



## No one can find my site, what do I do?

### Search Engines 101 - Part #1

by Alli Denning

Sorry, there is no quick fix to this problem. And, with over 90% of all Internet traffic guided by the search engines, the problem is one that requires the attention of any web site owner. While there are no guarantees (unless you want to pay per click for them) and no short cuts, there are tactics you can use to optimize your site's chances in the organic search results in the major search engines. What comes as a surprise to most people is that the single most important factor in a site's search engine rankings is the site itself. Let me put that another way: the way a site is constructed and the contents of a site are more important to a site's placement in the search engines than anything else.

However, before making changes to the site to target specific keyword phrases, it is critical to know which phrases deserve the attention. By researching the way in which people search for products or services like those of the site, you are able to maximize your search engine optimization efforts. A useful (and free) tool for researching keywords is the Search Term Suggestion Tool on the Overture.com site. It allows you to type in one word and returns the top phrases used by actual searchers that include that word. Once you know what phrases are used by searchers, you can set about incorporating those phrases into your site in the ways described below.

What makes a site attractive to the search engines? Well, they use unbelievably complex software programs that weigh a long list of factors in coming up with which sites rank above and below others. But, if you could only address two components of your site, **tackle content and page titles**.

#### Content is King

Content is king when it comes to search engines. The search engine spiders that crawl the web gathering information on sites cannot see the neat images you just paid a designer so much to come up with - they mean nothing. And, if they are there at the expense of good, quality content, so much the worse. Let me give you an example, Google, the most important of the search engines for you the site owner, likes sites with between 410 and 572 words in the body text of a site's pages. How many words are on your home page? Does that text include targeted keyword phrases - the sorts of phrases that searchers for a business or service like yours would be likely to use? If not, that is the best place to start. Don't stop of your home page either; go page by page through your site and ask yourself: what other information would be helpful to my users? what else can I say about our products, services, industry that would be important to potential customers? All that content will boost your rankings while having the added benefit of increasing your site's usefulness to visitors.

#### Make Those Page Titles Work for You

As important as content are your site's page titles, not just for your home page, but for each and every page within your web site. The title tag or page title of a given page is what you see across the top left-hand of your browser window when you visit the site. You want to start the title tag with your most important keyword phrase, following it up with your business name. Keep in mind also that your page title is often used to list your site in search results - having no page title or one that is uninformative will not drive the searcher to click on your link when other, more descriptive options are available. Not addressing this aspect of site development is leaving a lot of unrealized opportunity on the table.

This article cannot possibly cover all the aspects of optimizing a site for the search engines, but knowing what matters and beginning to address those components of your site is a good place to start. Having your site in good, search engine-friendly condition prior to submission is the best thing you can do. Any time spent developing meaningful content for your site will come back to you many-fold in better rankings (and more satisfied users).

**Coming Next:** Part #2 will address the spiderability of your web site, why it is so important and what you can do to improve it.  
© 2006 denning e-solutions, LLC. All Rights Reserved.