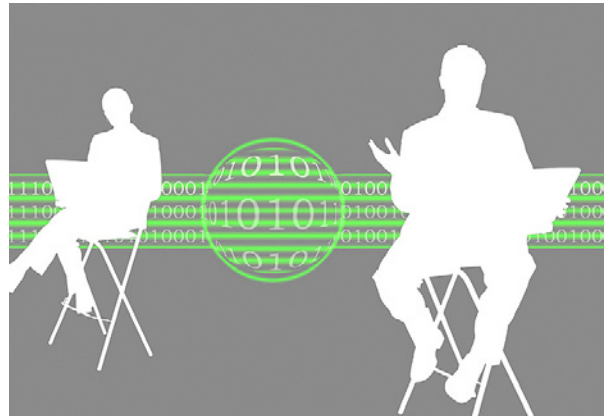


## How do you ensure that your website is delivering the desired message to your prospects and clients?

“What do you do to maximize the potential for search engines to rank your website higher? What should you include in your site’s content to ensure that it is found by people searching for your products and services?”

Content is different than design or programming and is crucial to how successful your website can become. Someone who builds a website does not necessarily know how to make it search engine friendly or maximize your ability to get ‘hits’. Taking the time to pay attention to your content can drastically improve your ability to connect with prospects through the web. After all, it is probably your only location that is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Here are some Search Engine Optimization (SEO) tips to help you incorporate into your website. (Not in order of priority).

1. Determine what keywords and phrases your prospects would use to search, locate, and shop for your products and services. These would be the words and phrases that someone would type into a search engine when looking for a solution your product/service could provide. Remember to think in terms of your prospect and how they would ask or search for something. Typically phrases of two to four words are better than single keywords.
2. Conduct research on keywords and phrases. You can purchase such tools as Wordtracker, Keyword Discovery, Overture Keyword Selector ([inventory.overture.com](http://inventory.overture.com)), Yahoo Keyword Selector/Bid tools ([searchmarketing.yahoo.com/rc/srch](http://searchmarketing.yahoo.com/rc/srch)) and Google™ Analytics and Keyword traffic estimator (the latter three obviously have the most value for people using those sites to conduct their searches). If you don’t want to spend your time trying to become an expert, you can also hire a search firm to do this for you. This is typically an additional cost when updating or building your website. Bevelwise can do this as part of developing your site or more extensively, you can use a company that specializes in SEO like Lizard Direct ([www.lizarddirect.com](http://www.lizarddirect.com)) but when using a specialist, be prepared to invest some in taking your website to the next level of functionality and success.
3. Have separate pages for each product and/or service you offer. You would then optimize each page with specific keywords and phrases related to that product or service. You would want to not only put these into the coding of page meta-tags but also in the content on the viewable page. Make sure that these phrases and keywords fit grammatically into your copy for that particular page. Along with this point, optimize each page you have individually. Search engines will display results to the pages best matching the search. So think in terms of each page and not your entire site for maximum effectiveness.
4. Avoid keyword or phrase overload. While it is true the search engines will rank you naturally (or organically) somewhat on how many ‘matches’ your site has to a search request, you don’t want your copy to sound awkward because you have tried to cram it with keywords. Make sure you also read what you have written aloud to make sure it sounds good and delivers the right message. Make the copy as natural and conversational as possible. Your audience is still a human, not a search algorithm.



5. Add key value and benefit statements near your key words or phrases. When search engines displays results, they show the link and then a summary of your page content with the keyword or phrase with it. That means your key benefits, value propositions, and ROI-type statements will also appear with their matched keyword or phrase and help persuade more of the search viewers to click through to the website.
6. What information is needed to take the next step in the buying/sales cycle? If you do not provide the information that would be beneficial to the prospect or viewer in helping them to determine if this is the correct product or service for them, and provide them with enough information to boost their curiosity into knowing more, you will restrict how many leads or sales your website can and will generate. If you are not providing them with the information you know it generally takes to turn prospects into leads and leads into sales, then you cannot expect them to respond to your website with maximum effectiveness.
7. Use Meta-tags. These are your keywords and phrases again, but this time embedded into the actual HTML code used to help create each web page (notice this is not web 'site', but each web 'page'). For SEO, the most important meta-tags are the title, description, and keywords associated with each web page. These tags are displayed for Internet surfers when your site is listed in search engines and can help those people choose whether or not to visit your site. The 'title' is what people see at the top of their browser window at your site. These should be no more than 50-75 characters in length. The 'description' is the opening piece of text that people see when your site appears in search engine findings. This should be clear and concise and tell the viewer what is your product/service and what it does for them. This is a descriptive sentence. Length here should not exceed 255 characters. 'Keywords' are the ideal words and phrases that Internet users search most often when looking for your product or service. We already talked about placing them in your copy, this is in addition to that. Again, limit these to about twenty-five keywords (or 255 characters) in each web page meta-tag. Also, do not repeat words and maybe include some common misspellings or alternate spellings. Keep these updated and change them with market trends and new developments in order to ensure best results.
8. Keep Landing pages and home pages simple, easy to navigate, and with little or no scrolling on the browser. You need to help people find what they are looking for. Your landing or home page needs to attract them visual and with effective messaging. You only have one chance to make a first impression with these people and your website can often be your one chance to move them further in the sales cycle. You have about 10 seconds to capture their attention. It is also true that with each 'click' someone has to make to get to information or fill out a form (which is probably your objective), you will have a certain percentage that will 'drop out' or not make the next click. With forms, make it simple and gather only the necessary information to follow up with them, you can get their details later. Long copy pages also rank lower with search engines. Single-page sites also rank lower, so make sure all your information is logically linked together.
9. Your copy does not have to be 'perfect' - and change it often. There are Content Management Systems (CMS) available that allow you to make changes to your copy on demand and without needing to be a programmer. They can be as easy as typing a document in Microsoft Word. Make sure you choose one that you will OWN with your site and that can match your unique design versus having to select from their 'templates'. Keep in mind that your web copy is different than a marketing piece. It takes the place of a salesperson so it had better be likable, effective, and convincing. Along those lines, make it conversational and don't be afraid to use words that are not grammatically correct (like ain't), especially if they will get them from your salespeople anyway. This is your brand to them so make sure it conveys the right image and message to the reader. When you change your copy, a search engine needs to re-index your page in order to make sure it is returning the searcher the best and most accurate results. Updating content often will help your site's rank on those results a bit.

10. Great copy is full of emotion, convincing to the audience, and its message is clear. This is probably the most subjective point because everyone has an opinion on copy. If you create the curiosity, but then don't answer the questions, they will continue searching for those answers because chances are someone will provide them with those answers immediately. The Internet is all about instantaneous gratification. Emotion is what sales people play on. You want the visitor to your site wanting to know more with every sentence. You want to be clear because you want them to get your message loud and clear without having to 'think' about it to understand it. Finally, is it convincing? You want them to take action after reading it, whether that is to buy something or request more information. Getting them to take action is the key to maximizing your website's effectiveness.

**For more information regarding these principles and how to integrate them into your everyday use, please contact Bevelwise today.**