

On Page Optimization Tasks



List of Enhancement Tasks for Existing Pages of a Website

In the here and now (May 2007) traditional search engine optimization is rather limited on actual optimization tasks. We generally denote these practices as On-page Optimization which constitutes most any enhancement task completed on the current pages of a website domain being optimized.

For the sake of argument you don't need to optimize anything today to rank better. As a matter-of-fact you don't even need to look or review the website to be able to rank significantly better than before or even #1 for your most competitive term.

This post and the subsequent ones that will follow are a complete end-to-end optimization strategy to rank #1 in three (3) months or less.

But before we get to "what works" let's briefly cover those things that are an absolutely a waste of your efforts since they add absolutely zero enhancement value to better ranks in any search engine.

What Doesn't Help in any Meaningful Way

Meta Tags

Meta Tags allowed authors to specify machine-readable metadata about their HTML documents and other network-accessible resources. At one time search engines used this machine-readable metadata to aid in categorizing and organizing web pages of similar topics. This then became one of the SEO optimization tasks -- to ensure a client's web site pages each provided a set of Meta Tags that enhanced the chances of its client to be organized higher in the search engine's categorization processes.

Meta Description

<META HTTP-EQUIV="Description" CONTENT="Your page description here.">

At one time Meta Description had some empirical value for ranking in search engines. Today this is token optimization. Even when considering the most obscure search phrases that do offer viable visitation from potential customers a Meta Description will no more aid you to a better ranked position than blowing with the wind (in a sail boat) and accepting that your effort actually had some impact to increasing your sailboat's speed – it doesn't... nor does Meta Description.

In a controlled environment I'm sure that someone can show an impact does occur but in practical application it is merely wishful thinking. It's important to realize that the information contained in the Meta Description is used by

search engines as contextual information for the page but is not used as ranking criteria in any meaningful capacity.

Others argue that while Meta Description does not aid to better ranks it does allow you to control what search engines display as a description for your web pages and an appealing description is better for producing clicks.

However, it's only effective when the term being searched for is included in your Meta Description. This then is a major concern since most web pages rank well for a volume of different terms. While your Meta Description may target the most often used terms it is a fact that terms generally considered much longer and more obscure are often far more likely to produce a sale.

Therefore the benefits of more appealing descriptions tend to go to those searchers that are far less likely to desire anything specific from you and at the expense of those searchers that desire the most from you.

Using this article as an example of a page a Meta Description (if used) might be "List of on page optimization techniques. Features practice guidance of do and don't tips for better ranks."

This page could however rank for the terms of **Meta Tags** or **Meta Description** yet because the Meta Description doesn't contain these terms the page content itself is snippet in these instances.

Without any understanding of how the search engine snippet page content or how to actually make these snippets more appealing over 55% of all search engine users that receive a description for this page (and page) will receive "un-optimized content".

How then can one truly call themselves an optimizer "if" they are suck on the premise of using Meta Description as part of their repertoire so they don't need to optimize page content?

Meta Keyword

<META HTTP-EQUIV="Keywords" CONTENT="Your page related keywords here.">

Meta Keyword is worthless to ranking enhancement and has been for quite some time. While some optimizers suggest adding Meta Keyword so you can easily track your targeted phrases this again is pointless as 55% of all traffic to a web site is based on queries that are 4- or 5-word phrases or more.

Statistically speaking it is a common occurrence that a 100-page, content rich website will rank easily for 10,000 separate phrases or an approximate 100 different phrases per page. The fact that phrase for phrase the longer the phrase in words the better or easier the sale potential is suggests that no one is really interested in keeping track of targeted phrases.

Meta Robots

`<META name="Robots" content="index, follow">`

Meta Robots are categorically not needed on a web page unless that page is not to be included in search engines or the author does not wish search engines to follow the links on the page.

The common uses of index, follow, or all are deprecated since search engines do that anyway.

Meta Revisit-After

`<META name="Revisit-After" content="X Days">`

Meta Revisit has deprecated.

While a vast assortment of other Meta Tags exists the previously mentioned ones were historically the only ones that were used for "optimizing" a web page.

Today, there is absolutely no optimizing value in any Meta Tag.

Alt Text

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Optimizing image Alternative Text - Alt="related keywords" was a worthwhile effort at one time. While there is still optimization value for navigational links that use images rather than text links, the inherent "enhancement" associated with Alternative Text optimization is pretty much worthless for better ranks.

It is worth mentioning that the appeal of image link can still be available with text links using CSS controlled mouseovers – thus there is really no good reason to use image links (this is also true for display ads).

Comment Tags

`<!-- Keywords here -->`

Comment Tags at one time did have some influence in ranks and may (like Meta Description) in a semi-controlled environment show as a ranking value but in practical application there is no value for any meaningful traffic oriented results. Search engines will often use comment tags for relevant contextual information of a page but seem does not suggest any value for ranking criteria in any meaningful way.

Keyword Density

Many people waste vast quantities of time measuring the density of the keyphrase (e.g. Keyword Density) being ranked on a specific page. Some even say a certain percent of keyword repetitiveness is invaluable to ranking better and once you reach that percentage any additional use of the phrase "decreases ranks"... I really like someone to actually show me the empirical evidence for this one.

Keyword Density offers no inherent value to better ranks beyond the common use of text on a page (on all pages).

It's worth mention that the use of hidden text (e.g. commonly denoted as text that is the same color as the background color of the page adds no value to ranking a page. Regardless of the inherently "shady trick" being deployed the practice is based on the assumption that higher keyword density means higher ranks. Since no one can categorically prove that any percentage of repeated text is better than any other percentage of repeated text the need to "hide" because you don't wish visitors to see something that has no value to them, because there is no value to be bettered ranked in any search engine - what's the point of use?

Title Attribute

The title attribute title="terms here" I actually like to use but it has no ranking enhancement value what-so-ever. The pop-up tool tip is more for demonstrating (an example only) what can be found on the next page if used in the link to that page.

Bold or Strong

While there is some empirical evidence that supports the use of **bold** or **strong** inherently that value amount is minimal.

I professionally use the following criteria to determine "if" I will use a specific technique in the capacity of optimizing a web page...

"If it can make a difference in the top 30 results positions of at least 100 potential returns then it is worthy of being an optimization technique."

"If you need to create results where there is none so you can determine any value what-so-ever the technique is worthless for practical application in optimization."

Sometime ever little bit "hurts" more than it helps.