

# Creating a Search-Friendly Web Site

## How to Improve Your Web Site's Ranking Without Destroying its Credibility

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Here's a scenario that illustrates a painful marketing growth curve.

In 1998, a company creates its first website. Visitors who discover the site find good information in well-written, informative copy.

The years go by and the site evolves into a core part of the company's marketing arsenal. A new marketing manager arrives armed with spreadsheets full of keyword research data. It shows that 639 people searched for "factory automation software" on Yahoo last month, but didn't find this company's website. This company's website uses its products' names to build product recognition, instead of "factory automation software." The spreadsheets include dozens of other obscure phrases and words that would be difficult to include in a well-written paragraph. But some people use these phrases and words when web surfing.

So the marketing manager re-writes the copy. What was once a well-structured, compelling and informative marketing tool, now reads like a thesaurus full of awkward keyword phrases that do nothing to enhance the selling proposition. But, according to the manager, it will "rank well on search engines."

No one wins. Not the company nor the visitors to what was once a compelling and informative website.

This is not a black and white problem with a black and white answer. But there is a middle ground. It's not necessary to sacrifice good brand management and copy quality to gain web traffic.

- A good writer using simple SEO best practices can produce good copy that indexes well with search engines.
- Search engine criteria changes everyday ... repeat: **everyday**. While some large companies can afford to spend a lot of money constantly changing their sites to keep up with revised search engine criteria, most can't and shouldn't try.

Here are some tips that should help you to maintain an informative site that helps promote a positive, professional image for your company while maintaining a reasonable place on search engine lists.

1. Know what search terms potential customers use to find your site. Know the frequency of those search phrases on your site and on competing sites that are part of the search results. This is the first step in building a well-thought out keyword strategy.
2. It may appear that there are many attractive phrases that would improve your site's search engine optimization. Pare the list down. You'll get best results if you target one or two keyword phrases per page. Reduce keyword clutter by combining phrasing when possible.

3. Search engines are affected by links to your page. Links are good. If you have any control over links that point to your site (through directory listings, channel partners, customers, etc.), craft link text that integrates your chosen keywords. Keep in mind that search engines look at the words in the links pointing to your site. If the relevancy of your page is driven by the link text of the pages pointing to it, you can worry less about using those keywords in the body copy of the page, giving you more creative and effective options.
4. Use a colon to separate your company name and the main keyword in your page title and description. This ensures that keywords have high prominence (closeness to the beginning of the text sentence.) For example, as a title use Acme: Distributor Lead Software and Lead Follow-up Assistance. However, don't use your name as lead for every page. Only use the company name where it makes sense. For other pages, the title and description should reflect the content of the page.
5. Not every page of a site needs to be rigorously optimized. Get a clear understanding of where you can get the best benefit. The most-visited pages should have the best copy that builds a great experience and sells your company's image and brand.

### **Find the Right Partners**

Finding people who can deliver great copy is a challenge. Finding people who can deliver great copy and great search-friendly copy is difficult because it requires the use of both right side and left side brain cells.

Integrated communication agencies like B&M have "those people." In fact, at B&M our business is almost equally divided between IT and marketing, with projects frequently crossing over between the two disciplines. Our IT and marketing people actually get along with one another and many of us delve into the others' profession enough to not only understand it ... but to be proficient in it.

Ad agencies and PR firms that "also do web pages," often do not have "those people." In fact, IT people and creative people at those companies frequently sit on opposite sides of the table during client meetings. Although they claim to be a team, their body language, actions and results, prove otherwise.

B&M was one of the first marketing/public relations firms in the country to establish an IT unit. Much larger firms have copied our way of integrating disciplines. Smaller agencies simply "claim" to have copied us.

B&M was ahead of the electronic marketing curve from the onset and we work diligently to remain ahead of that curve today. If we didn't, we wouldn't have Fortune 500 companies rely on us for both IT services and marketing assistance ... often mixing the two across individual projects.

If you have web-related or IT challenges that impact your company's marketing or public relations efforts, contact B&M. We'll explain things in a manner that you'll understand, and we'll get results that you'll undoubtedly appreciate.



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