

The Candid
Guide to SEO

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Search Engine
Optimisation

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What is SEO?

SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) is the activity of making sure that your website ranks highly in Search Engine results. The world-wide web is awash with millions of voices crying out to be heard, so how does a website make sure it's noticed? By using SEO to make sure it's voice is heard first.

If you were searching for a piano tuner on Google, it's very rare that you'll trawl through all the search results of the first page, let alone the many pages after that. Being listed in the first few results is crucial: people want answers and they want it fast.

A website that has the status to be within the first few results also encourages a sense of trust and significance to users and the fact of the matter is that a lot of money is now made online – whether as a direct transaction or from sales away from the online world that have been directed by search results. Ranking highly means a lot more than just being in the number one spot – it really can boost your business and your online profile to create significant improvements in revenue.

How do Search Engines work?

So, what is this enigmatic secret that can make such a huge difference? Returning to our piano tuner, if we imagine that they've finally hit the top spot, the question we need to ask is: how did they do it?

Well, firstly we need to understand a little bit about how the world-wide web works. You have to realize that every page in cyberspace that has ever been created is held together by links. Whether it's a link to a completely different website or to another page in your own site, links are the paths between everything available in the online world. If this is the case, then how do Search Engines work? Search Engines use these links, by crawling along each path and storing information they find. Once that information about a particular page has been indexed or filed, Search Engines can pull up results within a split-second. And not only that, they pull up results in a particular order especially for the user.

How do users experience Search Engines?

It's crucial to understand how users experience Search Engines in order to effectively realize why SEO is fundamental to marketing a website. Most searches start off with a query, a desire to know the answer: Where can I find a piano tuner to make my piano sound alright?

From there the user will manifest that query into a set of words or a phrase to use in a Search Engine: Piano tuners in Derby. Once the Search Engine has provided a result in less than a second, the user will browse through the results for a website that they feel matches their query. Once they've found a satisfying result, they will click on it. Having gone onto the website, they would scan for an answer or a link on the page that will provide that answer. If that page has been fruitless, the user tends to return to the Search Engines

results page again to find another result or try using different keywords to narrow down their search. Understanding this basic experience is one of the most valuable lessons, not only in SEO work but also, in any online endeavour. The user is the key and how your website ranks within a Search Engine result is completely down to the user and your audience.

How does SEO work?

The key to SEO and how it works is to understand what affects the way that Search Engines order their listings. After all, we know that the mass of information that Search Engines retrieve have to be shown in some orderly fashion: so how do Search Engines decide what's number one?

The whole point of a Search Engine is to provide answers and this depends on two things: how relevant a result is to your search and how important it is amongst the million voices waiting to be heard.

Major search engines tend to understand importance through ranking factors, and these are decided by a set of rules or algorithms that revolve around how convenient that page is for the user. Amongst these ranking factors are elements such as:

- How many other sites link to yours (which denominates popularity and trustworthiness)
- Whether your site includes keywords that the user might be looking for
- Looking at pages that are limited to a reasonable size
- Sites with a clear layout where every single page is accessible from at least one link

The user is at the heart of the search engine experience and, while clever little tips and tricks can up your ranking, the main factor that affects how a search engine will index your website is how easy and convenient your website is for the user to find it and use it.

Why use SEO?

According to www.statistics.gov.uk, 30.1 million adults in the UK access the Internet nearly everyday. Of the top 20 websites visited by these 30.1 million adults in the UK, 25% were Search Engines (www.hitwise.com, data from the week ending 6th November 2010).

A case study: Ken Savage was a search engine marketer that found out he had Type 2 diabetes one day, so he decided to blog about it. Diabetes is a pretty huge subject and yet, by using SEO techniques, Ken has come to attract a massive 7000 to 9000 page views a day by making his little blog noticeable amongst all the information available about the widespread illness. [Read more about it by clicking here.](#)

Search Engines are used by a huge proportion of people every second to find the answer they want. So how are you going to make sure that they find you, that you're amassing the wealth of this potential audience? By using SEO of course and using it to your advantage to make your voice loud enough to be heard over the racket.