

Insightful Copywriting Extends Internet Reach

Every communications piece is an opportunity to exponentially extend the reach of your message across the Internet. Here are just a few examples: bylined articles published in print magazines that also appear in online versions, white papers published to vertically oriented syndication networks like ITPapers.com and LightReading.com, and news releases that find their way to industry websites. All of these present opportunities to increase your company's search engine results position (SERP). The key is to incorporate SE optimization (SEO) techniques when the piece is being written.

1 The old rules. Remember when writing was simply pounding out key messages into a compelling story that would resonate with the target audience while remaining on brand? Now that every piece of content has the potential to be published online and 'read' by SE spiders, marketing professionals need to ensure that SEO techniques have been incorporated in all content approved for publication.

The Web rules. Today, writers should give you more than just the copy. Writers should identify the relevant keywords/phrases that will generate a high SERP via organic (unpaid) searches by your target audiences. These words should be sprinkled throughout the communications piece.

Insight into SEO techniques will exponentially extend the reach of your communications piece each time it's published on the Internet. At a time of their choosing, SEs send spiders (also called bots) to visit web sites to index them.

The spiders read titles, descriptions, and text on millions and millions of pages. They are programmed via algorithms to read and think like people. Left to right. Top to bottom. They think the most important data is at the top. They think mark up elements like and <bold> mean the word or phrase is important. They enjoy indexing SEO-friendly pages and abort un-SEO-friendly pages. How?

Word density. Think about the words your target audience would input into their SE browser to find relevant content. Ensure your content includes these words.

Spiders are programmed to believe the most important information is located at the top of a page. That's where keywords should be most dense. It's good practice to ensure keywords are sprinkled in the middle and at the end of the page as well.

Use bold or strong. SE spiders think bold or strong words are important and they tag them. Use either bold or strong to mark important words on your page.

Will this piece be a new page for your website? Each page should have a title. Determine the main topic of the page and use it as the title.

About the Author

Irene Crosby, Founder and Principal of Target Insight, is an accomplished marketing communications consultant located in Ottawa, Ontario. Services include marketing communications strategy development; hands-on implementation of marketing communications activities; website planning and project management; and copywriting. Irene works with CEOs, VPs, and marketing managers to develop and executive communications plans that resonate with target audiences, engage customers, and drive business. Her 20 years of experience span high tech, life sciences, education, health care, insurance, financial services, and the public sector. Irene is adept at managing projects and keeping clients up-to-date every step of the way—no surprises. *You and your customers deserve insightful communications.*

Each page should have a description. If you use the same metatag across all pages, the spider will pick up on this and potentially ignore the content of the meta tag or possibly the entire page, so write a unique description for each page.

HINT! Are you writing a news release? Within the first or second paragraph, be sure to include a hotlink to a relevant page on your website. While this strategy won't increase your SERP, it will increase the chance that your target prospect clicks through to your website!

Here's some additional insight into current SEO practices to ensure SE-friendly copy.

- If your website uses an image map rather than a text-based menu as the primary navigational method, place a redundant text-only menu elsewhere on the page to give spiders additional information about the content of each target page.
- Spiders can't read image, movie and audio files. Giving textual descriptions to these files allows spiders to better interpret and rank the content that they cannot hear.
- Many spiders have timeouts or maximum character counts. If they have to wade through too much javascript, they'll abandon their indexing and move on to another site. Avoid making your pages top heavy with too much code between the <head> tags.
- Your site should have a file called robots.txt. This file tells the spiders what directories they should not spider. Make sure this file is present and that it gives the appropriate permissions to the spiders. Everything not explicitly disallowed is considered fair game.

Initiate a reciprocal linking program to increase link popularity. Theme is important. Spiders can't be fooled – don't use link farms.

WHAT TO OPTIMIZE?

Spiders index HTML, PDFs, Microsoft Word files, etc., so optimize everything.

STAY ON TOP OF THIS TOPIC

SEO techniques are constantly in flux. The best way to stay on top of this topic is to add an SEO newsletter to your regular reading. Here are 3 sites that offer enewsletters. You should also make sure your writers are familiar with SEO practices.

- Web Digest for Marketers at <http://www.wdfm.com/>
- eMarketer at <http://www.emarketer.com/>
- SEO Chat eNews at <http://www.developershed.com/newsletter.php>

DEFINITIONS—

SEO (search engine optimization) – Enhancing the architecture of an electronic page and/or website to be “seen” by automated SEs that use algorithms to determine relevance based on search queries.

SERP (search engine results position) – It's important to have your site rank in the first 10 SERPs (page 1) for searches on specific keywords/phrases.

Organic search – A page from your web site appears in the SERP when a person inputs your chosen keywords/phrases into an SE.

Paid search – Pay to have your ad appear when a person inputs your chosen keywords/phrases into SE. An example is Google AdWords.

CHECKLIST

Please visit my website, www.targetinsight.ca, to get “Checklist | Insightful Copywriting Extends Internet Reach.”

Learn More

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