for on-page text as well. How does State Farm fair? #8, #48, and #6, respectively. You can tell why each site is ranking the way they are based on these factors. Heavy competition phrases will be "stacked" in the allinanchor column, while "low hanging fruit" phrases generally are stacked in the allintext column.

Since this is a heavily competed for phrase, you can see from the graphic above, the "allinanchor" column is “stacked.” In other words, the column for "allinanchor" is nearly identical to the way the sites are positioned in the SERPs. Since there aren't any openings, (sites that rank in the Top 20, but don't rank in the Top 100 for allinanchor), this indicates that the keyword phrase has been heavily optimized and not worth your time to pursue. Why? It would take far too much money and time to crack the Top 20. There are easier phrases to target. You just have to find them.

Once you find a keyword phrase, you need to work on a good solid link campaign of about 30-50 links with the targeted anchor text and slight variations. Submit the site to the top directories, write a compelling title and headline using the keyword phrase and then optimize the body of the page. It's really just basic SEO. Focus on these areas and accomplish it quickly so you can move on to the next keyword phrase.

**Step Twelve**
Submit articles to article directories, use the keyword phrase you are targeting in the anchor text and point to your targeted page.

**Step Thirteen**
If the page you are optimizing is the homepage, then focus on getting the targeted key phrase in the anchor text and submit the site to various free and paid directories.
Step Fourteen
Submit solid, intelligent posts to forums, blogs and guestbooks. Do a backlink analysis to find the "diamonds in the rough" that your competition has already found.

Now, “lather, rinse and repeat” the whole process. The key to a successful campaign is to focus on the keyword phrases and landing pages, which sell the most. Don't get distracted trying to fix pages or keyword phrases that aren't working. Focus on what is working because fixing can come later. Don't be the jockey who rides the horse that wins the race and then gets off the horse to train another horse. You have already found the champion, so ride it until it collapses!

The fourteen steps above will generally apply across all markets.

Google Algorithm Now Brand Aware
Google has “flushed” their index and rebuilt it again, based on “brand strength.” Last fall Eric Schmidt, CEO of Google, was quoted as saying, “Brands are the solution, not the problem.” Now “brands” are shooting to the top of the SERPs.

What You Should Do Right Now: Sit back, take a deep breath, and know this: The sky isn’t falling. I’m going to show you why you don’t need to panic. SEO is far from dead. Let’s start out by defining a “brand.”

Definition of “Brand”: A company that is well known in certain markets. Examples:

- Running Shoes: Nike
- Photocopies: Xerox
- Tissue: Kleenex
- Jeans: Levis
- Bandage: Band-Aid
- Coffee: Starbucks

The sheer power of “brand awareness” is when the actual competitor’s product is called by the name of the “branded” company. For example, if you are going to sneeze, you don’t ask for a tissue, you ask for a...
Kleenex. If you get cut, you don’t say, “Do you have an adhesive bandage?” You ask for a Band-Aid. And if you’re old enough, making a photocopy was referred to as “making a Xerox copy.”

With that out of the way, we can agree that branding is important and nothing will change that. Now, let’s look at the actual algorithm change. We’ll use RankPulse to track these changes.

What can we learn from this example? Orbitz and Delta both came into the top ten in mid-January, right at the time when this shift occurred. I could give you a few dozen examples, but take my word for it, around mid-January there were new entries by “branded” companies in the top ten SERPs for highly competitive keyword phrases.

**My question is, if this issue was really as big as Update Florida, why did it take five weeks for the SEO community to report it?**

That’s easy. The keyword phrases which are impacted by this algorithm shift were **NON-COMMERCIAL** phrases. In other words, they are phrases which are not “money producers.” To prove this, I set up eight CPA campaigns, all targeting keyword phrases which were affected by
the shift. I spent nearly $1,500.00 on the test and the conversion rate was awful. Even with simple CPA offers which just had a name and email address field, the conversions never came close to breaking even.

Did it affect all keyword phrases? No. Just the big ones and mostly the one-word terms like “gifts” and “electronics,” which no one in their right mind would bid on in the PPC space. For example, type in “running shoes” and Nike is nowhere to be found. Search “wrinkle cream” and you will see many review sites right at the top. I also did a complete sweep of my affiliate sites and I have no significant movement of the keyword phrases which drive most of my revenue.

**Bottom Line:** Non-converting keyword phrases are phrases the seasoned online marketer ignores.

As many of you know, I am an affiliate marketer first. It is how I make my living. Not by speaking or this membership, but by working in the trenches, just like you. And one of my favorite “short cuts” is to hijack keyword phrase lists from competitors and run a PPC campaign to see which ones convert. Amazingly, in looking at my data over the last eight months, it is consistent that only 6% of the phrases convert to the point of breaking even.

Why is that?

There are lots of reasons. As David Bullock says, it has a lot to do with your offer. A keyword phrase which converts for another site, may not convert for your site because you have a different offer, a different price point, or even a different product. Dan Thies, on the other hand, says that anything that can be measured can be improved. So just because it failed, doesn’t mean it can’t work if you send it to another page or to another offer.

All good points, so why am I harping on this? Simple, I don’t want to see you get distracted by the “noise” in the marketplace, especially during a fragile economic period. Concentrate on what works, on what sells, and how you are delivering your revenue. Maximize it and slowly spread to other areas and test new options.
Other Points to Remember

- **40%** or more of your traffic should be from [non-search engine referrals](#).

- **Work on your list building.** Are you continually building your list and contacting them at least once per week with solid information, followed up with an offer? If not, you need to be doing this consistently.

- **Relationships.** Do you have solid relationships built with at least three high-profile bloggers who could send out a plug for you within 72 hours? Do you have relationships in place where you could survive the short term until you figured out your ranking issue?

- Do you [contact](#) your current **customers at least once a month** with additional information/uses of the product they purchased or to up-sell offers for additional products?

While this algorithm shift isn’t going to affect your business, it should force you to sit down and ensure that you have a plan in place, just in case your Google traffic blows up. You can then continue “business as usual.” Don’t tell me you have good rankings with Yahoo! and Bing as your backup. 15% of the organic click through market is not going to replace 75%. **You need a good plan — a realistic one.**
This tutorial will show you how to best use Google Webmaster Tools (GWT) so you can get maximum return from your site.

If you don’t know about this tool yet, GWT helps your site be more “Google friendly” and improves your site’s performance. If you currently use this tool, you’ll learn how to take advantage of it. If you haven’t used it in awhile, you’ll learn about the many new features and improvements made throughout 2010.

GWT shows detailed reports about how Google crawls your site and alerts you to any problems. It even keeps a history, so if you have a severe drop in ranking, you can pinpoint when it happened and analyze why. New features include in-depth search query data, linking information and notification by email of any crawl errors.

Google Webmaster Tools

Improve your site's visibility in Google search results. It's free.

Google Webmaster Tools provides you with detailed reports about your pages' visibility on Google. To get started, simply add and verify your site and you'll start to see information right away. Learn more »

Get Google's view of your site and diagnose problems
See how Google crawls and indexes your site and learn about specific problems we're having accessing it.

Discover your link and query traffic
View, classify, and download comprehensive data about internal and external links to your site with new link reporting tools. Find out which Google search queries drive traffic to your site, and see exactly how users arrive there.

Share information about your site
Tell us about your pages with Sitemaps, which ones are the most important to you and how often they change. You can also let us know how you would like the URLs we index to appear.
Set up a Google Webmaster Tools Account
Setting up an account is easy. Go to Webmaster Tools, click “Create an Account Now” under the sign up box and follow the on-screen steps (enter email, password, location, verification code, etc.) and submit.

Add Your Site
The first time you log into your Google Webmaster Tools account, you will be on the “Home” page for Webmaster Tools. This is where you’ll find messages, a list of current sites, and a button to add a site. Any messages that Google sends regarding your site(s) will appear here, so make sure you check this area regularly.

If you don’t have an account and Google found a problem with your site, say 8 months ago, a message from Google will be waiting for you once you create an account and sign in the first time.

From there click on the button that says “Add a site.” A form field will appear. Type in the URL and click continue.

Verify Your Site
Once added, you will be taken to a page to verify ownership.
Verify ownership

There are several ways to prove to Google that you own http://www.examplesite.com/. Select the option that is easiest for you.

- **Add a DNS record to your domain’s configuration**
  You can use this option if you can sign in to your domain registrar or hosting provider and add a new DNS record.

- **Add a meta tag to your site’s home page**
  You can choose this option if you can edit your site’s HTML.

- **Upload an HTML file to your server**
  You can choose this option if you can upload new files to your site.

- **Link to your Google Analytics account**
  You can use this option if your site already has a Google Analytics tracking code that uses the asynchronous snippet. You must be an administrator on the Analytics account.

Instructions:

Select your domain registrar or provider ▼
This enables us to provide more specific instructions.
I don’t know who this is

Verify ▼ Do this later

You can verify your site using one of four methods:

1. Add a DNS record to your domain’s configuration.
2. Add a meta tag to your site’s homepage.
3. Upload an HTML file to your server.
4. Link to your Google Analytics account.

Those of you with a large number of websites will appreciate the new DNS verification which was added in May. If you’re familiar with changing DNS settings, this is more convenient than having to post a line of code into every one of your sites.

Whichever option you choose, the exact method will be detailed under “Instructions” at the bottom of the page. I suggest option number two, “Add a meta tag to your site’s homepage.” When you click that option, Google will generate code for you to insert in the <head></head> section of your homepage. Place this code near the end of your Meta Tags and upload it to your server. Once done, click the “Verify” button. If done correctly, Google will be able to verify that you are indeed the owner and you will be taken directly to your Dashboard.
Create and Upload a Sitemap
An XML Sitemap is not required to use Webmaster Tools; however, if you want to get the most out of their data, you need one. The XML format is different than HTML, but creating one is easy.

Go to XML-Sitemaps.com and use their free sitemap generator. You can also search for “GSite Crawler” or for “google xml sitemap” and find another solution.

Google Guidelines has a good article that further details sitemaps and why they recommend them.

After you have created the file, upload it to your server. From your Google Webmaster Tools Dashboard, look for the section of the page titled “Sitemaps” and click on the “Submit” link. This will take you to the Sitemap area. Click the “Submit” button and enter the name of your sitemap file then click the “Submit Sitemap” button. The page will automatically refresh and you should now see your sitemap listed with a clock icon next to it, indicating that it is waiting for data.

The Dashboard
Now let’s talk about the Dashboard. One of the major changes that Google Webmaster Tools has undergone is how they organize the domains and dashboard. It used to be that when you logged into your
GWT account, you were automatically in the Dashboard. Not anymore. When you first log in, you are on the “Home” page of your GWT.

This is where you will see any messages that Google may have for you regarding the site(s) that you have in your GWT. It also lists all your sites and whether or not they have been verified. It is important that you verify your site(s), not only to prove to Google that you are the owner, but also to be able to receive data about your site.

Each domain has its own Dashboard. To access a Dashboard, click the domain. The next screen will look something like this:

The Dashboard is an overview of the information Google has gathered for your domain. As you see, the main window of the Dashboard is broken down into five areas: Search Queries (formerly Top Searches), Crawl Errors, Keywords, Links to Your Site, and Sitemaps. The left sidebar also contains expandable menus of the different categories. One really neat thing that Google did was lump the areas together like categories.
The four main menu categories are:

**Site Configuration**
- Sitemaps
- Crawler Access
- Sitelinks
- Change of Address
- Settings

**Your Site on the Web**
- Search Queries (formerly Top Searches)
- Links to Your Site
- Keywords
- Internal Links
- Subscriber Stats

**Diagnostics**
- Malware
- Crawl Errors
- Crawl Stats
- HTML Suggestions

**Labs**
- Fetch as Googlebot
- Sidewiki
- Site Performance
- Video Sitemaps

The top left corner, under the Google Webmaster Tools logo, shows which domain's Dashboard you're presently on. Since each domain has a dedicated Dashboard, simply click the drop-down menu (circled in red) and select the one you want to look at.

The first area we want to look at in the overview is in the lower right-hand corner of the screen: Sitemaps. If you followed the directions
previously, you will see your sitemap listed, along with a checkmark indicating that it is working properly. To the right of that will be the number of URLs submitted and the number of URLs indexed. The next area you want to pay attention to is the upper-right portion of the page: Crawl Errors. If there are any HTTP, page not found, restricted by robot.txt or unreachable pages errors the exact number would show to the right of the error type. To see the specific details just click on it. From there you will know what you need to fix in order to avoid future crawl errors.

You can also get a quick look at top search queries drawing traffic to your site along with a quick glance at how many sites are linking in. Webmaster Tools has seriously evolved since the summer, so let’s check out some of the more helpful changes. Let’s break down a few tools from each section in the left sidebar, starting with Site Configuration.

Site Configuration
This is where you will find anything that has to do with the technical side of your site and how it communicates with Google.

Site Configuration: Sitemaps
Sitemaps shows all of the sitemaps that you have submitted for the specific domain you are looking at and whether they are working properly or not.

We previously reviewed Sitemaps in detail, but I wanted to add that I noticed the accuracy is not spot on; however, the information it provides really makes housekeeping a lot easier.

Remember, if you’re experiencing a drop in indexed pages, you’ll want to check this section to make sure there are no red flags between the number of submitted URLs and the number of indexed pages. Checking the “downloaded” date of the sitemap is important too. You want to make sure there are no errors or issues with crawling.
It is recommended that you set aside an hour to go through the process of getting your sitemap up and running. This is hands down, the best way to get a site crawled and deeply indexed. While I have seen Google Sitemaps to be effective in regards to a new site, they do NOT help you avoid the Sandbox, but they do allow for more pages to be found on a new site than those without a Sitemap.

**Site Configuration: Crawler Access**

Robots.txt is discussed throughout this book, and this is the section of Webmaster Tools where you can test, generate, and remove a robots.txt file. As with Sitemaps, it shows the file name, last download date and status.

Remember, if you’re using AdSense, make sure the following is included in the file:

**User-agent: Mediapartners-Google**

Disallow:
Site Configuration: Sitelinks

To look at what sitelinks Google has given you, go to the “Site configuration” area in the sidebar and look for “Sitelinks.” These are ultra cool if you can get them for your main keyword phrase, but most sites have them for either their company name or their straight URL. The screenshot below shows how Sitelinks look in the Google SERPs.

In this section you can review pages included in your Sitelinks and block/remove any pages you don’t want included.
Site Configuration: Change of Address
This section is useful when you are moving a site. You will need to do a 301 redirect, but using this tool will help Google index your new URL faster.

Site Configuration: Settings
Set geographical targets, preferred domains (www.yourdomain.com vs. yourdomain.com) and the crawl rate. Parameter handling allows you to tell Google which parameters to ignore to help avoid duplicate content.

Your Site on the Web
This section has everything pertaining to how your site is found on the Web, as well as subscriber stats.

Your Site on the Web: Search Queries
Another great improvement is the enhanced Search Queries section (formerly Top Search Queries). Now, you can see how individual pages rank for specific search terms. You can also view the number of impressions and clicks your pages had, and the clickthrough rate. The pretty chart can be customized to show specific date ranges, so you can monitor overall performance for different keywords.

Your Site on the Web: Links to Your Site
Google Webmaster Tools has also added a feature that shows the backlinks to each page on your site. This is vital information and can help you understand how your site is ranking or not ranking for your target keyword phrase. Just remember, this information is not completely accurate.

Your Site on the Web: Subscriber Stats
One of the best Google tools allows you to see the number of subscribers to your feeds or blog. It’s a very nice way to easily see how your message is getting out to the masses.

Diagnostics
Even though much of your crawl errors are presented in the overview area of the Dashboard, you will still want to check the Diagnostics area for your crawler stats and any HTML suggestions Google may have specifically for your site.
**Diagnostics: Malware**

Malware was previously available in Google Labs, but has been added as a section to Webmaster Tools under the Diagnostics section. This section shows webmasters when malware has been detected on their site so it can be dealt with immediately.

**Diagnostics: SiteNotices and Crawl Errors**

When Googlebot crawls your site, each page returns a success or failure response. Responses range from 200 (URL was accessed successfully) to a 404 which means the request failed. A 404 could be due to an error, or an intentional block on your end.

Types of errors include:

- Restricted by robots.txt
- Page not found
- Timed out
- URLs not followed
- HTTP errors
- URL unreachable
- Soft 404s

It’s normal for a crawl to return a mix of responses; however, when errors suddenly increase this could indicate a problem that needs to be addressed ASAP. To help expedite your awareness of the issue, Google now sends SiteNotices to alert you of a spike in crawl errors. If you keep track of numerous sites, this will be helpful.

To receive notices the site must be verified in Webmaster Tools. You can also opt to have any messages forwarded to an email attached to your account. To do this, click the Messages link, which is the second link in the left menu. Find the drop-down menu to the right of the Messages section and select the email you’d like messages forwarded to.

Don’t wait for SiteNotices to check errors. Keep an eye on your site’s crawl errors via the Webmaster Tools interface.
If the Crawl Errors section references pages that you have deleted, don’t ignore this information. Somewhere on your site, those pages are being referenced. It may be as simple as uploading a new sitemap file, as your current one could still contain links to the deleted pages.

**Diagnostics: Crawl Stats**
The “Crawl Stats” section was formerly a killer, but has received a make-over. This is where Google shows you how many pages were crawled per day and time spent downloading a page.

It will also give you the PageRank information and tell you the distribution of PageRank across your site as High, Average, or Low. This helps to gauge the effectiveness of your internal linking structure and overall link campaign. If the majority of pages are low (3 or lower), you have work to do. Mediums are 4-6 and Highs are 7+.

**Diagnostics: HTML Suggestions**

HTML suggestions will include:

- Missing Title Tags
- Duplicate Title Tags
- Long Title Tags
- Short Title Tags
- Non-informative Title Tags

The section also lists duplicate, long and short meta descriptions. If there are any non-indexable pages, those will be listed too.
**Labs: Site Performance**

Google has over 200 signals for determining rank and in April they announced that page speed was a factor. Google has a [Page Speed Tool](#) available as a free Firebox add on. Yahoo!’s [YSlow](#) is also highly recommended to learn ways to speed up your site’s performance.

To view performance stats for our site, check the Site Performance section of Webmaster Tools, under Labs. The chart will show how many seconds it takes to load your pages on average and where that falls compared to other sites. Below are a few example pages from your site with suggestion on how to speed up load time.

**Labs: Video Sitemaps**

Google allows you to add videos to the sitemap. This section would list any warnings or problems with indexing videos.

**Analyze Search Queries**

Let’s look more at Search Queries which is found under the “Your Site on the Web” menu option in WMT.
Search Queries has become, one of the most powerful features of Webmaster Tools. Let’s break it down.

Right off the bat you’re going to notice the columns below the graph which are new. This lists the query, impressions, clicks, clickthrough rate and average position. The change for each factor is shown to the right of the column.

**Impressions**
Search Queries shows your most popular queries, the number of impressions for the time period selected (default 30 days) and the change by percentage.
If you’re a little confused about how Google Instant affects page impressions, this might help. Before Instant Search was offered, page impressions occurred when the user typed in a word/phrase, clicked the Search button, and your page appeared in the SERPs. With Google Instant, the results are updated as a person types. When the searcher pauses on a new results page for three seconds, that counts as an impression.

According to Google Engineer, Ben Gnomes, the average search query is 20 letters long and since Instant is basically search by character, not by word, this could result in a very noticeable increase in page impressions. It all depends on how fast someone types and if they pause for three seconds.

Click Through
By now, we all know what a click Through is. Someone performed a search, saw your listing and clicked on it. A lot of people feel that ranking matters little if you don’t get the click. Some webmasters will shrug their shoulders and say, “Well, I have no way of tracking that.” Oh yes, you do! That is why this report is so vital.

Just by glancing at Search Queries, you can see how well your keywords are performing and which need attention. It also serves as good feedback for how recent SEO changes are impacting your site. Drastic changes are red flags you’ll want to look into. (Is a new competitor on the scene and you were bumped, was there a penalty, does the site need an update, more links, etc.).

Sort Results
To sort results by greatest to smallest change, click the Change tab. Keep in mind, these are not real-time stats and by default cover the last month ending about three days prior. (For example, I checked these stats on October 6, but wasn’t able to see stats past October 3). To change the date range, click the pull-down menu and select your dates.
Default Settings

Search queries

By default, data from the last 30 days is shown. You still have the option as to what kind of query you want to research, including images, mobile, mobile smartphone, video or web search. To change this, click the “ALL” button under the Top Queries tab.

By clicking the “All Countries” tab you can pinpoint specific locations to search. If this is your first time checking out Search Queries, I recommend analyzing how the impressions, clicks, clickthrough rate, and average position have changed over the months.

Just below the chart are three numbers: queries, daily impressions for your keywords/phrases and clicks. In the chart above, the number of Impressions is 201,000 and the number of displaying impressions is 90,500. The “Displaying” number means that data is represented in the graph, while the larger bold number represents both displaying phrases and other long tail phrases not shown in the chart.

Monitoring Specific Keywords
Another change is the Starred tab. Scroll through the list of keywords within the table and click the star next to any phrase you’d like to see individual stats for. That will add the phrase to the Starred tab. Click it to see stats for that “starred” phrase only.

Look at the Search Queries screenshot again and locate the phrase “meta author” outlined in red. As seen in the Impressions column to the left, this keyword phrase represents 1,300 impressions, up 20%; 480
clicks, up 50%; a clickthrough rate of 37% which is up 5%; and an average position of 1.9. This listing is performing better than expected. How so? Let’s look at the actual SERPs:

The Title Tags are focused. Wait, did I say Title Tags, plural? Yes, I did. You’re probably saying, “Wait a minute! I thought you said never use more than one Title Tag per page.” That’s right, I did. The reason two appear here is because I obtained a double-listing in Google (as shown above) for two different pages, each with a unique Title and the process still works. The best part is this: a double-listing can increase your clickthrough rate by as much as 24%.

Meta Author Tag Explained - 2 visits - 9/13/09
Learn all about the Meta Author Tag and how it relates to your site as a webmaster and search engine optimizer.
www.webmarketingnow.com/.../meta-tags-meta-author.html - Cached - Similar

Meta Tags Explained - 23 visits - 11/29/09
Feb 26, 2004 ... The Meta Author tag will display the author of the document. This Meta tag will reference the name of the person who developed the HTML/XML ...
Meta Abstract - Meta Author - Meta Copyright - Meta Designer
www.webmarketingnow.com/tips/meta-tags-uncovered.html - Cached - Similar

Okay, back to the Title Tags. Look at the screenshot above. Do you see how the Titles are highly focused? Do you see how they are formatted? They are written in initial caps (capitalizing the first letter of each word) making them easier to read. Also, they don’t ramble. They give searchers exactly what they want: “Meta Author Tag Explained” and “Meta Tags Explained.” Boom. That is a click right there.

Success is Intentional

The above is one of my mottos and you’ll see why with this next example.

When Good Data Goes Bad
Okay, what if something isn’t right? What if the numbers are off, indicating a problem?

First, click on one of the keyword phrases in the report that you want to fix. This will launch Google and show you the SERPs for that term or phrase. What does the competition look like? Are there any double listings (two pages from the same site, indented)? Now, find your site and read your Title aloud. Do the same for the sites that rank **ABOVE** you. Chances are, your Title is extremely weak and not compelling enough to win the click. Now, read the Titles of the sites **BELOW** you. It could also be that the site below you has a double-listing. If you don’t have a double-listing, they are getting the eyeballs and the clicks even though you rank higher.

The bottom line: If you have a keyword phrase that receives a high number of impressions with a low number of click throughs, you need to find out why. Normally it just takes a few simple changes to greatly increase your clickthrough rate, which in turn boosts traffic without having to increase rank at all! That is always awesome!

**Content Analysis**

Next on our quick list is Content Analysis. You want to ensure your content is behaving properly. To get to the Content Analysis page:

1. Log in to Webmaster Tools
2. Click your chosen domain
3. Click “Diagnostics” in the left sidebar
4. Click the “HTML Suggestions” link

The next screenshot shows an example of the Content Analysis page.
The Content Analysis page is vital to check, as my experience has shown that everything can be fine one week and then Google finds a bunch of “duplicate” stuff the next, even though they were always there. Just thinking out loud here, but if it is hard for Google to detect duplicate content on your own site, imagine how difficult or impossible it is to detect across hundreds of millions of sites. Food for thought — feast on it.

The Title Tag information is one of the key ways Google determines duplicate content on your site. It is recommended you fix those issues first, regardless of which column is showing problems. To see which pages are affected, simply click the link.

What if you have limited time and a ton of pages with issues — where should you start?

Easy.

Start with addressing the following in the Title section:

- Missing Title Tags. Correcting those should increase clicks as soon as they are re-indexed.
- Duplicate Title Tags should be fixed to help you avoid internal duplicate content.
- Long Title Tags lower your clickthrough rate. Tighten those up.
- Short Title Tags will make your titles more compelling.
- Non-informative Title Tags can increase clickthrough rates.
Lastly, there is a section for non-indexable content issues. You may never see a page listed here because it is rare to trip this filter.

**Do You See What I See?**
The last report of the “Top Five Reports to Check” in Google Webmaster Tools is the “Your site on the Web” section. Log in to Webmaster Tools

- Click your chosen domain
- Click “Your site on the Web” in the left sidebar
- Click the “Links to your site” link

This section refers to your incoming link campaign. We know that incoming links play a major role in how pages are ranked. In October, Google announced improved and expanded features to this section. You can now see which sites link to yours the most, the most linked to pages on your site and a sampling of anchor text being used.

The **Links Overview** page has three main sections:

- Who Links the Most
- Your Most Linked Content
- How Your Data is Linked

The **Who Links the Most** summary on the overview page gives you a quick glance at the top five sites linking to yours, along with the total number of links from that domain. To see a list of all sites, click the **More** link.

Once you click the “More” link you’ll see an expanded chart like the one below.
The first column shows the specific domains linking to yours, followed by the number of links and the number of unique pages linked. To sort the columns by any of these factors, just click the Domain, Pages or Links column title.

Next to each domain is a “+” icon as shown below. Click the icon to see the specific pages on your site that the domain links to, for example, the homepage, blog, specific article, etc. (If you use Search Queries in Webmaster Tools, this layout/option will be familiar to you).

The expanded link information you see in the image above is just a sampling. Click the More link to see the full list. From there you’ll see a table breaking down all the pages on your site to which that domain links (shown below).
The top row of the table shows the domain linking to yours, the total number of links from that domain and the number of unique pages linked to. These are links that Googlebot picked up during the crawling/index process. Not all links are necessarily listed. Links blocked by robots.txt aren’t included and neither are broken links. Those are listed as 404 errors in the Crawl Errors section.

The **Who Links the Most** section gives you a quick look at the number of unique domains linking in, the subject matter of those sites, and which pages are linked to the most. If there isn’t much going on in this section it’s time to amp up (or start) a link campaign!

You aren’t done yet. This is another report that I would advise downloading so you can analyze the sites that link to you. We want all links to be found within the last 30 days. One of the tasks I give my outsourced team is to manually check the Google cache data for any link listed in this report. If the cache date is less than two weeks old, odds are the data in Webmaster Tools isn’t updated, so they move onto to the next one.

If the cache date is older than 30 days, then there is something wrong with the page linking to mine. Often, all that is needed are some fresh links to their page, so I will do a small link campaign for them. Yes, that’s *for them* (because ultimately, that benefits my site too). Often a few blog posts or Web 2.0 pages pointing to their page is sufficient. The majority of the time, a small effort like that will get the page re-indexed and your link will be “found” and counted again.

I strongly suggest you use the method I just described. I’ve been doing link campaigns for sites that link to me since 2001, and it’s very effective.

What if I check a link that was last found months ago, but the cache date is recent? The problem is your link is too far down on the page and Google is only partially indexing the page. This is common with long link
pages. You will need to request your link be moved up. If there is no cache date, meaning the page is no longer in the index, then the page may no longer be linked on their site. Informing the webmaster of this find would be well received and in the same email you could request for higher placement on the page.

To return to main list of domains, click “All Domains” in the navigation menu above the chart. Click “Overview” to return to the Links dashboard and we’ll move onto the next section.

**Your Most Linked Content**
While the last section showed us domains linking in, and allowed us to further explore pages linked, **Your Most Linked Content** tells you which pages are linked to the most and lets you explore the domains linking to each.

The summary shows the top five, with a link to view **More**. Go ahead and click that.

**Note:** As you go through this section remember that it’s unnatural for all incoming links to point to the homepage. Make sure specific categories and articles have good representation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your most linked content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[<a href="http://www.webmarketingnow.com/">http://www.webmarketingnow.com/</a>]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[/tips/meta-tags-meta-expres.html]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[/tips/meta-tags-uncovered.html]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[/hire_us.html]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[/tips/tips.html]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[More »]

The “All Linked Pages” table shown below breaks down your specific pages, the number of links each has and the number of domains linking to each.
Again, you can click the “+” icon next to each page to see a sample of the domains linking to it. Click More to see a larger list of domains linking to that specific page. From there you can click on a specific website to get a list of exact URLs from that domain linking to your pages.

**Note:** An improvement made to the Links section within Webmaster Tools is that it now includes pages redirected with 301 or 302 HTTP redirects.

Many SEOs do a “backlink check” in Google to see how well a site is being marketed. In this example, if you use the “link command,” 340 links to the example homepage are returned. A far cry to the 5,900 links you’d see in this Google report if it was shown in its entirety. Google is protective of the information they display to the public, even on your behalf.

So, how can you use this information to better improve your site? First of all, you can find your main “sales funnel” pages to see how many links Google is counting for each page. The page could be struggling based on the simple fact that it lacks links.

If I do a search in Google for “meta content” or “meta rating” the site ranks #1 for both phrases, even though they show two and three incoming external links respectively. This just goes to show you that doing “just enough” to be #1 is what you want to accomplish, so you aren’t wasting time and resources in over kill.

How can you utilize this particular report to improve your site? First, go through the list, download it to Excel and find 3-5 “sales funnel” pages that have fewer than ten links. Next, schedule a decent link campaign for each page with the goal of adding 5-25 links to each page. In one month, check this report and record any changes in the number of links it reports. Record any improvements after tracking the traffic and rank.
There should be a strong correlation between improved link count with targeted anchor text and improved rank and traffic.

This is just one example of why you want to target your link campaigns on your subpages. A lot of site owners focus linking efforts solely on the homepage. This is a mistake. First of all, your subpages are built with conversion in mind, where your homepage is not. Sending all links to the homepage hurts the overall potential of your site. You want a minimum of 30% of your links aimed at subpages. I’m hitting the minimum here with 5,900 of the 8,400 total to my home-page. A better ratio would be 40%. That would mean a campaign of 1,000 links is needed for the subpages in order to achieve that ratio.

**Diversify**

Why is this important? You would rather have 50 pages receiving 10 visitors per day instead of one page receiving 500. The reason is diversity. If one page controls the livelihood of your business and that page loses its ranking *for any reason*, your business is in big trouble. Now, if one page out of 50 loses its ranking, the business marches on.

Head back over to the Links Overview page and let’s review the last section.

**How Your Data is Linked**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How your data is linked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>web marketing now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>webmarketingnow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jerry west seo testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>www webmarketingnow com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>web marketing now seo testing &amp; conversion featuring</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The third summary on the Links Overview page is the **How Your Data is Linked** column, which is a sampling of text used to link to your pages. Click **More** from this table to see a numbered list of your most popular anchor text.
Remember, you want a nice mix of anchor text. Focusing solely on your most coveted keywords can trigger alarms and get penalties.

It matters little the total number of links a site or a page has; what matters is what the anchor text of those links say.

For example, a site with 500,000 links with anchor text that reads “Click Here” will do little to drive traffic for the keyword phrase “Red Widget.”

As a quick review, the anchor text is the text link a Web visitor clicks on to go from one page on a site to another, or from one website to another. While Google has publicly stated that the information displayed in this report is accurate based on what they have indexed, keep in mind that all links are not necessarily counted or factored into the ranking criteria. Despite this disclaimer, you should ensure your link campaigns are on the right track.

For example, if your targeted keyword phrase was “Search Engine God,” the fact that it isn’t listed in the top phrases would indicate a problem. Searching the list would show where the phrase actually ranked amongst all incoming anchor text Google knows about.

This is also a great indicator of how the link building company you hired is doing. Alter the phrase slightly. Using our example, you could target “Search Engine God Articles.” This report will separate the two phrases (Search Engine God and Search Engine God Articles) and you will know if the job they are doing is actually getting picked up by Google.

**What Googlebot sees: Keywords in Content**
The next area we want to look at are all the keyword phrases that Google found within your content. This will show you the overall “theme” of your site based on Google’s ability to properly index and “read” it. To see this information, click on the “Keywords” link under the “Your site on the Web” section in the sidebar.

My suggestion is to skim through the first 20 keyword phrase results to make sure the majority of them are on your theme. If the report shows keyword phrases that are not part of your theme, the best method to fix the problem is to add more content. For a quick fix, check your internal linking navigation for any “out of place” words.
Pages with Internal Links

In the sidebar of your Webmaster Tools is “Internal Links,” found under “Your site on the Web” in the left sidebar. In my testing, I have found this report to be less than accurate. Make this report a low priority. The numbers simply are not consistent. For example, if you have internal links in the footer, they likely appear on every page of the site; however, the number of actual internal links on your site and the number shown in this report often do not correspond. Additionally, even though all links in the footer appear the same number of times, some links are counted more times than others.

Webmaster Tools: Overview Page

This screenshot of the Dashboard shows an overview of the specific domain you are looking at in your account. Remember, each domain has its own Dashboard and can be accessed using the drop-down menu found next to the domain name at the top of the screen. The area you should look at first in this view is “Not Found,” listed in the “Crawl..."
errors” section. These are pages which are linked from OTHER sites and are currently 404 errors on your site. Often these are older links and the “link juice” is not being captured by your site. I suggest either doing a 301 redirect to the homepage or an even better option, create a subpage that could convert the visitor based on the old content. You could also recreate the page with new or updated content.

If you have URLs that are listed in the “Restricted by Robots.txt” then you want to double check that you really don’t want those pages crawled. All too often, former employees or webmasters will do dirty things to your code to keep your top pages from getting indexed.

The other sections will list various errors that will depend on your server setup and the type of pages you upload.

Okay, that’s it. That is the quick and effective version of checking your Google Webmaster Tools account.

Every serious webmaster and site owner needs to take advantage of Google’s Webmaster Tools. While some of the tools are worth passing on (internal links page), others are extremely helpful in increasing your rank, clickthrough rate and traffic—all of which help reach our ultimate goal of increased revenue.
## Google Hacks and Shortcuts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Command</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site:www.domain.com</td>
<td>Lists all pages, if any, indexed by Google.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>site:www.domain.com *** -view</td>
<td>Used to show supplemental index pages, but no longer works. Compare the site command between Google and AOL instead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link:www.domain.com</td>
<td>Displays a snapshot of the backlinks to a site. For a more accurate accounting of backlinks, I suggest Yahoo! Site Explorer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.yourdomain. - <a href="http://www.yourdomain.com">www.yourdomain.com</a></td>
<td>This gives a more complete count of the backlinks in Google's index, but also includes &quot;text&quot; references.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cache:www.site.com</td>
<td>Displays Google's cache of the page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allinanchor:keyword</td>
<td>Ranks sites that have the keyword in the backlinks pointing to the site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allinurl:keyword</td>
<td>Ranks sites that have the keyword in the URL - including sub folders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allintext:keyword</td>
<td>Ranks sites that have the keyword in the indexable body text of the page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allintitle:keyword</td>
<td>Confines the results to those sites that have the keyword in the Title.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You’ve made it through the guide, now what? Of course you need to take action, but where to start? Personally, I recommend starting where you will get the most results, and that usually is where you are currently making money. But what if you aren’t making money yet? I cover both below:

If You’re Making Money: Take the three keyword phrases that you are making the most money with which are NOT ranking in the Top Three organically and use the “SEO in a Box” technique to get to the top of the SERPs in less than a month.

If You’re Not Making Money: Go through the “Google Love” and the “Quick Test of a Market” sections and get your site up to speed quickly, and then tackle each section until your site is meeting your expectations.

The key is to do something everyday to continue to the progress of your site. Analyze. Track. Make changes. Lather. Rinse. Repeat.

This isn’t difficult, but it needs constant attention from you. As I said at the beginning, there is no “big red button” to push. There isn’t a magic pill to swallow to get your site traffic that will make you money. It takes work and dedication, the same as any successful business.

The bottom line is you can do this, you know you can. Success can be yours. As Thomas Edison once said, “Many of life’s failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.”

Failure only happens when you quit and with this guide, there will be no reason to quit.

- Jerry West