Ch-1 – the search Engines: Reflecting Consciousness & Connecting Commerce

Definition of SEO:

Search engine optimization (SEO) refers to techniques that help your website rank higher in organic (or "natural") search results, thus making your website more visible to people who are looking for your product or service via search engines.

SEO IN 2018

CONTENT & LINKS
Quality Content and the organic high-quality link will maintain the priority in Google's ranking signals.

RANKBRAIN & USER EXPERIENCE SIGNALS
RankBrain to give advantage to high Click through rate and Dwell time

VOICE SEARCH
With increasing mobile users and innovative Voice assistant devices, it is very important to make results voice search friendly along with exact keyword phrases.

VIDEO MARKETING
Videos will be the main focus of marketing that provides very high engagement and value to the users

MOBILE FIRST INDEX
It is already cleared by Google upcoming days are of mobile users and ranking will be focused on Mobile experience

⊕ www.tecocraft.com

The Mission of Search Engines:
➢ Since web searchers are free to use any of the many available search engines on the Web to find what they are seeking, the burden is on the search engines to develop a relevant, fast, and fresh search experience.

➢ As a result, search engines invest a tremendous amount of time, energy, and capital in improving their relevance.
➢ Search engines generate revenue primarily through paid advertising.
➢ The great majority of this revenue comes from a pay-per-click (or cost-per-click) model, in which the advertisers pay only for users who click on their ads.

➢ Each major search engine employs a team of people who focus solely on finding and eliminating spam from their search results.

➢ The main Goal of Search Engine is to "satisfies the searcher".

The Market Share of Search Engines.

Figure Below shows the US market share for search engines in July 2011, according to comScore. As you can see, Google is the dominant search engine on the Web in the United States.

Google market share review:

Google, Googler, Googlest
Global search engine market share in February 2017, by device type

Desktop

- 80.5% Google
- 6.9% Bing
- 5.9% Baidu
- 5.4% Yahoo
- 1.3% Other

Mobile/Tablet

- 95.9% Google
- 1.9% Yahoo
- 0.9% Bing
- 0.4% Baidu
- 0.9% Other

Console

- 99.4% Google
- 0.3% Yahoo
- 0.1% Bing
- 0.1% Other

@StatistaCharts   Source: Net Market Share

statista
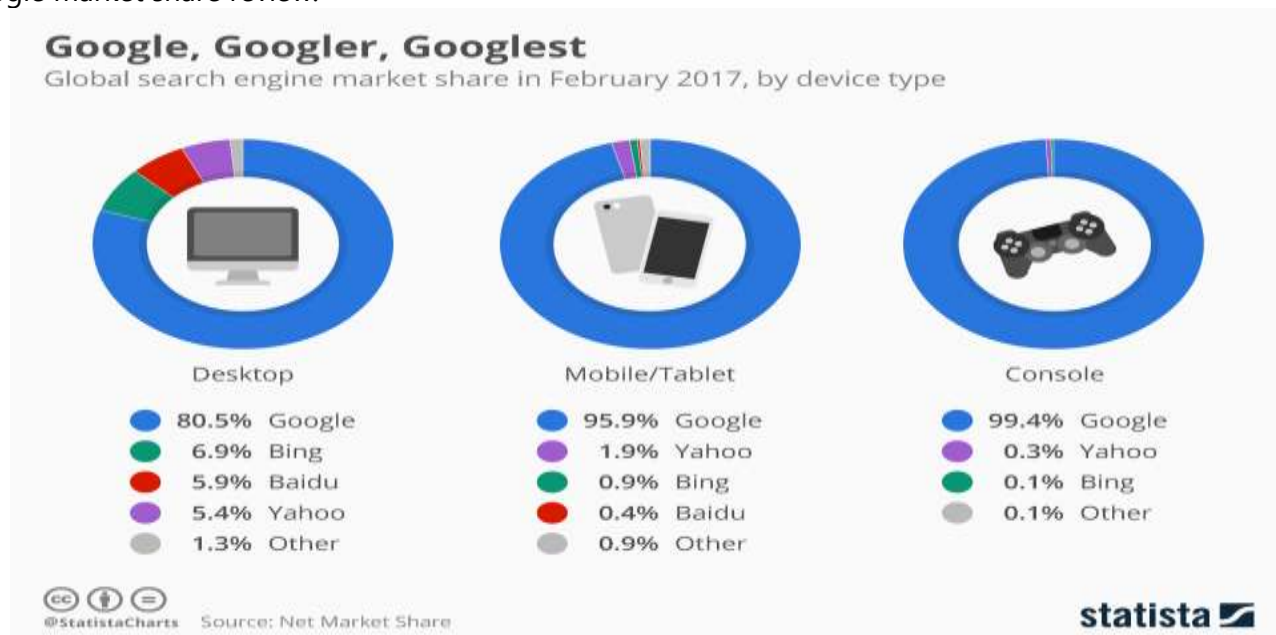
Search engine market share (APRIL 2019)

Top 5 Search Engines Worldwide

| 76% | 15% | 4% | 2% | 0.6% |
| Google | Baidu | Bing | Yahoo! | Yandex |
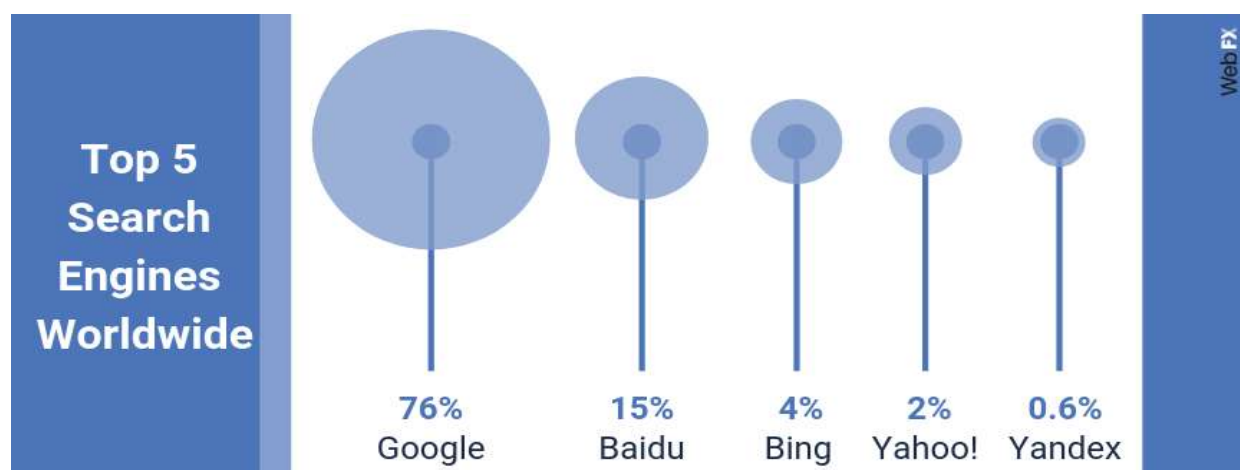
Get a breakdown of the top 10 search engines worldwide:

Search Engine	Global Market Share
1. Google	76%
2. Baidu	15%
3. Bing	4%
4. Yahoo!	2%
5. Yandex	0.6%
6. Ask	0.2%
7. DuckDuckGo	0.1%
8. Naver	0.1%
9. AOL	0.04%
10. Dog pile	0.03%

The Human Goals of Searching.

The basic goal of a human searcher is to obtain information relevant to an inquiry.
However, searcher inquiries can take many different forms.
One of the most important elements to building an online marketing strategy for a website around SEO and search rankings is developing a thorough understanding of the psychology of your target audience.

Most search processes comprise the following steps:

1. Experience the need for an answer, solution, or piece of information. For example, the user may be looking for a website (navigational query) to buy something (transactional query) or to learn something (informational query). We will discuss this in more detail in the following section.
2. Formulate that need in a string of words and phrases (the query). Most people formulate their queries in one to three words. Table 1-1 gives a more detailed look at the percentages of searches per query length.
3. Execute the query, check the results, see whether you got what you wanted, and if not, and try a refined query.

➢ **Who Searches and What Do They Search For?**

   ComScore reported that the number of search queries performed worldwide on the Web was approximately 158 billion across all engines in August 2011.
• Google is the dominant player in most world markets.
• Users tend to use short search phrases, but these are gradually getting longer.
• Search covers all types of markets.

➢ **Determining Searcher Intent: A Challenge for Both Marketers
   And Search Engines.**
• Good marketers are empathetic. Smart SEO practitioners and the search engines have a common goal of providing searchers with results that are relevant to their queries.
• Therefore, a crucial element to building an online marketing strategy around SEO and search rankings understands your audience.
• Once you grasp how your target market searches for your service, product, or resource, you can more effectively reach and keep those users.
• Search engine marketers need to be aware that search engines are tools—resources driven by intent.
➢ **What follows is an examination of the different types of queries, their categories, characteristics, and processes.**

• **Navigational Queries:** Navigational searches are performed with the intent of surfing directly to a specific website. In some cases, the user may not know the exact URL.

- **Informational Queries**

Informational searches involve a huge range of queries—for example, local weather, maps and directions, details on the latest Hollywood awards ceremony, or just checking how long that trip to Mars really takes.

- Informational searches are primarily non-transaction-oriented

- **Transactional Queries**

Transactional searches don't necessarily involve a credit card or wire transfer. Signing up for a free trial account at CooksIllustrated.com , creating a Gmail account, paying a parking ticket or finding the best local Mexican restaurant for dinner tonight are all transactional queries.

- Note: more than 80% of searches are informational in nature, and only about 10% of searches are navigational or transactional.
- The researchers went further and developed an algorithm to automatically classify searches by query type. When they tested the algorithm, they found that it was able to correctly classify queries 74% of the time.

➢ **Adaptive Search.**
- The search engines also look at sequences of search queries to determine intent.
- This was confirmed in Eric Enge's interview with Jack Menzel, Product Management Director for Google Search
- Keeping track of users' previous search queries and taking them into account when determining which results to return for a new query—known as adaptive search.
- Adaptive search is intended to help the search engines get a better sense of a user's intent.

➢ **How People Search.**
- Search engines invest significant resources into understanding how people use search, enabling them to produce better (i.e., faster, fresher, and more relevant) search engine results.
- For website publishers, the information regarding how people use search can be used to help improve the usability of a site as well as search engine compatibility.
- Data from comScore provides some great insight into the types of things that people tend to search for.
- Table 1-4 shows a breakdown of many of the major categories that people's Internet searches fall into, based on comScore data for August 2011.
- Data from comScore provides some great insight into the types of things that people tend to.

➢ **How Search Engines Drive Commerce on the Web.**
- People make use of search engines for a wide variety of purposes, with some of the most popular being to research, locate, and buy products.
- Ecommerce sales reported by the US Census Bureau were a healthy $47.5 billion
- It is important to note that search and offline behavior have a heavy degree of interaction, with search playing a growing role in driving offline sales.
- A Google study from 2011 showed that each $1 of online ad spend drives anywhere from $4 to $15 in offline sales

- According to a March 2010 report from Forrester Research, over $155 billion worth of consumer goods were purchased online in the US in 2009. While that seems like a big number, the influence on offline sales was far greater.
- Local search is an increasingly important component of SEO, and one that we will explore in detail in next unit.

➢ **Eye Tracking: How Users Scan Results Pages.**
- This particular study perfectly illustrates how little attention is paid to results lower on the page versus those higher up, and how users' eyes are drawn to bold keywords, titles, and descriptions in the natural ("organic") results versus the paid search listings, which receive comparatively little attention.

- This research study also showed that different physical positioning of on-screen search results resulted in different user eye-tracking patterns.

- When viewing a standard Google results page, users tended to create an "F-shaped" pattern with their eye movements, focusing first and longest on the upper-left corner of the screen, then moving down vertically through the first two or three results, across the page to the first paid page result, down another few vertical results, and then across again to the second paid result.
- The other search engines followed suit within a few months, and the industry now refers to this general concept as Blended Search.

➢ **Click Tracking: How Users Click on Results, Natural versus Paid.**
- By now, you should be convinced that you want to be on the top of the SERPs. It never hurts to be #1 in the natural search results.
- SEO is part of the broader topic of Search Engine Marketing (SEM), a term used to describe all marketing strategies for search. SEM entails both organic and paid search.
- With paid search, you can pay to list your website on a search engine so that your website shows up when someone types in a specific keyword or phrase.

- Organic and paid listings both appear on the search engine, but they are displayed in different locations on the page.

- So, why is it important for your business" website to be listed on search engines? On Google alone, there are over 694,000 searches conducted every second.i Think about that.
- Every second that your website is not indexed on Google, you are potentially missing out on hundreds, if not thousands of opportunities for someone to visit your website, read your content, and potentially buy your product or service.
- In addition, the first 10 results received 89.71% of all click-through traffic; the next 10 results (normally listed on the second page of results) received 4.37%, the third page 2.42%, and the fifth page 1.07%. All other pages of results received less than 1% of total search traffic clicks.

CTR by SERP position
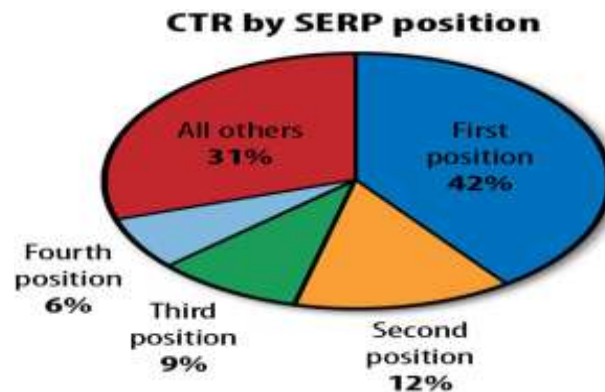
Here are some additional things to take away from the study:
• 85% of searchers click on natural results.
• The top four sponsored slots are equivalent in views to being ranked at 7–10 in natural search in terms of visibility and click-through.
• This means if you need to make a business case for natural search, assuming you can attain at least the #3 rank in natural search for the same keywords you bid on, natural search

- One can also expect that it will take time for searchers to fully understand what the Google+ Brand Page results are, and how they differ from the organic and paid results. Figure 1-15 shows an example of a Google result including Brand Pages.

Return on investment (ROI)
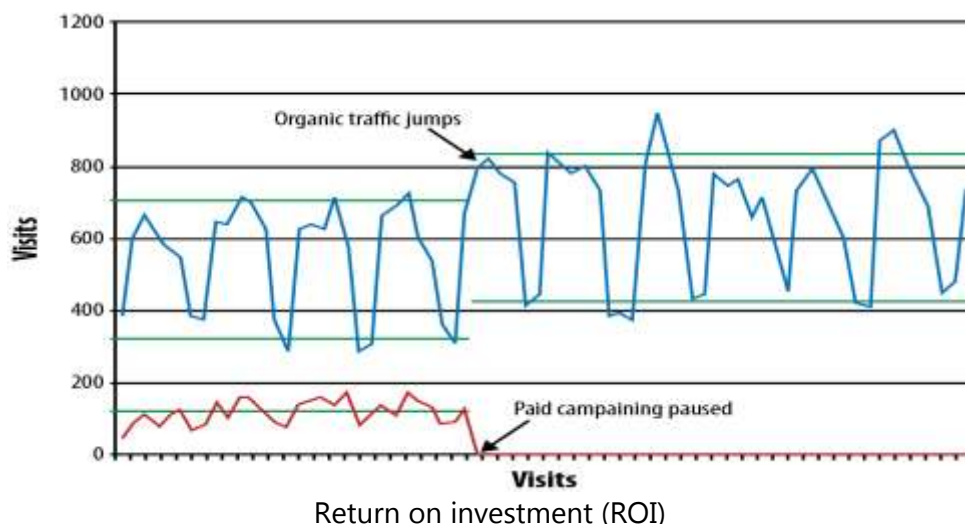
Ch – 2 Search Engine Basics

Understanding Search Engine Results.

In the search marketing field, the pages the engines return to fulfill a query are referred to as search engine results pages (SERPs). Each engine returns results in a slightly different format and will include vertical search results (specific content targeted to a query based on certain triggers in the query, which we'll illustrate shortly).

Understanding the Layout of Search Results Pages.

Each unique section represents a snippet of information provided by the engines. Here are the definitions of what each piece is meant to provide:

The various sections outlined in the Google search results are as follows:

1. Horizontal navigation (see top left)
2. Search query box
3. Results information
4. PPC advertising
5. Vertical navigation
6. Query refinement suggestions
7. Natural/organic/algorithmic results
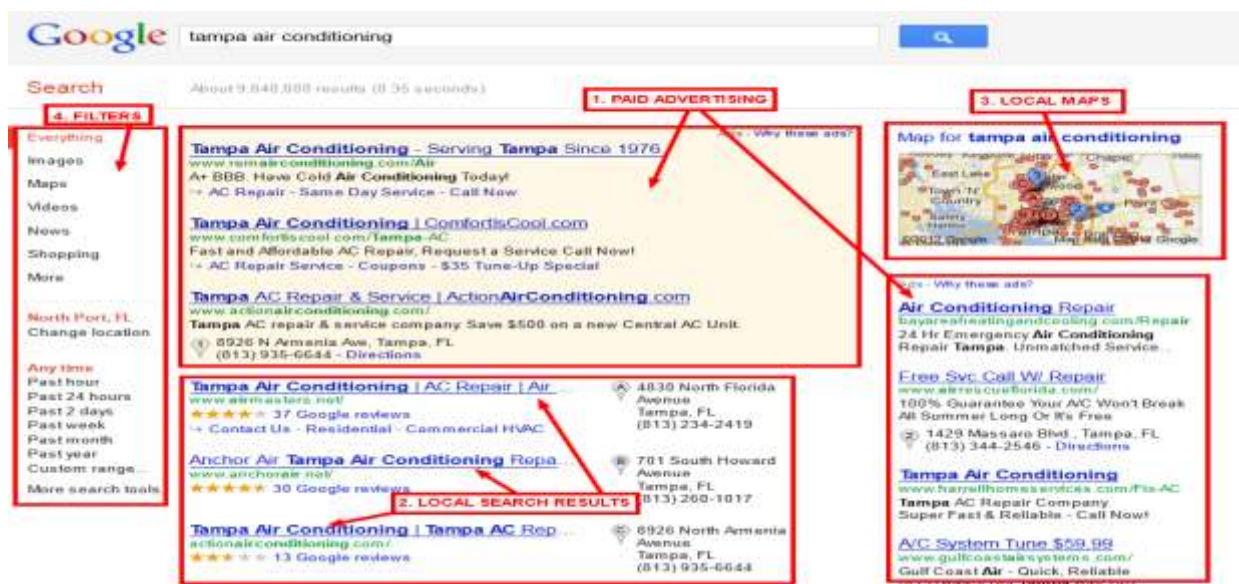
Vertical navigation

Each engine offers the option to search different verticals, such as images, news, video, or maps. Following these links will result in a query with a more limited index.

Horizontal navigation

The search engines also offer other types of navigation elements.

For example, in Figure 2-1 you can see that Google offers the option to limit the date range of the content returned in the search results.

Search query box

All of the engines show the query you've performed and allow you to edit that query or enter a new query from the search results page.

Next to the search query box, the engines also offer links to the advanced search page, the features of which we'll discuss later in the book.

Results information

This section provides a small amount of meta information about the results that you're viewing, including an estimate of the number of pages relevant to that particular query

PPC (a.k.a. paid search) advertising

Companies purchase text ads from either Google Ad Words or Microsoft ad Center. The results are ordered by a variety of factors, including relevance

Natural/organic/algorithmic results

These results are pulled from the search engines' primary indexes of the Web and ranked in order of relevance and popularity according to their complex algorithms.

Query refinement suggestions

Query refinements are offered by Google, Bing, and Yahoo!. The goal of these links is to let users search with a more specific and possibly more relevant query that will satisfy their intent.

In March 2009, Google enhanced the refinements by implementing Orion Technology, based on technology Google acquired in 2006. The goal of this enhancement is to provide a wider array of refinement choices.

Shopping search results

All three search engines do this as well. Shopping results incorporate offers from merchants into the results so that searchers that are looking to buy something can do so quite easily.

How Vertical Results Fit into the SERPs

These "standard" results, however, are certainly not all that the engines have to offer. For many types of queries, search engines show vertical results, or instant answers, and include more than just links to other sites to help answer a user's questions. These types of results present many additional challenges and opportunities for the SEO practitioner.

Figure below shows an example of these types of results. The query in Figure 2-4 brings back a business listing showing an address and the option to get directions to that address. This result attempts to provide the user with the answer he is seeking directly in the search results.

Figure shows another example. The Google search in Figure 2-5 for weather plus a city name returns a direct answer. Once again, the user may not even need to click on a website if all she wanted to know was the temperature.

FIGURE. Google search on an artist's name

Figure is an example of a search for a well-known painter. A Google search for Edward Hopper returns image results of some of his most memorable works

As you can see, the vast variety of vertical integration into search results means that for many popular queries, returning the standard set of 10 links to external pages is no longer the rule.

Engines are competing by attempting to provide more relevant results and more targeted responses to queries that they feel are best answered by vertical results, rather than web results.

Determining Searcher Intent and Delivering Relevant, Fresh Content
Analyzing Ranking Factors
Using Advanced Search Techniques
Vertical Search Engines
Country-Specific Search Engines
Conclusion

➢ **Algorithm-Based Ranking Systems:**
➢ **Crawling, Indexing, and Ranking Crawling -** is the process of fetching all the web pages linked to a web site. This task is performed by software, called a **crawler** or a **spider** (or Googlebot, as is the case with Google).

To offer the best possible results, search engines must attempt to discover all the public pages on the World Wide Web and then present the ones that best match up with the user's search query. The first step in this process is crawling the Web.

Indexing - is the process of creating index for all the fetched web pages and keeping them into a giant database from where it can later be retrieved. Essentially, the process of indexing is identifying the words and expressions that best describe the page and assigning the page to particular keywords.

Processing - When a search request comes, the search engine processes it. I.e. it compares the search string in the search request with the indexed pages in the database.

Calculating Relevancy - Since it is likely that more than one page contains the search string, so the search engine starts calculating the relevancy of each of the pages in its index to the search string.

Retrieving Results - The last step in search engines' activities is retrieving the best matched results. Basically, it is nothing more than simply displaying them in the browser.

Search engines such as Google and Yahoo! often update their relevancy algorithm dozens of times per month. When you see changes in your rankings it is due to an algorithmic shift or something else outside of your control.

Although the basic principle of operation of all search engines is the same, the minor differences between their relevancy algorithms lead to major changes in results relevancy.

The search engine will then load those other pages and analyze that content as well. This process repeats over and over again until the crawling process is complete. This process is an enormously complex one as the Web is a large and complex place.

Search engines do not attempt to crawl the entire Web every day. In fact, they may become aware of pages that they choose not to crawl because they are not likely to be important enough to return in a search result.

Once the engines have retrieved a page during a crawl, their next job is to parse the code from them and store selected pieces of the pages in massive arrays of hard drives.

The first step in this process is to build a dictionary of terms.

This is a massive database that catalogs all the significant terms on each page crawled by a search engine.

One key concept in building a search engine is deciding where to begin a crawl of the Web.

Although you could theoretically start from many different places on the Web, you would ideally begin your crawl with a trusted seed set of websites.

Aware of pages that they choose not to crawl because they are not likely to be important enough to return in a search result.

Rank

Rank is the position that your website physically falls in on the SERP when a specific search query is entered. If you are the first website in the organic section of the SERP (don''t be confused by the paid ads at the very top), then your rank is 1. If your website is in the second position, your rank is 2, and so on.

As discussed previously in How Search Engines Work, your rank is an indicator of how relevant and authoritative your website is in the eyes of the search engine, as it relates to the search query entered.
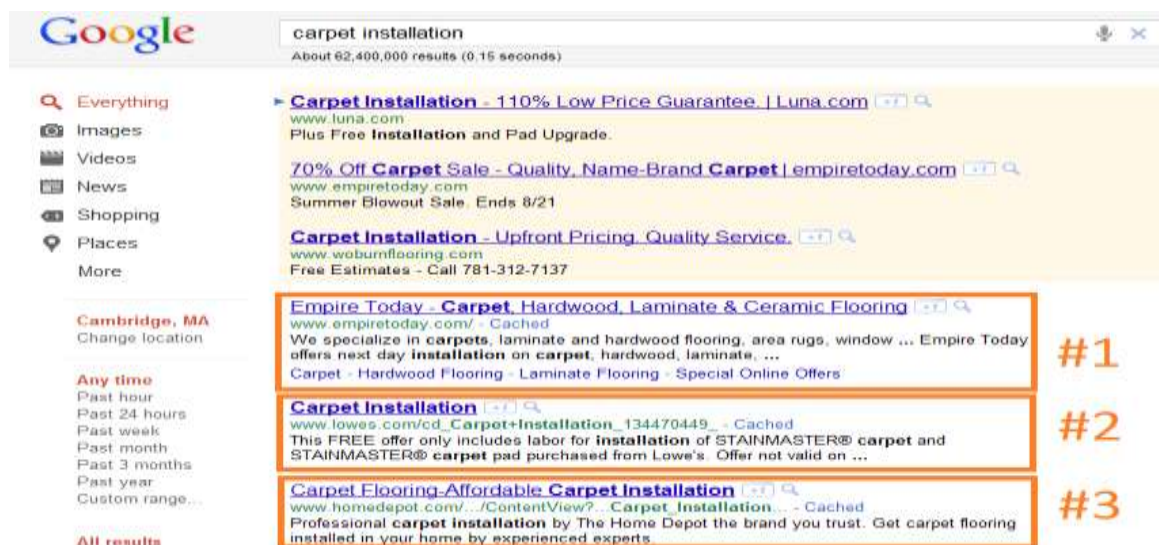
➢ **Relevance.**

Relevance is the degree to which the content of the documents returned in a search matches the intention and terms of the user's query.

The relevance of a document increases if the page contains terms relevant to the phrase queried by the user, or if links to the page come from relevant pages and use relevant anchor text.

➢ **Importance.**

Importance refers to the relative importance, measured via citation (the act of one work referencing another, as often occurs in academic and business documents), of a given document that matches the user's query. The importance of a given document increases with every other document that references it. In today's online environment, citations can come in the form of links to the document or references to it on social media sites. Determining how to weight these signals is known as citation analysis.

Evaluating Content on a Web Page

Search engine crawlers and indexing programs are basically software programs. These Programs are extraordinarily powerful. They crawl hundreds of billions of web pages, analyze the content of all these pages, and analyze the way all these pages link to each other. Then they organize this data into a series of databases that enable them to respond to a user search query with a highly tuned set of results in a few tenths of a second.

This is an amazing accomplishment, but it has its limitations. Software is very mechanical; andit can understand only portions of most web pages. The search engine crawler analyzes the raw HTML form of a web page. If you want to see what this looks like, you can do so by using your browser to view the page source. Shows how to do that in Firefox (Tools Web Developer Page Source), and shows how to do it in Internet Explorer (Page View Source).

URL Structure

The actual structure of your website URL can have an impact on the search engines" ability to index and understand your websites content. Opting for a more organized URL structure will have the greatest impact. Some website creation software will insert arbitrary numbers and code in the URL. Although this may be optimal for the software, it serves no other purpose. If you can edit the URL to include the title of your webpage, you should do so. In fact, some website creation software, like Hub Spot, will automatically create URLs based off of your webpage content in order to eliminate this issue.

Pictures

There is nothing worse than landing on a webpage and being faced with mountains of text. Not only are pictures a great way to break up sections of text, but they also serve as an opportunity to communicate with the search engines. Because search engines cannot tell what a picture is by scanning it, they look for clues in two places.

Alt tags

Title Tags & Meta Tags:

Besides an actual text headline on your page, every webpage you create has a title tag. This is the text snippet that appears in the upper left corner or on the tabs of your web browser. Also, the title tag is the blue link that the search engines show when they list your webpage on the SERP. Title tags max out at 75 characters, so choose your words wisely.

Meta tags are snippets of code you can include within your webpage's HTML. The Meta tags are usually located near the title tag code in the head of your HTML. There are two Meta tags – Meta description and Meta keywords.

The Meta description is a text snippet that describes what your specific webpage is about. Meta descriptions are usually the first place a search engine will look to find text to put under your blue link when they list your website on the SERP. If you do not have a Meta description, the search engines will usually select a random piece of content from the page they are linking to.

The Meta description is limited to 150 characters.

Now, most search engines claim they do not even use meta keywords when indexing content. Some small or niche search engines may still use it though. As a best practice, it is recommended to put 5-7 keywords in the meta keywords, but don"t spend too much time thinking about it.

Headline Tags

When the search engine bots scan your webpages, they look for clues to determine exactly what your webpage is about. Keywords that are treated differently than most others on the page show the search

engines that they are more important than other keywords on the page. This is why the use of **headline tags** within your page is so important.

```
<div id="tagline">
        <h1>Inbound Internet Marketing Blog</h1>
        <h2>SEO, Blogging, Social Media, Landing Pages, Lead Generation and Analytics</h2>
</div>
```

Internal Linking

Up until this point we have only referenced inbound links, or those links coming to you website from other websites. When creating content for your website on your blog or on specific webpages, you may want to reference other pages on your website.

6 Ways to Become an Industry Thought Leader

1. Maintain an Active Business Blog Launching a blog that covers important topics relating to the industry in which you're selling is perhaps the best way to establish and uphold your image as a thought leader. A well-written blog will make prospects and current customers confident that the products and services they buy from you are created using industry expertise. Not only will maintaining an active business blog reward you with a more credible industry presence, but when done right, it will also afford you additional business benefits such as improved lead generation and a boost in search engine optimization.

2. Contribute Guest Blog Posts: Once you start gaining traction as a credible business blogger using

What search engines cannot see?

Image: A search engine cannot tell whether an image is a picture of Bart Simpson, a boat, a house, or a tornado. In addition, search engines will not recognize any text rendered in the image. The search engines are experimenting with technologies to use optical character recognition (OCR) to extract text from images, but this technology is not yet in general use within search.

Flash files: In addition, conventional SEO wisdom has always held that the search engines cannot read Flash files, but this is a little overstated. Search

Further, the search engines cannot see the pictorial aspects of anything contained in Flash. This means that when text is converted into a vector-based outline in Flash, the textual information that search engines can read is lost. Chapter 6 discusses methods for optimizing Flash.

Audio and video files: Audio and video files are also not easy for search engines to read. As with images, the data is not easy to parse.

Determining Searcher Intent and Delivering Relevant, Fresh Content.

Modern commercial search engines rely on the science of information retrieval (IR). This science has existed since the middle of the twentieth century, when retrieval systems powered Computers in libraries, research facilities, and government labs. Early in the development of Search systems, IR scientists realized that two critical components comprised the majority of Search functionality: relevance and importance (which we defined earlier in this chapter). To Measure these factors, search engines perform document analysis (including semantic analysis of concepts across documents) and link (or citation) analysis.

Document Analysis and Semantic Connectivity.

In document analysis, search engines look at whether they find the search terms in important

Areas of the document—the title, the metadata, the heading tags, and the body of the text.

They also attempt to automatically measure the quality of the document based on document

Analysis, as well as many other factors.

Reliance on document analysis alone is not enough for today's search engines, so they also

look at semantic connectivity. Semantic connectivity refers to words or phrases that are commonly associated with one another. For example, if you see the word aloha you associate it with Hawaii, not Florida. Search engines actively build their own thesauruses and dictionaries to help them determine how certain terms and topics are related. By simply scanning their massive databases of content on the Web, they can use Fuzzy Set Theory and certain equation to connect terms and start to understand web pages/sites more like a human does. The professional SEO practitioner does not necessarily need to use semantic connectivity measurement tools to optimize websites, but for those advanced practitioners who seek every advantage, semantic connectivity measurements can help in each of the following sectors:
• Measuring which keyword phrases to target
• Measuring which keyword phrases to include on a page about a certain topic
• Measuring the relationships of text on other high-ranking sites/pages
• Finding pages that provide "relevant" themed links
Although the source for this material is highly technical, SEO specialists need only know the
Principles to obtain valuable information. It is important to keep in mind that although the
World of IR incorporates hundreds of technical and often difficult-to-comprehend terms, these can be broken down and understood even by an SEO novice.

The following are some common types of searches in the IR field:

Proximity searches:
A proximity search uses the order of the search phrase to find related documents. For
Example, when you search for "sweet German mustard" you are specifying only a precise
Proximity match. If the quotes are removed, the proximity of the search terms still matters
To the search engine, but it will now show documents whose contents don't exactly match
The order of the search phrase, such as Sweet Mustard—German.

Fuzzy logic:
Fuzzy logic technically refers to logic that is not categorically true or false. A common
Example is whether a day is sunny (e.g., if there is 50% cloud cover, is it still a sunny
Day?). One way engines use fuzzy logic is to detect and process misspellings.

Boolean searches.
Boolean searches use Boolean terms such as AND, OR, and NOT. This type of logic is used
to expand or restrict which documents are returned in a search.

Term weighting.
Term weighting refers to the importance of a particular search term to the query. The idea
is to weight particular terms more heavily than others to produce superior search results.
For example, the word the in a query will receive very little weight in selecting the results
Because it appears in nearly all English-language documents. There is nothing unique
About it, and it does not help in document selection.

IR models (search engines) use Fuzzy Set Theory (an offshoot of fuzzy logic created by Dr. Lotfi Zadeh in 1969) to discover the semantic connectivity between two words. Rather than using a thesaurus or dictionary to try to reason whether two words are related to each other, an IR system can use its massive database of content to puzzle out the relationships.
Although this process may sound complicated, the foundations are simple. Search engines need to rely on machine logic (true/false, yes/no, etc.). Machine logic has some advantages over humans, but machine logic is not as good at solving certain types of problems as people. Things that are intuitive to humans can be quite hard for a computer to understand. For example,

Both oranges and bananas are fruits, but oranges and bananas are not both round. To a human this is intuitive.

For a machine to understand this concept and pick up on others like it, semantic connectivity
Can be the key. The massive human knowledge on the Web can be captured in the systems
Index and analyzed to artificially create the relationships humans have made. Thus, a machine can determine that an orange is round and a banana is not by scanning thousands of
Occurrences of the words banana and orange in its index and noting that round and banana do not have great concurrence, while orange and round do.

This is how the use of fuzzy logic comes into play. The use of Fuzzy Set Theory helps the
Computer to understand how terms are related simply by measuring how often and in what
Context they are used together.

Analyzing Ranking Factors.
SEOmoz periodically conducts surveys of leading search engine optimizers to determine whattheythink are the most important ranking factors (*http://www.seomoz.org/article/search-ranking-factors*). Here is a high-level summary of the top nine results:
• Page Level Link Metrics
• Domain Level Link Authority Features
• Page Level Keyword Usage
• Domain Level Keyword Usage
• Page Level Social Metrics
• Domain Level Brand Metrics
• Page Level Keyword Agnostic Feature
• Page Level Traffic/Query Data
• Domain Level Keyword Agnostic Features
Here is a brief look at each of these:

Page Level Link Metrics
This refers to the links as related to the specific page, such as the number of links, the
Relevance of the links, and the trust and authority of the links received by the page.

Domain Level Link Authority Features
Domain level link authority is based on a cumulative link analysis of all the links to the
domain. Factors considered include the number of different domains linking to the site,
the trust/authority of those domains, the rate at which new inbound links are added, the
relevance of the linking domains, and more.

Page Level Keyword Usage
This describes use of the keyword term/phrase in particular parts of the HTML code on
the page (title element, <h1>s, alt attributes, etc.).

Domain Level Keyword Usage
This refers to how keywords are used in the root or sub domain name, and how impactful
that might be on search engine rankings.
Page Level Social Metrics
Social metrics considered include mentions, links, shares, Likes, and other social media
site–based metrics. At the time of the survey, the considered sites were Face book and
Twitter. Since then Google has launched Google+, and Search, plus Your World, which

would also be included in this definition.

Domain Level Brand Metrics
This factor includes search volume on the website's brand name, mentions, whether it has a presence in social media, and other brand-related metrics.

Page Level Keyword Agnostic Features
Factors included here are on-page elements such as the number of links on the page, number of internal links, number of followed links, number of No Followed links, and other similar factors.

Page Level Traffic/Query Data
Elements of this factor include the click-through rate (CTR) to the page in the search results, the bounce rate of visitors to the page, and other similar measurements.
Domain Level Keyword Agnostic Features
Major elements of this factor in the survey included the number of hyphens in the domain name, numeric characters in the domain name, and domain name length.

Negative Ranking Factors
The SEOmoz survey also identified a number of negative ranking factors. Some of the most significant ones included: *Malware being hosted on the site*. The search engines will act rapidly to penalize sites that contain viruses or trojans. *Cloaking* Search engines want publishers to show the same content to the search engine as is shown
to users.*Pages on the site that sell links*
Googlehasa strong policy against paid links(*http://www.google.com/support/webmasters/bin/ answer.py?answer=66736*), and sites that sell them may be penalized. *Content that advertises paid links on the site*As an extension of the prior negative ranking factor, promoting the sale of paid links maybe a negative ranking factor.

Other Ranking Factors
The ranking factors we've discussed so far are really just the basics. Search engines potentially factor in many more signals. Some of these include:

Rate of acquisition of links
If over time your site has acquired an average of 5 links per day, and then the links
Suddenly start to come in at a rate of 10 per day, that could be seen as a positive ranking
Signal. On the other hand, if the rate of new links drops to two per day, that could be a
Signal that your site has become less relevant.
However, it gets more complicated than that. If your site suddenly starts to get 300 new
Links per day, you have either abruptly become a lot more relevant or started to acquire
Links in a spammy way. The devil is in the details here, with one of the most important
details being the origins of those new links. The concept of considering temporal factors
in link analysis is documented in a US patent held by Google that you can look up by
searching for patent number 20050071741.

User data
Personalization is one of the most talked about frontiers in search. There are a few ways
personalization can take place. For one, a search engine can perform a geolocation lookup
to figure out a user's approximate location and then show results tailored to that location.
This is very helpful, for example, if you are looking for a local restaurant.

Another way a search engine can get some data on a user is if the user creates a profile with the search engine and voluntarily provides some information. A simple example would be a language preference. If the user indicates he prefers Portuguese, the search engine can tailor the results to that preference.

Search engines can also look at the search history for a given user. Basically, the search engine maintains a log of all the searches you have performed when you are logged in. Based on this, it can see that you have been checking out luxury cars recently, and can use that knowledge to tweak the results you see after you search on *jaguar*. This is Sometimes referred to as *adaptive search*.

To avoid personalization, before searching users need to log out of their Google accounts and select "disable customizations based on search history" in the Google interface under Web History. This will allow the user to see Google results that are not personalized based on search history. However, the results will still be personalized to the user's location. You can also depersonalize your search results by performing your search query, and then appending *&pws=0* to the end of the search page URL and reloading the page. You also need to have Google Instant turned off in your preferences.

Google sandbox

As we have discussed throughout this chapter, the search engines use a number of Methods to fight spam. One technique that many people believe Google uses has become Known as the Google "sandbox." The sandbox is thought to be a filter where Google limits The rate of growth of the Page Rank (or rankings) of new domains.

This approach could be useful in filtering out spam domains because they often don't stay Around very long, so the spammer works hard to get them ranking and producing traffic as quickly as they can. The sandbox can potentially create a scenario where the website is caught by improved algorithms or manual review prior to becoming highly productive. At a minimum, it would increase the cost of the spammer's efforts.

Using Advanced Search Techniques
One of the basic tools of the trade for an SEO practitioner is the search engines themselves. They provide a rich array of commands that can be used to perform advanced research, Diagnosis and competitive analysis. Some of the more basic operators are:

-keyword

Excludes the keyword from the search results. For example, loans -student shows results for all types of loans *except* student loans.

+keyword

Allows for forcing the inclusion of a keyword. This is particularly useful for including *Stop words* (keywords that are normally stripped from a search query because they usually do not add value, such as the word *the*) in a query, or if your keyword is getting converted into multiple keywords through automatic stemming. For example, if you mean to search for the TV show *The Office*, you would want the word *The* to be part of the query. As anotherexample, if you are looking for Patrick Powers, who was from Ireland, you would searchfor patrick powers + Ireland to avoid irrelevant results for Patrick Powers.

"*key phrase*"Shows search results for the exact phrase—for example, "seo company".

Keyword1 OR *keyword2*

Shows results for *at least one* of the keywords—for example, google OR Yahoo!.
These are the basics, but for those who want more information, what follows is an outline of
The more advanced search operators available from the search engines.

Vertical Search Engines
Vertical search is the term people sometimes use for specialty or niche search engines that focus on a limited data set. Examples of vertical search solutions provided by the major search engines are image, video, news, and blog searches. These may be standard offerings from these vendors, but they are distinct from the engines' general web search functions.
Vertical search results can provide significant opportunities for the SEO practitioner. High
Placement in these vertical search results can equate to high placement in the web search
Results, often above the traditional 10 blue links presented by the search engines.
Vertical Search from the Major Search Engines
The big three search engines offer a wide variety of vertical search products. Here is a partial list:
1) Google
2) Google Maps, Google Images, Google Product Search, Google Blog Search, Google Video,
3) Google News, Google Custom Search Engine, Google Book Search, Google US Gov't
4) Search, etc.
5) Yahoo!
6) Yahoo! News, Yahoo! Local, Yahoo! Images, Yahoo! Video, Yahoo! Shopping, Yahoo!
7) Audio Search, etc.
8) Bing
9) Bing Image, Bing Video, Bing News, Bing Maps, Bing Health, Bing Products, etc.

SEARCHEING IN BASICS.
Image search
All three of the big search engines offer image search capability. Basically, image search engines Limit the data that they crawl, search, and return in results to images. This means files that are in GIF, TIF, JPG, and other similar formats. A surprisingly large number of searches are performed on image search engines. According to comScore, more than 1 billion image searches were performed on Google Image Search
It is likely that at least that many image-related search queries occurred within Google web search during that same time frame; however, since an image is a binary file, search engine crawlers cannot readily interpret it. Historically, to determine an image's content, search engines have had to rely on text surrounding the image, the alt attribute within the img tag, and the image filename. However,

Google now offers a search by image feature you can drag an image file into the Google Image Search box and it will attempt to identify the subject matter of the image and show relevant results. Optimizing for image search is its own science, and we will discuss it in more detail in "Optimizing for Image Search" in
Video search as with image search, video search engines focus on searching specific types of files on the Web—in this case, video files in formats such as MPEG, AVI, and others.
A very large number of searches are also performed in video search engines. YouTube (http://www.youtube.com) is the dominant video search engine, with over 3.8 billion searches performed in June 2011, representing more than 14% of all search queries performed on the Web. This makes YouTube the third largest search engine on the Web (Bing is larger when you consider the cumulative search volume of Bing + Yahoo!). As with image search, many video searches are also performed directly within Google web search.
There is significant traffic to be gained by optimizing for video search engines and participating in them. Once again, these are binary files and the search engine cannot easily tell what is inside them.

SEARCHEING IN WEB BASICS

Each search engine is investing in technology to analyze images and videos to extract as much information as possible. For example, the search engines are experimenting with OCR technology to look for text within images, and other advanced technologies are being used to analyze video content. Flesh-tone analysis is also in use to detect pornography or recognize facial features. The application of these technologies is in its infancy, and is likely to evolve rapidly over time.

News search

News search is also unique. News search results operate on a different time schedule, as they
Must be very, very timely. Few people want to read the baseball scores from a week ago when several other games have been played since then.
News search engines must be able to retrieve information in real time and provide nearly
Instantaneous responses. Modern consumers tend to want their news information now.
As with the other major verticals, there is a lot of search volume here as well. To have a chance of receiving this volume, you will need to become a news source. This means generating timely, topical news stories on a regular basis. There are other requirements as well.
Next up in our hit parade of major search verticals is local search (a.k.a. map search). Local
Search results are now heavily integrated into the traditional web search results, so a presence in local search can have a large impact on organizations that have one or more brick and mortar locations. Local search engines search through databases of locally oriented information, such as the names, phone numbers, and locations of local businesses around the world, or just provide a service, such as offering directions from one location to another. The integration of local search results into regular web search results has dramatically increased the potential traffic that can be obtained through local search.

Blog search

Google has implemented a search engine focused just on blog search called Google Blog Search (misnamed because it is an RSS feed engine and not a blog engine). This search engine will respond to queries, but only search blogs (more accurately, feeds) to determine the results.

Book search

The major search engines also offer a number of specialized offerings. One highly vertical search engine is Google Book Search, which specifically searches only content found within books.

Shopping search

Microsoft also has some unique vertical search properties. One of the more interesting ones is its vertical shopping search solution.

Universal Search/Blended Search

Google made a big splash in 2007 when it announced Universal Search. This was the notion
Of integrating images, videos, and results from other vertical search properties directly into the main web search results.

The other search engines quickly followed suit and began offering vertical search integration
Before the end of 2007. People now refer to this general concept as Blended Search (since
Universal Search is specifically associated with Google). A look at some Universal Search results from Google can help illustrate the concept

Note the image results, along with the news results farther down. This information is coming
from Google's news search index. If you look farther down in the search results, you will
Continue to see more vertical results, including video results.
A wide range of vertical data sets have been integrated into Google's Universal Search, as well as into the Blended Search results of the other search engines. In addition to the preceding examples, you can also see images, videos, and local data integrated into the traditional web Search results.

The advent of Blended Search has significantly increased the opportunity for publishers with
Matching vertical data sets (such as a rich music library) to gain significant additional traffic to their sites by optimizing these data sets for the appropriate vertical search.

Meta search
Meta search engines are search engines that aggregate results from multiple search engines
And present them to the user. The two best-known ones are MetaCrawler.com and
Dogpile.com. However, their cumulative search volume is quite small, and these do not factor into SEO strategies.

More specialized vertical search engines
Vertical search can also come from third parties. Here are some examples:
• Comparison shopping engines, such as PriceGrabber, Shopzilla, and NexTag
• Travel search engines, such as Expedia, Travelocity, Kayak, and Uptake
• Real estate search engines, such as Trulia and Zillow
• People search engines, such as Spock and Wink
• Job search engines, such as Indeed, CareerBuilder, and SimplyHired
• Music search engines, such as iTunes Music Store
• B2B search engines, such as Business.com, KnowledgeStorm, Kellysearch, and
ThomasNet

Country-Specific Search Engines
At this stage, search is truly global in its reach. Google is the dominant search engine in many countries, but not all of them. How you optimize your website depends heavily on the target market for that site, and the search engines that (are) the most important in that market.
According to comScore data from June 2011, Google receives 68.9% of all searches performed worldwide. In addition, Google is the market share leader in every major regional market. In the Asia Pacific region, however, Google holds a relatively narrow 42.3% to 24.8% edge over Baidu, the largest search engine in China. This is the only regional market in which Google has less than 60% market share, and it also happens to be the largest market for search in the world (in terms of total searches performed).
Here is some data on countries where other search engines are major players:

China:
Baidu News reported in April 2011 that Baidu had more than 75% market share in China
In 2010 (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-13205047). This is significant since China boasts the largest Internet usage in the world, with 420 million users in 2010 according to the
China Internet Network Information Center.

Russia:
According to figures announced by Yandex, the company's market share in Russia
Comprised about 65% of all searches in March 2011 (http://searchengineland.com/russias
-search-engine-yandex-steathily-moves-west-86458).

South Korea:
Naver (http://www.naver.com) was estimated to have about 70% market share in South
Korea in February 2011 (http://searchengineland.com/should-korean-search-engine-naver
-worry-about-local-competitors-or-google-65401, http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/07/04/
business/naver.php).

Czech Republic:
The Startup Meme Technology blog reported Seznam (http://seznam.cz) as having more
than 45% market share in the Czech Republic in early January 2011 (http://
searchengineland.com/google-nunber-one-czech-republic-5-countries-left-61174). During that time frame,
Google was estimated to have about 47% market share.

Optimizing for Specific Countries
One of the problems international businesses continuously need to address is identifying
Themselves as "local" in the eyes of the search engines. In other words, if a search engine user is located in
France and wants to see where the wine shops are in Lyons, how does the search engine know which results
to show?
Here are a few of the top factors that contribute to international ranking success:

• Owning the proper domain extension (e.g., .com.au, .co.uk, .fr, .de, .nl) for the country that
  Your business is targeting
• Hosting your website in the country you are targeting (with a country-specific IP address)
• Registering with local search engines:
• Having other sites from the same country link to you
• Using the native language on the site (an absolute requirement for usability)
• Placing your relevant local address data on every page of the site
• Defining your preferred region in Google Webmaster Tools
All of these factors act as strong signals to the search engines regarding the country you are
targeting, and will make them more likely to show your site for relevant local results.
The complexity increases when targeting multiple countries.

Conclusion: - Understanding how search engines work is an important component of SEO. The search
engines are constantly tuning their algorithms. For that reason, the successful SEO professional is constantly
studying search engine behavior and learning how they work.

UNIT 2

CH-3 Determining Your SEO Objectives and
Defining Your Site's Audience

SEO PLAN

SEO, once a highly specialized task relegated to the back rooms of a website development team, is now a mainstream marketing activity. This dramatic rise can be attributed to three emerging trends:

Search engines drive dramatic quantities of focused traffic, comprising people intent on accomplishing their research and purchasing goals.

Businesses can earn significant revenues by leveraging the quality and relevance of this traffic for direct sales, customer acquisition, and branding/awareness campaigns.

Visibility in search engines creates an implied endorsement effect, where searchers associate quality, relevance, and trustworthiness with sites that rank highly for their queries.

Dramatic growth in the interaction between offline and online marketing necessitates investment by organizations of all kinds in a successful search strategy.

Consumers are increasingly turning to the Web before making purchases in verticals such as real estate, autos, furniture, and technology.

Organizations cannot afford to ignore their customers' needs as expressed through searches conducted on the major search engines.

As with any other marketing function, it is important to set specific goals and objectives—if a goal is not measurable, it is not useful.

Setting up such objectives is the only way you can determine whether you are getting your money's worth from your SEO effort.

And although SEO can be viewed as a project, the best investment, in our opinion, is to treat it as more of a process—one that is iterative, ongoing, and requires steady commitment from the stakeholders of an organization.

➢ **Strategic Goals SEO Practitioners Can Fulfill**

Visibility (Branding)

Most consumers assume that top placement in the search engines is like a stamp of approval on a business. Surely a company could not rank highly in the search results if it were not one of the best in its field, right?

If you are an experienced search engine user, you probably recognize that the preceding statement is not true. However, the fact is that many consumers, and even business searchers, interpret high search rankings as an implicit endorsement.

Therefore, for critical brand terms, the SEO practitioner should work toward improving the search engine rankings for the website he is working on.

However, if you sell solar panels, you will want to rank well for the search term solar panels. When users see you ranking highly on that search term, they will assume you are one of the best places to buy solar panels.

Website Traffic

Long gone are the days of a "build it and they will come" paradigm on the Web. Today's environment is highly competitive, and you need great SEO to ensure targeted, high-quality traffic to your site.

The SEO practitioner fills the different, more critical role of bringing new prospects to your website from an audience of people who would not otherwise have been interested in, or perhaps aware of, the business at all.

Experienced SEO practitioners know that users search for products, services, and information using an extraordinarily wide variety of search queries and query types.

An SEO professional performs keyword research (which we will discuss in Chapter 5) to determine which search queries people actually use. For example, when searching for a set of golf clubs, some users may type in left handed golf clubs as a search query.

Knowing that, the SEO process works on a site architecture strategy (see Chapter 6) and a link-building strategy (we cover this in Chapter 7) to help the site's pages achieve competitive search engine rankings for these types of terms.

High ROI (ROI = RETURN ON INVESTMENT)

Improving visibility and driving traffic are nice, but the most important goal is to achieve the goals of your organization.

For most organizations, that means generating sales, leads, or advertising revenue. For others, it may mean the promotion of a particular message.

An important component of SEO is to deliver not just traffic, but relevant traffic that has the possibility of converting.

The great thing about SEO is that it can result in dramatically improved website ROI. Whether you are selling products and services, advertising and looking for branding value, or trying to promote a specific viewpoint to the world, a well- designed SEO strategy can result in a very high return on investment when contrasted with other methods of marketing.

For many organizations, SEO brings a higher ROI when compared to TV, print, and radio campaigns. Traditional media is not in danger of being replaced by SEO, but SEO can provide some high-margin returns that complement and enhance the use of offline media.

The ever-changing, dynamic nature of the search marketing industry requires constant diligence.

SEO professionals must maintain a research process for analyzing how the search landscape is changing, because search engines strive to continuously evolve to improve their services and monetization.

This environment provides search engine marketers with a niche within which the demand for their services is all but guaranteed for an indefinite period of time, and it provides advertisers with the continuous opportunity, either independently or through outside consulting, to achieve top rankings for competitive target searches for their businesses.

Organizations should take many factors into account when pursuing an SEO strategy, including:
- What the organization is trying to promote
- Target market
- Brand
- Website structure
- Current site content
- Ease with which the content and site structure can be modified
- Any immediately available content
- Available resources for developing new content
- Competitive landscape
- And so on...

Understanding Search Engine Traffic and Visitor Intent

As we discussed in "The Mission of Search Engines" on page 2, searchers enter many different types of queries. These are typically classified into three major categories:

Navigational query
Informational query
Transactional query

The user types in **buy digital camera.** Although there is no information in the query about which one she wants to buy, the intent still seems quite clear.

The searcher types in **canon powershot G10.** The chances are very high that this user is looking to buy that particular camera.

Part of an SEO plan is to understand how the various relevant types of searches relate to the content and architecture of your website.

Developing an SEO Plan Prior to Site Development:
It is widely understood in the industry that search engine optimization should early as possible, to the entire site development strategy, from choosing a content Management system (CMS) and planning site architecture to developing on-page content.

SEO plans have many moving parts, and SEO decisions can have a significant impact on other departments, such as development, other marketing groups, and sales.

Getting that input as soon as possible will bring the best results for a business at the least possible cost.

Business Factors That Affect the SEO Plan
Here are some examples of business issues that can impact SEO:

Revenue/business model
It makes a difference to the SEO practitioner if the purpose of the site is to sell products, sell advertising, or obtain leads. We will discuss this more in the later sections of this chapter.

Target customers: Who are you trying to reach? This could be an age group, a gender group, or as specific as people looking to buy a house within a 25-mile radius of Orlando, FL.

Competitor strategies
The competitive landscape is another big factor in your SEO plan. Competition may be strongly entrenched in one portion of the market online, and it may make sense to focus on a different segment.

Or you may be the big dog in your market but you have specific competitors you want to fend off.

Branding goals
There may be terms that it is critical for you to own, for branding reasons.

Budget for content development
An important part of link building (which we will discuss in detail in Chapter 7) is ensuring the quality of your content, as well as your capacity to commit to the ongoing development of high-quality on-page site content.

How your potential customers search for products like yours
Understanding what customers do when they are searching for products or services like yours is one of the most basic functions of SEO (we will discuss it in detail in Chapter 5).This involves mapping the actual search queries your target customers use when they goto a search engine to solve their current problem.

Understanding Your Audience and Finding Your Niche
A nontrivial part of an SEO plan is figuring out who you are targeting with your website. This is not always that easy to determine. As you will see in this section, many factors enter into this, including the competition, the particular strengths or weaknesses of your own company, and more.

Mapping Your Products and Services
Successful SEO requires a thorough understanding of the business itself. What products, services, and types of information and resources does your organization have to offer?

As we outlined in the preceding section, a critical SEO activity is understanding who is searching for what you are trying to promote, which requires thoroughly understanding all aspects of your offering.

You will also need to understand the broad market categories that your products fall into, as each of these categories might relate to sections of your website that you may want to create.

You also should consider business development and the company's expansion strategy at the outset of the SEO planning process. Consider Amazon, which began as a bookseller but has evolved into a general purpose e-tailer.

Content Is King

One aspect of determining the desired audience for your website is determining who you want to reach, which requires an understanding of what you have to offer visitors to your site, both now and in the future.

You may have a deep library of "how to" content, great videos, a unique photo gallery, or an awesome tool that people are interested in using. Each of these can be valuable in building a world-class website that does well in the search engines.

The content you have available to you will affect your keyword research and site architecture, as your site content is the major source of information that search engines use to determine what your site is about. As we discussed in "Algorithm-Based Ranking Systems: Crawling,indexing.".

To establish itself as a leader, Site must bring something new and unique to the market.

Perhaps it can offer a solution to a problem that no one else has been able to solve before, perhaps it focuses on a specific vertical niche and establishes itself as a leader in that niche—for example, by being the first to release a high-quality video series on the topic it covers.

Segmenting Your Site's Audience

Let's not forget the audience itself! It is important for the SEO practitioner to understand the target audience.

Similar things can happen with gender. For example, women and men may not search for their shoes the same way, as shown in Figure 3-2, which lists the top shoe-related search terms from Wordtracker.com.

.Another major criterion to consider might be location. Searchers in Austin, TX, may want a different version of your product than searchers in Chicago, IL.

For that matter, because they want different products, they may use different search terms, which requires extensive keyword research—yet another critical aspect of the SEO process

SEO for Raw Traffic

Optimizing for search engines and creating keyword-targeted content helps a site rank for key search terms, which typically leads to direct traffic and referring links as more and more people find, use, and enjoy what you've produced.

Thousands of sites on the Web leverage this traffic to serve advertising, directly monetizing the traffic sent from the engines

Here are some factors to think about when considering SEO for raw traffic:

When to employ SEO for raw traffic**; Use** it when you can monetize traffic without actions or financial transactions taking place on your site (usually through advertising).

Keyword targeting

Keyword targeting in this scenario can be very broad. The goal here isn't typically to select specific keywords, but rather to create lots of high-quality content that naturally targets interesting/searched-for terms.

Concentrate efforts on great content, and use keyword-based optimization only as a secondary method to confirm the titles/headlines of the works you create.

Page and content creation/optimization

A shallow, highly crawl able link structure is critical to getting all of your content indexed—follow good information architecture practices (for more on this, see "Creating an Optimal Information Architecture (IA)" in Chapter 6) and use intelligent, detailed category and subcategory structures to get the most benefit out of your work. You'll also need to employ good on-page optimization (titles, headlines, internal linking, etc.)

SEO for Ecommerce Sales

One of the most direct monetization (something conversion into money) strategies for SEO is driving relevant traffic to an ecommerce shop to boost sales. Search traffic is among the best quality available on the web, primarily because a search user has expressed a specific goal through her query, and

when this matches a product or brand the web store carries, conversion rates are often extremely high. Here are some factors to think about when considering SEO for ecommerce sales:

When to employ SEO for ecommerce sales: Use it when you have products/services that are directly for sale on your website.

Keyword targeting

Paid search advertising is an excellent way to test the efficacy and potential ROI of keyword targets.

You'll often find that the more specific the query is—brand-inclusive, product-inclusive, and so on—the more likely the visitors are to make the purchase.

Of course, as noted earlier, you should have little difficulty ranking for your brand terms, so the best use of this tactic is for generic terms that you will find harder to win on so you can decide if they are worth the effort.

Page and content creation/optimization

You'll typically need to do some serious link building, along with internal optimization, to achieve high rankings for competitive, high-value keywords that bring in conversion-focused traffic.

SEO for Mindshare/Branding

A less popular but equally powerful application of SEO is its use for branding purposes. Bloggers, social media/community websites, content producers, news outlets, and dozens of other web publishing archetypes have found tremendous value in appearing atop the SERPs and using the resulting exposure to bolster their brand recognition and authority.

Online marketers have observed that being at the top of the search rankings around a particular subject has a positive impact on traffic, consideration, and perceived authority.

When to employ SEO for mindshare/branding

Using it when branding or communicating a message is your goal. If you do not have direct monetization goals for the moment or for the foreseeable future, this is the approach for you.

This approach can also be used on portions of ecommerce sites that are not about conversion but more about long-term branding and mindshare.

Keyword targeting

A keyword focus is less critical here—you'll likely have a few broad terms that receive the high traffic you want, but the long tail may be far more achievable and the better target.

Focus on keywords that are going to bring you visitors who are likely to be interested in and remember your brand.

Page and content creation/optimization

Make an accessible site, use good link structure, apply best practices, and focus on links for domain authority rather than chasing after specific keywords.

SEO for Lead Generation and Direct Marketing

Although lead generation via the Web is less direct than an ecommerce transaction, it is arguably just as valuable and important for building customers, revenue, and long-term value.

Millions of search queries have commercial intents that can't be (or currently aren't) fulfilled directly online. These can include searches for services such as legal consulting, contract construction, commercial loan requests, alternative energy providers, or virtually any service or product people source via the Web.

When to employ SEO for lead generation and direct marketing

Use it when you have a non-ecommerce product/service/goal that you want users to accomplish on your site or for which you are hoping to attract inquiries/direct contact over the Web.

Keyword targeting

As with ecommerce, choose phrases that convert well, have reasonable traffic, and have previously performed in PPC campaigns.

Page and content creation/optimization

You'll need a solid combination of on-site optimization and external link building to many different pages on the site (with good anchor text) to be competitive in the more challenging arenas.

SEO for Reputation Management

Since one's own name—whether personal or corporate—is one's identity, establishing and maintaining the reputation associated with that identity is generally of great interest.

You may accomplish this using social media, major media, bloggers, your own sites and sub domains, and various other tactics.

SEO enables this process through both content creation and promotion via link building. Although reputation management is among the most challenging of SEO tasks (primarily because you are optimizing many results for a query rather than one), demand for these types of services is rising as more and more companies become aware of the issue.

Here are some factors to think about when considering SEO for reputation management:

When to employ SEO for reputation management

If you're trying to either protect your brand from negative results appearing on page 1 or push down already existing negative content, reputation management SEO is the only path to success.

Keyword targeting

Chances are this is very easy—the keyword you are targeting is your personal name, your brand name, or some common variant (and you already know what it is). You might want to use keyword research tools just to see whether there are popular variants you're missing.

Page and content creation/optimization

Unlike the other SEO tactics, reputation management involves optimizing pages on many different domains to demote negative listings. This involves using social media profiles, public relations, press releases, and links from networks of sites you might own or control, along with classic optimization of internal links and on-page elements.

SEO for Ideological Influence

For those seeking to way public (or private) opinion about a particular topic, SEO can be a powerful tool. By promoting ideas and content within the search results for queries likely to be made by those seeking information about a topic, you can influence the perception of even very large groups.

Politicians and political groups and individuals are the most likely employers of this tactic, but it can certainly be applied to any subject, from the theological to the technical or civic.

When to employ SEO for ideological influence

Use it when you need to change minds or influence decisions/thinking around a subject.

Keyword targeting

It's tough to say for certain, but if you're engaging in these types of campaigns, you probably know the primary keywords you're chasing and can use keyword research query expansion to find others.

Page and content creation/optimization

This is classic SEO, but with a twist. Leverage your combined links and content to espouse your philosophical preferences.

Conclusion: To bring this all together, your objectives, tactics, and strategies need to be aligned. They need to take into account your market, your business, and the competition.

The best strategy is the one that gets you to your goals the fastest. Don't spread yourself too thin. Remember to ask yourself the tough questions, such as:

• Does your company need direct sales, traffic, branding, or some combination of these?

• Are there specific influencers you're trying to reach with a message?

• Is the organization/brand subject to potentially negative material that needs to be controlled/mitigated?

• Do you have products/services you sell, either directly over the Web or through leads?

Ch – 4 First Stages Of SEO

INTRODUCTION

SEO projects require forethought and planning to obtain the best results, and SEO needs to be considered during, and incorporated into, all stages of a website development or redevelopment project. For example, the site architecture (including the selection of a content management system, or CMS), the marketing plan (including branding concepts), and much more are affected.

In this chapter, we will discuss several aspects of how SEO projects start, including:

• Putting together an SEO plan

• Performing a technical SEO audit of a site

• Setting a baseline for measuring results and progress

These are the things you want to do at the very beginning of your SEO efforts for any website.

The Major Elements of Planning

As any experienced SEO consultant will tell you, you should incorporate your SEO strategy into the site planning process long before your site goes live.

Your strategy should be well outlined before you make even the most basic technology choices, such as the hosting platform and your CMS.

➢ **Technology Choices**

As we already suggested, SEO is a technical process, and as such, it impacts major technology choices.

For example, a CMS can facilitate—or, possibly, undermine—your SEO strategy. Some platforms do not allow you to have titles and meta descriptions that vary from one web page to the next, create hundreds (or thousands) of pages of duplicate content, or make a 302 (temporary) redirect the default redirect.

This problem also exists with web servers. For example, if you use Internet Information Services (IIS), the default redirect choice is a 302 (as we will explain in Chapter 6 a 301 [permanent] redirect is essential for most redirect applications).

➢ **Market Segmentation:** Another critical factor to understand is the nature of the market in which you are competing. This tells you how competitive the environment is in general, and augmented with additional research, you can use this information to tell how competitive the SEO environment is. In some markets, natural search is intensively competitive. Method you can use to get a very quick read on competitiveness is using a keyword tool such as the Google Traffic Estimator.

Where You Can Find Great Links

As you will see in Chapter 7, getting third parties to link their websites to yours is a critical part of SEO. Without inbound links, there is little to no chance of ranking for competitive terms in search engines such as Google, whose algorithm relies heavily on link measuring and weighting criteria.

An early part of the SEO brainstorming process is identifying the great places to get links, as well as the types of content you might want to develop to encourage linking from other quality websites. Note that we, the authors, advocate pursuing few, relevant, higher-quality links over hundreds of low-quality links, as 10 good links can go much further than thousands of links from random blog posts or forums. Understanding this will help you build your overall content plan.

➢ **Content Resources**

Content is a king.

The driver of any heavy-duty link campaign is the quality and volume of your content. If your content is of average quality and covers the same information dozens of other sites have covered, it will not attract many links. If, however, you are putting out quality content, or you have a novel tool that many will want to use, you are more likely to receive external links.

➢ **Branding Considerations**

Of course, most companies have branding concerns as well. The list of situations where the brand can limit the strategy is quite long, and the opposite can happen too,
Where the nature of the brand makes a particular SEO strategy pretty compelling. Ultimately, your goal is too detail SEO efforts with branding as seamlessly as possible.

➢ **Competition**

• The competitor discovers a unique, highly converting set of keywords.
• The competitor discovers a targeted, high-value link.
• The competitor saturates a market segment, justifying your focus elsewhere.
• Weaknesses appear in the competitor's strategy, which provide opportunities
For Exploitation.

Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of your competition from an SEO perspective isa significant part of devising your own SEO strategy.

Identifying the Site Development Process and Players: Before you start the SEO process, it is imperative to identify who your target audience is, what your message is, and how your message is relevant.
There are no web design tools or programming languages that tell you these things. Your company's marketing, advertising, and PR teams have to set the objectives before you can implement them—successful SEO requires a team effort.

➢ **Your SEO team should be**

Cross-functional and multidisciplinary
Consisting of the team manager
The technical team
The creative team
The data and analytics team (if you have one)
The major stakeholders from marketing
Advertising and PR

The team leader wants to know who the target audience is. What does the marketing team know about them? How did we find them? What metrics will we use to track them? All of this is key information that should have an impact on the project's technical implementation.
Advertising messages need to be well thought out and prepared. You do not want your team bickering over whether to optimize for "hardcore widget analysis" or "take your widgets to the next level."
Advertising serves multiple purposes, but its most fundamental purpose is to compel people to take a specific action.
The PR team has to take your story to the media and entice them into writing and talking about it. What message do they want to deliver? You have to mirror that message in your content.
The technical and creative team is responsible for delivering the project. They take direction from marketing, advertising, and PR on what needs to be accomplished, but from there on out they have to put the pieces into place.
Ongoing feedback is essential because the success of your project is determined solely by whether you're meeting your goals. A successful SEO team understands all of these interactions and is comfortable relying on each team member to do his part.

Defining Your Site's Information Architecture

Whether you're working with an established website or not, you should plan to research the desired site architecture (from an SEO perspective) at the start of your SEO project. This task can be divided into two major components:

➢ technology decisions

➢ structural decisions

➢ technology decisions

Dynamic URLs

Although Google now states that dynamic URLs are not a problem for the company, this is not entirely true, nor is it the case for the other search engines. Make sure your CMS does not end up rendering your pages on URLs with many convoluted parameters in them.

Session IDs or user IDs in the URL

It used to be very common for CMSs to track individual users surfing a site by adding a tracking code to the end of the URL. Although this worked well for this purpose, it was not good for search engines, because they saw each URL as a different page rather than variants of the same page. Make sure your CMS does not ever serve up session IDs.

Superfluous flags in the URL

Related to the preceding two items is the notion of extra junk being present in the URL. This probably does not bother Google, but it may bother the other search engines, and it interferes with the user experience for your site.

Links or content based in JavaScript, Java, or Flash

Search engines often cannot see links and content implemented using these technologies. Make sure the plan is to expose your links and content in simple HTML text.

Content behind forms (including pull-down lists)

Making content accessible only after the user has completed a form (such as a login) or made a selection from an improperly implemented pull-down list is a great way to hide content from the search engines. Do not use these techniques unless you want to hide your content!

Temporary (302) redirects

This is also a common problem in web server platforms and CMSs. The 302 redirect blocks a search engine from recognizing that you have permanently moved the content, and it can be very problematic for SEO as 302 redirects block the passing of Page Rank.

➢ **Structural Decisions**

One of the most basic decisions to make about a website concerns internal linking and navigational structures, which are generally mapped out in a site architecture document.

What pages are linked to from the home page?

What pages are used as top-level categories that then lead site visitors to other related pages?

For search engines, the navigation structure helps their crawlers determine what pages you consider the most important on your site, and it helps them establish the relevance of the pages on your site to specific topics.

➢ **Target keywords**

Keyword research is a critical component of SEO.

What search terms do people use when searching for products or services similar to yours? How do those terms match up with your site hierarchy?

Ultimately, the logical structure of your pages should match up with the way users think about products and services like yours. Figure 4-2 shows how this is done on the Amazon site.

> ### Cross-link relevant content

Linking between articles that cover related material can be very powerful. It helps the Search engine ascertain with greater confidence how relevant a web page is to a particular topic.

The "Frequently Bought Together" and "What Do Customers Ultimately Buy after Viewing This Item?" sections are brilliant ways to group products into categories that establish the relevance of the page to certain topic areas, as well as to create links between relevant pages.

In the Amazon system, all of this is rendered on the page dynamically, so it requires little day-to-day effort on Amazon's part. The "Customers Who Bought…" data is part of Amazon's internal databases, and the "Tags Customers Associate…" data is provided directly by the users themselves.

> ### Use anchor text

> Anchor text is one of the golden opportunities of internal linking. As an SEO practitioner, you need to have in your plan from the very beginning a way to use keyword-rich anchor text in your internal links. Avoid using text such as **"More"** or **"Click here,"** and make sure the technical and creative teams understand this

Use breadcrumb navigation
Breadcrumb navigation is a way to show the user where he is in the navigation hierarchy.
Figure 4-4 shows an example from Pet Smart.

Minimize link depth

Search engines (and users) look to the site architecture for clues as to what pages are most important. A key factor is how many clicks from the home page it takes to reach a page. A page that is only one click from the home page is clearly important.

Standard SEO advice is to keep the site architecture as flat as possible, to minimize clicks from the home page to important content. Do not go off the deep end, though; too many links on a page are not good for search engines.

Auditing an Existing Site to Identify SEO Problems

Auditing an existing site is one of the most important tasks that SEO professionals encounter. SEO is still a relatively new field, and many of the limitations of search engine crawlers are nonintuitive. In addition, many web developers, unfortunately, are not well versed in SEO.

Even more unfortunately, some stubbornly refuse to learn, or, worse still, have learned the wrong things about SEO. This includes those who have developed CMS platforms, so there is a lot of opportunity to find problems when conducting a site audit.

Elements of an Audit

The following sections identify what you should look for when performing a site audit.

Usability

Although this may not be seen as a direct SEO issue, it is a very good place to start. Usability affects many factors, including conversion rate as well as the propensity of people to link to a site.

➢ **Accessibility/spider ability:**

Make sure the site is friendly to search engine spiders. We will discuss this letter.

- **Search engine health check:** Perform a site: yourdomain.com search in the search engines to check how many of your pages appear to be in the index. Compare this to the number of unique pages you believe you have on your site.

  Test a search on your brand terms to make sure you are ranking for them (if not, you may be suffering from a penalty).

  Check the Google cache to make sure the cached versions of your pages look the same as the live versions of your pages.Check to ensure major search engine "tools" have been verified for the domain (Google and Bing currently offer site owner validation to "peek" under the hood of how the engines view your site).

- **Keyword health checks:** Are the right keywords being targeted? Does the site architecture logically flow from the way users search on related keywords? Does more than one page target the same exact keyword (a.k.a. keyword cannibalization)? We will discuss these items in "Keyword Targeting"

Duplicate content checks

The first thing you should do is to make sure the non-www versions of your pages (i.e., http:// yourdomain.com) 301-redirect to the www versions of your pages (i.e., http://www.yourdomain .com), or vice versa (this is often called the canonical redirect).

If your site is monstrously large and this is too big a task, make sure you check the most important pages, and have a process for reviewing new content before it goes live on the site.

You can also use commands such as inurl: and intitle: (see Table 2-1) to check for duplicate content.

Another duplicate content task to perform is to make sure each piece of content is accessible at only one URL. This probably trips up more big commercial sites than any other issue.

URL check

Make sure you have clean, short, descriptive URLs. Descriptive means keyword-rich but not keyword-stuffed.

Title tag review

Make sure the title tag on each page of the site is unique and descriptive.

If you want to include your company brand name in the title, consider putting it at the end of the title tag, not at the beginning, as placement of keywords at the front of a URL brings ranking benefits.

 Also check to make sure the title tag is fewer than 70 characters long.

Content review

Do the main pages of the site have enough content? Do these pages all make use of header tags?

Meta tag review

Check for a meta robots tag on the pages of the site. If you find one, you may have already spotted trouble.

Also make sure every page has a unique meta description. If for some reason that is not possible, consider removing the meta description altogether.

Sitemaps file and robots.txt file verification: Use the Google Webmaster Tools "Test robots.txt" verification tool to check your robots.txt file. Also verify that your Sitemaps file is identifying all of your (canonical) pages.

Redirect checks: Use a server header checker such as Live HTTP Headers (http://livehttpheaders.mozdev.org) to check that all the redirects used on the site return a 301 HTTP status code. Check all redirects this way to make sure the right thing is happening. This includes checking that the canonical redirect is properly implemented.

Internal linking checks

Look for pages that have excessive links. Google advises 100 per page as a maximum, although it is OK to increase that on more important and heavily linked-to pages.

Make sure the site makes good use of anchor text in its internal links.

Avoidance of unnecessary sub domains

The engines may not apply the entirety of a domain's trust and link juice weight to sub domains.

This is largely due to the fact that a sub domain could be under the control of a different party, and therefore in the search engine's eyes it needs to be separately evaluated. In the great majority of cases, sub domain content can easily go in a subfolder.

Geolocation

If the domain is targeting a specific country, make sure the guidelines for country retargeting outlined in "Best Practices for Multilanguage/Country Targeting" in Chapter 6 are being followed.

External linking

Check the inbound links to the site. Use a back linking tool such as Open Site Explorer (http://www.opensiteexplorer.org) or Majestic SEO (http://www.majesticseo.com) to collect data about your links. Look for bad patterns in the anchor text, such as 87% of the links having the critical keyword for the site in them.

Also look to see that there are links to pages other than the home page. These are often called deep links and they will help drive the ranking of key sections of your site.

Lastly, check how the link profile for the site compares to the link profiles of its major competitors. Make sure that there are enough external links to your site, and that there are enough high-quality links in the mix.

Page load time

Is the page load time excessive? Too long a load time may slow down crawling and indexing of the site. However, to be a factor, this really does need to be excessive—certainly longer than five seconds, and perhaps even longer than that.

Image alt tags

Do all the images have relevant, keyword-rich image alt attribute text and filenames? Search engines can't easily tell what is inside an image, and the best way to provide them with some clues is with the alt attribute and the filename of the image.

Code quality

Although W3C validation is not something the search engines require, checking the code itself is a good idea. Poor coding can have some undesirable impacts. You can use a tool such as SEO Browser (http://www.seo-browser.com) to see how the search engines see the page.

➢ **The Importance of Keyword Reviews**

Another critical component of an architecture audit is a keyword review. Basically, this involves the following steps.

Step 1: Keyword research

It is vital to get this done as early as possible in any SEO process. Keywords drive on-page SEO, so you want to know which ones to target. You can read about this in more detail in Chapter 5.

Step 2: Site architecture

Coming up with a site architecture can be very tricky. At this stage, you need to look at your keyword research and the existing site (to make as few changes as possible). You can think of this in terms of your site map.

You need a hierarchy that leads site visitors to your money pages (i.e., the pages where conversions are most likely to occur). Obviously, a good site hierarchy allows the parents of your money pages to rank for relevant keywords (which are likely to be shorter tail).

Whenever there are multiple ways in which people search for the same product, establishing a hierarchy becomes challenging.

Step 3: Keyword mapping

Once you have a list of keywords and a good sense of the overall architecture, start mapping the major relevant keywords to URLs (not the other way around).

When you do this, it is a very easy job to spot pages that you were considering creating that aren't targeting a keyword (perhaps you might skip creating these), and, more importantly, keywords that don't have a page.

Step 4: Site review

Once you are armed with your keyword mapping, the rest of the site review becomes a lot easier. Now when you are looking at title tags and headings, you can refer back to your keyword mapping and see not only see whether the heading is in an <h1> tag, but also whether it includes the right keywords.

Keyword Cannibalization

Keyword cannibalization typically starts when a website's information architecture calls for the targeting of a single term or phrase on multiple pages of the site. This is often done unintentionally, but it can result in several or even dozens of pages that have the same keyword target in the title and header tags. Figure 4-5 shows the problem.

Problem   solution
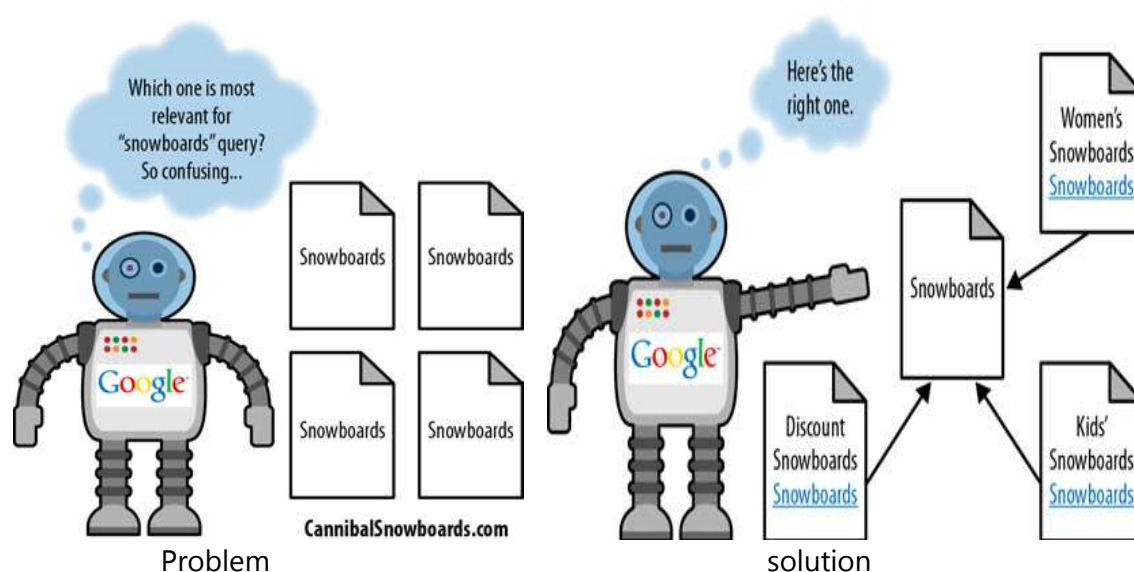
The difference in this example is that instead of every page targeting the single term snowboards, the pages are focused on unique, valuable variations and all of them link back to an original, canonical source for the single term.

Server and Hosting Issues

The following are some server and hosting issues that can negatively impact search engine rankings:

Server timeouts

If a search engine makes a page request that isn't served within the bot's time limit (orthat produces a server timeout response), your pages may not make it into the index at all, and will almost certainly rank very poorly (as no indexable text content has been found).

Slow response times

Although this is not as damaging as server timeouts, it still presents a potential issue. Not only will crawlers be less likely to wait for your pages to load, but surfers and potential linkers may choose to visit and link to other resources because accessing your site is problematic.

Shared IP addresses

Basic concerns include speed, the potential for having spammy or untrusted neighbors sharing your IP address, and potential concerns about receiving the full benefit of links to your IP address

Blocked IP addresses

As search engines crawl the Web, they frequently find entire blocks of IP addresses filled with nothing but egregious web spam.

Bot detection and handling

Some sys admins will go a bit overboard with protection and restrict access to files to any single visitor making more than a certain number of requests in a given time frame. This can be disastrous for search engine traffic, as it will constantly limit the spiders' crawling ability.

Bandwidth and transfer limitations

Many servers have set limitations on the amount of traffic that can run through to the site.

Server geography

This isn't necessarily a problem, but it is good to be aware that search engines do use the location of the web server when determining where a site's content is relevant from a local search perspective.

Since local search is a major part of many sites' campaigns and it is estimated that close to 40% of all queries have some local search intent, it is very wise to host in the country (it is not necessary to get more granular) where your content is most relevant.

Identifying Current Server Statistics Software and Gaining Access

In next chapter we will discuss in detail the methods for tracking results and measuring success, and we will also delve into how to set a baseline of measurements for your SEO projects. But before we do that, and before you can accomplish these tasks, you need to have the right measurement systems in place.

Web Analytics

Analytics software can provide you with a rich array of valuable data about what is taking place on your site. It can answer questions such as:
• How many unique visitors did you receive yesterday?
• Is traffic trending up or down?
• What are the most popular search terms with which people find you?
• What are the most popular pages on your site?
• What are the best-converting pages on the site?

High-quality, free analytics tools are available, such as Yahoo! Web Analytics and Google Analytics.

Log files Tracking

Log files contain a detailed click-by-click history of all requests to your web server. Make sure you have access to the log files and some method for analyzing them.

If you use a third-party hosting company for your site, chances are it provides some sort of free log file analyzer, such as AWStats, Webalizer, or something similar.

Obtain access to whatever tool is in use as soon as you can.

Google and Bing Webmaster Tools

As mentioned earlier, other valuable sources of data include Google Webmaster Tools and Bing Webmaster Tools.

Search Analytics

Search analytics is a new and emerging category of tools. Search analytics tools specifically monitor how your website interacts with the search engines. Compete (http://www.compete.com) offers search-specific analytic tools, as do many smaller vendors.

Determining Top Competitors

Understanding the competition should be a key component of planning your SEO strategy.

The first step is to understand who your competitors in the search results really are. It can often be small players who give you a run for your money.

Seeking the Best

Look for competitors whose efforts you would like to emulate (or "embrace and extend," as Bill Gates would put it)—usually a website that consistently dominates the upper half of the first page of search results in the search engines for a range of important keywords that are popular and relevant to your target audience.

To assess competitors' competence at SEO, you need to answer the following questions:

- Are their websites fully indexed by Google and Yahoo!? In other words, are all their web pages, including product pages, making it into the search engines' databases? You can go to each search engine and type in site: theirdomain.com to find out.
- Do their product and category pages have keyword-rich page titles (title tags) that are unique to each page? You can easily review an entire site's page titles within Google or Yahoo! by searching for site: www.yourcompetitor.com.
- Do their product and category pages have reasonably high Page Rank scores?
- Is anchor text across the site, particularly in the navigation, keyword-rich?
- Are the websites getting penalized? You can overdo SEO. Too much keyword repetition or too many suspiciously well-optimized text links can yield a penalty for over-optimization.
- Are they spamming the search engines with "doorway pages"? According to Google:
- "Doorway pages are typically large sets of poor-quality pages where each page is optimized for a specific keyword or phrase.

Uncovering Their Secrets

- What keywords are they targeting? You can determine this by looking at the page titles.<meta name="keywords" content="keyword1, keyword2, ...">
- Who's linking to their home page, or to their top-selling product pages and category pages? A link popularity checker can be quite helpful in analyzing this.
- If it is a database-driven site, what technology tricks are they using to get search engine spiders such as Googlebot to cope with the site being dynamic?
- You can check to see whether they are using the same server software as you by using the "What's that site running?" tool at the top-left corner of http://news.netcraft.com. Figure 4-10 shows a screenshot of the results for HSN.com.

Site report for www.hsn.com

Site	http://www.hsn.com	Last reboot	unknown	Uptime graph
Domain	hsn.com	Netblock owner	Akamai Technologies	
IP address	88.221.178.38	Site rank	10792	
Country	EU	Nameserver	dns.hsn.com	
Date first seen	July 1998	DNS admin	hostmaster@hsn.com	
Domain Registrar	melbourneit.com	Reverse DNS	a88-221-178-38.deploy.akamaitechnologies.com	
Organisation	HSN Interactive LLC, 1 HSN Dr, St Petersburg, 33729, United States	Nameserver Organisation	HSN Interactive LLC, 1 HSN Dr, St Petersburg, 33729, United States	
Check another site:		Netcraft Site Report Gadget	Google	[More Netcraft Gadgets]

Hosting History

Netblock Owner	IP address	OS	Web Server	Last changed
Akamai Technologies	2.19.226.38	Linux	Microsoft-IIS/6.0	12-Jul-2011
Akamai Technologies	2.19.226.38	Linux	Microsoft-IIS/6.0	11-Jun-2011
Home Shopping Network, Inc. 1 HSN Drive St. Petersburg FL US 33729	192.234.237.220	unknown	Microsoft-IIS/6.0	17-Apr-2011
Home Shopping Network 1 HSN Drive St Petersburg FL US 33729	161.254.200.220	F5 Big-IP	Microsoft-IIS/6.0	16-Apr-2011
Home Shopping Network, Inc. 1 HSN Drive St. Petersburg FL US 33729	192.234.237.220	unknown	Microsoft-IIS/6.0	15-Apr-2011
Home Shopping Network 1 HSN Drive St Petersburg FL US 33729	161.254.200.220	F5 Big-IP	Microsoft-IIS/6.0	14-Apr-2011
Home Shopping Network, Inc. 1 HSN Drive St. Petersburg FL US 33729	192.234.237.220	unknown	Microsoft-IIS/6.0	13-Apr-2011
Home Shopping Network 1 HSN Drive St Petersburg FL US 33729	161.254.200.220	F5 Big-IP	Microsoft-IIS/6.0	12-Apr-2011
Home Shopping Network, Inc. 1 HSN Drive St. Petersburg FL US 33729	192.234.237.220	unknown	Microsoft-IIS/6.0	11-Apr-2011
Home Shopping Network 1 HSN Drive St Petersburg FL US 33729	161.254.200.220	F5 Big-IP	Microsoft-IIS/6.0	10-Apr-2011

- What effect will their future SEO initiatives have on their site traffic? Assess the success of their SEO not just by the lift in rankings.
- Simply go to Compete.com, Quantcast.com, or Alexa.com and search on the competitor's domain. If you have the budget for higher-end competitive intelligence tools, you can use comScore.com or Hitwise.com.

The data these tools can provide is limited in its accuracy, but still very useful in giving you a general assessment of where your competitors are.

The tools are most useful when making relative comparisons between sites in the same market space.

Assessing Historical Progress

Measuring the results of SEO changes can be challenging, partly because there are so many moving parts and partly because months can elapse between when changes are made to a site and when results are seen in search rankings and traffic.

This difficulty only increases the importance of measuring progress and being accountable for results. This section will explore methods for measuring the results from your SEO efforts.

Maintain a Timeline of Site Changes

Keeping a log of changes to your site is absolutely recommended.

You will have a harder time executing your SEO plan and managing the overall SEO process.

Sure, without one you can still gauge the immediate effects of content additions/revisions, link acquisitions, and development changes, but visibility into how technical modifications to the website might have altered the course of search traffic, whether positively or negatively, is obscured.

If you can't map changes—both those intended to influence SEO and those for which SEO wasn't even a consideration—you'll be optimizing blind and could miss powerful signals that could help dictate your strategy going forward.

There are many scenarios in which you will want to try to establish cause and effect, such as:

If search traffic spikes or plummets (synonym to drop swiftly, drop, fall)

Sudden changes in organic traffic are obviously notable events. If traffic plummets, you will be facing lots of questions about why, and having a log of site changes will put you in a better position to assess whether any changes you recommended could have been the cause.

When gradual traffic changes begin

Changes do not always come as sudden spikes or drop-offs. If you see the traffic beginning a gradual climb (or descent), you will want to be able to assess the likely reasons.

To track and report SEO progress: Accountability is a key component of SEO. Budget managers will want to know what return they are getting on their SEO investment.

Types of Site Changes That Can Affect SEO

Your log should track all changes to the website, not just those that were made with SEO in mind. Organizations make many changes that they do not think will affect SEO, but that have a big impact on it. Here are some examples:

• Adding content areas/features/options to the site (this could be anything from a new blog to a new categorization system).

• Changing the domain of the site.

• Modifying URL structures. Changes to URLs on your site will likely impact your rankings, so record any and all changes.

• Implementing a new CMS. This is a big one, with a very big impact.

• Establishing new partnerships that either send links or require them (meaning your site is earning new links or linking out to new places).

• Acquiring new links to pages on the site other than the home page (referred to as "deep links").

• Making changes to navigation/menu systems (moving links around on pages, creating new link systems, etc.).

• Implementing redirects either to or from the site.

When you track these items, you can create an accurate storyline to help correlate causes with effects.

Previous SEO Work

When you are brought on to handle the SEO for a particular website, one of the first things you need to find out is which SEO activities have previously been attempted.

There may be valuable data there, such as a log of changes that you can match up with analytics data to gauge impact.

If no such log exists, you can always check the Wayback Machine (http://www.archive.org) to see whether it has historical logs for your website. This offers snapshots of what the site looked like at various points in time.

Even if a log was not kept, spend some time building a timeline of when any of the types of changes that affect SEO (as discussed in the previous section) took place.

You should also pay particular attention to understanding the types of link-building activities that took place.

Benchmarking Current Indexing Status

The search engines have an enormous task: that of indexing the world's online content—well, more or less. The reality is that they try hard to discover all of it, but they do not choose to include all of it in their indexes. There can be a variety of reasons for this, such as the page being inaccessible to the spider, being penalized, or not having enough link juice to merit inclusion.

When you launch a new site or add new sections to an existing site, or if you are dealing with a very large ite, not every page will necessarily make it into the index. To get a handle on this you will want to actively track the indexing level of your site. If your site is not fully indexed, it could be a sign of a problem (not enough links, poor site structure, etc.).

All three major search engines support the same basic syntax for that: site: yourdomain.com. Figure 4-12 shows a sample of the output from Bing.
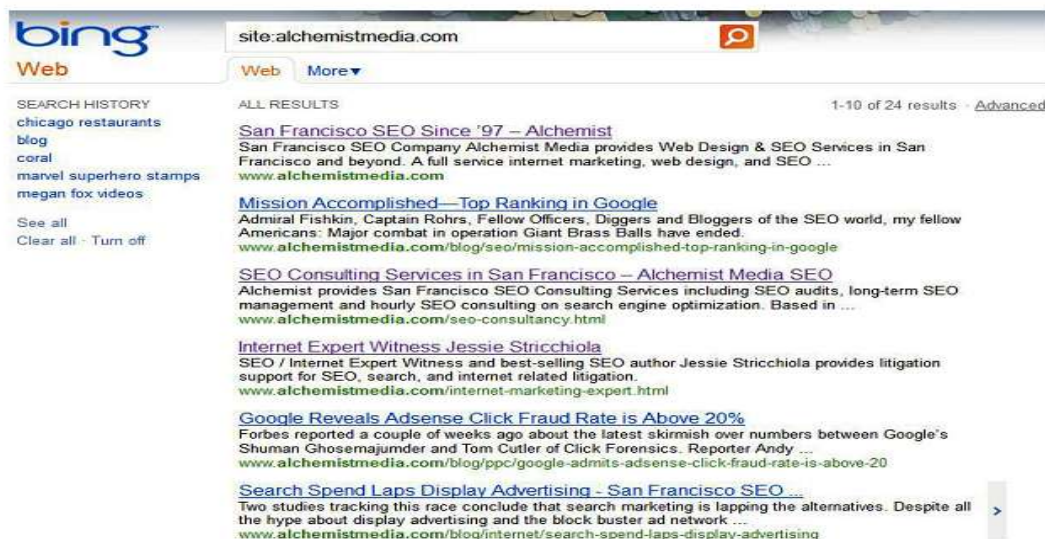

IRE 4-12. Indexing data from Bing

Google web master tools

Related to indexation is the crawl rate of the site. Google provides this data in Google Webmaster Central.

Figure 4-13 shows a screenshot representative of the crawl rate charts that are available (another chart, not shown here, displays the average time spent downloading a page on your site).

Benchmarking Current Rankings

People really love to check their search rankings. Many companies want to use this as a measurement of SEO progress over time, but it is a bit problematic, for a variety of reasons.

Here is a summary of the major problems with rank checking:

• Google results are not consistent:

—Different geographies (even in different cities within the United States) often give different results.

—Different data centers give different results (and you can hit multiple data centers from a single location at different times).

—Results are personalized for logged-in users based on their search histories.

—No rank checker can monitor and report all of these inconsistencies (at least, not without scraping Google hundreds of times from all over the world with every possible

•The Google API rarely matches up to what anyone sees in the search results:

— It appears to match up only on very heavily trafficked, consistent search results; anything mid-tail or long tail is invariably inaccurate.

The most fundamental objective of any SEO project should be to drive the bottom line. For a business, this means delivering more revenue with favorable ROI. As a precursor to determining the level of ROI impact, the SEO practitioner must focus on increasing the volume of relevant traffic to the site.

As an SEO practitioner, it will be natural to want to delve into more detail—specifically, break down the search engine traffic and understand that better as well.

Leveraging Business Assets for SEO

Chances are your company/organization has a lot of valuable commodities beyond the website that can be put to good use to improve the quality and quantity of traffic you receive through search engine optimization efforts. We discuss some of these things in the subsections that follow.

Other Domains You Own/Control

If you have multiple domains, the major items to think about are:

• Can you 301-redirect some of those domains back to your main domain or to a subfolder
on the site for additional benefit?

• Do you own exact keyword match domain names that would make for effective
Micro sites?

• If you're maintaining those domains as separate sites, are you linking between them?
Intelligently?

Partnerships On and Off the Web

Partnerships can be leveraged in similar ways, particularly on the link-building front.

If you have business partners that you supply or otherwise work with—or from whom you receive service—chances are good that you can implement link strategies between their sites and yours.

Although reciprocal linking carries a bit of a bad reputation, there is nothing wrong with building a "partners," "clients," "suppliers," or "recommended" list on your site, or with requesting that your organizational brethren do likewise for you.

Content or Data You've Never Put Online

Chances are that you have content that you have never published on your website. This content can be immensely valuable to your SEO efforts.

Those hundreds of lengthy articles you published when you were shipping a print publication via the mail are a great fit for your website archives.

You should take all of your email newsletters and make them accessible on your site.

If you have unique data sets or written material, you should apply it to relevant pages on your site (or consider building out if nothing yet exists).

Customers Who Have Had a Positive Experience

Customers are a terrific resource for earning links, but did you also know they can write? Customers and website visitors can contribute all kinds of content. Seriously, if you have user-generated content (UGC) options available to you and you see value in the content your users produce, by all means reach out to customers, visitors, and email list subscribers for both links and content opportunities.

You're Fans

This principle applies equally to generic enthusiasts of your work. there are people out there who've used your products or services and would love to share their experiences.

Do you make video games? Reach out to your raving fans. Written a book? Mobilize your literary customers on the Web. Organize events? Like customers, fans are terrific resources for link acquisition, content creation, positive testimonials, and social media marketing (to help spread the word).

Combining Business Assets and Historical Data to Conduct SEO:

Website SWOT Analysis

A classic staple of business school is the SWOT analysis—identifying the strengths, weaknesses opportunities, and threats faced by a business or project. As we saw in Chapter 3, by combining data from your business asset assessment and historical tracking data (and visitor analytics), you can create some very compelling analyses of your organization and its marketplace.

Identifying strengths is typically one of the easier objectives:

•What sources of traffic are working well for your site/business?

•Which projects/properties/partnerships are driving positive momentum toward traffic/revenue goals?

•Which of your content sections/types produces high traffic and ROI?

•What changes have you made historically that produced significant value?

Determining the weaknesses can be tougher (and takes more intellectual honesty and courage):

•What content is currently driving low levels of search/visitor traffic?

• Which changes that were intended to produce positive results have shown little/no value?

•Which traffic sources are underperforming or under delivering?

•What projects/properties/partnerships are being leveraged poorly?

Parsing opportunities requires a combination of strength and weakness analysis. You want to
Find areas that are doing well but have room to expand, as well as those that have yet to be
Explored:

•What brainstormed but undeveloped or untested projects/ideas can have a significant, positive impact?

•What traffic sources currently sending good-quality traffic could be expanded to provide more value?

•What areas of weakness have direct paths to recovery?

•Which website changes have had positive results? Can these be applied more rigorously or to other areas for increased benefit?

• What new markets or new content areas are potentially viable/valuable for expansion?

• In your areas of weakness, which players in your market (or other, similar markets) are strong? How have they accomplished this?

• What shifts in human behavior, web usage, or market conditions could dramatically impact your business/site?

•Which competitors have had the most success in your arena? How have they accomplished this? Where do they intersect with your business/customers?
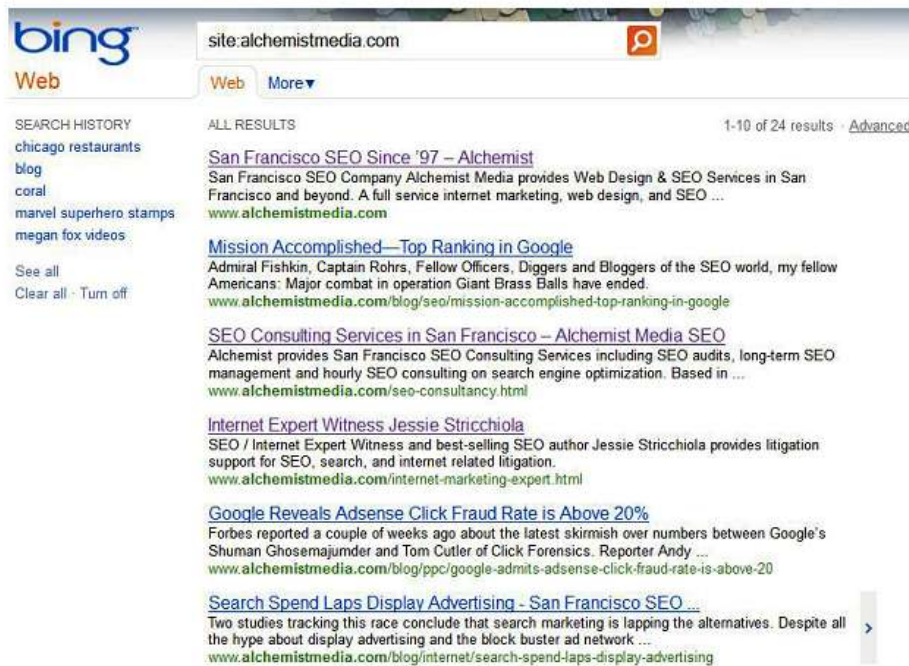
Conclusion

The first steps of SEO can often be challenging ones. It is also tempting to launch into the effort just to get things moving. However, spending some focused effort on setting up your SEO strategy before implementation will pay big dividends in the long run. Establish a strong foundation, and you will help set yourself up for SEO success.

Benchmarking Current Indexing Status

The search engines have an enormous task: that of indexing the world's online content—well, more or less. The reality is that they try hard to discover all of it, but they do not choose to include all of it in their indexes. There can be a variety of reasons for this, such as the page being inaccessible to the spider, being penalized, or not having enough link juice to merit inclusion.

When you launch a new site or add new sections to an existing site, or if you are dealing with a very large site, not every page will necessarily make it into the index. To get a handle on this you will want to actively track the indexing level of your site. If your site is not fully indexed, it could be a sign of a problem (not enough links, poor site structure, etc.).

All three major search engines support the same basic syntax for that: site:yourdomain.com. Figure 4-12 shows a sample of the output from Bing.

IRE 4-12. Indexing data from Bing

Google web master tools

Related to indexation is the crawl rate of the site. Google provides this data in Google Webmaster Central.

Figure 4-13 shows a screenshot representative of the crawl rate charts that are available (another chart, not shown here, displays the average time spent downloading a page on your site).
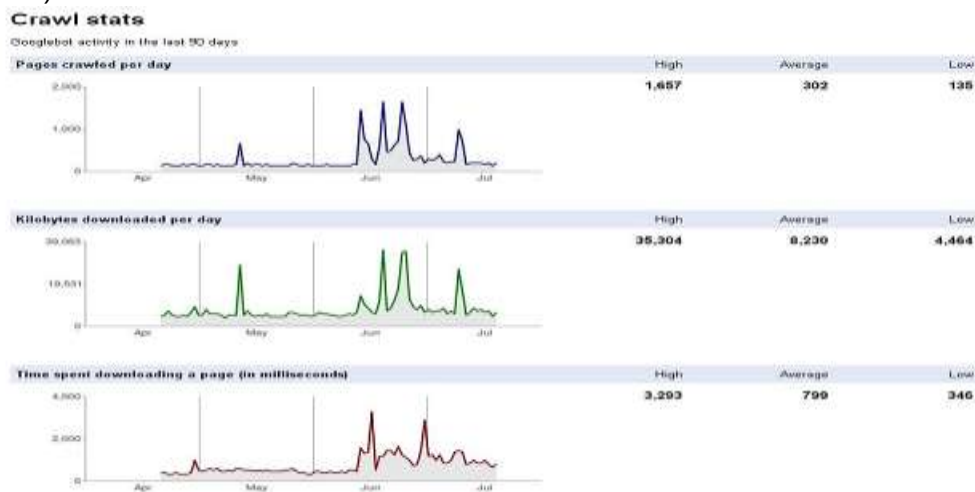

FIGURE 4-12. Indexing data from Bing

Benchmarking Current Rankings

People really love to check their search rankings. Many companies want to use this as a measurement of SEO progress over time, but it is a bit problematic, for a variety of reasons.

Here is a summary of the major problems with rank checking:

• Google results are not consistent:

—Different geographies (even in different cities within the United States) often give different results.

—Different data centers give different results (and you can hit multiple data centers from a single location at different times).

—Results are personalized for logged-in users based on their search histories.

—No rank checker can monitor and report all of these inconsistencies (at least, not without scraping Google hundreds of times from all over the world with every possible

•The Google API rarely matches up to what anyone sees in the search results:

— It appears to match up only on very heavily trafficked, consistent search results;
Anything mid-tail or long tail is invariably inaccurate.

—It is extremely slow to update, so even though news results or geographic results
might be mixed in

•Obsessing over rankings (rather than traffic) can result in poor strategic decisions:

Benchmarking Current Traffic Sources and Volume

The most fundamental objective of any SEO project should be to drive the bottom line. For a business, this means delivering more revenue with favorable ROI. As a precursor to determining the level of ROI impact, the SEO practitioner must focus on increasing the volume of relevant traffic to the site.

As an SEO practitioner, it will be natural to want to delve into more detail—specifically, break down the search engine traffic and understand that better as well.

Reporting period : 2009.06.01 - 2009.06.30 (COT)

This report shows the number of individual people (filtered for spiders and robots) who visited your web site during the selected period. Based on the resolution tab you select, the report will display hourly, daily, weekly, or monthly visitors. This report is available for reporting periods only after **January 1, 2007.**

The Visitors metric is calculated by generating a unique visitor ID and storing it in the visitor's cookie. Users who do not support cookies will be excluded from this report. Please note that deleting cookies will inflate the number of Visitors.

Day	Visitors
June 01, 2009 Mon	253
June 02, 2009 Tue	281
June 03, 2009 Wed	282
June 04, 2009 Thu	297
June 05, 2009 Fri	224
June 06, 2009 Sat	119
June 07, 2009 Sun	134

Traffic Sources Overview

Jul 29, 2011 - Aug 28, 2011

All traffic sources sent a total of 11,844 visits

26.53% Direct Traffic

30.61% Referring Sites

39.88% Search Engines

Search Engines 4,723.00 (39.88%)
Referring Sites 3,626.00 (30.61%)
Direct Traffic 3,142.00 (26.53%)
Other 353 (2.98%)

Top Traffic Sources

Sources	Visits	% visits	Keywords	Visits	% visits
google (organic)	4,539	38.32%	seo meta tags	194	4.11%
(direct) ((none))	3,142	26.53%	meta tags seo	155	3.29%
seomoz.org (referral)	627	5.29%	link building techniques	95	2.01%
seroundtable.com (referral)	398	3.36%	stone temple consulting	93	1.97%
feedburner (feed)	249	2.10%	eric enge	59	1.25%

Ch – 5 Keyword Research

The Theory behind Keyword Research

Keyword research is one of the most important, valuable, and high-return activities in the search engine marketing field.

Keyword research enables you to predict shifts in demand, respond to changing market conditions, and ensure that you are producing the products, services, and content that web searchers are already actively seeking.

Every search phrase that's typed into an engine is recorded in one way or another, and keyword research tools such as the ones we discuss in this chapter allow you to retrieve this information.

However, those tools cannot show you (directly) how valuable or important it might be to rank for and receive traffic from those searches.

To understand the value of a keyword, you need to research further, make some hypotheses, test, and iterate—the classic web marketing formula. This chapter seeks to expose the details of this process and the tools that can best assist.

Thinking Strategically

Keyword research tools provide valuable insight into the thinking of your potential customers.

When users go to search engines and type out their search queries, they may use language that is entirely different from what you expect.

Other aspects include the demographics of your target population (male/female, age, income, etc.), where they live, and the time of year. Demand for seasonal products such as Valentine's Day cards, for example, peaks sharply at the relevant time of year and then declines rapidly.

The keyword research tools presented in this chapter will provide you with methods to investigate all these factors.

Understanding the Long Tail of the Keyword Demand Curve

It is wonderful to deal with keywords that **have 5,000 searches per day**, or **even 500 searches per day**, but in reality these "popular" search terms may actually comprise **less than 30%** of the overall searches performed on the Web. The **remaining 70% lie** in what's commonly called the "long tail" of search. See Figure 5-1. The tail contains hundreds of millions of unique searches that might be conducted only a few times in any given day, or even only once ever, but when assessed in aggregate they comprise the majority of the world's demand for information through search engines.

Search engine keyword demand

The "Head" of the search demand curve

Thousands of queries per day

The "Long Tail"

<1 query per week

Popular queries
Stock quotes
NFL
Laptop reviews

"Long Tail" queries
Chart of Argentinian Market in 1994
Draft picks for Seattle Seahawks
Dell m1210 battery life estimates
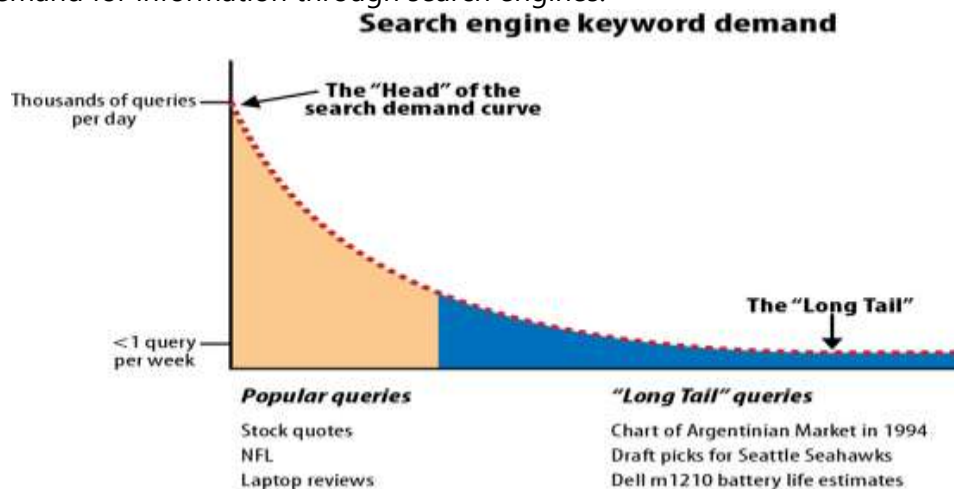
Traditional Approaches: Domain Expertise, Site Content Analysis

Start by generating a list of terms and phrases that are relevant to your industry and pertain to what your site or business offers. The brainstorming phase should ideally result in a list of several dozen to several hundred or more keyword searches that will bring relevant visitors to your site.

One easy way to begin this process is to gather your team in a conference room and then follow these steps:

1. Produce a list of key one- to three-word phrases that describe your products/services.
2. Spend some time coming up with synonyms that your potential customers might use for those products and services. Use a thesaurus to help you with this process.
3. Create taxonomy of all the areas of focus in your industry. You can also look at sites that are leaders in the industry and study their site hierarchies as a way to start your thinking about a taxonomy.
4. Broaden your list by thinking of higher-level terms of which your products or services are a subset.
5. Review your existing site
6. List all your various brand terms.
8. List all your products. If your site has a massive number of products, consider stepping back a level (or two) and listing the categories and subcategories.
9. Have your team imagine they are potential customers, and ask them what they would type into a search engine if they were looking for something similar to your product or service.
11. Use your web analytics tool to see what terms people are already using to come to your site, or what terms they are using within your site search tool if you have one.

Include Competitive Analysis

1. Review your competitors' websites and see what key phrases they use for their products and services that compete with yours.
2. Record what no branded terms they use for their business.
3. Read any articles they have written that are published on sites other than their own.
4. Observe what the media may have had to say about them.

Once you have completed these steps you will have in hand a rich set of terms of interest. The next step is to expand those terms of interest using keyword research tools.

Keyword Research Tools

A wide variety of options are available for performing keyword research, including tools provided by the search engines, tools developed by third parties, and tools for complex keyword analysis of terms culled during research.

➢ **Things to Keep in Mind**

Each tool will provide different search counts than the others. Rather than focusing on the exact search counts of various terms, you should think of each tool as a good way to get a general comparison of two search terms.

If you are just starting out with keyword research, consider starting with the Google Keyword Tool and either Word tracker or Keyword Discovery. This will give you a rich data set with which to begin your keyword research.

➢ **Keyword Research Data from the Engines**

The search engines provide a number of tools that can help you with keyword research.

Blog search counts

Blog search data is terrific for picking out hot topics or keywords in the blogosphere and the realm of social media.

For example, check out the 851,000 results returned by the blog search for cupcake recipes (see Figure 5-2) versus the 3.28 million results returned when web search was used to perform the same search.

Related terms

Several of the engines offer "related" terms, including Google, Yahoo!, Bing, Ask, and Yippy (which shows related terms in clusters, as shown in Figure 5-3).


Common usage and phrase combinations

Using a search with the * character can give you a good idea of what terms/phrases commonly precede or follow a given term/phrase.

Frequency of recent usage

Using the very cool Google date range operator, shown in Figure 5-5, you can determine how many times in the past day, week, month, or year new content related to your term was added to the Google index.
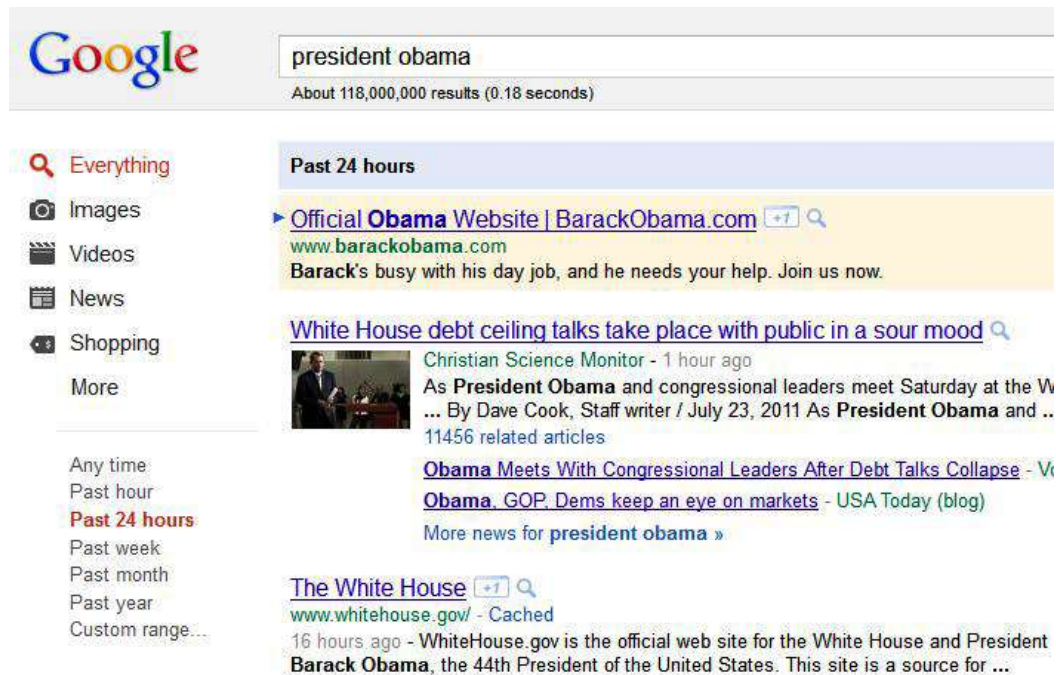

Keyword Research with Tools

It is great to get this data from search engine queries, and it can certainly help you get a sense of the importance of a given keyword. However, a large array of tools exist to give you direct

Google's Ad Words Keyword Tool and Traffic Estimator

Google provides a couple of tools specifically designed for use in keyword research. Although they are primarily meant to help Google's paid search customers, they can also be used to obtain information for organic search.

Google's Ad Words Keyword Tool (https://adwords.google .com/select/KeywordToolExternal) provides related terms, search volume estimates, search trends, and ad cost estimates for any keyword or URL that you enter (see Figure 5-7).
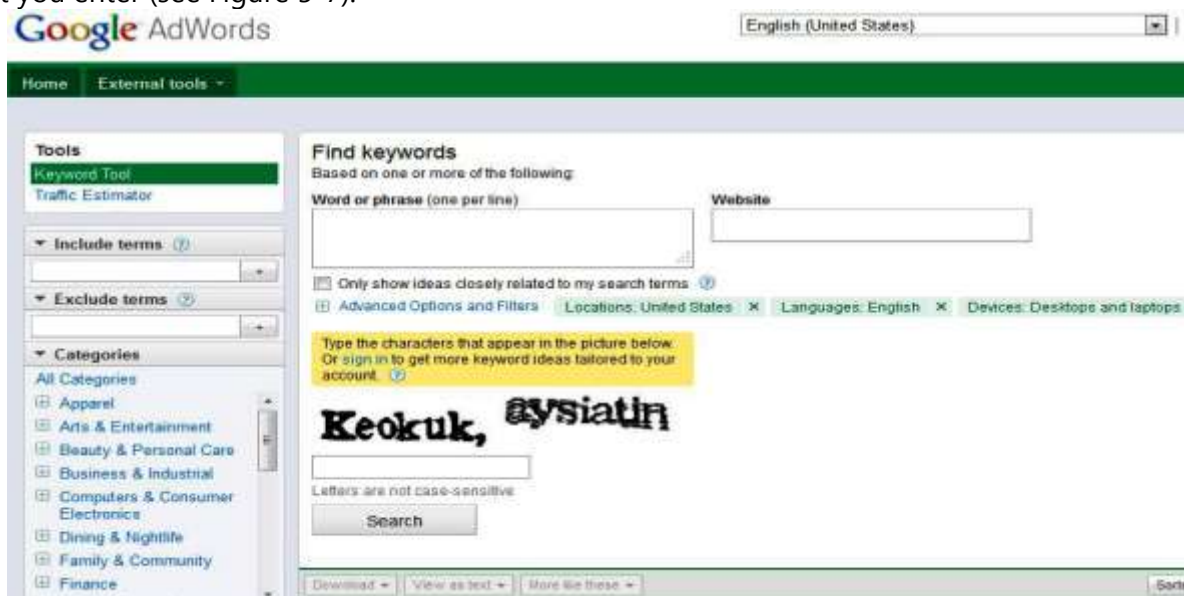
What the Traffic Estimator provides.
Within Google Ad Words is a tool called the Traffic Estimator (see Figure 5-10) that allows you to get estimates of traffic on different keywords?

FIGURE 5-8. Specifying a required term in the Keyword Tool

You can enter your keyword in the following ways:

Broad match

Entering your keyword without any parameters means it will be broadly matched; this means if you buy an ad for this keyword, it will appear in the search results when the search query is interpreted by the search engines as being related to your phrase.

Exact match

Putting brackets around your keyword (e.g., [search engine optimization]) means your ad will show only when a user types in the exact keyword phrase you are targeting.

Phrase match

Adding quotation marks around your keyword (e.g., "search engine optimization") means your ad will show when a user types in a phrase that contains your exact keyword phrase, but it can also contain other words. For example, your ad will show on a search for "how to do search engine optimization."

Negative match

Using the minus sign/dash in front of an undesired keyword (e.g., -spam) before your keyword (e.g., "search engine optimization" for a phrase match) indicates that that term does not apply to you and that you don't want your ad to show for searches that contain the undesired keyword. For example, your ad won't show for "search engine optimization spam.
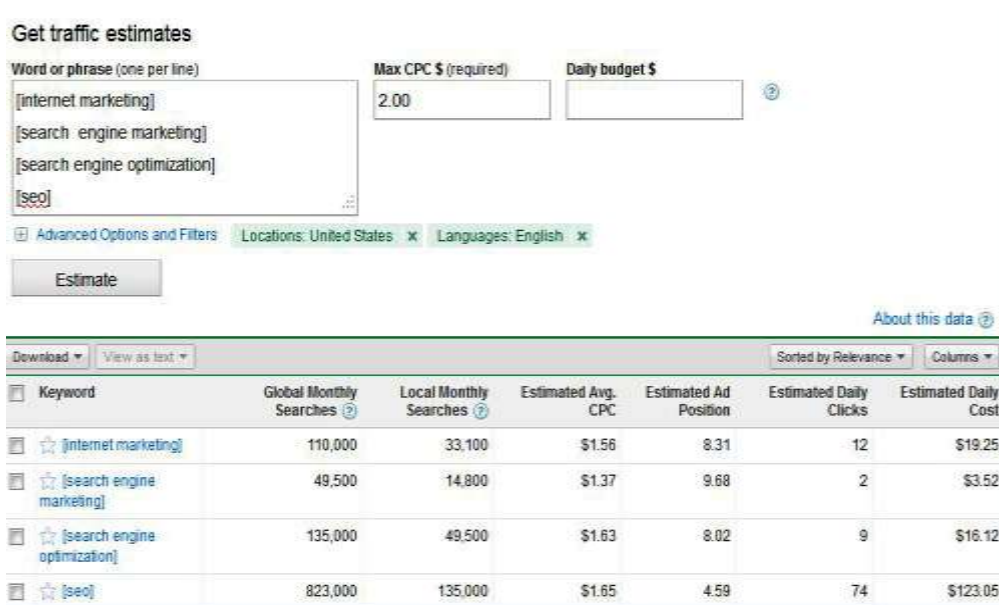
FIGURE 5-11. Traffic Estimator output

Where the tools get their data.

Google's AdWords Keyword Tool and Traffic Estimator get their data from Google's search query database.

➢ **Microsoft's adCenter Keyword Generation Tool:** Microsoft's adCenter Keyword Generation Tool generates keyword suggestions based on a search term or website you enter.
Entering a keyword in the search box will return data that includes search
Phrases that contain the keyword you provided, along with how many
Searches they received in the preceding month, typical click-through rate
(CTR) percentages and average cost per click (CPC).
For example, a search for ice cream returns ice cream maker, ice cream
Recipes, ice cream shop, etc. As you can see in Figure 5-12, the term ice
Cream had, according to Microsoft, 856,543 searches in the month prior
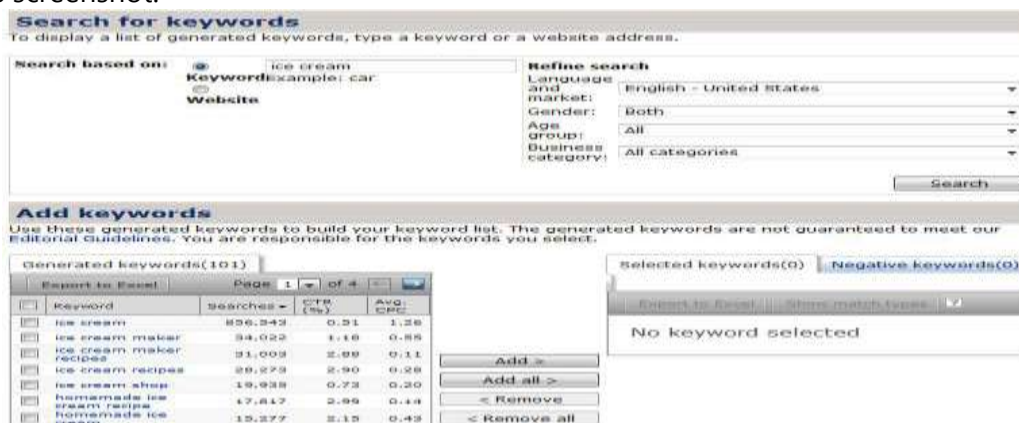To this screenshot.

FIGURE 5-12. Microsoft adCenter Keyword Generation Tool basic output

The "Export to Excel" option allows you to pull the collected data into a spreadsheet. Although the CTR (%) and Avg. CPC columns are intended for paid search customers, they can also provide some indication of SEO value.

FIGURE 5-13. Microsoft adCenter Keyword Generation Tool demographic settings

Where it gets its data: The adCenter Keyword Generation Tool obtains its data from Microsoft's Bing search query database.

Cost: The adCenter Keyword Generation Tool is free, although you do have to create an account with Microsoft adCenter and provide credit card information in the event that you advertise on the Microsoft network.

➢ **Word tracker**

Keyword research tool

When you enter a keyword or phrase in the search box under the Research section, Word tracker displays the most popular search terms that include the keyword or phrase you provided, and the number of searches performed on Word tracker's partner search engines over the past 365 days (which represents about 0.04% of all search volume).

Keyword (?) (2,000)	Searches ▼ (?) (84,955)	Competition (IAAT) (?)	KEI (?)	KEI3 (?)
1 apple news conference (search)	1,205	3,620	176	0.333
2 big ten conference (search)	1,071	60,400	52.8	0.018
3 embedded systems conference (search)	942	8,500	181	0.111
4 world conference against racism (search)	805	3,380	382	0.238
5 big east conference (search)	697	78,700	28.3	0.009
6 tiger press conference (search)	663	327	2,780	2.03
7 climate change conference (search)	662	69,800	8.60	0.009
8 tiger woods news conference (search)	655	959	1,130	0.683
9 southbridge conference center (search)	647	36	2,990	18.0
10 conference (search)	629	94,000,000	0.021	0.000
11 ncaa division i men's basketball conference tournaments (search)	596	30	16,100	19.9
12 american conference pro bowl players (search)	570	65	2,270	8.77

FIGURE 5-14. Sample Word tracker output

Related keywords

The related keywords feature returns a list of keywords that are closely related to the keyword you enter. In Figure 5-15 you can see the results for the word Halloween, which shows that costume and costumes are closely related words. This tool is a great way to find related keywords that may be of interest that are not derived directly from the search term

FIGURE 5-15. Word tracker related keywords

Word tracker provides different subscription offerings that range from a onemonth membership for $69.00 to a 1yr membership for $379.00 (pricing as of December 2011) .

➢ **Keyword Discovery**

Another popular third-party tool for keyword research is Trillion's Keyword Discovery. Keyword Discovery offers the following features: FIGURE 5-17. Keyword Discovery basic output

Seasonal search trends

    If you click on the little bar graph icon next to the number of searches for a query, you'll see a graph of the search trends for that keyword over the past 12 months.

FIGURE 5-18. Keyword Discovery seasonal search trends Spelling mistake research

Typing the query spell: keyword as the Search Term will return spelling variations for that keyword (Word), the number of times the keyword has been searched for (Searches), and the keyword results for your search (Queries).

For example, spell: optimization returns results such as optimation, optimization, and optimization, as shown in Figure 5-19.
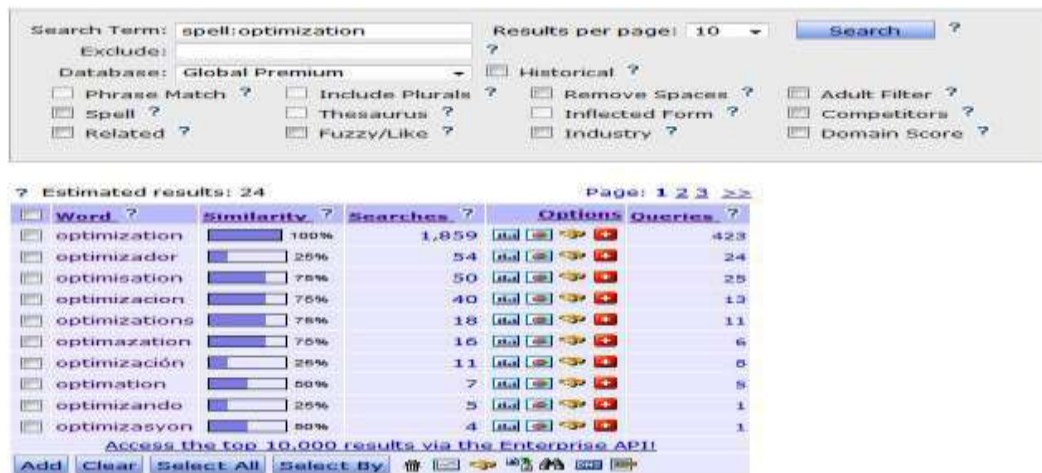
FIGURE 5-19. Keyword Discovery spelling mistakes output

Free Search Term Suggestion Tool

Keyword Discovery offers a free keyword research tool (http://www.keyworddiscovery.com/ search.html) that is similar to Word tracker's free Keyword Suggestion Tool. When you enter a keyword/phrase, you'll see a list containing both the keyword you searched for and similar keywords, along with their estimated search count over the past 12 months.

Where it gets its data: Trellian derives its keyword data primarily from aggregated Historical Global data purchased from ISPs. Trellian also uses a panel of 4.4 million users to collect its Global Premium data.

Cost: Keyword Discovery offers different subscription options that range from a standard monthly subscription for $69.95 to a yearly Enterprise subscription for $4,752.

➢ **Google Trends**

Google Trends allows you to compare two or more search terms to see their relative popularity and seasonality/trending over time. If you enter the terms into the search bar and separate them with commas, you'll see the requested terms' trend history depicted in different colors on a graph spread over a certain time period. You can modify the results by changing the time period and/or region (see Figure 5-22).
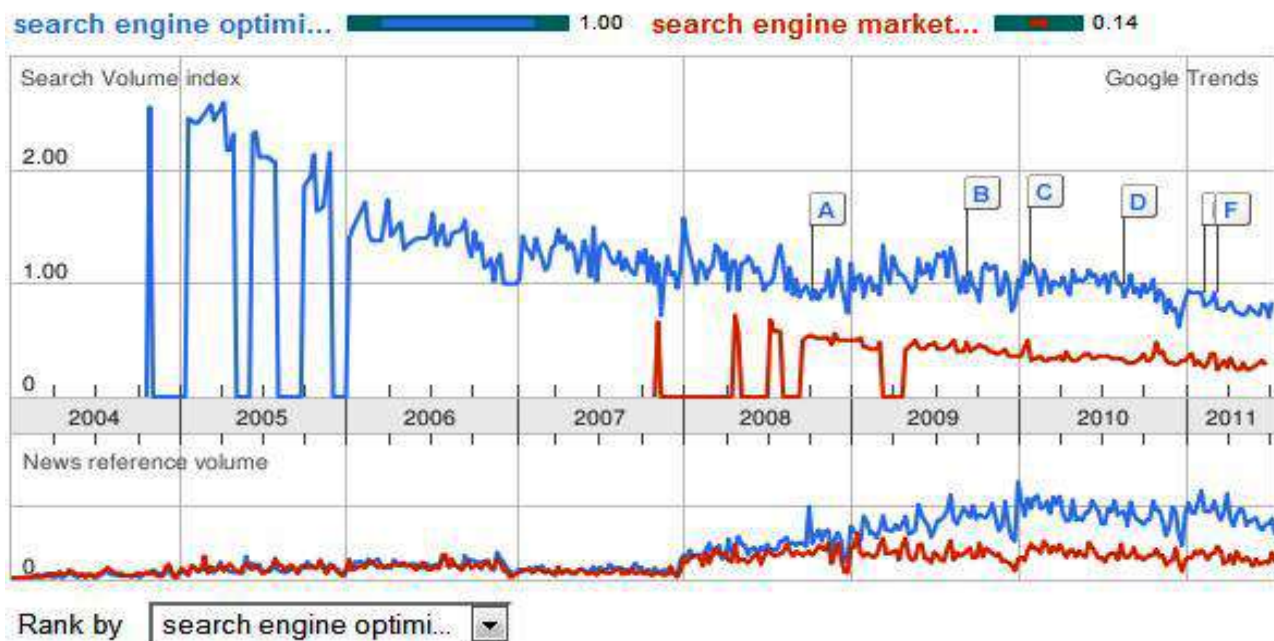
With Google Trends, users can also see Google's estimate of which cities, regions, and languages performed the largest number of searches for a particular keyword (see Figure 5-23).

Cities

	City	
1.	New Delhi, India	▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬
2.	Chennai, India	▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬
3.	Mumbai, India	▬▬▬▬▬▬
4.	Bangalore, India	▬▬▬▬▬
5.	San Diego, CA, USA	▬▬▬▬
6.	Irvine, CA, USA	▬▬▬
7.	Phoenix, AZ, USA	▬▬▬
8.	Miami, FL, USA	▬▬
9.	Tampa, FL, USA	▬▬▬
10.	Austin, TX, USA	▬▬

How it is useful.

Google Trends is a great, easy tool for comparing keywords and identifying which are more popular; in addition, you can examine this data over many years with seasonality factored in. Although Google Trends doesn't supply figures, the graphs are simple to understand and provide a perfect visual of search trends over a particular period of time.

Google Trends is free to use.

Experian Hit wise

Experian Hit wise offers a wide range of competitive and web statistics via its service.

One component of the Experian Hit wise suite, Hit wise Search Intelligence, is a powerful keyword research tool for analyzing the long tail of search data.

Hit wise "popular search terms" report

Searches performed before visiting eBay
4 Rolling Weeks ending August 6, 2011
Report Details ▼

Portfolio ▼   Chart ▼   Add T

	Search Terms (270,097 returned)	Searches Before 1 Step ?	Searches Before ▼ 2 to 5 Steps ?
1	ebay	14.47%	0.82%
2	facebook	0.083%	0.29%
3	craigslist	0.067%	0.28%
4	amazon	0.025%	0.16%
5	google	0.059%	0.099%
6	youtube	0.019%	0.092%
7	yahoo	0.025%	0.084%
8	ebay.com	1.59%	0.082%
9	paypal	0.039%	0.073%
10	my ebay	0.39%	0.071%

Where it gets its data: Hit wise derives its data from more than 25 million people's interaction with the Internet (10 million from the United States). Hit wise collects anonymous Internet usage information from a combination of ISP data partnerships and opt-in panels.
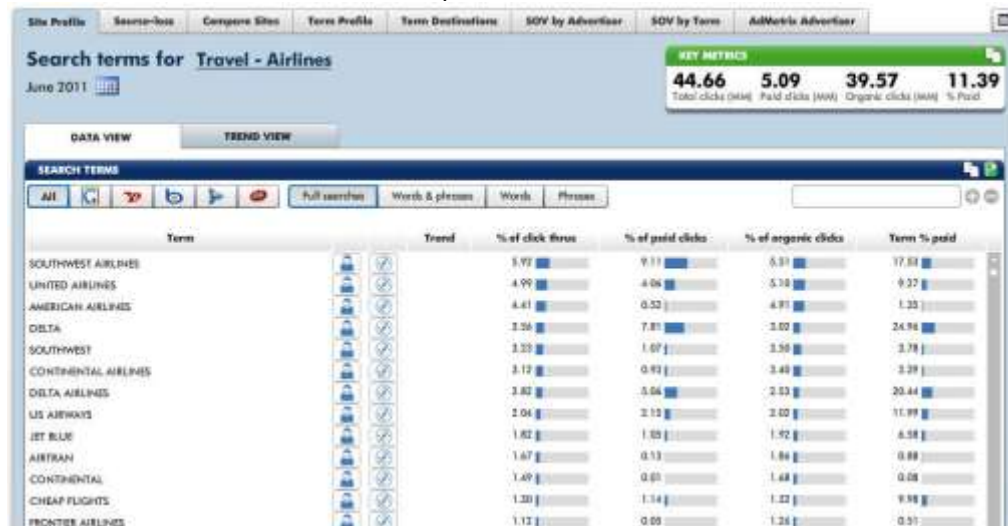
How it is useful: The data is presented in percentages (the volume of searches on a term and its success rate with searchers), which makes it very easy to compare the relative popularity of various keywords but difficult to estimate the actual number of searches for a given term.

Cost: Hit wise is not an inexpensive tool. The website does not list pricing information, but you should be ready to spend $20,000 if you plan to engage with this tool.

ComScore Search Planner: Like Hit wise, comScore Search Planner is a tool that provides a wide range of data as a result of monitoring the behavior of actual users on the Internet.

Where it gets its data. ComScore monitors the behavior of approximately 2 million users.

FIGURE 5-26. ComScore "airline search terms" report

How it is useful: The data is presented in percentages (the volume of searches for a term and its success rate with searchers), which makes it very easy to compare the relative popularity of various keywords but difficult to estimate the actual number of searches for a given term.

Cost: Pricing for comScore Search Planner is available only upon contacting the company. The primary audience for the product is mid-size to large companies with developed SEM/SEO strategies, but the company has some smaller clients as well.

Word stream: Word stream offers keyword research tools with some unique capabilities, such as keyword grouping, and the ability to export up to 10,000 rows of keyword data sorted in priority order.

Where it gets its data: Unlike many keyword research tools, Word stream does not source its data from Google. Instead, the company buys its data from ISPs, browser toolbar providers, and search engines.

How it is useful: Word stream is useful because it pulls its data from different sources than the search engines and goes into further depth in what it will show, exposing more of the long tail of search.

Cost: Word stream is available in a number of different packages, one of which is a free keyword research tool
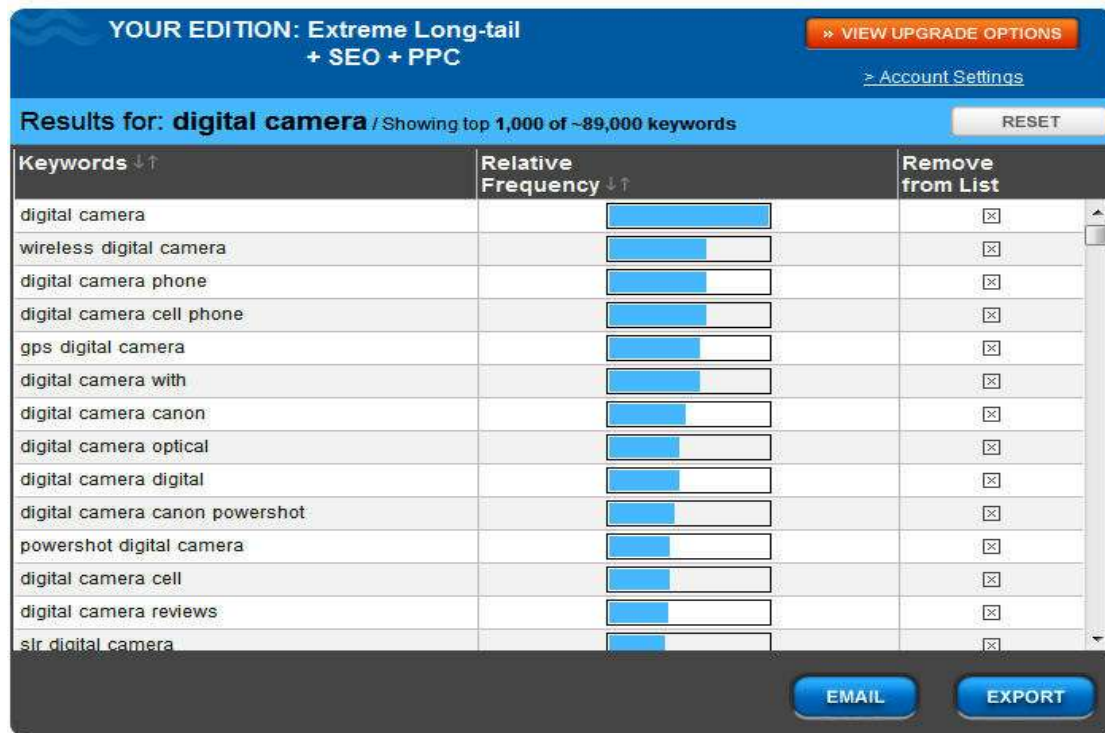
Determining Keyword Value/Potential ROI

Once you have obtained the raw keyword data by doing research with your favorite tools, you need to analyze which keywords have the highest value and the highest ROI.

Unfortunately, there are no simple ways to do this, but we will review some of the things you can do in this section.

Estimating Value, Relevance, and Conversion Rates:

When researching keywords for your site, it is important to judge each keyword's **value, relevance, and potential conversion rate.** If a keyword is strong in all three criteria, it is almost certainly a keyword you want to plan to optimize for within your site.

Determining keyword value

When judging the value of a keyword, you should contemplate how useful the term is for your site. How will your site benefit from targeting different keywords?

Identifying relevant keywords

How relevant is the term/phrase to the content, services, products, or information on your site?

Assuming a visitor who searches for that term clicks on your result in the SERPs, what is the likelihood that she'll perform a desired action on your site (make a purchase, subscribe to a newsletter, etc.), create a link to your site, or influence others to visit?

How many people who search for this term will come to your site and leave dissatisfied?

It is important to categorize your keywords into terms with high and low relevance. Generally, keywords of higher relevance will be more beneficial to your site in that they more closely represent your site as a whole.

Determining conversion rates

The many different types of conversions create distinct opportunities for targeting various keywords. Although one keyword may work well for purchase conversions, another may be well suited to getting users to subscribe to something on your site.

To know which keywords to target now (and which to pursue later), it is essential to understand the demand for a given term or phrase, as well as the work that will be required to achieve the desired rankings. To get a rough idea of the level of competition faced for a particular term or phrase, the following metrics are valuable:

• Search demand volume (how many people are searching for this keyword)
• Number of paid search competitors and bid prices to get in the top four positions

• Strength (age, link power, targeting, and relevance) of the top 10 results
• Number of search results (it can be valuable to use advanced operators such as "exact search" or the allintitle: and allinurl: operators)

Testing Ad Campaign Runs and Third-Party Search Data

One of the things we have emphasized in this chapter is the imprecise nature of the data that keyword tools provide.

TABLE 5-2. Click-through rates by SERP position

Organic position	Click-through rate
1	42.1%
2	11.9%
3	8.5%
4	6.1%
5	4.9%

Using Landing Page Optimization

Landing page optimization (sometimes also called conversion optimization) is the practice of actively testing multiple variations of a web page (or website) to see which one performs the best. Typically, this is done as part of an effort to improve the conversion performance of the site.

The simplest form of this type of test is called an A/B test. A/B tests involve creating two different versions of a page, and then randomly picking which version to show to a new visitor to the site (old visitors get the version they saw the last time they visited). You then measure the behavior of the visitors in response to the two different versions to see which group of visitors completes more conversions on the site.

Leveraging the Long Tail of Keyword Demand

As we discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the long tail of search is where 70% of search queries occur. Only 30% of those precious queries happen in the more obvious terms that people use, the so-called "head terms." Another way to underscore this is that in May 2007, Google Vice President Udi Manber indicated that 20% to 25% of all search queries that Google receives on a given day are queries that Google is seeing for the first time. You can think of this as the "ultra-long tail."

The long tail of search queries in a given industry is typically not visible via any of the major keyword research services or search engine ad databases (Google AdWords, Yahoo! Search Marketing, and MSN adCenter).

With this in mind, let's outline a few methods for finding long-tail terms.

Extracting Terms from Relevant Web Pages

1. Extract the top 10 to 50 most common search phrases at the head of the distribution graph from your existing keyword research in the industry.
2. Search Google and Bing for each term.
3. For each page in the top 10 to 30 results, extract the unique usable text on the page.
4. Remove stop words and filter by phrase size.
5. Remove instances of terms/phrases already in your keyword research database.
6. Sort through the most common remnants first, and comb as far down as you feel is valuable.

Identifying Long-Tail Patterns

You can also take another stab at determining long-tail information. As a hypothetical example using digital camera, here are some searches for two different brands and models of digital cameras that have been pulled (for this demonstration) from the Keyword Discovery database. Each of these received only one search:

Consumer comments on nikon 5.1 mp coolpix l3 digital camera
• New nikon coolpix p3 8 1 mp digital camera memory
• Nikon 3 2 mp coolpix digital camera
• Nikon 51 mp coolpix s1 digital camera and cradle
• Nikon 6 mp coolpix digital camera
• Nikon 7 1 mp coolpix 7900 digital camera
• Nikon 81 mp coolpix 8800 digital camera
• Nikon coolpix 4800 4 mp digital camera
• Nikon coolpix 5200 51 mp digital camera
• Nikon coolpix 5400 51 mp digital camera
• Nikon coolpix 6.0 mp digital camera
• Nikon coolpix 8700 8mp 8x zoom digital camera 8 mp
• Nikon coolpix l2 6.0 mp digital camera
• Nikon coolpix l3 6 mp digital camera usa warranty
• Nikon coolpix p2 51 mp digital camera
• Best buy Sony cyber shot DSC t7 51 mp digital camera
• Brand new Sony cyber shot dsc h1 51 mp digital camera
• Camera digital Sony cyber shot 51 mp
• Sony - cyber shot 10.1 mp digital cameras
• Sony - cyber shot 6.0 mp digital cameras
• Sony 5 mp cyber shot DSC t9 digital camera
• Sony 72 mp cyber shot DSC p200 digital camera information
• Sony 72 mp cyber shot DSC w7 digital camera
Approximately 48% begin with the brand name and end with digital camera.
Approximately 35% are ordered brand, model name, model number, megapixel, digital camera.
Approximately 22.5% are ordered brand, megapixel, model name, digital camera.
A whopping 60% follow the overall pattern of brand, model name, and digital camera.

Editorial Content Strategies for Long-Tail Targeting

One of the most difficult aspects of capturing traffic from the long tail of search is creating relevant, targeted content. FIGURE 5-32. Sample long-tail data

1 ☑ canon digital camera (search)	2,582	698,000	39.8	0.004
2 ☑ canon digital cameras (search)	564	1,350,000	2.39	0.000
3 ☑ canon digital camera reviews (search)	392	21,000	88.0	0.019
4 ☑ canon digital camera in vietnam (search)	288	10	27,600	28.8
5 ☑ compare canon digital cameras (search)	244	1,220	180	0.201
6 ☑ canon digital camera accessories (search)	117	8,950	6.42	0.013
7 ☑ canon digital camera software (search)	115	2,800	8.45	0.041
8 ☑ canon digital camera windows 7 screen fix (search)	105	0	–	–
9 ☑ canon digital camera lens (search)	100	4,820	3.59	0.021
0 ☑ cheap canon digital cameras (search)	95	6,390	10.4	0.015

➢ **User-Generated Content Strategies for Long-Tail Targeting**

User-generated content (UGC) can be a great way to obtain lots of content that will help attract long-tail traffic. Popular ways of doing that include providing users with forums, a place to post reviews or blog comments, or a way to upload videos or images, among others. As users submit content, they do the hard work of writing the text you need to capitalize on the long tail.

If you want to write holiday-related content, it will be important to have your site visible in the SERPs for those search queries prior to that holiday's buying season so that you'll get optimum traffic for those terms.

To make UGC work, you need one or more of the following:

• Significant existing daily site traffic. How much depends on how vertically oriented your community is intended to be. Narrowly focused topics can get going with a smaller number of users.

• A way to generate a lot of buzz to generate site traffic.

• Compelling supporting content.

➢ **Trending, Seasonality, and Seasonal Fluctuations in Keyword Demand**

One of the subtleties of keyword research, and of any fully developed SEO strategy, is that the use of keywords varies significantly over time. For instance, major holidays inevitably lead to bursts of keyword volume related to those holidays. Examples could be searches such as Halloween costumes, gift ideas for Christmas, or Valentine's candy.

Pattern also emerges for searches related to holidays such as Christmas and the Fourth of July. Figure 5-34 shows an example for firecrackers: searches start consistently increasing in early June. Likewise, with Valentine's Day, the searches start in mid-December.
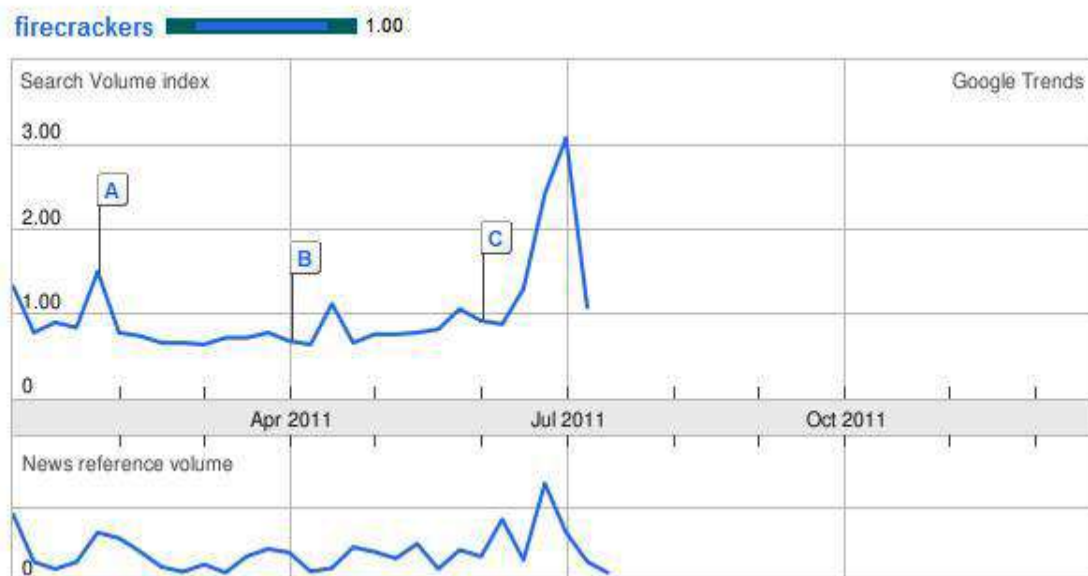
In most cases searches start increasing about two to three months before the holiday.

➢ **Conclusion**

Keyword research is a complex and time-consuming task, but the rewards are high. Once you learn where the keyword search volume is, you can begin to think about how that affects the information architecture and the navigation structure of your site.

CH – 6 Developing SEO friendly Website

Intro….

  In this chapter, we will examine the major elements of how to assess the search engine friendliness of your site. Making your site content accessible to search engines is the first step toward creating visibility in search results. Once your website content is accessed by a search engine, it can then be considered for relevant positioning within the SERPs.

Making Your Site Accessible to Search Engines

  The first step in the SEO design process is to ensure that your site can be found and crawled by the search engines. This is not as simple as it sounds, as there are many popular web designs and implementation constructs that the crawlers may not understand.

❖ Index able Content

  To rank well in the search engines, your site's content—that is, the material available to visitors of your site—should be in HTML text form.

  For example, while the search engines do crawl images and **Flash files**, these are content types that are difficult for search engines to analyze, and therefore they do not help them determine the topical relevance of your pages.

It is difficult to read and crawl the flash file by the search engine.

However, in our experience the preference is almost always given to HTML-based files.

  The search engines also face challenges with **"identifying" images** from a relevance perspective, as there are minimal text-input fields for image files in GIF, JPEG, or PNG format (namely the filename, title, and alt attribute)

  The search engines also face challenges with "identifying" images from a relevance perspective, as there are minimal text-input fields for image files in GIF, JPEG, or PNG format (namely the filename, title, and alt attribute)

❖ Spider able Link Structures

We strongly recommend taking the time to build an internal linking structure that spiders can crawl easily.
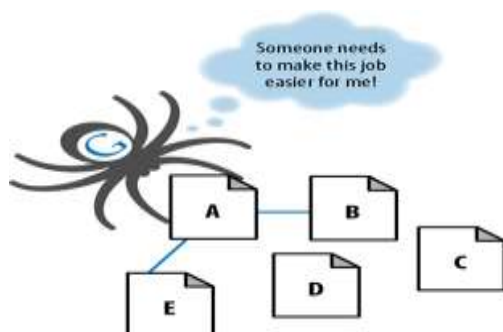
In Figure 6-1, Google's spider has reached Page A and
Sees links to pages B and E. However, even though pages C and D might be important pages on the site, the spider has no way to reach them (or even to know they exist), because no direct, crawl able links point to those

❖ XML Sitemaps

  Google, Yahoo!, and Bing (from Microsoft, formerly MSN Search, and then Live Search) all support a protocol known as XML Sitemaps.

  Google first announced it in 2005, and then Yahoo! and MSN Search agreed to support the protocol in 2006. Using the Sitemaps protocol you can supply the search engines with a list of all the pages you would like them to crawl and index.

Adding a URL to a Sitemap file does not guarantee that it will be crawled or indexed. However, it can result in pages that are not otherwise discovered or indexed by the search engines getting crawled and indexed.

• For the pages they don't know about, they use the additional URLs you supply to increase their crawl coverage.

• For URLs that may have duplicates, the engines can use the XML Sitemaps data to help choose a canonical version.

• Verification/registration of XML Sitemaps may indicate positive trust/authority signals.

• The crawling/inclusion benefits of Sitemaps may have second-order positive effects, such as improved rankings or greater internal link popularity.

Sitemaps use a simple XML format that you can learn about at http://www.sitemaps.org. XML Sitemaps are a useful and in some cases essential tool for your website.

What to include in a Sitemap file

When you create a Sitemap file, you need to take care in situations where your site has multiple URLs that refer to one piece of content.

You can use the Sitemap file as one way to suggest to the search engines which URL points to the preferred version of a given page.

Where to upload your Sitemap file

When your Sitemap file is complete, upload the file to your site in the highest-level directory you want search engines to crawl (generally, the root directory), such as www.yoursite.com/ sitemap.xml.

Managing and updating XML Sitemaps: Once your XML Sitemap has been accepted and your site has been crawled, monitor the results and update your Sitemap if there are issues. With Google, you can return to your Google Webmaster Tools account to view the statistics and diagnostics related to your Google Sitemaps.

Creating an Optimal Information Architecture (IA): Making your site friendly to search engine crawlers also requires that you put some thought into your site information architecture. A well-designed architecture can bring many benefits for both users and search engines.

❖ **The Importance of a Logical, Category-Based Flow**

• The search engines face myriad technical challenges in understanding your site.

• Crawlers are not able to perceive web pages in the way that humans do, and thus significant limitations for both accessibility and indexing exist.

• Logical and properly constructed website architecture can help overcome these issues and bring great benefits in search traffic and usability.

• At the core of website information architecture are two critical principles: usability, or making a site easy to use; and information architecture, or crafting a logical, hierarchical structure for content.

• **Usability and search friendliness**

Search engines are trying to reproduce the human process of sorting relevant web pages by quality.

If a real human were to do this job, usability and the user experience would surely play a large role in determining the rankings.

FIGURE 6-3. Making your site attractive to link to

An analogy

Look at how a standard filing cabinet is organized. You have the individual cabinet, drawers in the cabinet, folders within the drawers, files within the folders, and documents within the files (see Figure 6-4).

Cabinet **Drawer** **Folder** **File** **Document**
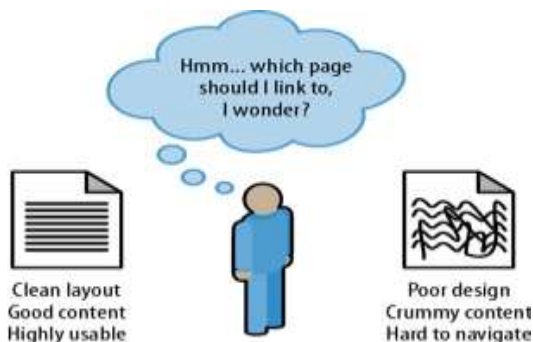
FIGURE 6-4. Similarities between filing cabinets and web pages

Filing Category   **Site Analogue**

Cabinet ➡ **Fully Qualified Domain**
(e.g., seattle.craigslist.org)

Drawer ➡ **Primary Site Category**
(e.g., Housing)

Folder ➡ **Secondary Site Category**
(e.g., Apartments for Rent)

File ➡ **Tertiary Site Category**
(e.g., 2 Bedroom Apartments)

Document ➡ **Individual Page/Item**
(e.g., 2 Bedroom Capitol Hill Loft Apartment)

Figure 6-5 shows what it looks like when you apply this logic to the popular website, Craigslist.org.

This principle applies perfectly to the process of SEO, where good information architecture dictates:

• As few clicks as possible to get to any given page
• One hundred or fewer links per page (so as not to overwhelm either crawlers or visitors)
• A logical, semantic flow of links from home page to categories to detail pages

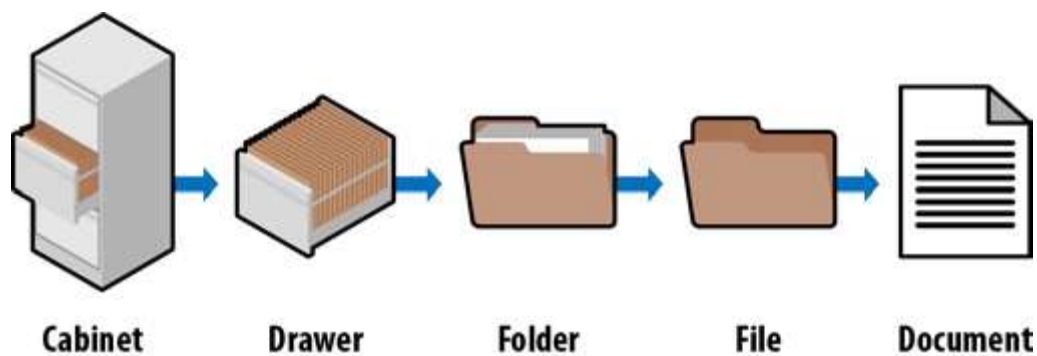**Site Architecture Design Principles**

When planning your website, remember that nearly every user will initially be confused about **where to go, what to do, and how to find what he wants.**

Well-organized site architecture helps solve these problems and provides semantic and usability benefits to both users and search engines.

As Figure 6-6 demonstrates, a recipes website can use intelligent architecture to fulfill visitors' expectations about content and create a positive browsing experience.
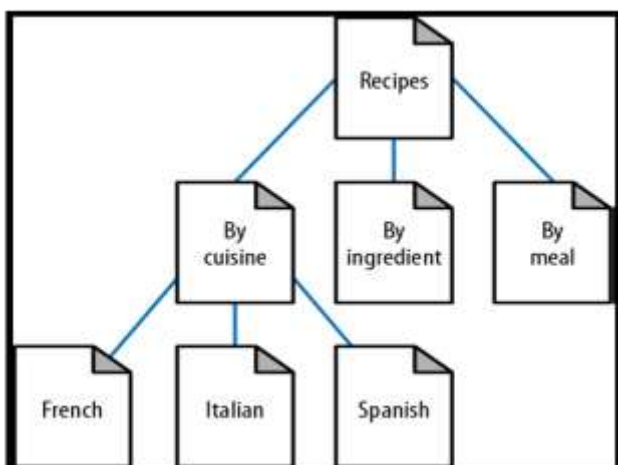
FIGURE 6-6. Structured site architecture

Designing site architecture

The process itself should not be overly arduous, if you follow this simple protocol:

1. List all of the requisite content pages (blog posts, articles, product detail pages, etc.).

2. Create top-level navigation that can comfortably hold all of the unique types of detailed content on the site.

3. Reverse the traditional top-down process by starting with the detailed content and working your

way up to an organizational structure capable of holding each page.

4. Once you understand the bottom, fill in the middle. Build out a structure for sub navigation to sensibly connect top-level pages with detailed content. In small sites, there may be no need for this level, whereas in larger sites, two or even three levels of sub navigation may be required.

5. Include secondary pages such as copyright, contact information, and other nonessentials.

6. Build a visual hierarchy that shows (to at least the last level of sub navigation) each page on the site.
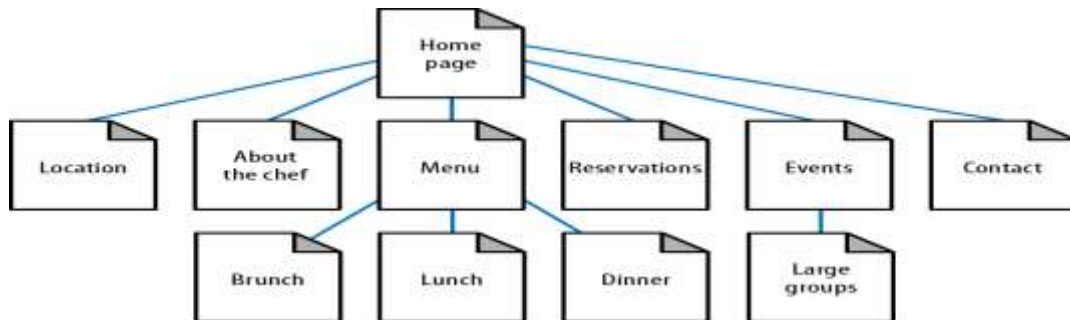
Second example of structured site architecture
❖ Category structuring

As search engines crawl the Web, they collect an incredible amount of data (millions of gigabytes) on the structure of language, subject matter, and relationships between content.

Though not technically an attempt at artificial intelligence, the engines have built a repository capable of making sophisticated determinations based on common patterns.

As shown in Figure 6-8, search engine spiders can learn semantic relationships as they crawl thousands of pages that cover a related topic (in this case, dogs).
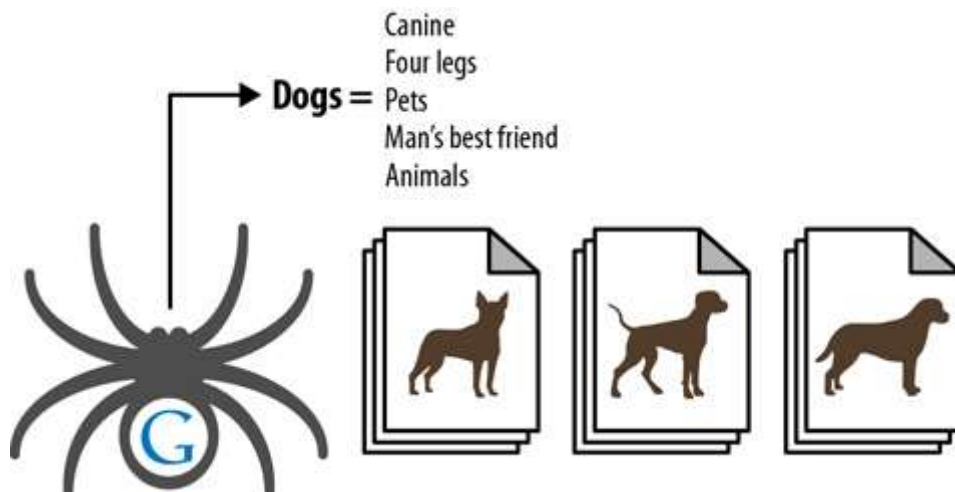
Spiders learning semantic relationships

Topical relevance: Naturally, this pattern of relevance-based scoring extends from single relationships between documents to the entire category structure of a website. Site creators can best take advantage of this by building hierarchies that flow from broad, encompassing subject matter down to more detailed, specific content.

Taxonomy and ontology: In designing a website, you should also consider its taxonomy and ontology.
The taxonomy is essentially a **two-dimensional hierarchical model** of the architecture of the site.

You can think of ontology as mapping the way the human mind thinks about a topic area. It can be much more complex than taxonomy, because a larger number of relationship types can be involved. One effective technique for coming up with an ontology is called card sorting.

Flat Versus Deep Architecture

One very strict rule for search friendliness is the creation of a flat site architecture. Flat sites require a minimal number of clicks to access any given page, whereas deep sites create long paths of links required to access detailed content.

Figure 6-9. In contrast, a flat site (see Figure 6-10) allows users and search engines to reach most content in just a few clicks.
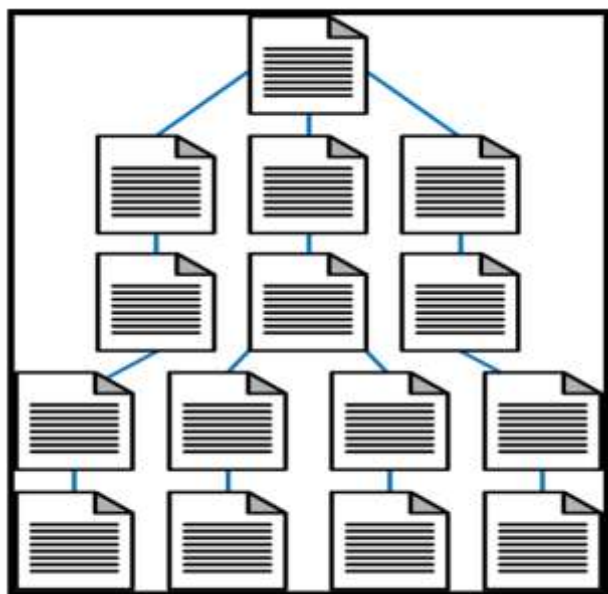
FIGURE 6-9. Deep site architecture   FIGURE 6-10. Flat site architecture
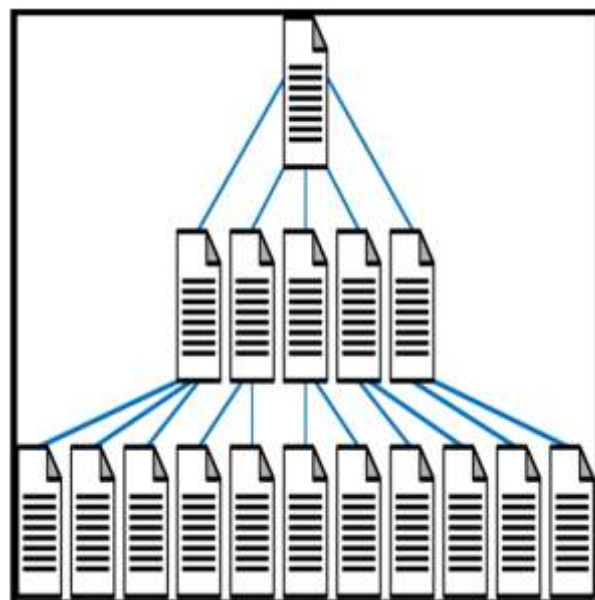
Flat sites aren't just easier for search engines to crawl; they are also simpler for users, as they limit the number of page visits the user requires to reach her destination. This reduces the abandonment rate and encourages repeat visits.

AVOID PAGINATION

Pagination, the practice of creating a sequence of pages to break up long lists of elements or long articles (e.g., some ecommerce sites use pagination for product catalogs that have more products than they wish to show on a single page), is problematic for many reasons.

First, pagination provides virtually no topical relevance. Second, pagination can potentially create duplicate content problems or be seen as indicative of poor-quality content. Last, pagination can create spider traps, and having hundreds or thousands of extraneous, low-quality pages can be detrimental to search visibility.
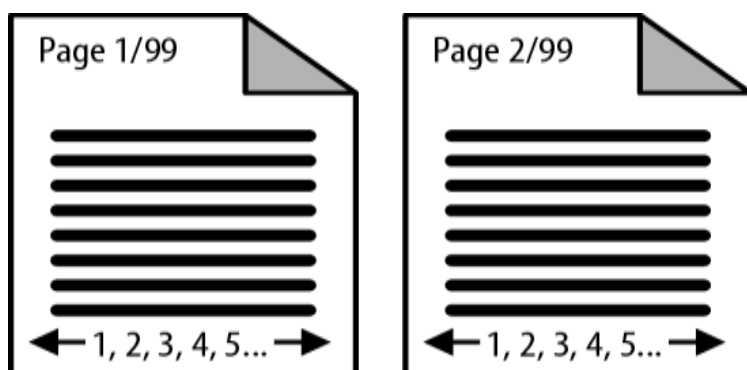
❖ **Search-Friendly Site Navigation**

Website navigation is something that web designers have been putting considerable thought and effort into since websites came into existence.

Even before search engines were significant, navigation played an

Important role in helping users find what they are wanted.
FIGURE 6-11. Pagination structures

It plays an important role in helping search engines understand your site as well.

Basics of search engine friendliness

- The search engine spiders need to be able to read and interpret your website's code to properly spider and index the content on your web pages.
- Do not confuse this with the rules of organizations such as the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), which issues guidelines on HTML construction.
- Although following the W3C guidelines can be a good idea, the great majority of sites do not follow these guidelines, so search engines generally overlook violations of these rules as long as their spiders can parse the code.
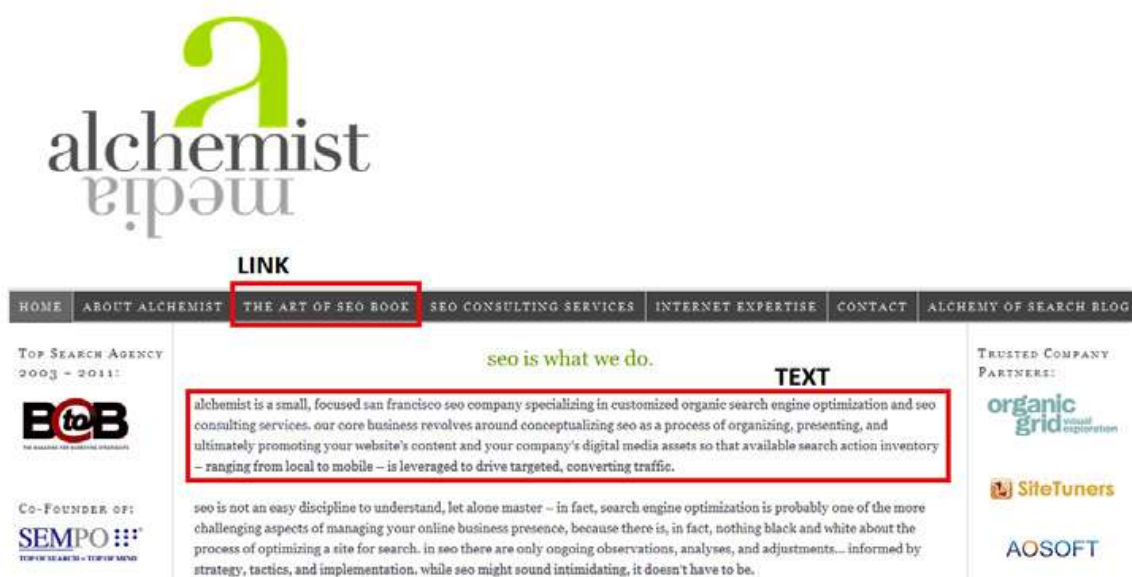
FIGURE 6-12. Example page with simple text and text link

Site elements that are problematic for spiders

While simple HTML is not a problem for the spiders, many other types of content may appear on a web page that work well for humans but not so well for search engines. Here are some of the most common problem areas.

Search and web forms.

Many sites incorporate search functionality. These "site search" elements are specialized search engines that index and provide access to one site's content.

Search engines operate by crawling the Web's link structure—they don't submit forms or attempt random queries into search fields, and thus, any URLs or content solely accessible via a form will remain invisible to Google or Bing.

Java, images, audio, and video. Adobe Shockwave files, Java embeds, audio, and video (in any format) present content that is largely uncrawlable by the major engines.

AJAX and JavaScript.

JavaScript enables many dynamic functions inside a website, most of which interfere very minimally with the operations of a search engine spider. The exception comes when a page must use a JavaScript call to reach another page, or to pull content that the spiders can't see in the HTML.

Standard
http://url.com/app → **New URL**
http://url.com/result1

AJAX
http://url.com/app → http://url.com/app
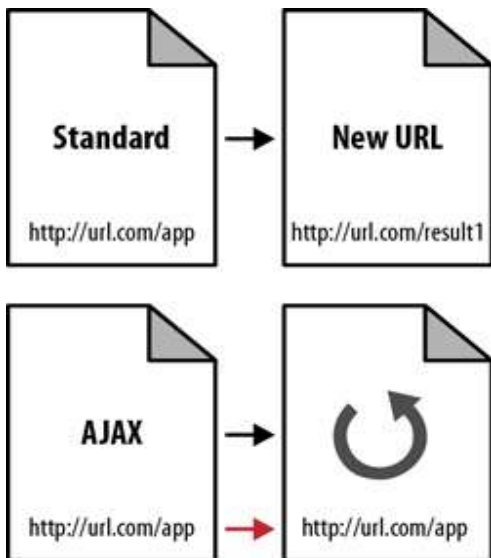
Frames:-

For search engines, the biggest problem with frames and iframes is that they often hold the content from two or more URLs on a single page. For users, the issue is that search engines, which direct searchers to only a single URL, may get confused by frames and direct visitors to single pages (orphan pages) inside a site intended to show multiple URLs at once.

Figure 6-15 shows an example page that illustrates how multiple pages are combined into a single URL with frames, which results in link distribution and spidering issues.

Search engine–friendly navigation guidelines

Although search engine spiders have become more advanced over the years, the basic premise and goals remain the same: spiders find web pages by following links and record the content of the pages they find in the search engine's index (a giant repository of data about websites and pages).

Implement a text link–based navigational structure

If you choose to create navigation in Flash, JavaScript, or some other technology the search engine may be unable to parse, make sure to offer alterna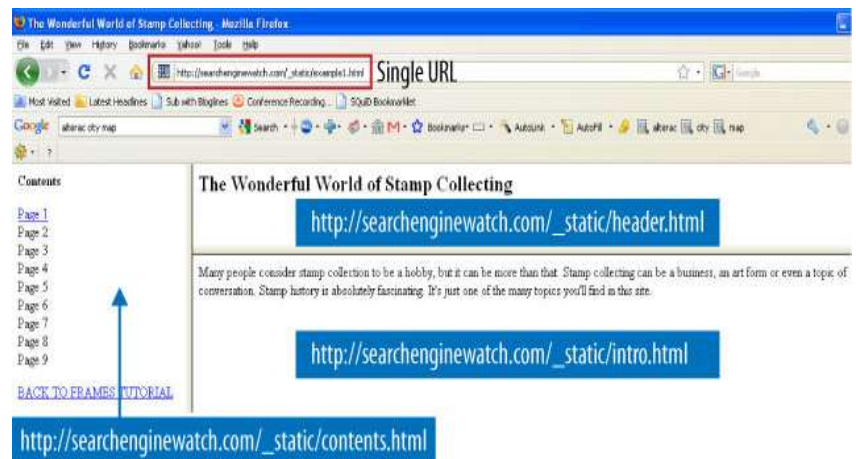tive text links in HTML for spiders to ensure that automated robots (and visitors who may not have the required browser plug-ins) can reach your pages.

Beware of "spider traps"

Even intelligently coded search engine spiders can get lost in infinite loops of links that pass between pages on a site.

Watch out for session IDs and cookies

As we just discussed, if you limit the ability of a user to view pages or redirect based on a cookie setting or session ID, search engines may be unable to crawl your content.

Be mindful of server, hosting, and IP issues

Server issues rarely cause search engine ranking problems—but when they do, disastrous consequences can follow.

The engines are acutely aware of common server problems, such as downtime or overloading, and will give you the benefit of the doubt (though this will mean your content cannot be spidered during periods of server dysfunction).

Root Domains, Sub domains, and Micro sites

Among the common questions that arise when structuring a website (or restructuring one) are whether to host content on a new domain, when to use subfolders, and when to employ micro sites.

➢ Individual pages/URLs

These are the most basic elements of the Web: filenames, much like those that have been found on computers for decades, which indicate unique documents.
A typical URL might look something like: http://www.yourdomain.com/page.html.

➢ Subfolders

The folder structures that websites use can also inherit or be assigned metrics by search engines (though there's very little information to suggest that they are used one way or another).
In the URL http://www.yourdomain.com/blog/post17.html, /blog/ is the subfolder and post17.html is the name of the file in that subfolder.

➢ Sub domains/fully qualified domains (FQDs)/third-level domains

In the URL http://blog.yourdomain.com/page.html, three kinds of domain levels are present. The top-level domain (also called the TLD or domain extension) is .com, the second-level domain is your domain, and the third-level domain is blog. The third-level domain is sometimes referred to as a sub domain.
The word sub domain when referring to www, although technically, this too is a sub domain.

➢ Complete root domains/host domains/pay-level domains (PLDs)/second-level domains

The domain name you need to register and pay for, and the one you point DNS settings toward, is the second-level domain (though it is commonly improperly called the "top-level" domain). In the URL http://www.yourdomain.com/page.html, yourdomain.com is the second-level domain. Other naming conventions may refer to this as the "root" or "pay-level" domain. FIGURE 6-16. Breaking down some example URLs
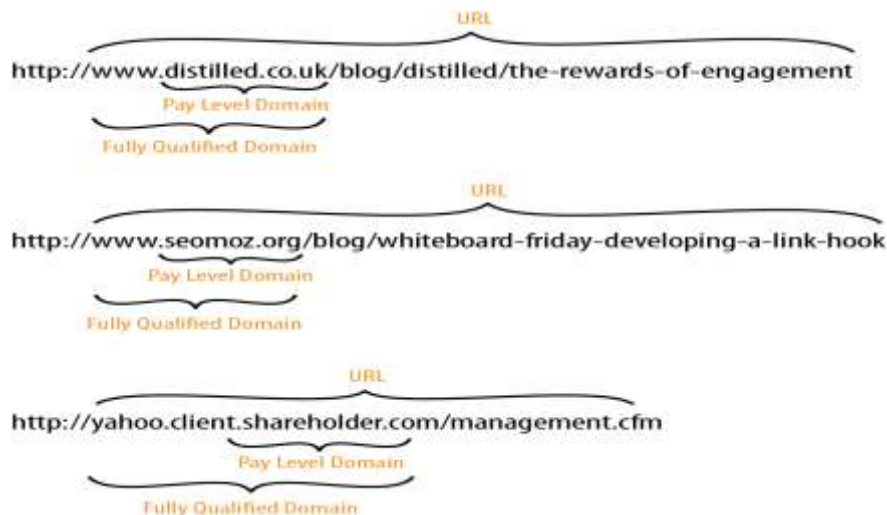
When to Use a Subfolder

If a subfolder will work, it is the best choice 99.9% of the time. Keeping content on a single root domain and single subdomain (e.g., http://www.yourdomain.com) gives the maximum SEO benefits, as the engines will maintain all of the positive metrics the site earns around links, authority, and trust and will apply these to every page on the site.

When to Use a Sub domain

If your marketing team decides to promote a URL that is completely unique in content or purpose and would like to use a catchy subdomain to do it, using a subdomain can be practical. Maps.google.com is an example of where the marketing considerations make a subdomain an acceptable choice.

When to Use a Separate Root Domain

If you have a single, primary site that has earned links, built content, and attracted brand attention and awareness, it is very rarely advisable to place any new content on a completely separate domain.

Micro sites

There is a lot of debate about micro sites, and although we generally recommend that you do not saddle yourself with the hassle of dealing with multiple sites and their SEO risks and disadvantages, it is important to understand the arguments, even if there are only a few, in favor of doing so.

➢ When you own a specific keyword search query domain

➢ When you plan to sell the domains

➢ As discussed earlier, if you're a major brand building a "secret" or buzz-worthy micro site

Multiple sites split the benefits of links

As suggested in Figure 6.17, a single good link pointing to a page on a domain positively influences the entire domain & every page on it.100 links to Domain A ≠ 100 links to Domain B + 1 link to Domain A (from Domain B)
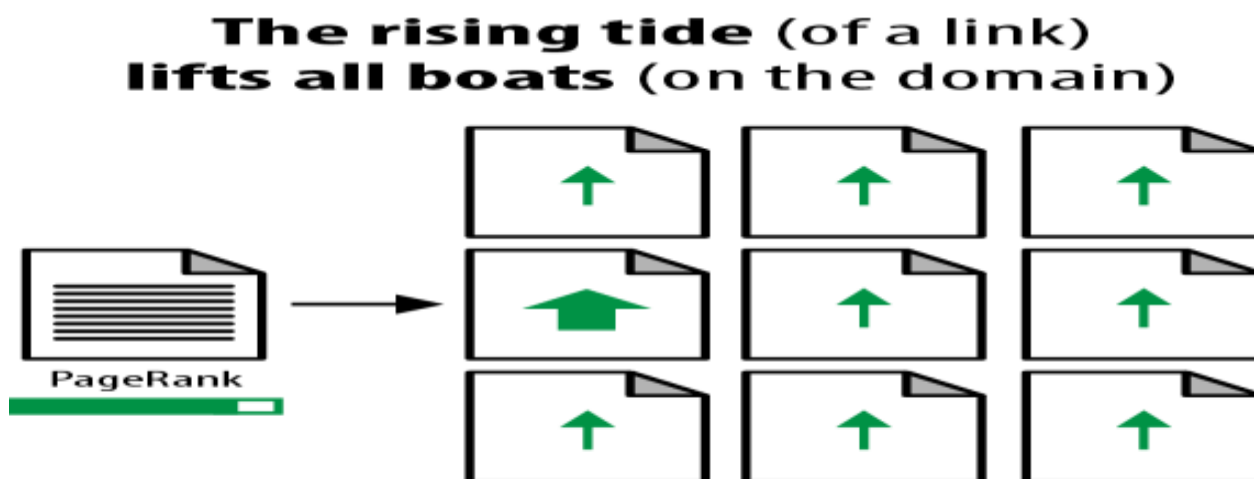
FIGURE 6-18. How direct links to your domain are better
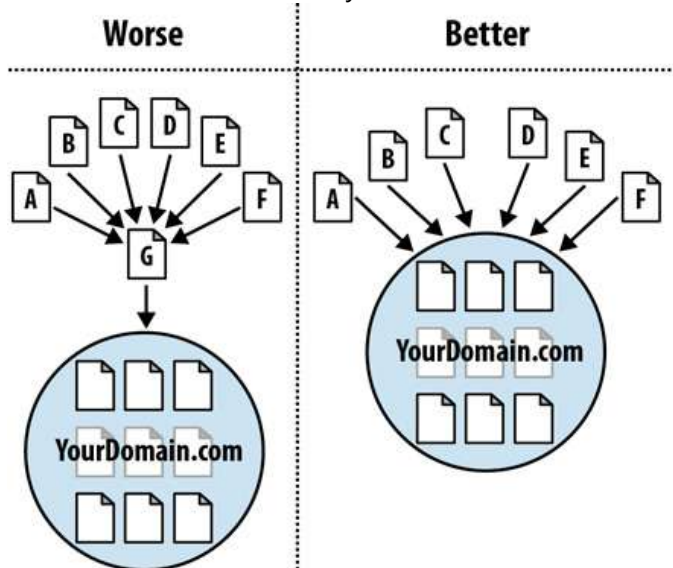
> ### When to Use a TLD Other than .com

There are only a few rare situations in which you should consider using a TLD other than .com:
• When you own the .com and want to redirect to a .org, .tv, .biz, etc., possibly for marketing/ branding/geographic reasons. Do this only if you already own the .com and can redirect.
• When you can use a .gov, .mil, or .edu domain (.jobs, though technically restricted to HR and hiring organizations, is available to anyone who hires and doesn't have any special search benefits).
• When you are serving only a single geographic region and are willing to permanently forego growth outside that region (e.g., .co.uk, .de, .it, etc.).
• When you are a nonprofit and want to distance your organization from the commercial world. In this case, .org may be for you.

Optimization of Domain Names/URLs
Two of the most basic parts of any website are the domain name and the URLs for the pages of the website. This section will explore guidelines for optimizing these important elements.

> ### Optimizing Domains

When a new site is being conceived or designed, one of the critical items to consider is the naming of the domain, whether it is for a new blog, a company launch, or even just a friend's website.

1. **Brainstorm five top keywords.**
When you begin your domain name search, it helps to have five terms or phrases in mind that best describe the domain you're seeking.

2. Make the domain unique.
Having your website confused with a popular site that someone else already owns is a recipe for disaster.
Thus, never choose a domain that is simply the plural, hyphenated, or misspelled version of an already established domain.

3. **Choose only .com-available domains or the ccTLD for your country.**
If you're not concerned with type-in traffic, branding, or name recognition, you don't need to worry about this one. However, if you're at all serious about building a successful website over the long term, you should be worried about all of these elements, and although directing traffic to a .net or .org is fine, owning and 301'ing the .com, or the ccTLD for the country your website serves (e.g., .co.uk for the United Kingdom), is critical.

4. **Make it easy to type.**
If a domain name requires considerable attention to type correctly due to spelling, length, or the use of unmemorable words or sounds, you've lost a good portion of your branding and marketing value.

5. **Make it easy to remember.**
Remember that word-of-mouth marketing relies on the ease with which the domain can be called to mind.

6. **Keep the name as short as possible.**
Short names are easy to type and easy to remember(see the previous two rules).

7. **Create and fulfill expectations.**
When someone hears about your domain name for the first time, he should be able to instantly and accurately guess what type of content he might find there.

8. **Avoid trademark infringement.**
This is a mistake that isn't made too often, but it can kill a great domain and a great company when it is. To be sure you're not infringing on anyone's registered trademark with your site's name, visit the US Patent and Trademark office site (http://www.uspto.gov/trademarks/index.jsp) and search before you buy.

9. **Set yourself apart with a brand.**
Using a unique moniker is a great way to build additional value with your domain name.

10. **Reject hyphens and numbers.**

    Both hyphens and numbers make it hard to convey your domain name verbally and fall down on being easy to remember or type. Avoid Roman or spelled-out numerals in domains, as both can be confusing and mistaken for the other.

11. **Don't follow the latest trends.**

    Website names that rely on odd misspellings (as do many Web 2.0–style sites), multiple hyphens (such as the SEO-optimized domains of the early 2000s), or uninspiring short adjectives (such as "top...x," "best...x," "hot...x") aren't always the best choice.

12. **Use an AJAX domain selection tool**.

    Websites such as Name boy and Domjax make it exceptionally easy to determine the availability of a domain name. Just remember that you don't have to buy through these services. You can find an available name that you like, and then go to your registrar of choice.

➢ **Picking the Right URLs**

    Search engines place some weight on keywords in your URLs. Be careful, however, as the search engines can interpret long URLs with numerous hyphens in them (e.g., Buy-this-awesome-product-now.html) as a spam signal. What follows are some guidelines for selecting optimal URLs for the pages of your site(s).

▪ Describe your content

    An obvious URL is a great URL. If a user can look at the address bar (or a pasted link) and make an accurate guess about the content of the page before ever reaching it, you've done your job.

▪ Keep it short

▪ Static is the way

    The search engines treat static URLs differently than dynamic ones. Users also are not fond of URLs in which the big players are ?, &, and =. They are just harder to read and understand.

▪ Descriptive are better than numbers

If you're thinking of using 114/cat223/ you should go with /brand/adidas/ instead

▪ Keywords never hurt.

    If you know you're going to be targeting a lot of competitive keyword phrases on your website for search traffic, you'll want every advantage you can get.

▪ Sub domains aren't always the answer

    First off, never use multiple sub domains (e.g., product.brand.site.com); they are unnecessarily complex and lengthy.

▪ Use fewer folders

    A URL should contain no unnecessary folders (or words or characters, for that matter). They do not add to the user experience of the site and can in fact confuse users.

▪ Hyphens separate best

    When creating URLs with multiple words in the format of a phrase, hyphens are best to separate the terms (e.g., /brands/dolce-and-gabbana/), but you can also use plus signs (+).

Keyword Targeting:-

This practice has long been a critical part of search engine optimization, and although other metrics (such as links) have a great deal of value in the search rankings, keyword usage is still at the core of targeting search traffic.

    The first step in the keyword targeting process is uncovering popular terms and phrases that searchers regularly use to find the content, products, or services your site offers. There's an art and science to this process, but it consistently begins with a list of keywords to target.

Title Tags

Do keep in mind, however, that a title tag for any given page must directly correspond to that page's content.

Place your keywords at the beginning of the title tag.

Limit length to 65 characters (including spaces).

Incorporate keyword phrases.

Target longer phrases if they are relevant.

Use a divider.(-,>,/)

Target searcher intent.

Be consistent.

Meta Description Tags

Meta descriptions have three primary uses:

• To describe the content of the page accurately and succinctly

• To serve as a short text "advertisement" to click on your pages in the search results

• To display targeted keywords, not for ranking purposes, but to indicate the content to searchers

Here are seven good rules for meta descriptions:

• Tell the truth.

• Keep it succinct. Be wary of character limits—currently Google displays up to 160 characters,

• Author ad-worthy copy.(short and sweet)

• Analyze psychology.

• Include relevant keywords.

• Don't employ descriptions universally.

Heading (H1, H2, H3) Tags

The Hx tags in HTML (<h1>, <h2>, <h3>, etc.) are designed to indicate a headline hierarchy in a document. Thus, an <h1> tag might be considered the headline of the page as a whole, whereas <h2> tags would serve as subheadings, <h3>s as tertiary-level headlines, and so forth. The search engines have shown a slight preference for keywords appearing in heading tags, notably the <h1> tag (which is the most important of these to employ).

Document Text

As far as the search engines are concerned, however, the text in a document—and particularly the frequency with which a particular term or phrase is used— has very little impact on how happy a searcher will be with that page.

Image Filenames and alt Attributes

The filename: Image alt text

Boldface Text

Some SEO professionals who engage in considerable on-page optimization testing have noticed that, all else being equal, a page that includes the targeted keyword(s) in <b> or <strong> tags (HTML elements that boldface text visually) outrank their counterparts that do not employ boldface.

Avoiding Keyword Cannibalization

Keyword Targeting in CMSs and Automatically Generated Content

Large-scale publishing systems, or those that produce automatically generated content, present some unique challenges. If hundreds of pages are being created every day, it is not feasible to do independent keyword research on each and every page, making page optimization an interesting challenge.

SEO Copywriting: Encouraging Effective Keyword Targeting by Content Creators
Here are the main components of SEO copywriting that your writers must understand:
• Search engines look to match up a user's search queries with the keyword phrases on your web pages. If a search phrase does not appear on your page, chances are good that the page will never achieve significant ranking for that search phrase.

Using the more popular phrases you wish to target on a web page
The title tag is the most important element on the page.
➢ **Long-Tail Keyword Targeting**

 Content Optimization
Content optimization relates to how the presentation and architecture of the text, image, and multimedia content on a page can be optimized for search engines. Many of these recommendations are second-order effects.
If you regularly practice the techniques in this section, you'll earn better consideration from the engines and from the human activities on the Web that influence their algorithms.

Content Structure
Because SEO has become such a holistic part of website development and improvement, it is no surprise that content formatting—the presentation, style, and layout choices you select for your content—is a part of the process.

possible source of confusion
Arial: (Ill)ustration

Verdana: (Ill)ustration
the difference is clear

Content length and word count
Content length is another critical piece of the optimization puzzle that's mistakenly placed in the "keyword density" or "unique content" bucket of SEO.
Lengthy pieces often don't fare particularly well on the Web (with the exception, perhaps, of the one-page sales letter), whereas short-form and easily digestible content often has more success.

Visual layout
Last but not least in content structure optimization is the display of the material. **<u>Beautiful, simplistic, easy-to-use, and consumable layouts</u>** instill trust and garner far more readership and links than poorly designed content wedged between ad blocks that threaten to overtake the page.

CSS and Semantic Markup

Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) is commonly mentioned as a best practice for general web design and development, but its principles provide some indirect SEO benefits as well.

Google used to recommend keeping pages smaller than 101 KB and it used to be a common belief that there were benefits to implementing pages that were small in size.

Now, however, search engines deny that code size is a factor at all, unless it is really extreme. Still, keeping file size low means faster load times, lower abandonment rates, and a higher probability of the page being fully read and more frequently linked to.

You can use CSS code to provide emphasis, to quote/reference, and to reduce the use of tables and other bloated HTML mechanisms for formatting, which can make a positive difference in your SEO.

Schema.org and Micro formats

In June 2011, Google, Bing, and Yahoo! came together to announce a new standard for markup called Schema.org. You can see a copy of the announcement at http://googleblog.blogspot.com/ 2011/06/introducing-schemaorg-search-engines.html. This represented a new level of commitment by the search engines to the concept of marking up content, or more broadly, allowing the publisher to provide information about the content to the search engines.

Markup in search results

As mentioned above, search engines sometimes use markup to create rich snippets. Figure 6-25 shows an example of rich snippets in the search results, returned for a search on a recipe for a Cambodian dish called Loc Lac.

The type of markup used for this example is called microformats. Figure 6-26 shows what the source code looks like for this example.

Content Uniqueness and Depth

Few can debate the value the engines place on robust, unique, value-added content—Google in particular has had several rounds of kicking "low-quality-content" sites out of its indexes, and the other engines have followed suit.

The criteria have never been officially listed, but many examples/discussions from engineers and search engine representatives place the following on the list:

• At least 30 to 50 unique words, forming unique, parsable sentences that other sites/pages do not have (for many pages much more is appropriate; consider this a minimum).

•Unique HTML text content that differs from that of other pages on the site in more than just the replacement of key verbs and nouns

• Unique titles and meta description elements. If you can't write unique meta descriptions, just exclude them.

• Unique video/audio/image content. The engines have started getting smarter about identifying and indexing for vertical search pages that wouldn't normally meet the "uniqueness" criteria.

N O T E:

You can often bypass these limitations if you have a good quantity of high-value external links pointing to the page in question (though this is very rarely scalable), or an extremely powerful, authoritative site (note how many one-sentence Wikipedia stub pages still rank).

Duplicate Content Issues:

Duplicate content can result from many causes, including licensing of content to or from your site, site architecture flaws due to non-SEO-friendly CMSs, or plagiarism.

Thus, today we're faced with a world of "duplicate content issues" and "duplicate content penalties." Here are some definitions that are useful for this discussion:

Unique content

This is content that is written by humans; is completely different from any other combination of letters, symbols, or words on the Web; and has clearly not been manipulated through computer text-processing algorithms (such as Markov chain–employing spam tools).

Snippets

These are small chunks of content such as quotes that are copied and reused;

Shingles

Search engines look at relatively small phrase segments (e.g., five to six words), checking for the presence of the same segments on other pages on the Web. When there are too many "shingles" in common between two documents, the search engines may interpret them as duplicate content.

Duplicate content filter

This is when the search engine removes substantially similar content from a search result to provide a better overall user experience.

Duplicate content penalty

Penalties are applied rarely and only in egregious situations. Engines may devalue or ban other web pages on the site, too, or even the entire website.

How Search Engines Identify Duplicate Content

Some examples will illustrate the process for Google as it finds duplicate content on the Web. In the examples shown in Figures 6-28 through 6-31, three assumptions have been made:

• The page with text is assumed to be a page containing duplicate content (not just a snippet, despite the illustration).
• Each page of duplicate content is presumed to be on a separate domain.
• The steps that follow have been simplified to make the process as easy and clear as possible. This is almost certainly not the exact way in which Google performs (but it conveys the effect).There are a few facts about duplicate content that bear mentioning, as they can trip up webmasters who are new to the duplicate content issue:

FIGURE 6-28. Google finding duplicate content

Location of the duplicate content

Is it duplicated content if it is all on my site? Yes, in fact, duplicate content can occur within a site or across different sites.

Percentage of duplicate content

What percentage of a page has to be duplicated before you run into duplicate content filtering? Unfortunately, the search engines would never reveal this information because it would compromise their ability to prevent the problem.

Ratio of code to text

What if your code is huge and there are very few unique HTML elements on the page? Will Google think the pages are all duplicates of one another?

Ratio of navigation elements to unique content

Every page on my site has a huge navigation bar, lots of header and footer items, but only a little bit of content; will Google think these pages are duplicates? No. Google (and Yahoo! and Bing) factors out the common page elements such as navigation before evaluating whether a page is a duplicate.

Licensed content

What should I do if I want to avoid duplicate content problems, but I have licensed content from other web sources to show my visitors? Use meta name = "robots" content="no index, follow". Place this in your page's header and the search engines will know that the content isn't for them.

How to Avoid Duplicate Content on Your Own Site

Here is a summary of the guidelines on the simplest solutions for dealing with a variety of scenarios:

• Use the canonical tag. This is the next best solution to eliminating the duplicate pages.
• Use robots.txt to block search engine spiders from crawling the duplicate versions of pages
On your site.
• Use the robots No Index Meta tag to tell the search engine not to index the duplicate pages.

Be aware, however, that if you use robots.txt to prevent a page from being crawled, using No Index or No Follow on the page itself will not make sense: the spider can't read the page, so it will never see the No Index or No Follow tag.

With these tools in mind, let's look at some specific duplicate content scenarios:

HTTPS pages

CMSs that create duplicate content

Print pages or multiple sort orders
Duplicate content in blogs and multiple archiving systems (pagination, etc.)
User-generated duplicate content (reposting, etc.)

Controlling Content with Cookies and Session IDs

Sometimes you want to more carefully dictate what a search engine robot sees when it visits your site. In general, search engine representatives will refer to the practice of showing different content to users than crawlers as cloaking, which violates the engines' Terms of Service (TOS) and is considered spam my behavior. Above figure shows concept of content Using cookies to store data.

What's a Cookie?

A cookie is a small text file that websites can leave on a visitor's hard disk, helping them to track that person over time.

Cookies are the reason Amazon.com remembers your username between visits and the reason you don't necessarily need to log in to your Hotmail account every time you open your browser.

Cookie data typically contains a short set of information regarding when you last accessed a site, an ID number, and, potentially, information about your visit.

What Are Session IDs?

Session IDs are virtually identical to cookies in functionality, with one big difference:

When you close your browser (or restart), session ID information is (usually) no longer stored on your hard drive.

Figure 6-33 illustrates. The website you were interacting with may remember your data or actions, but it cannot retrieve session IDs from your machine that don't persist (and session IDs by default expire when the browser shuts down).

In essence, session IDs are like temporary cookies (although, as you'll see shortly, there are options to control this).

How Do Search Engines Interpret Cookies and Session IDs?

They don't. Search engine spiders are not built to maintain or retain cookies or session IDs and act as browsers with this functionality shut off.

Despite the occasional access engines are granted to cookie/session-restricted pages, the vast majority of cookie and session ID usage creates content, links, and pages that limit access.

Why Would You Want to Use Cookies or Session IDs to Control Search Engine Access?

There are numerous potential tactics to leverage cookies and session IDs for search engine control. Here are some of the major strategies you can implement with these tools, but here are certainly limitless other possibilities:

Showing multiple navigation paths while controlling the flow of link juice

Keeping limited pieces of a page's content out of the engines' indexes

Granting access to pages requiring a login

Avoiding duplicate content issues

One of the most promising areas for cookie/session use is to prohibit spiders from reaching multiple versions of the same content, while allowing visitors to get the version they prefer.

Content Delivery and Search Spider Control

Before we discuss the risks and potential benefits of cloaking-based practices, take a look at Figure 6-34, which shows an illustration of how cloaking works.

FIGURE 6-34. How cloaking works
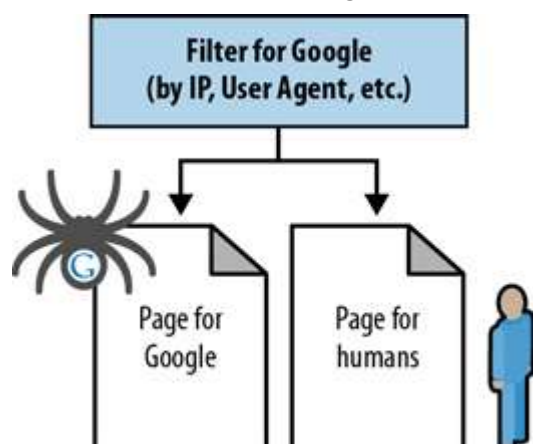
Google has taken a strong stand against all forms of cloaking, regardless of intent.

The following are some examples of websites that perform some level of cloaking:

Google.com

Search for Google toolbar, Google translate, ad words, or any number of other Google properties, and note how the URL you see in the search results and the one you land on almost never match.

NYTimes.com

The interstitial ads, the request to log in/create an account after five clicks, and the archive inclusion are all showing different content to engines versus humans.

Wine.com

In addition to some redirection based on your path, there's a state overlay forcing you to select a shipping location prior to seeing any prices (or any pages). That's a form the engines don't have to fill out.

Yelp.com

Geo targeting through cookies based on location is a very popular form of local targeting that hundreds, if not thousands, of sites use.

Trulia.com

Trulia was found to be doing some interesting redirects on partner pages and its own site (http://www.bramblog.com/trulia-caught-cloaking-red-handed/).

How to Display Different Content to Search Engines and Visitors

A variety of strategies exist to segment content delivery. The most basic is to serve content that is not meant for the engines in unspiderable formats (e.g., placing text in images, Flash files, plug-ins).

When you're trying to show the engines something you don't want visitors to see, you can use CSS formatting styles (preferably not display: none, as the engines may have filters to watch specifically for this), JavaScript, user-agent detection, cookies or session-based delivery,

Or perhaps IP delivery (showing content based on the visitor's IP address).

The robots.txt file:

This file is located on the root level of your domain (e.g., http://www.yourdomain.com/robots .txt), and it is a highly versatile tool for controlling what the spiders are permitted to access on your site. You can use robots.txt to:

• Prevent crawlers from accessing nonpublic parts of your website
• Block search engines from accessing index scripts, utilities, or other types of code
• Avoid the indexation of duplicate content on a website, such as "print" versions of HTML pages, or various sort orders for product catalogs Auto discover XML Sitemaps
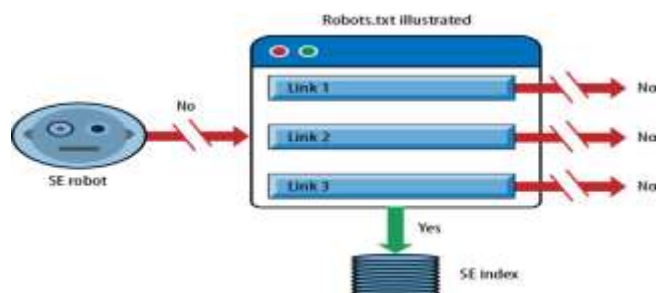
Google, Yahoo!, Bing, Ask, and nearly all of the legitimate crawlers on the Web will follow the instructions you set out in the robots.txt file. Commands in robots.txt are primarily used to prevent spiders from accessing pages and subfolders on a site, though they have other options as well.

The Meta robots tag:

The Meta robots tag has three components: cache, index, and follow. The cache component instructs the engine about whether it can keep the page in the engine's public index, available via the "cached snapshot" link in the search results (see Figure).
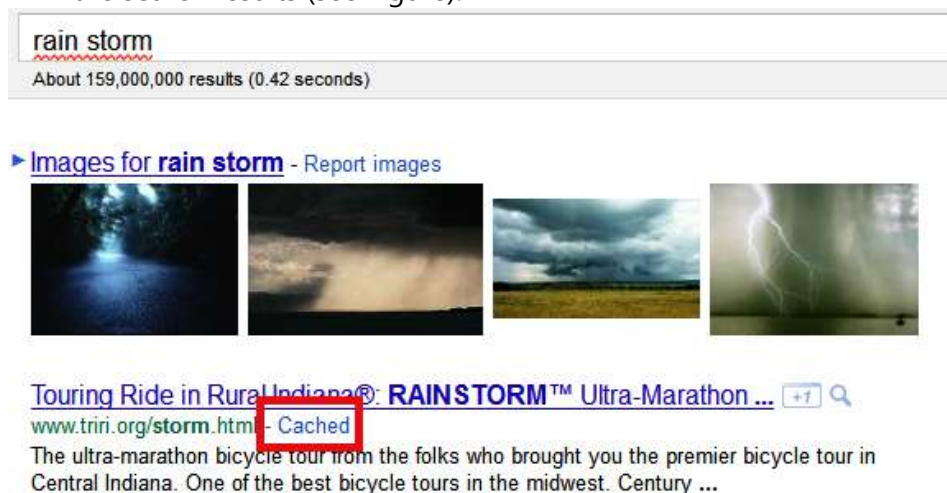
The canonical tag:

In February 2017, Google, Yahoo!, and Microsoft announced a new tag known as the canonical tag (sometimes referred to as rel="canonical"). This tag was a new construct designed explicitly for the purposes of identifying and dealing with duplicate content. Implementation is very simple and looks like this:

<link rel="canonical" href="http://www.seomoz.org/blog" />
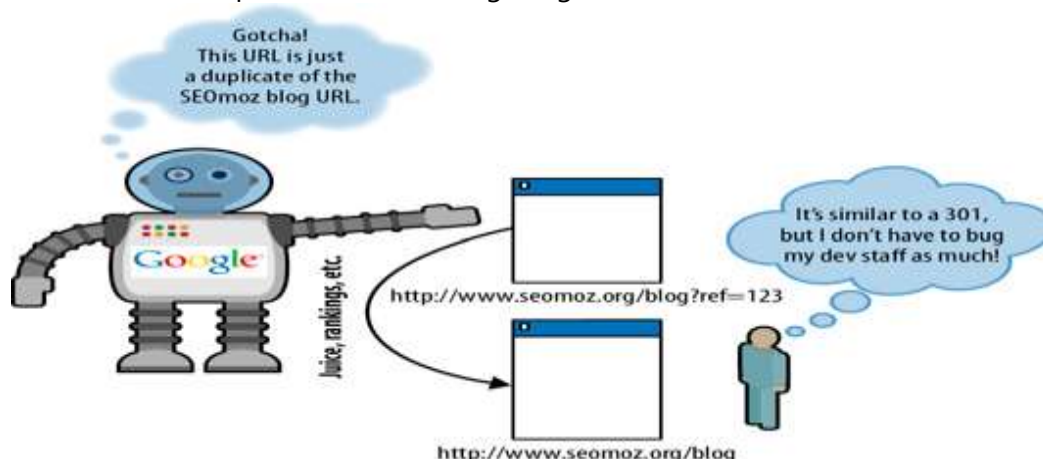
FIGURE: How search engines look at the canonical tag

Blocking and cloaking by IP address range:

You can block particular bots from crawling entire IP addresses or ranges through server-side restrictions on IPs. Most of the major engines crawl from a limited number of IP ranges, making it possible to identify them and restrict access.

This technique is, ironically, popular with webmasters who mistakenly assume that search engine spiders are spammers attempting to steal their content, and thus block the IP ranges to restrict access and save bandwidth.

Using iframes:

Hiding text in images
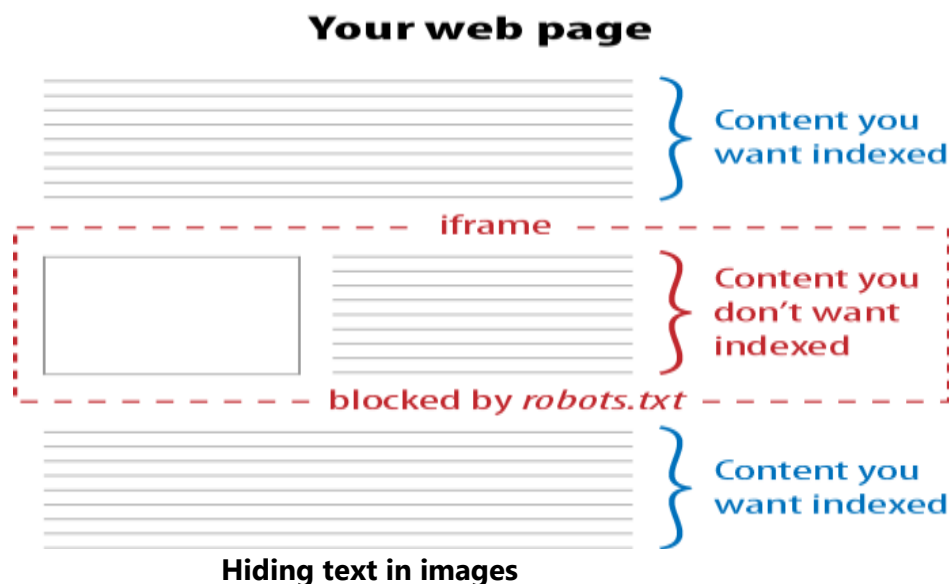
As we discussed previously, the major search engines still have very limited capacity to read text in images (and the processing power required makes for a severe barrier). Hiding content inside images isn't generally advisable, though, as it can be impractical for alternative devices (mobile devices, in particular) and inaccessible to others (such as screen readers).

Hiding text in Java applets Forcing form submission

Using login/password protection

Removing URLs from a search engine's index

A secondary, post-indexing tactic, URL removal is possible at most of the major search engines through verification of your site and the use of the engines' tools. For example, Google allows you to remove URLs through Webmaster Central (https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/ removals). Microsoft's Bing search engine may soon carry support for this as well.

Redirects

A redirect is used to indicate when content has moved from one location to another. For example, suppose you have some content at http://www.yourdomain.com/old.html, and you decide to restructure your site. As a result of this restructuring, your content may move to http://www.yourdomain.com/critical-keyword.html.

Why and When to Redirect
• You have old content that expires, so you remove it.
• You find that you have broken URLs that have links and traffic.
• You change your hosting company.
• You change your CMS.
• You want to implement a canonical redirect (redirect all pages on http://yourdomain.com to http://www.yourdomain.com).
• You change the URLs where your existing content can be found for any reason.

Good and Bad Redirects:
It turns out that there is more than one way to perform a redirect, and they are not all created
Equal. There are two major types of redirects that can be implemented, tied specifically to the
HTTP status code returned by the web server to the browser. These are:
"301 moved permanently"
        This status code tells the browser (or search engine crawler) that the resource has been permanently moved to another location, and there is no intent to ever bring it back.
"302 moved temporarily"
        This status code tells the browser (or search engine crawler) that the resource has been temporarily moved to another location, and that the move should not be treated as permanent.
        Both forms of redirect send a human or a search engine crawler to the new location, but the search engines interpret these two HTTP status codes in very different ways.

Methods for URL Redirecting and Rewriting:
There are many possible ways to implement redirects. On Apache web servers (normally present on machines running Unix or Linux as the operating system), it is possible to implement redirects quite simply in a standard file called .ht access, using the Redirect and Redirect Match directives (you can learn more about this file format at http://httpd.apache.org/docs/2.2/howto/htaccess.html).
Important special characters and how the rewrite engine interprets them:
• * means 0 or more occurrences of the immediately preceding character.
• + means 1 or more occurrences of the immediately preceding character.
• ? Means 0 or 1 occurrence of the immediately preceding character.
• ^ means the beginning of the string.
• $ means the end of the string.
• . Means any character (i.e., it acts as a wildcard).
• \ "escapes" the character that follows; for example, \. means the dot is not meant to be a
Wildcard, but an actual character.
• ^ inside square brackets ([]) means not; for example, [^/] means not slash.
Redirecting a Home Page Index File without Looping
www.ursite.com/index.html.

The default document redirects solution
The solution that follows is specific to the preceding index.php example. You will need to plug
in the appropriate default filename for your own web server:
1. Copy the contents of index.php to another file. For this example, we'll be using sitehome.php.
2. Create an Apache Directory Index directive for your document root. Set it to sitehome.php. Do not set the directive on a server-wide level; otherwise, it may cause problems with other folders that still need to use index.php as a directory index.
3. Put this in an .htm access file in your document root: DirectoryIndexsitehome.php. Or, if you aren't using per-directory context files, put this in your httpd.conf:

```
<Directory /your/document/root/examplesite.com/>
Directory Index sitehome.php
</Directory>
```
4. Clear out the contents of your original index.php file and insert this line of code:
```
<? Header ("Location: http://www.example.com") ;?>
```

➤ **Content Management System (CMS) Issues:**
When looking to publish a new site, many publishers may wonder whether they need to use a CMS, and, if so, how to ensure that it is SEO-friendly.

It is essential to determine whether a CMS is necessary before embarking on a web development project. You can use the flowchart in Figure 6-44 to help guide you through the process.

FIGURE : Flowchart to determine whether you need a CMS

The next step involves understanding how to ensure that a CMS will be search engine–friendly. Here is a list of basic SEO issues that you should be aware of when dealing with CMSs (both prebuilt and custom-made).

By dealing with these, you will ensure a relatively smooth platform for content delivery:
- Title tag customization and rules
- Static, keyword-rich URLs
- Meta tag customization
- Enabling custom HTML tags
- Internal anchor text flexibility
- Intelligent categorization structure
- Image-handling and alt attributes
- URLs free of tracking parameters and session IDs
- Customizable URL structure
- Keywords in URLs
- Multilevel categorization structure
- Breadcrumb navigation
- Keyword-rich intro copy on category-level pages
- XML Sitemap generator
- HTML4, HTML5, or XHTML validation
- Pingbacks, trackbacks, comments, and anti spam mechanisms

The problem with comments/trackbacks/pingbacks is that they are vectors for spam, so if you have one or more of these features enabled, you will be spammed. Therefore, effective spam prevention in the form of Akismet, Mollom, or Defensio is a must.

➢ **Selecting a CMS:**

There are many factors to consider when choosing an existing CMS. Many CMSs are free, but some of them are proprietary, with a license cost per site.

The majority of CMSs were not designed with security, stability, search friendliness, and scalability in mind, though in recent years a few vendors have developed excellent CMSs that have search friendliness as their primary focus.

Popular CMS solutions that the authors have experience with include Joomla, Drupal, Pixel silk, and Word Press. Each of these has strong support for SEO, but each of them requires some configuration for optimal results. Make sure you get that help up front to get the SEO for your site off to a strong start.

Electing a CMS is an important process. If you make the wrong choice, you will doom your site to failure. Like most software, CMSs are a moving target—what's missing today may be a new feature tomorrow.

Third-Party CMS Add-ons

Many CMS platforms offer third-party plug-ins or add-ons that extend the core functionality of the CMS. In the Word Press plug-in directory alone there are over 15,000 plug-ins.

Plug-ins provides a simple way to add new SEO features and functionality, making the CMS much more flexible and future-proof. It is particularly helpful when there is an active community developing plug-ins.

Google announced in November 2011 that it is continuing to expand its ability to execute JavaScript, and it is known that Google can now index Face book Comments.

It may be able to read reviews implemented with Bazaar Voice or Power Reviews in the near future, but what it can and cannot execute is not fully known.

To be safe, one novel solution to the JavaScript problem is to execute the JavaScript, extract the content from its encrypted form, and present it in plain-text format so that the search engines can see it.

Flash

As referenced several times earlier in this chapter, Flash is popular on the Web, but it presents challenges to the search engines in terms of indexing the related content. This creates a gap between the user experience with a site and what the search engines can find on that site.

It used to be that search engines did not index Flash content at all. In June 2008, Google announced that it was offering improved indexing of this content (http://googlewebmastercentral .blogspot.com/2008/06/improved-flash-indexing.html). This announcement indicates that Google
Here are some reasons why Flash is still not fully SEO-friendly:

- Different content is not on different URLs
- The breakdown of text is not clean
- Flash gets embedded
- Flash doesn't earn external links like HTML
- SEO basics are often missing
- A lot of Flash isn't even crawl able

Note that it used to be that you could not test the crawl ability of Flash, but the Adobe Search Engine SDK does allow you to get an idea as to how the search engines will see your Flash file.

Flash Coding Best Practices:

Flash Meta tags

Beginning with Adobe/Macromedia Flash version 8, there has been support for the addition of **title and description Meta tags to any .swf file.** Not all search engines are able to read these tags yet, but it is likely that they will soon.

Adobe Flash Search Engine SDK

Flash developers may find the SDK useful for server-based text and link extraction and conversion purposes, or for client-side testing of their Flash content against the basic Adobe (formerly Macromedia) Flash Search Engine SDK code.

Tests have shown that Google and other major search engines now extract some textual content from Flash .swf files. It is unknown whether Google and others have implemented Adobe's specific Search Engine SDK technology into their spiders, or whether they are using some other code to extract the textual content.

Internal flash coding

• Search engines currently do not read traced text (using the trace() function) or text that has been transformed into a shape in Flash (as opposed to actual characters). Only character-based text that is active in the Flash stage will be read (see Figure).
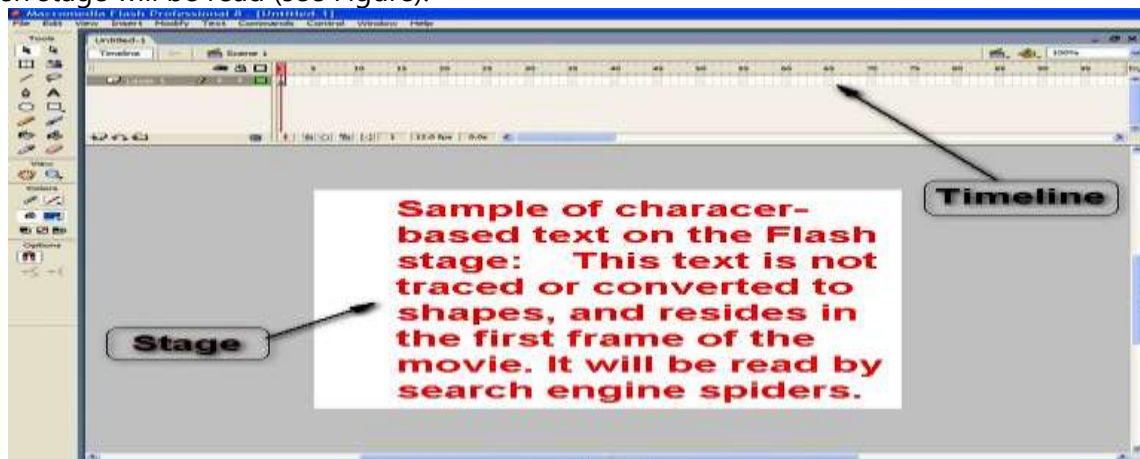
FIGURE: Example of spider-readable text inside a Flash program

• Search engine spiders do not see dynamically loaded content (text added from an external source, such as an XML file).

• The font size of text does not affect search engines; they read any size font.

• Special characters such as <, >, &, and " are converted to HTML character references (<, >, &, and ") and should be avoided.

SWFObject and No Script tags

Because alternative content workarounds for SEO of Flash files have been historically abused by spammers, we cannot recommend using these tactics to optimize your Flash files without providing a critical disclaimer.

Google and other search engines do not algorithmically ban sites for using SWFObject and No Script tags; it usually requires human intervention to evoke a penalty or outright ban.

The opportunity for abuse is obvious upon viewing the code. This small piece of code is placed

Within the <head> tags:

```
<script type="text/JavaScript" src="swfobject.js"></script>
```

```
<script type="text/javascript" src="swfobject.js"></script>

<div id="flashcontent">
    Text, links, and graphics placed here are replaced by the Flash movie. Search
    engine spiders will read this information, but the browser with an active Flash
    plugin will show the Flash movie instead.
</div>

<script type="text/javascript">
    var so = new SWFObject("whatever.swf", "themovie", "200", "100", "7", #336699);
    so.write("flashcontent");
</script>
```

In the body of the text, the code. Information between the <div> HTML tags is read by search engine spiders

The **No Script tag** has been abused in "black hat" SEO attempts so frequently that caution should be taken when using it. Just as SWFObject and <div> tags can be misused for link and keyword stuffing, so too can the No Script tag.

You use No Script tags with Flash .swf files in the following manner:

<script type="text/JavaScript" src="YourFlashFile.swf"></script>

Followed at some point afterward by:

<No script>

<H1>Mirror content in Flash file here.</H1>

<p>Any content within the No Script tags will be read by the search engine

spiders, including links

http://www.mirroredlink.com, graphics, and corresponding alt attributes.

</no script>

Scalable Inman Flash Replacement (sIFR)

SIFR is a technique that uses JavaScript to read in HTML text and render it in Flash. The essential fact to focus on here is that the method guarantees that the HTML content and the Flash content are identical.

One great use for this is to render headline text in an ant aliased font (this is the purpose for which sIFR was designed). This can provide a great improvement in the presentation of your site.

Best Practices for Multilanguage/Country Targeting

Many businesses target multiple countries with their websites, and for such businesses, various questions arise. Do you put the information for your products or services all on the same domain? Do you obtain multiple domains? Where do you host the site(s)? It turns out that there are SEO factors, as well as basic marketing questions, that affect the answers.

Of course, there are also non-SEO factors, such as the tax implications of what you do; further, for some TLDs you can only register a domain if you have a local physical presence (e.g., France requires this to get a .fr domain).

Targeting a Specific Country

Starting with the basics of international targeting, it is important to let the search engines know where your business is based in as many ways as possible. These might include:

• Using a country-specific TLD (ccTLD) for your domain (e.g., .co.uk)
• Hosting your site locally, not abroad
• Including the physical local address in plain text on every page of your site
• Setting Google Webmaster Central geo targeting to your country of interest
• Verifying your address with Google Maps
• Getting links from in-country websites
• Using the local language on the website

Problems with Using Your Existing Domain

If you're expanding into a new country, you may be wondering why you cannot leverage your current domain's weight to target the new territory rather than starting from scratch—

in other words, why can't you create multiple versions of your site and determine where the user is in the world before either delivering the appropriate content or redirecting that user to the appropriate place in the site (or even to a sub domain hosted in the target country)?

The problem with this approach, from an SEO perspective, **is that the major search engines spider from the United States, so their IP addresses will be in the United States in your lookup, and they will therefore be delivered only US content.**

This problem is exacerbated if you are going even further and geo delivering content in different languages, as only your English language content will be spidered unless you cloak for the search engine bots.

This kind of IP delivery is therefore a bad idea. You should make sure you do not blindly geo deliver content based on IP address, as you will ignore many of your markets in the search engines' eyes.

The Two Major Approaches

The best practice remains one of two approaches, depending on the size and scale of your operations in the new countries and how powerful and established your .com domain is.

If you have strong local teams and/or (relatively speaking) less power in your main domain, launching independent local websites geotargeted as described earlier (hosted locally, etc.) is a smart move in the long run.

If, on the other hand, you have only centralized marketing and PR and/or a strong main domain, you may want to create localized versions of your content either on country-specific sub domains (http://uk.yourdomain.com, http://au.yourdomain.com, etc.) or in subfolders (/uk/, /au/, etc.), with the preference being for the use of sub domains so that you can set up local hosting.

Multiple-Language Issues

This section will focus on providing you with the fundamental components of successful Multilanguage content management. Here are best practices for targeting the search engines as of this writing, using Spanish and English content examples:

• If you have content in Spanish and English serving the same country:

--- Create a single website with language options that change the URL by folder structure; for example, http://www.yourdomain.com versus http://www.yourdomain.com/esp/.

— Build links from Spanish- and English-language sites to the respective content areas on the site.

— Host the site in the country being served.

— Register the appropriate country domain name (for the United States, .com, .net, and .org are appropriate, whereas in Canada using .ca or in the United Kingdom using .co.uk is preferable).

• If you have content in Spanish and English targeting multiple countries:

— Create two separate websites, one in English targeting the United States (or the relevant country) and one in Spanish targeting a relevant Spanish-speaking country.

— Host one site in the United States (for English) and the other in the relevant country for the Spanish version.

• If you have content in Spanish targeting multiple countries:

— Create multiple websites (as mentioned earlier) targeting each specific country.

— Register domains in each country, using the appropriate country TLD and hosting them locally.

— When possible, have native speakers fluent in that region's dialect write the site content for each specific country.

UNIT 4

CH – 7 Optimizing for Vertical Search

Intro....

Vertical search engines focus on specific niches of web content, including images, videos, news, travel, and people. Such engines exist to provide value to their user bases in ways that go beyond what traditional web search engines provide.

There is a lot of opportunity in vertical search, so SEO professionals should seriously consider what potential benefits vertical search areas can provide to their websites.

The Opportunities in Vertical Search

Vertical search has been around for almost as long as the major search engines have been in existence.

This chapter will focus on strategies for optimizing your website for the vertical search offerings from Google, Yahoo!, and Bing.

The data in Table 9-1comes from Experian Hit wise and shows the top 20 Google domains as of May 2006, one year before the advent of Universal Search.

Back in May 2006, when images were not shown directly in the web search results, image search comprised almost 10% of Google's search volume.

With the integration of image results into web search results, it is likely that the demand for images has only gone up. Pair this with the knowledge that a smaller number of people on the Web optimize their sites properly for image search (or other vertical search engines) than for regular web search, and you can see how paying attention to vertical search can pay tremendous dividends.

TABLE 9-1. Most popular Google properties, May ...

Rank	Name	Share
1	Google	79.98%
2	Google Image Search	9.54%
3	Google Mail	5.51%
4	Google News	1.49%
5	Google Maps	0.82%
6	Froogle	0.46%
7	Google Video Search	0.46%
8	Google Groups	0.43%
9	Google Scholar	0.27%
10	Google Book Search	0.25%
11	Google Earth	0.22%
12	Google Desktop Search	0.18%
13	Google Directory	0.10%
14	Google Answers	0.09%
15	Google AdWords	0.07%
16	Google Local	0.05%
17	Google Finance	0.03%
18	Google Calendar	0.01%
19	Google Talk	0.01%
20	Google Labs	0.01%

Universal Search and Blended Search:

In May 2017, Google announced Universal Search, which integrated vertical search results into main web results.

Thinking of it another way, Google's web results search engine used to be a kind of vertical search engine itself: one focused specifically on web pages (and not images, videos, news, blogs, etc.). With the advent of Universal Search, Google changed the web page search engine into a search engine for any type of online content. Figure shows some examples of Universal Search results, starting with a Google search on iphone.
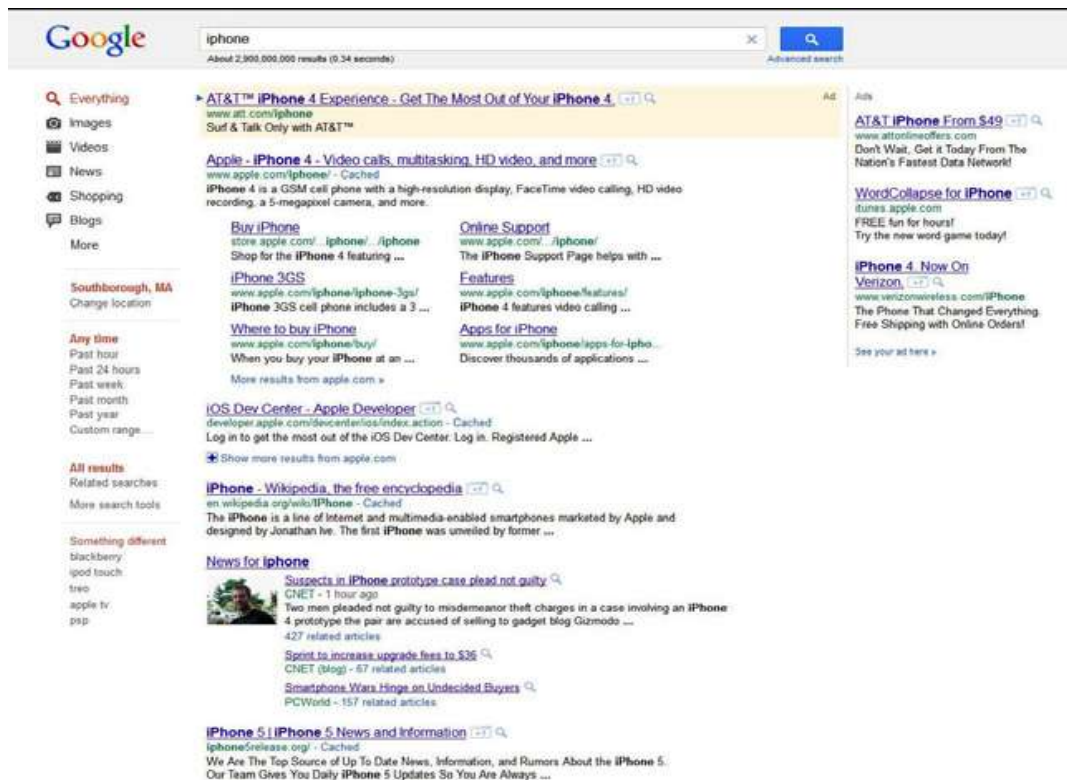
FIGURE: Non-personalized search results for "iphone"

The Opportunity Unleashed: As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, the opportunity in vertical search was significant before the advent of Universal Search and Blended Search.

TABLE 9-2: Most popular Google properties, July 2011

Rank	Name	Number of searches	% of total
1	Google (http://www.google.com)	6,243,892,993	60.35%
2	YouTube (http://www.youtube.com)	2,672,070,772	25.83%
3	Gmail (http://www.gmail.com)	874,662,958	8.45%
4	Google Maps (http://maps.google.com)	229,291,754	2.22%
5	Google News (http://news.google.com)	61,541,405	0.59%
6	Google Docs (http://docs.google.com)	48,207,545	0.47%
7	Google Translate (http://translate.google.com)	37,175,399	0.36%
8	Picnik.com	31,166,949	0.30%
9	Google Video (http://video.google.com)	26,162,413	0.25%
10	Google Chrome (http://www.google.com/chrome)	24,137,868	0.23%
11	Blogger (http://www.blogger.com)	19,787,485	0.19%
12	Google Images (http://images.google.com)	14,517,225	0.14%
13	Orkut (http://www.orkut.com)	10,666,820	0.10%
14	Google Books (http://books.google.com)	10,279,082	0.10%
15	Google Earth (http://earth.google.com)	6,706,180	0.06%
16	Google+ (http://plus.google.com)	6,006,650	0.06%
17	Google Groups (http://groups.google.com)	4,606,855	0.04%
18	Google Finance (http://www.google.com/finance)	3,805,910	0.04%
19	Google Buzz (http://www.google.com/buzz)	3,317,955	0.03%
20	Google Scholar (http://scholar.google.com)	2,809,831	0.03%

Applications such as Google Maps, Yahoo! Local, and Bing Maps have introduced disruptive technology to local directory information by mashing up maps with directory listings, reviews/ratings, satellite images, and 3-D modeling—all tied together with keyword search relevancy.

Despite rapid innovation in search engine technology, the local information market is still extremely fractured. There is no single dominant provider of local business information on the Internet.

If you are a business that depends on local customers, such as a flower shop, an auto body shop or a restaurant, what could be better than coming up right at the top of the search engine result page for keyword search including your geographic location?
Example in Google for car rental.

Search engine local management portals
You can find the local management portals for Google, Yahoo!, and Bing at the following URLs:
•GooglePlaceslistings: https://www.google.com/accounts/ServiceLogin?service=lbc
• Yahoo! Local: http://listings.local.yahoo.com/account/
• Bing Local Listing Center: http://www.bing.com/businessportal/
Enhancing your Google Places profile is a matter of providing as much relevant data to Google as you can. The most important elements to focus on are business name, address, phone number, website, description, and categories. These are the elements that you can influence that carry the most weight in the ranking algorithms.

Business Name
Make sure you use an accurate business name. Be sure to use the exact same business name in Google that you use in any other online business profiles.

Address
Like the business name, your address is part of the "key" that Google uses to identify your business. It is helpful to ensure that the address "maps accurately" in Google Maps. Do this by performing a search in Google Maps on just your address. See if Google finds an exact match for this business address.
Phone Number
For the "main" phone number, be sure to use a unique local phone number.
Website
In many cases, for a business with a single location, this is simply your home page. For businesses with multiple locations, it is ideal to have a separate page representing each location.

Description:
Google provides you with a 200-character description field. This is not a lot of room. You want to provide a short, unique, keyword-rich description of your business. This
Categories
Category selection provides a very strong clue for the search engine to decide what kinds of searches your business is relevant to.
As of this book's printing, the best guide for Internet yellow pages, vertical directories, and local search engines is the Local Search Guide provided by the Local Search Association. Check your listings in each of the sites listed in the guide, and update where necessary.

Additional local info guides
Search engines are not the only source for local business information. Some of the more notable alternatives include the following:
Additional local online Yellow Pages
In addition to the online directories listed in the Local Search Guide, check to see that you've also updated your information in any local directory sites that are independent of the Local Search Guide lists. Other Yellow Pages guides may be dominant for your area but may not be listed.
Newspapers
Check the sites of the top newspapers in your area and see whether you have or can add listings in their business directories.

Chambers of Commerce

Most US cities have a local Chamber of Commerce to help promote businesses in the area, and getting listed in its directory can be beneficial to you, particularly if the chamber's site is optimized for search engines

Local guides

Loads of local guides are devoted to information about local areas, so search on your city's name or zip code and see what sites appear on the first page of results in each of the main search engines: Google, Yahoo!, and Bing.

Specialty Yellow Pages

Many niche Yellow Pages directories are geared toward particular demographic groups— for instance, special interest groups or non-English directories.

Introduction to Local Business Profiles

Online directories and local search engines are adding more dimensions of information onto a business's basic listing.

Providing as much detailed information about your company as possible through these profiles could be beneficial in terms of converting users of those sites into new customers for you, but the primary benefit is the impact that this data has on your rankings in local search.
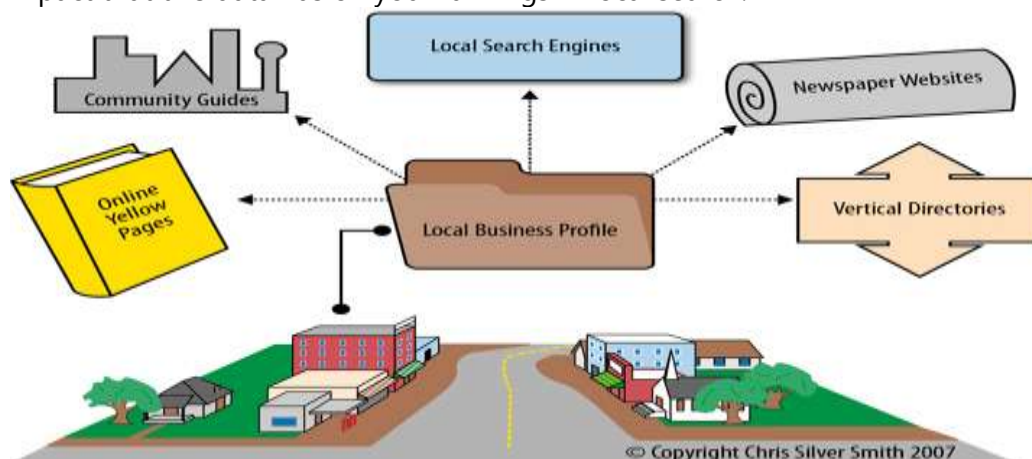
Optimizing Your Website for Local Search Engines:

All of the basic SEO factors can come into play here and help to influence your rankings. These factors include having good, specific text in each page's title, <h1> tags, Meta description, page content, image alt attr5ibutes, inbound links, and so forth. But some things are specific to local search, such as the following:

• Have your page title, <h1> tags, and content include the business name, the type of business, and the location—for example, "Acme Café: French Restaurant in Boston, MA." For multiple locations, make the title different on each location's page. Include the phone number, neighborhood, street address, area nicknames, and other location-distinguishing information.

• The home page and/or Contact Us page should have the main location's basic listing information (street address, city, state, zip code, phone numbers, etc.) displayed somewhere in the HTML text.

• Place differentiating information on each store's pages, including, for example, items such as a map, hours of operation, brand names of products carried, product photos,

• Be aware of your proximity to your city's centroid (the location that the search engine defines as the center of the city). This is likely something that you cannot change at this point, but if you are considering moving your company to a new location, take into account where your city's centroid is located and try to find a place close to that point.

• Proximity works the same way for zip codes. If a user searches for businesses within a specific zip code, the businesses closest to the zip code area centroid will likely be displayed first in the list. Note, though,

that zip code searches are not commonly performed in the United States (you can verify this with your favorite keyword research tool).

By asking enough happy clients to rate you, you might be able to drive up the positive reviews, which can bring rankings benefits. It is worth the effort to identify your happy customers and ask them to write reviews for you at one or more of the major directory sites. Never offer to pay for or otherwise incentivize positive reviews, however!

• Develop external links pointing to your website. The best links to support local search come from other locally and topically oriented sites with locally and topically oriented anchor text.

• If your local business has its own blog, add a blog map or feedmap (http://www.feedmap.net) to it. This will add a local signal to the blog

• For businesses such as restaurants, it may be beneficial to add photos of celebrities who have visited the establishment.

— Charitable events that you host yourself. Is anyone organizing the provision of food for the needy at Thanksgiving? If not, organize it yourself and host the information pages off your own website. This could draw many others to link to you as they help in promotion efforts.

— The local college or high school sports teams and bands. You can request that sponsors are listed on the school website, if this isn't done already.

Optimizing for Image Search

Optimizing for image search can be a smart strategy for many search marketers. Even if you're working on a site that you don't feel truly lends itself to an image optimization strategy, you may be able to leverage images or photos on your website for SEO.

A significant amount of traffic can come from image search, and the number of people competing effectively for that traffic is much lower than it is in general web search.

There are a few different ways that image search optimization can help to improve traffic and conversions for your site:

Subtle reputation management

Providing generous numbers of images says you don't have anything to hide, and it will improve consumer confidence in your company, increasing the chances that they'll decide to do business with you.

Shopping via image search results

Increasingly, consumers are searching for products via image search engines because they can rapidly find what they are seeking without having to dig through promotion-laden websites.

Increased chances of showing up in Universal/Blended Search results

Performing image search optimization improves your chances of showing up in additional positions on the main search results pages, as Universal Search pulls image search content into the main SERPs for some keyword search terms.

Empowering others to promote you

If you have a flexible enough organization and you hold the legal copyrights to your images, you can allow others to reuse the images in return for promotion of your site/business.

Image Optimization Tips

Google is known to be experimenting with artificial intelligence algorithms to improve detection of image content. For example, you can drag the image of a well-known person or place onto the Google Image search box (http://images.google.com), and Google will attempt to identify the contents and show you other similar images. Search engines are also experimenting with techniques such as optical character recognition (OCR) to read text content within images, but most images don't have any text to read.

For example, if you have a picture of the Golden Gate Bridge as the single image on a page, and the title, heading tag, and content of the page all support that, the search engines' confidence in the content of the image increases.

The same is true if you have 10 images on a page of many different bridges, and their content is reinforced by the title, heading tag, and page content.

• Make sure the image filename or img src string contains your primary keyword. If it is a picture of Abe Lincoln, name the file abe-lincoln.jpg and/or have the src URL string contain that keyword, as in http://example.com/abe-lincoln/portrait.jpg.

• Always use the image alt attribute. The alt attribute helps the vision-impaired to understand your site, and search engines use it to better understand what your images are about.

• Use good-quality pictures, which will read well when shown in thumbnail format.

• Do not save images as graphics files with embedded thumbnails—turn this feature off in Photoshop and other image editing software. Search engines may copy your image, reduce it in size, save it in compressed format, and deliver up a thumbnail of it for their results pages.

• Don't store the image in a sidebar column with your ads or inside the header/footer navigation elements; otherwise, the search engine algorithms will ignore the image as irrelevant, just as they ignore page decor and navigation graphics.

• If you are using images that may also be displayed on other websites, store/display them at different sizes from how they were provided to you. Don't change only their HTML img tag height/width parameters; reduce the size of the images or increase or decrease their compression and then resave them so that they have different file sizes.

Consider adding a watermark with your site URL to the images as well. This can bring traffic to your site, and it discourages people from stealing your images.

• You need to ensure that your server configuration allows your site's images to be displayed when called from web pages on other domains.

Optimizing Through Flickr and Other Image Sharing Sites:

Flickr is one of the strongest image sharing sites in terms of search optimization potential. No other image sharing site has the same level of domain authority, crawl ability, keyword-focusing signals, and cross-referencing potential (the ability to link to your website from photo pages).

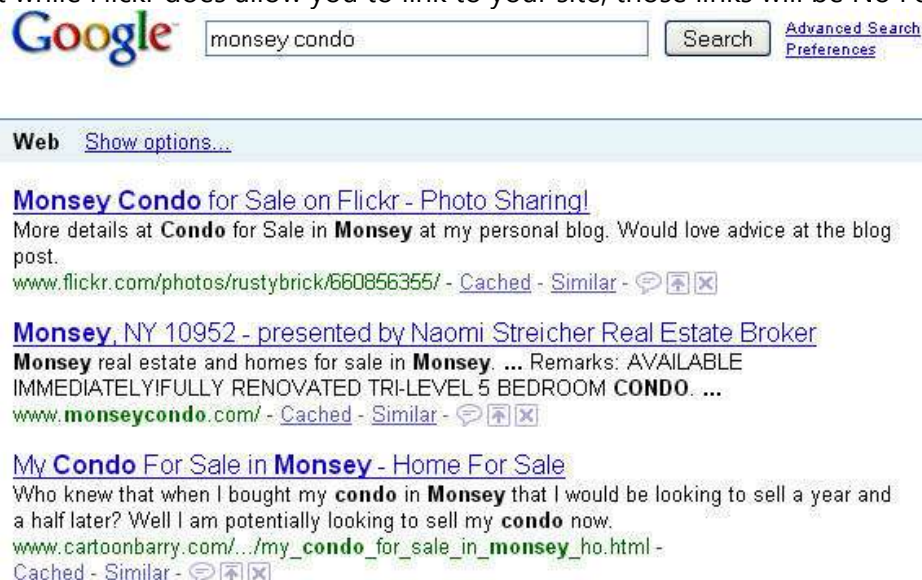Note, though, that while Flickr does allow you to link to your site, those links will be No Followed.

FIGURE: Flickr in Google's search results

Other image sharing sites exist as well, even though they appear to have less potential. The following tips are specifically for Flickr, but most image sharing sites have similar features, so these tips could also work on many of them:

• When you upload your photos, always add tags. The tags or keywords that you associate with your photo will make sure users can find it when they are searching and will lend keyword weight to the photo's page.
• Create a descriptive title for the image.
• Enter a description under the photo, or write something about the picture.
• Consider adding a note or two directly onto the photo, particularly if it is humorous. Flickr allows you to select a rectangular area and associate some text with it that will appear as a tool tip when users mouse over it.
• If the photo is location-specific, geotag the picture.
• Browse through Flickers' Groups for public "photo album" collections that are dedicated to pictures that could be related to your photo.
• Link each of your Flickr photo pages to your website, or a related page on your site. You can add hyperlinks to the Description field below the photo.
• Post as many optimized pictures as possible.

➢ **Optimizing for Product Search:**
Google Product Search is less popular than some of the other Google-owned properties (reference the Experian Hit wise charts shown at the beginning of this chapter). However, top rankings for product-based businesses in Google Product Search are critical.
This Product Search one box can appear anywhere on the page—top, middle, or bottom. Figure 9-9 shows an example for the search canon power shot.
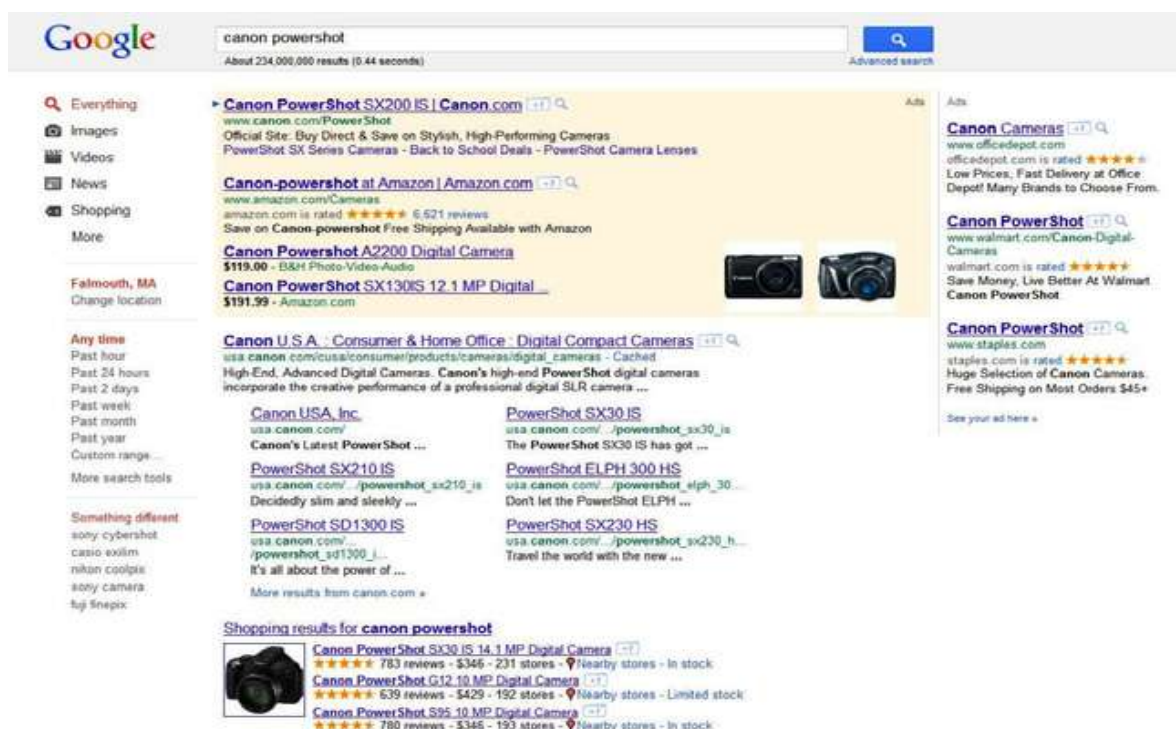
Product search optimization:

Here are some of the basic things you can do to optimize your feed for Google Product Search:
• The most important optimization step is to make sure that your feed is accurate. Pricing must match exactly, taking into account all factors, such as shipping and handling.
• Create descriptive, accurate item titles.
• Use long-tail terms in your titles, particularly for highly competitive products. Picking the right terms can be difficult, because there may be hundreds of long-tail terms to choose from.
• Seller ratings play a big role in rankings in Google. Manage your ratings at contributor sources such as Deal Time, NexTag, Price Grabber, Reseller Ratings, and Shopzilla.

• Product ratings are also important. Get your products rated on sites such as Epinions.com.

• It appears that product names plus brand names in item titles are the best choice. You cannot really invoke non–brand name searches effectively in Google Product Search.

• Always include product images. Google Product Search has a preference for products that display a product image (and in Bing, if you have no photo, your product simply will not be shown). Here are some tips for product images:

— Google converts images to 90×90 pixels to display thumbnails. Therefore, square pictures will take better advantage of the available space.

— Ensure that the product is sized as large as possible in the picture. — Higher-contrast pictures are easier to read in thumbnail size. Make sure the pictures are not muddy/low-contrast.

— Make sure the products appear clearly against their backgrounds.

• Other factors that also may play a part include the following:

— The perceived authority of the domain

— Specific pricing details (may be used to sort results)

— The website's ranking for the keyword in web search

— Whether any of the products are deemed "adult" (if so, all of your products might get filtered out due to Safe Search)

— Users specifying Google Checkout items only

— The number of users who have added your Google Product items to their individual Shopping Lists within Product Search, or placed them on their Shared Wish Lists

➢ **Optimizing for News, Blog, and Feed Search:**

News, blog, and feed search is another large potential area of opportunity for optimization. This has a bearing not only on obtaining traffic directly from the search engines, but also in promoting your business in whole new ways.

RSS Feed Optimization

Many people mistakenly lump blogs and RSS together, but RSS has infinitely more applications beyond just blogs. RSS feeds can also be used for reporting upon or announcing

News alerts, your latest specials, clearance items upcoming events, new stock arrivals,   new articles, new tools and resources, search results, a book's revision history,

Top 10 best sellers (as Amazon.com does in many of its product categories), Project management activities, forum/listserv posts, and recently added downloads.

A good place to start is with basic SEO practices, as we've outlined elsewhere in the book (providing good titles and descriptions, handling tracking URLs properly, etc.).

Here are the basics for RSS feed optimization:

• Consider multiple feeds. You can organize them by category, latest comments, and comments by post, and so on.

• Make it easy to subscribe. Ideally, users should have to click only once to subscribe via their favorite aggregator.

➢ **Blog Optimization**

Blogs are great publishing platforms for those who want to write articles on a regular basis. First, they make it easy to publish the content. Authors only need to log in and use a relatively simple set of menu choices to input what they want to publish, preview it, and then proceed to publish it. It is far easier than coding your own HTML pages by hand.

Blogs are inherently social in nature, and a host of social marketing benefits come from blogs.

Enabling comments allows for interaction with your readers, and bloggers tend to have a significant level of interaction.

For example, one blogger may write a post that reacts to or comments on another blogger's post. A lot of cross-linking takes place, with one blogger citing another.

Structural blog optimizations

As we have discussed throughout this book, there are many key elements to successful SEO. These include things such as title tags, heading tags, good content, inbound links, and SEO-friendly architecture. Although the various blog publishing platforms are great, they can sometimes also require tweaking to achieve optimal SEO results:

• Blogs usually offer the ability to categorize each post. Make sure the tag name is used in the title of that tag page.

• Rewrite your URL to contain keywords, and to use hyphens (preferred over underscores) as word separators.

• Make sure you 301-redirect from http://yourblog.com to http://www.yourblog.com (or vice versa). Note that if you have a site at http://www.yourdomain.com and a blog at http://www .yourdomain.com/blog, you may need to implement a separate redirect just for the blog.

This has to be handled not just for the home page, but also for all internal pages (e.g., permalink pages). Each URL must redirect to the corresponding URL on the www version.

Figure 9-11 depicts a sample search result that shows the impact of using keywords in blog page titles.
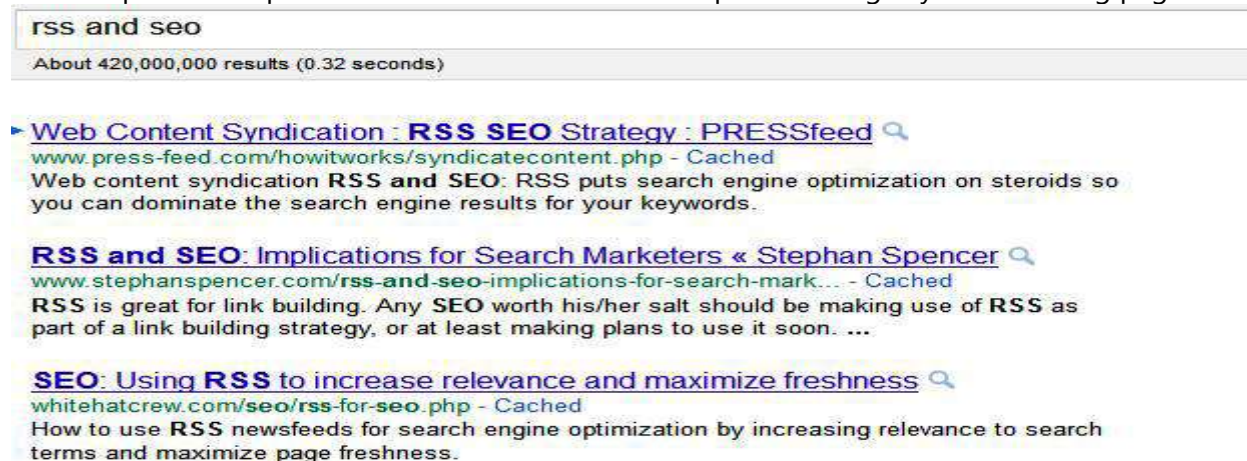

FIGURE: Impact of using keywords in blog page titles

Notice how the first three results have the keywords in their titles as well as in the URLs.

➤ **Optimizing your anchor text :**

Anchor text is just as important in blogging as it is in general SEO. You need to leverage it as much as you can. Here are some specifics:

• Make the post's title a link to the permalink page. You do not want your only link to the post to say "Permalink."

• Use a tool such as Open Site Explorer (http://www.opensiteexplorer.org) or Majestic SEO (http://www.majesticseo.com) to see who is linking to your site. Using these tools or tools like them, you can see who is linking to you and what anchor text they have used.

• Internally link back to old, relevant posts within the body of a blog post. Don't use here or previously or similar words as the anchor text; use something keyword-rich instead.

➤ **Sticky posts:**

Sticky posts are a way to add content that always shows up first on a page of your blog. The "Politics and Political Blogs" post shown in Figure 9-12 is an example of a sticky post associated with a category page on a blog.

Author profile pages

If you have a multi-author blog, another smart tactic is to create author profile pages. This has a multitude of benefits. First, many of your readers will have a stronger interest in one of your writers than the others.

Figure: is an example of an author profile page.

Links remain critical

Obtaining links and managing your link juice remain critical activities. Blog platforms provide limited ability to manage your internal link juice, so this may require some customization to accomplish. Fortunately, in the Word Press environment some really good plug-ins is available to help you with this.
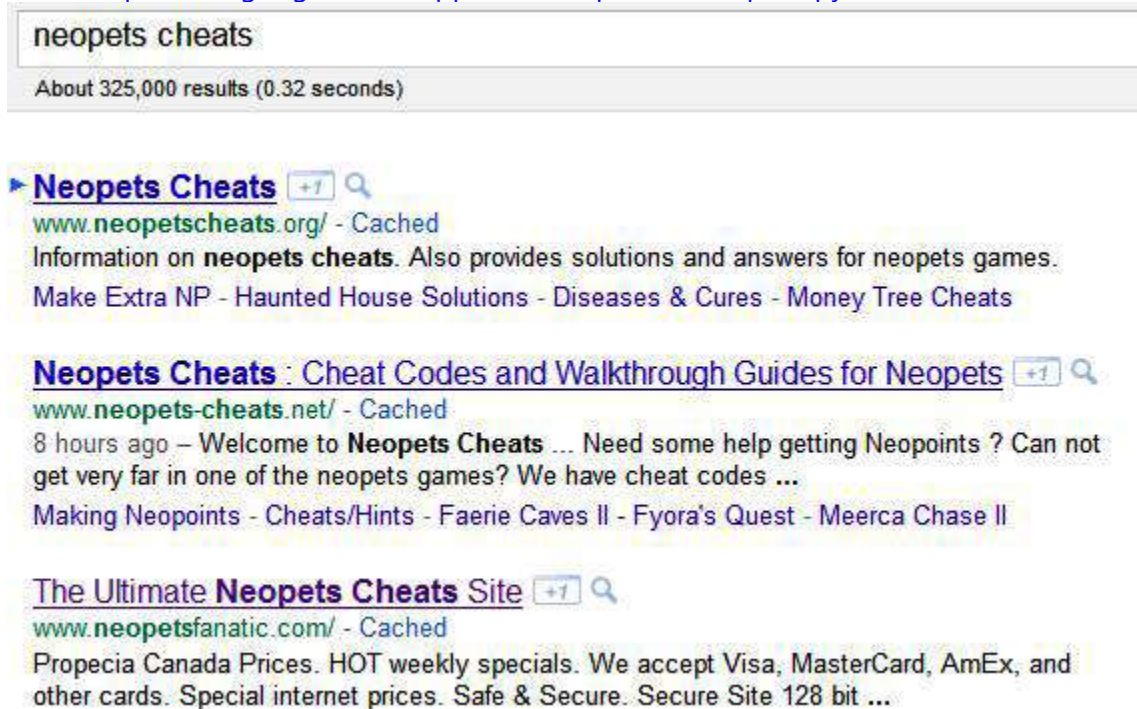
- ➢ **News Search Optimization:**

   Most people are so conditioned to the fact that Google is the dominant provider of search that few of them realize that the king of news search engines is Yahoo! News. Figure 9-17 shows data published by Experian Hit wise that indicates the market share of various news portals.

   As you can see, in a complete role reversal, Yahoo! News gets nearly three times as many visitors as Google News does. If you are able to implement a true news feed on your site (which requires a substantial commitment of time and resources).

   You should submit to both Yahoo! News and Google News. Here is their submission URLs:

• Yahoo! News: http://help.yahoo.com/l/us/yahoo/news/submitsource.html
• Google News: http://www.google.com/support/news_pub/bin/request.py

neopets cheats

About 325,000 results (0.32 seconds)

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For either one, having very high-quality content that is unique and original and is created on a regular basis is a must. We will discuss this more in a moment.

If you are able to get into a news search engine, you can gain a lot in terms of relevant traffic. In May 2007, Loren Baker of Search Engine Journal reported obtaining up to 5,000 visitors per day from Yahoo! News alone (http://www.searchenginejournal.com/how-to-submit-your-site-to -yahoo-news/4971/). That is a serious bump in traffic.

- ➢ **Optimizing for news search:**

   The news search engines are looking for content that is in the form of either a news story or a feature story. They also are looking to see that you are creating news content in reasonable volume—a minimum of 10 articles per week.

   News sites are looking for news sources, not individual news pieces.

   In addition, as mentioned previously, be aware that both Yahoo! News and Google News very rarely accept new sources.

   Investing in building a news feed to try to get into these new search engines is an iffy proposition at best, and should only be pursued if you are already committed to producing very high quality news content.

Submission details

Google News has some more specific requirements than Yahoo! News, so a best practice is to make sure you meet Google's minimum bar. Here are some of the things you will need to get into Google News:
• All news stories should appear at a static URL. The URL and the content on it should not change over time. The URL also needs to be accessible through a standard HTML text link.
•CreateaGoogleNewsSitemap (http://www.google.com/support/news_pub/bin/answer.py?hl= en&answer=74288) and submit it to Google through Google Webmaster Tools.
• Keep all content in standard HTML (no PDFs, multimedia, or frames). Make sure the articles are UTF-8-encoded.

FIGURE : News search market share (Experian Hit wise)

Rank	Websites	Domain	Total Visits	Visits Share
Top Visited News and Media Sites — Month of July 2011				
1	Yahoo! News	news.yahoo.com	429,109,585	9.94%
2	The Huffington Post	www.huffingtonpost.com	200,413,743	4.64%
3	MSNBC	www.msnbc.msn.com	192,081,515	4.45%
4	The Weather Channel – US	www.weather.com	173,960,021	4.03%
5	CNN.com	www.cnn.com	101,259,853	2.34%
6	Fox News	www.foxnews.com	68,789,823	1.59%
7	Google News	news.google.com	61,541,405	1.42%
8	Yahoo! Weather	weather.yahoo.com	57,503,433	1.33%
9	MSN City Guides	cityguides.msn.com	48,895,082	1.13%
10	Yahoo! Local	local.yahoo.com	47,753,077	1.11%
11	Weather Underground	www.weatherunderground.com	46,200,247	1.07%
12	The New York Times	www.nytimes.com	45,722,547	1.06%
13	The Today Show	today.msnbc.msn.com	39,839,248	0.92%
14	Drudge Report	www.drudgereport.com	38,642,256	0.89%
15	AccuWeather.com	www.accuweather.com	38,509,698	0.89%
16	People Magazine	www.people.com	34,377,091	0.80%
17	USA Today	www.usatoday.com	30,176,231	0.70%
18	www.myqwest.com	www.myqwest.com	29,617,012	0.69%
19	topix	www.topix.com	28,911,873	0.67%
20	ABCnews.com	abcnews.go.com	27,375,363	0.63%

Source: Experian Hitwise, a unit of Experian Marketing Services

• Publish content on a regular basis. Twice per business day is a great place to start, but do more if you can.
• Make sure you have at least 30 days of history before you submit your site.

Google News Sitemaps can speed up the discovery process for your news articles as well. You can implement this as an RSS or Atom feed and have it ping the news server. Even without this, you should create a News Sitemap file for your news. The format of this feed differs from the traditional XML Sitemaps file, as detailed in the link we provided earlier in this section.

➤ **Others: Mobile, Video/Multimedia Search:**

Mobile Search

Mobile search is a dynamic and growing market. In June 24, 2011, group product manager for mobile ads at Google, Paul Feng, told Mashable, "Google has seen mobile search grow at an exponential rate; it's increased five-fold worldwide in the past two years. That rate of growth is comparable to the early days of Google's desktop search" (http://mashable.com/2011/07/12/ mobile-search-trends-google-bing/). Rapid growth is expected to continue.

Remember that google mobile employs a different spiders then googlebot does.

Common considerations for a mobile site

There are some recommendations that hold true regardless of whether you choose a same-URL approach or a mobile-subdomain approach. These are:
• Create a small, lightweight, fast-loading site (<20 KB per page). Mobile devices have limited bandwidth for communication.
• Use the XHTML Basic 1.1 DOCTYPE (with XHTML MP 1.2, cHTML, or WML 1.3). This is important to make sure your site renders properly on the majority of mobile devices that may be used to access your site.
• Use UTF-8 character encoding.

• Avoid use of Flash media interfaces/content because these do not render on most phones. Use only JPEG or GIF images.
• Check that your mobile-friendly URLs' DTD declarations are in an appropriate mobile format, such as XHTML Mobile or Compact HTML.
• Speed up your page load times by reducing DNS lookups. This can be done by combining files (such as script files) or removing unnecessary images. You can read more about this here: http://developer.yahoo.com/performance/rules.html.

Mobile SEO tools for creating mobile-ready sites
There are a growing number of tools that can help you render a mobile-ready version of your existing site. Here are some of the best ones:
• MoFuse: Costs $7.95 per month
• Mippin: Free tool for mobile site creation
• Mobilize by Mippin Word Press Plugin: Free Word Press plug-in for creating a mobile version of your blog
• MobiSiteGalore: Offers mobile site conversion for unlimited pages for $225 per year

➢ **Video Search Optimization:**
Video search optimization is in its infancy, but it is growing rapidly. The increasing penetration of high-bandwidth Internet connections is going to drive more and more demand for online video content. So, creating video content and optimizing it is something you should consider.
The problem is that video search engines have not yet been able to look inside the videos to tell what their content is from a human "eye" perspective. For that reason, they rely on other on-page factors, the metadata within the video file itself, and inbound links and anchor text to determine what a video is about. Here are some additional tips that will assist in the promotion of your video:
• Put it everywhere. Exposure is king. Upload the video to all the video upload sites previously identified. Be sure that you also reference your multimedia files within appropriate RSS or mRSS feeds.
• Use social bookmarking tools that will help make the video more visible. This works regardless of promotional medium. Social bookmarking sites can help your video go viral.
• Offer the option to embed your video in other people's sites. This really encourages people to spread your video around.
• End the video with a "send to a friend" option. Give users some incentive to help you spread the word.
N O T E: **There are exceptions to the statement that video search engines cannot look inside a video. They can do some basic things, such as flesh-tone detection to identify adult content, face detection, on-screen text detection, and so on, but you cannot count on this to help you with your optimization efforts.**

There is evidence, however, that through the use of voice recognition technology, search engines are beginning to "hear" the content of videos. In the future, this may enable them to search through the audio content of a video to determine its subject matter and relevance to a particular search query.
Video search engines that crawl your site

This is the scenario where you host the video on your own site. An example of a video search engine that will crawl your site to find videos is Truveo (http://www.truveo.com). Although this type of search engine represents a small percentage of your total market opportunity, it can still be worth pursuing. It provides a variety of optimization opportunities, including the following:
• You can customize the content on the web page where the user can access or read about the video.
• You can keep your video files in one directory. This makes it easier for the crawler to find them all.
• If you embed a Flash video player into a web page, you can include a link to the raw video file (in .avi, .wmv, QuickTime, or some other format), to maximize exposure to all the different video search engines.
• You can use a video Sitemap, which will make it easier for the crawlers to find your videos.
Video upload sites

These are video search engines that require or allow you to upload your videos to them.
Examples include:
• YouTube • AOL Video • MySpace • Revver • Metacafe • Vimeo • Flickr
• Dailymotion • Yahoo! Video
Also, make sure you keep your videos from getting too large. Videos smaller than 100 MB will work on most video sharing sites, and YouTube will accommodate videos of up to 20 GB (video file sizes larger than 2GB require the upload method you can see here: http://www.google.com/support/youtube/bin/answer.py?answer= 185316) and up to 15 minutes in length (as of December 2011). Flickr limits the length of the videos it will support to 90 seconds.

➤ Other video optimization tips:

Develop videos that reinforce the message of your brand. It is great to have a video go viral or be a success, but will it actually help you if it does?
• Make sure you include the word video on a regular basis throughout any metadata,
• Pick a preferred format, such as .mov, .avi, or .wmv.
• Keep the length reasonable (five minutes or less). If the video is too long, you will run the risk of boring the viewer.
• Give your video a keyword-rich but catchy title.
• Make good use of thumbnails to help users decide which videos to watch. Users like to watch a quick snapshot so that they can decide whether they want to invest their time in the full video.
• Allow users to rate your video. Search engines will pay attention to this when ranking these videos.
• Use keywords in the filename and URL. Video search engines place a fair amount of weight on these in the world of video. Avoid using stop words, such as the and and, in the filename.
• Use appropriate keywords in the link text for the file. Keyword-rich anchor text carries a lot of weight.
• In preparation for voice recognition–based indexing of video and audio content, develop video content "scripts" that are keyword-rich and relevant to your video's topic. In this regard, digital media SEO will be a very new and dynamic area of optimizing content for search engines.

Conclusion:

Optimizing for the vertical engines owned by the major search engines, as well as other players with small but growing market share, represents an opportunity that is largely untapped. You can get a leg up on your competition by optimizing your content for the appropriate engines. This may require enhancing or otherwise modifying the content itself, augmenting the content with additional metadata, or submitting the content by filling out forms or submitting feeds specific to each engine. All of this may seem like a lot of effort, but if you have the right type of content, it is worth it. Not only can you gain visibility in those vertical search properties, but you may also find that your listings are promoted into the Blended Search results in the main
Engines.

UNIT 5

CH – 8 Tracking Results and Measuring Success

Intro….

      Since the nature of what SEO practitioners do is not clear to many people, the expert practitioner knows how important it is to establish quantifiable goals and demonstrate results. Expectation management is key, and effective communication of timetables for deliverables and improvements is crucial to the success of any SEO project.

      Web analytics and other data-mining tools can provide a rich array of data that is invaluable to the SEO process. However, thousands of tools are available, and it can be difficult to figure out which ones you need to use, which ones are merely nice to have, and which ones are not worth the time.

Closely connected with the goals of the site are the direct drivers of results. These include parameters such as:

• Total site traffic
• Traffic to your most popular pages
• Keywords driving the traffic
• Keywords driving conversions
• Pages receiving the search traffic
• Pages resulting in conversions down the line
• Traffic per page and conversion rate per page
• Traffic per keyword and conversion rate per keyword

Why Measuring Success Is Essential to the SEO Process

At the beginning of any SEO project, it is wise to establish baseline data points for the website.

This includes the following:

• Quantifying organic search traffic by search engine and keyword
• Quantifying a baseline of the major keywords that are driving traffic by search engine
• Quantifying a breakout of what sections are getting the current organic search traffic by search engine and keyword
• Quantifying data on conversions broken down by search engine and keyword
• Identifying poorly performing pages
• Identifying the best-performing pages (in terms of traffic and conversions)
• Tracking search engine crawler activity on the site
• Determining the number of indexed pages
• Determining whether the indexed pages are getting search traffic
• Determining whether best-selling product pages are indexed and getting search traffic
• Identifying 404 error pages and external sites linking to these pages, if any

      In the world of web analytics, this is referred to as picking actionable **key performance indicators (KPIs).** The best data measurements are those that potentially result in an action being taken in response. Think of this as data-driven decision making.

➢ The Tracking Cycle: Produce, Launch, Measure, Refine

1. Define an SEO campaign and set goals. What are you going to accomplish, and what is the strategy for accomplishing it? How will you measure progress?
2. Discuss your strategy.
3. Establish a baseline.

However, you must also consider how changes in the market, new competition, competitors exiting the market, industry consolidation, and changes in your business strategy may have affected that year-over-year data.

4. Proceed with your project.

Implement the new pages, the site changes, the link-building campaign, or whatever else you may have planned. Put it in place and execute it.

5. Collect data.

6. Compare the baseline data to the new data.

7. Refine your campaign. Now that you have compared your old data with your new data, you can make some decisions. Is the campaign a bust?

If you don't see any change in your traffic or conversion rate within a few weeks (or if the changes are measurably negative), you will need to examine the data more closely.

➢ Using Analytics as a Business Case for SEO

You can use a properly structured plan as the business case for an SEO project. The way to do this is to express the target results of an SEO project in terms of financial impact. You could include a variety of metrics in a business case, such as:

Revenue   • Lead generation   Margin   • Branding value   Reach

• Other action triggers (newsletter sign-ups, contact requests, demo requests, accepting a free trial, viewing a specific piece of content, etc.) Measuring such things requires that you tie organic search engine visits to the revenue and other conversions that result.

Measuring Search Traffic

• Look at your daily referral reports to detect newly received inbound links (the great majority of webmasters click on a link after implementing it, to make sure it works).

• Look at the search terms people use to come to your site to spot long-tail search opportunities.

• Measure the results of your campaigns by tracking the increase in conversions you are driving over time.

➢ Basic Overview

Your hosting company most likely provides a free web analytics solution, such as AWStats, Webalizer, or something similar. Although these tools provide valuable data, they are very limited in scope, and other tools out there provide significantly more data. Here are some of the best-known options:

• Google Analytics   • Woopra
• Clicky   • Piwik
• Yahoo! Web Analytics   • Web trends

➢ Selecting the Right Analytics Package:

Log file tracking and JavaScript tracking are equally valid methods, and each has its own strengths and weaknesses. The biggest advantage of the log file method is that it allows you to track search engine crawler activity on your site. This is something you cannot do in JavaScript implementations, because search engine crawlers do not execute the JavaScript.

In addition, log file analysis allows you to track all of the following:

• Users who don't have JavaScript enabled (or are using privacy or ad filters)
• Media types beyond HTML
• Partial requests (incomplete page loads and load errors)

Another major advantage of a log file-based solution is that you run the software in-house, so no third party has a copy of a log file with your proprietary traffic data on it. This distinction can be a big win in terms of security for some organizations.

Some other key advantages of JavaScript tracking include the following:

• Tracks outgoing link requests
• Tracks events that don't involve HTML requests, such as playing a video
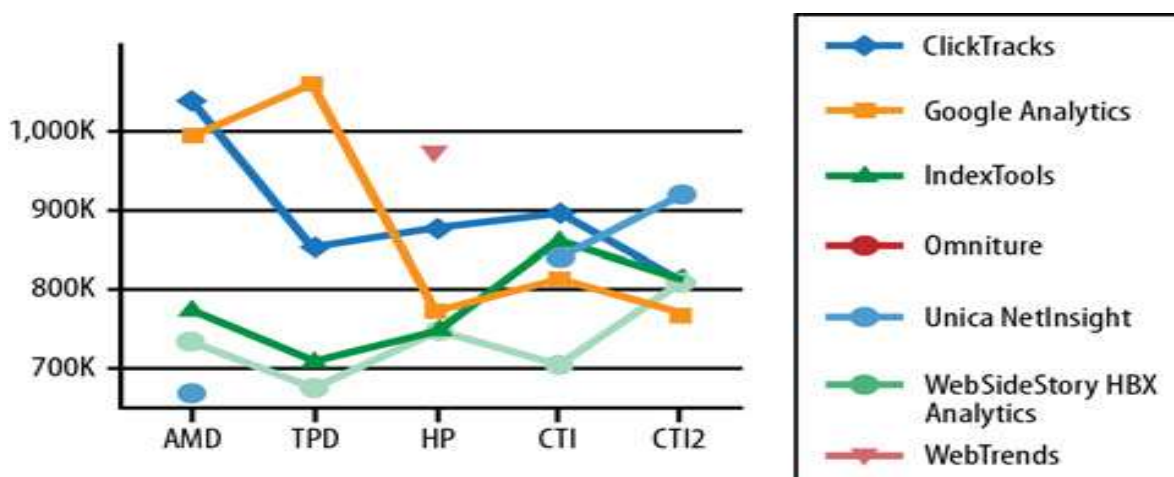• Records visitors' screen resolutions

FIGURE: Web analytics accuracy report (Stone Temple Computing, 2017)

The table compares seven different analytics packages (listed on the right) across five different sites (represented by the acronyms on the bottom).

On the AMD site, the lowest reporting package (HBX Analytics) shows a little less than 750,000 unique visitors, while the highest reporting package (Click Tracks) shows about 1,050,000 unique visitors during the same period—almost 50% more!

For many companies, one of the best solutions is to start with a free analytics package such as Google Analytics, then look to buy a higher-end solution once they have pushed these packages to their limits. By pushing the limits of these free analytics products first, you will end up developing a set of requirements you can use in deciding where to go next.

Valuable SEO Data in Web Analytics

You can extract all kinds of data from web analytics. Let's take a look at a few of the more interesting types of information you may want to extract.

Traffic by search engine

One of the first things you may want to know is the breakout of traffic by search engine. Figure 10-2 provides an example of such a report in Google Analytics.

Traffic by keyword

One of the basic data points of interest for an SEO practitioner is what search terms are bringing traffic to the website. This provides a quick way to see where the SEO campaign is going well, and where it is not going so well.

Branded versus non branded traffic

Branded search traffic refers to traffic that comes to your site through queries that involve your company name or product brand name. Non branded search traffic is much more valuable because it represents organic long-tail search traffic to your site.

FIGURE 10-2 Traffic by search engine

➤ **Number of pages getting search traffic**

An indirect way of measuring effective indexation is to keep an eye on how many pages are getting search traffic. This number should represent a subset of the total pages indexed, but it is more valuable because these pages were not just indexed, but ranked highly and were interesting enough that visitors decided to click on the listing.

➤ **Segmenting Search Traffic**

Next, you can consider putting these things together. Even the free tools provide substantial capability for building out custom reports. Figure 10-4 depicts a screenshot from Yahoo! Web Analytics that shows the search phrases just for Google.

⊟ stone temple seo	4	0.11%
Google	4	100.00%
⊟ maile ohye	4	0.11%
Google	4	100.00%
⊟ frazier miller	4	0.11%
Google	4	100.00%
⊟ white hat link building	4	0.11%
Google	4	100.00%
⊟ css menu seo	4	0.11%
Google	4	100.00%
⊟ meta tags for seo	4	0.11%
Google	4	100.00%
⊟ how can css be used for developing a unique website style?	4	0.11%
Google	4	100.00%
⊟ technical seo	4	0.11%
Google	4	100.00%
⊟ enquisite	4	0.11%
Google	4	100.00%

➢ Referring Sites

Referring site reports are useful for a number of reasons, but one of the more interesting SEO reasons to look at these reports is to spot when you receive new links. You can often see those new links in these reports first, even before the search engines report them.

➢ Using Analytics Dashboards

In analytics terms, a dashboard is a single-page view that contains your most critical metrics all in one place. Of course, your most critical metrics are likely to differ from those of the next publisher, because the needs of different sites vary greatly.

In addition, multiple dashboards may be required in any given organization. For example, the CEO of a large public company probably wants to see different data (and a lot less of it) than a senior business analyst.
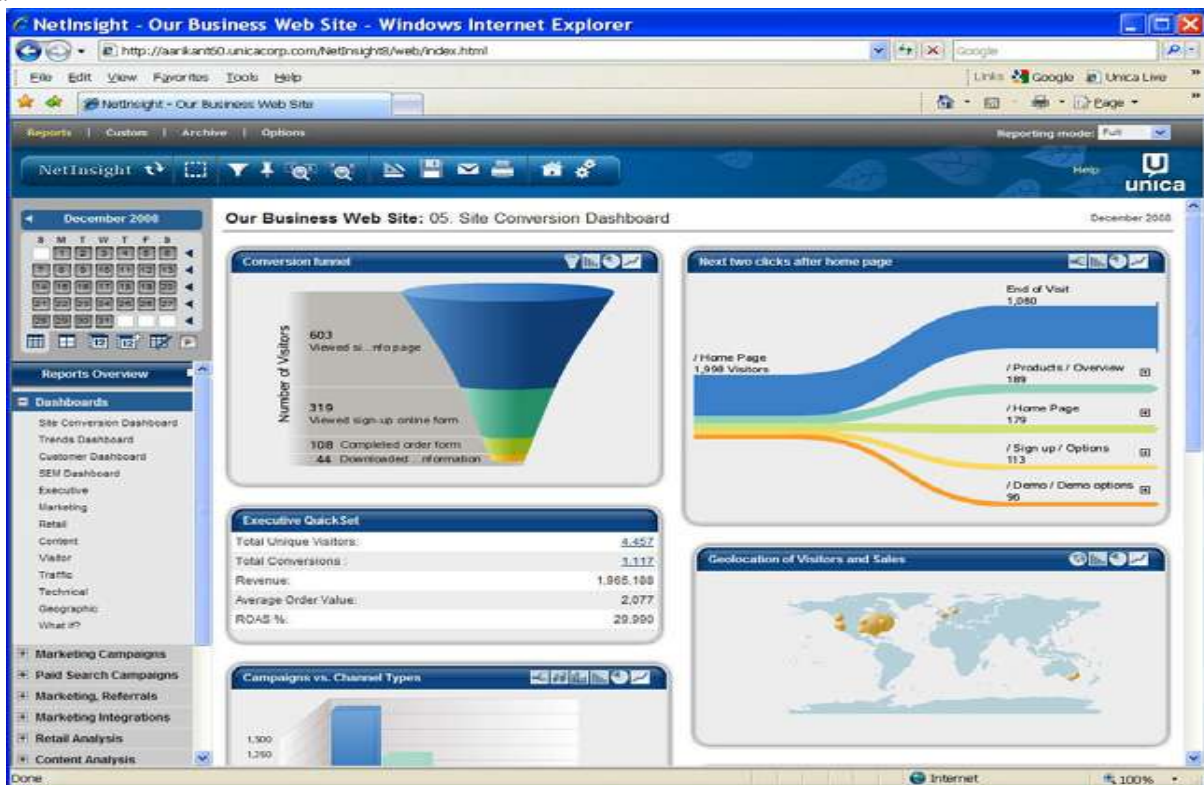

FIGURE 10-6 Custom dashboard

Each analytics package provides methods for implementing a custom dashboard. Figure 10-6 is an example of one from IBM Net Insight.

➢ A Deeper Look at Action Tracking

Action tracking is one step deeper than basic analytics. Rather than simply observing what pages are visited and how many unique sessions are logged, action tracking allows you to narrow down groups of visitors based on the actions they take on your site.

• SEOmoz has action tracking in place on its user sign-up page. Note that it is often the best choice to have the action tracking on the action confirmation page rather than the sign-up form itself, as tracking on the sign-up form can result in including incomplete form fills as part of your action total. (login page and registration page)

So, what types of actions should you be tracking on your site? The answer varies depending on your business and site structure. Here are some suggestions, segmented by site type.

➢ For ecommerce sites:
Add to Cart button
Complete checkout
Save to wish list
Send this to a friend

➢ For B2B sites:
Subscribe to newsletter

A subscription is a tacit endorsement of your brand and an indication of a desire to stay in contact. It may not be a conversion, but for B2B, it may be the next best thing.
Contact form submission

Filling out a contact form can be even more valuable than a newsletter subscription, in some cases. Though some of these forms will report support issues, many may contain questions about your products/services and indicate a desire to open a sales conversation.
Email link

As with contact forms, direct email links have the possibility of becoming sales contacts. The best thing you can do is clearly label sales-related emails and track them separately from those raising support or business issues.
➢   For blogs:
Subscribe to RSS feed

An RSS feed subscriber is a blog's equivalent of a conversion; tracking these is imperative.
Add comment

Anyone who is contributing content to the blog or posting comments should be paid attention to (as should those channels that send you people who participate).
Social bookmark/share

All those folks who are submitting your content to Digg, Reddit, and other social media and news aggregation/discussion sites deserve to be recognized (and sought after).
➢   For forums or other sites based on user-generated content (UGC):
Sign up for an account

These users are active contributors; you need to know where they come from.
Contribute content

When a user publishes, discovering his path is important (especially if it is not from a bookmark/type-in).
Add comment

Comments are a great predictor of engagement; you will also want to track these participants.
Vote/rate

Even low levels of participation, such as a rating or a vote, are worth tracking when every piece of participation counts.
Social shares

Face book friends and Likes, Google +1's, and Twitter followers are all worth tracking.

➢   **Separating the Analytics Wheat from the Chaff**

One of the big problems with web analytics is that there is so much data. There is seemingly an endless supply of the stuff—so much that you can get lost in the weeds and waste a lot of time. As Dennis Mortensen of Visual Revenue (http://visualrevenue.com/blog) likes to say, do not "report-surf."

The basis of this plan is the definition of actionable key performance indicators (KPIs). To summarize this concept very briefly, do not view a report unless there is a chance that it will provide enough insight to enable you to take action (e.g., reallocating resources to fix a problem or pursue a new opportunity you've discovered).

Common analytics mistakes

Because of the complexity of web analytics, there are plenty of opportunities to make mistakes. Even if you are laser-focused on actionable KPIs, you can still draw wrong conclusions from the data. Here are a couple of examples:

Making a decision based on too small a sample size

A simplistic example would be if you had a keyword that brought you two visitors, and both of them bought something. What does that mean? Your conversion rate will always be 100%? Of course not.

Not recognizing when you have enough data

You can make the previous mistake in the opposite direction, too. When you have enough data, you need to be willing to act on it.

Working with biased data

You can easily collect biased data and make the wrong decision. For example, an ecommerce site basing its SEO plans on December's traffic numbers is probably being misled. And temporal factors aren't the only problem—visitor locations, referral sources, and in-house campaigns to existing lists can all skew your information.

Tying SEO to Conversion and ROI

As we discussed previously in this chapter, it is important to tie your SEO campaign to the results it brings to the business. Key to that is measuring the conversions driven by organic SEO traffic. Here are some of the most common types of conversions:

Sales/sales revenue

This is the one most people think of when they think of conversions. Sales and sales revenue (or better still, margin) conversions can be the simplest things to track, provided you are not selling many different products at different price points and in different quantities. In that case, the process needs to be a bit more sophisticated.

Email/blog/newsletter subscriptions

Any time a user signs up to receive regular communications from you, it is a win. Even though this action does not have direct financial consequences, it is still a conversion.

Sign-ups

Closely related to subscriptions are other types of sign-ups. Perhaps you offer a service such as a tool that people need to sign up to use. Even if the tool is free, you should track this as a conversion.

Downloads

Many sites offer free downloads, such as white papers, or free downloadable tools. even if you do not require a sign-up of any type, you should still count a download as a conversion. You are getting your message out there with the downloads you offer.

Contact forms and phone calls

When someone contacts you, or requests that you contact him, it may count as a conversion.

Visitors who share

This kind of conversion happens when a visitor shares the information she found on your site with someone else.

Visitors who link

Users who visit your site and find its content useful, entertaining, or otherwise compelling may link to it from their own sites. Linking counts as a conversion.

Visitors who publicize

Visitors can publicize your site by mentioning it in forums or blog comments, on social media sites such as Google+, Twitter, and Facebook, or by writing about it on their own sites.

SEO software packages such as Conductor Searchlight and Raven SEO Tools allow SEO professionals to view search ranking data together with traffic and revenue data. This enables them to tie natural search traffic to conversions, and therefore measure ROI. You can see sample screens from Conductor Searchlight in Figure 10-8 and Raven SEO Tools in Figure 10-9.
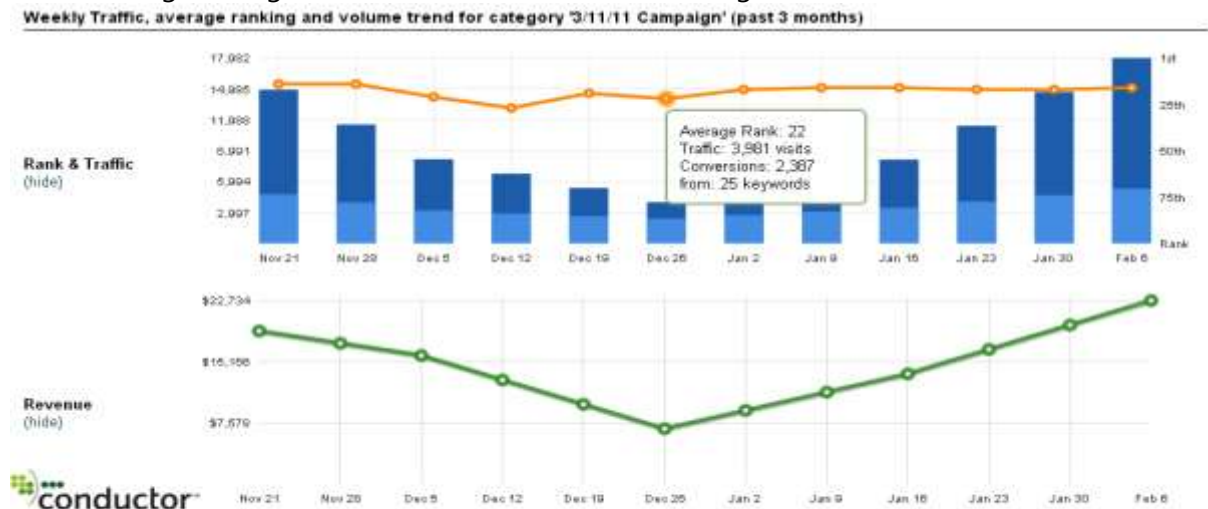
Attribution

Another issue to be aware of is that of attribution. The issue is that there is a tremendous amount of interaction between types of media. Here are some
Examples:
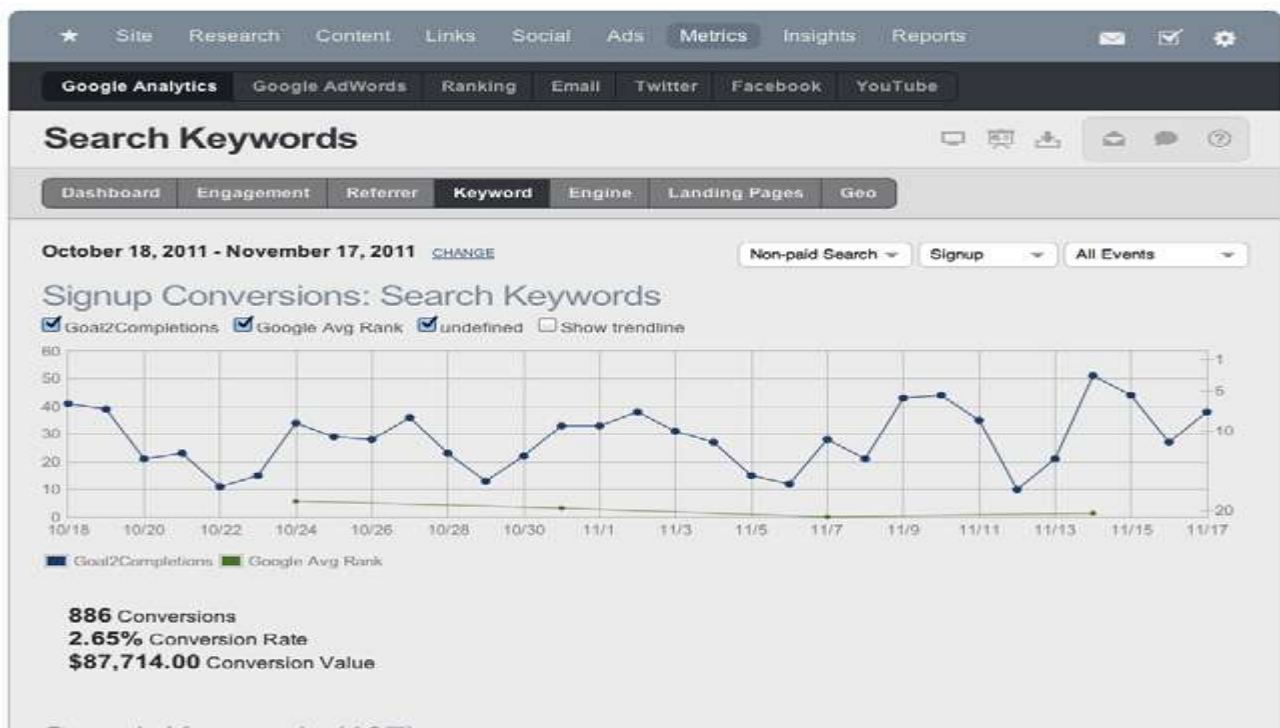
• A user does a search, clicks on an organic search result, reads a few things on the page, and leaves. The next day, she remembers what she read, does another search, and this time clicks on a paid search ad for the site and buys a product. Organic search should receive some credit for this sale.
• A user does a search, clicks on an organic search result, has a look around your site, and leaves. A few days later, because of what he learned, he goes into a store and buys one of your products. Organic search should also receive some credit for this offline sale.

• It goes in the other direction, too. For example, if a user sees a TV ad, then does an organic search to find your website, and buys your product, the TV ad should get some credit for the sale.

Setting Up Analytics Software to Track Conversions

One of the great things about tracking conversions is that you can use the resulting data to focus your efforts. If certain keywords, pages, or referrers are showing much higher conversion rates than other sources, you may want to focus more of your SEO efforts on those rather than on something else that does not convert as well. Alternatively, you can use this information to identify underperforming areas where you might be able to make improvements.

Capturing conversion data takes a little setting up. Your analytics software does not know what you consider a conversion unless you define it. For example, in Google Analytics, you need to go into your Profile Settings to configure conversion goals and funnels.

FIGURE: Google Analytics goals setup

The key code is on Click="ACTION='05'". This tells Yahoo! Web Analytics to associate this event with Action #5. Some additional configuration is also required within Yahoo! Web Analytics so that you can give Action #5 a label and a value.

In addition, you will need to have your web application populate certain data in the JavaScript before executing it, such as the total amount spent. Oftentimes, publishers choose to include a lot more data, such as listing all the products sold, the price per product, the number of units, shipping costs, and so on.

Although the preceding examples used Google Analytics and Yahoo! Web Analytics, any of the major analytics packages can do this type of conversion tracking.

Conversion tracking strategy

An important step in conversion tracking is deciding what you want to call a conversion. As we outlined earlier in this chapter, it is important to consider all types of conversions, such as sign-ups, contact requests, downloads, and so forth. There is one other decision you need to make, though: how to value each conversion.

Segmenting Campaigns and SEO Efforts by Conversion Rate

Now that you have conversion tracking set up, how do you use it to focus your SEO efforts? One of the things you will want to do is to track conversion data in different ways. Here are some examples of the things you may want to look at:

• Conversions by keyword—what keywords are bringing the best results?
• Conversions by referrer—which traffic source is offering the best conversion?
• Conversions by web page—which pages on your site result in the highest conversion?
• Conversions by initial entry page—which initial entry pages drive the most conversions?
• Conversions by keyword and landing page—taking into account the highest-converting landing pages on your site, what keywords are the big hitters for those pages?

The link bait bump

A specific example of how to use action tracking by referral source is to track a link bait bump. The idea is that after successful link bait draws thousands of visitors to your site, a small percentage of those visitors will stick around and continue to visit on a semi regular basis (this is particularly true if you're delivering fresh, valuable content on a regular basis).

Figure 10-14 shows a sample report from Yahoo! Web Analytics (which was pulled after an article for SEOmoz made the home page of Digg).In Figure 10-14, you can see a list of domains that sent SEOmoz traffic over a few weeks' time, along with the number of resulting SEOmoz membership sign-ups. You can see some clear patterns, including the following:

Referring Domain	First Time	Returning	Visits			
Direct access or bookmark	49,851	39,853	89,704			
http://www.seomoz.org	1,765	5,650	7,415	147	$0.00	
http://www.google.com	11,656	4,175	15,831	132	$0.00	0.83%
http://www.seocompany.ca	454	129	583	25	$0.00	4.28%
http://del.icio.us	7,032	1,391	8,423	25	$0.00	0.29%
http://www.webrankinfo.com	648	162	810	19	$0.00	2.34%
http://blog.searchenginewatch.com	809	358	1,167	18	$0.00	1.54%
http://searchenginewatch.com	1,012	223	1,235	18	$0.00	1.45%
http://www.hispamp3.com	880	25	905	16	$0.00	1.76%
http://forums.digitalpoint.com	679	322	1,001	16	$0.00	1.59%
http://digg.com	20,529	1,645	22,174	13	$0.00	0.05%
http://www.google.co.uk	1,120	463	1,583	12	$0.00	0.75%
http://www.stuntdubl.com	109	70	179	12	$0.00	6.70%
http://www.tripple.net	25	5	30	12	$0.00	40.00%
http://www.seobook.com	374	145	519	10	$0.00	1.92%
http://www.stumbleupon.com	11,433	1,439	12,872	8	$0.00	0.06%
http://googlesystem.blogspot.com	1,743	127	1,870	8	$0.00	0.42%
http://www.kalidej.net	30	18	48	8	$0.00	16.66%
http://www.sitesell.com	349	283	632	7	$0.00	1.10%
http://search.yahoo.com	687	103	790	7	$0.00	0.88%
http://reddit.com	7,489	334	7,823	6	$0.00	0.07%
http://www.webmasterbrain.com	73	21	94	6	$0.00	6.38%
http://forums.searchenginewatch.com	83	47	130	6	$0.00	4.61%
http://www.digg.com	15,752	1,241	16,993	6	$0.00	0.03%

Determining Project ROI

Number of people searching for your keywords
Expected click-through rate from organic search
Average conversion rate.

Competitive and Diagnostic Search Metrics

Thus far in this chapter we have focused on the basics—the dollars and cents of determining whether you have succeeded in your SEO campaign. As we noted at the beginning of the chapter, these should be your first priority in your analytics efforts.

An example of this would be finding out that a major section of your site is not indexed. Another example is seeing how your traffic growth compares to that of your competitors (this helps you decide whether you have set the right objectives for your efforts).

Search Engine and Competitive Metrics

Numerous tools allow you to monitor your site and those of your competitors, providing insight into your SEO progress. You can also use these tools to figure out what your competitors are doing from an SEO perspective. This type of intelligence can provide you with new ideas on how to adapt your strategy to get better results.

Site Indexing Data

It is valuable to know how many pages in your site are in a search engine's index. This is interesting for two reasons:

• To determine whether important parts of your site are not in the index (if key parts of the site are not in the index, you can embark on an effort to determine why)

• To learn about your competitors' sites and strategies
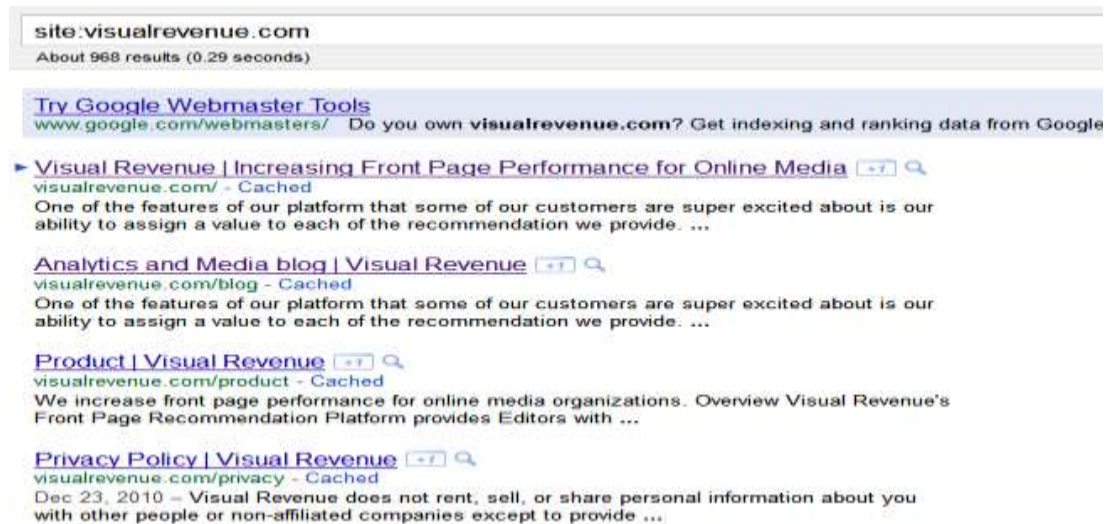
One important thing to note is that the results that site: commands return are fast estimates, and aren't as accurate as the reports generated by Google Webmaster Tools based on your XML Sitemap. You can use them to give you a general impression, but that is all.

Link Building, Link Tracking, and Link-Based Metrics (Including Anchor Text Analysis)

Measurement of link-building campaigns is another must for the expert SEO practitioner. This can help you refine your campaigns to bring better results, compare link growth to your search rankings, and perform analysis to see how your campaigns are faring compared to the efforts of your competitors.

Search engine–supplied tools

There are three basic tools for checking backlinks:

• Google Webmaster Tools is a powerful start. With Google WMT, a website publisher can easily download a spreadsheet of all the links Google has in its database to that site (note that Google might not include some links that it does not consider significant). Publishers can see only the links to their own sites. Figure 10-21 shows the report.

• Bing Webmaster Tools is also a great asset. It offers a similar capability for downloading a spreadsheet of the links that Bing has in its database for a site. Once again, publishers can use this tool only to see the links to their own site. Figure 10-22 shows what the report looks like.

• For quick and dirty link totals, you can use a Firefox plug-in known as Search Status. This plug-in provides basic link data on the fly with just a couple of mouse clicks. Figure shows the menu you'll see with regard to back links. Notice also in the figure that the Search Status plug-in offers an option for highlighting No Follow links, as well as.

Third-party link-building tools

A variety of third-party link-building tools are also available.

Link Maps:

Developed by Bruce Clay, Inc., Link Maps (http://www.linkmaps.com) allows you to map the back links of any website, including your competitors'. Link Maps gathers the initial data from the search engines and then adds some advanced filtering, including:

• Removing pages that return 404 errors
• Removing pages that do not have a link
• Limiting results to no more than four pages per domain
• Filtering out guest books
• Identifying possible link farms

Conductor Searchlight.

This platform provides a rich toolset for link building for enterprise marketers. It provides deep insight into both you and your competitors' backlink profiles in easy-to-understand charts that automatically update as the landscape changes.

Stone Temple Consulting Link Focus.

Stone Temple Consulting Link Focus is a link-building research tool that uses a proprietary algorithm to identify the most important links to a given website.

FIGURE: Conductor Searchlight

➢ **Google Blog Search:**

It is well known that the link: command works poorly in Google Web Search. For whatever reason, Google has decided to return only a small sampling of data when people use that command. However, interestingly enough, you can get more data on your back links using Google Blog Search—and it reports more than just the blog links

➢ **Exalead.**

Exalead has developed a European search engine (http://www.exalead.com/search/) that offers capabilities that include a link: command. What makes Exalead particularly interesting is the advanced filtering capabilities it provides, as you can see in Figure 10-31.
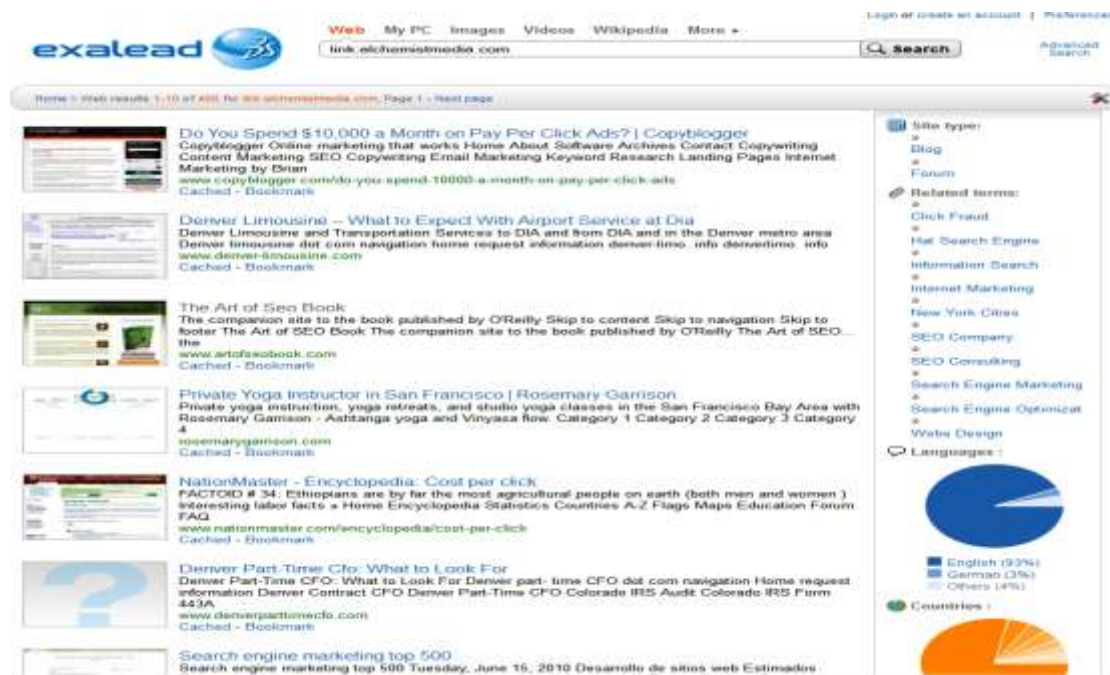
Measuring the value of a link

One of the big questions that people ask is what the value of a particular inbound link is. There is no simple way to answer that question, but there are some metrics you can look at that can give you a feeling for how important a link might be. Here are some of the most important elements in determining a link's value:

Where does the linking page rank for the term/phrase you want to rank for?
Where does the linking page rank for one to two important, competitive terms in its title tag?
Where does content on the linking domain generally rank for competitive terms in its pages' respective title tags?
How many keyword phrases do the linking domain and page rank in the top 20 results for?
Does the linking site carry any brokered sets of links?(SELLING SIGHTS)
What is the relevance of the linking page/site to your target page?
When was the last time Google crawled the page?
Pages that link to high-ranking competitors
Page Rank of the page
In links to the page
Total in links to the domain
Number of external links on the page

> ### Ranking:

Many people get obsessed with checking their rankings. Rankings do have some correlation with traffic. However, do not spend too much time on this activity. For one thing, many tools that are available today for checking rankings scrape Google results, which is against Google's Webmaster Guidelines.

Rankings data can be helpful in a few scenarios, however:

• Where a #1 (or a very high) ranking for a trophy search term provides brand value

• When there is a sudden significant change (such as a move from position #5 to #50, or a similar change in the other direction)

• Where a long-term trend can be established, such as a steady improvement in position, or a steady decline

• In aggregate, where you can measure a site's overall activity and popularity

Authority Labs also provides an array of reporting tools that help you track rankings across the major search engines. A sample screenshot is shown in Figure 10-33.
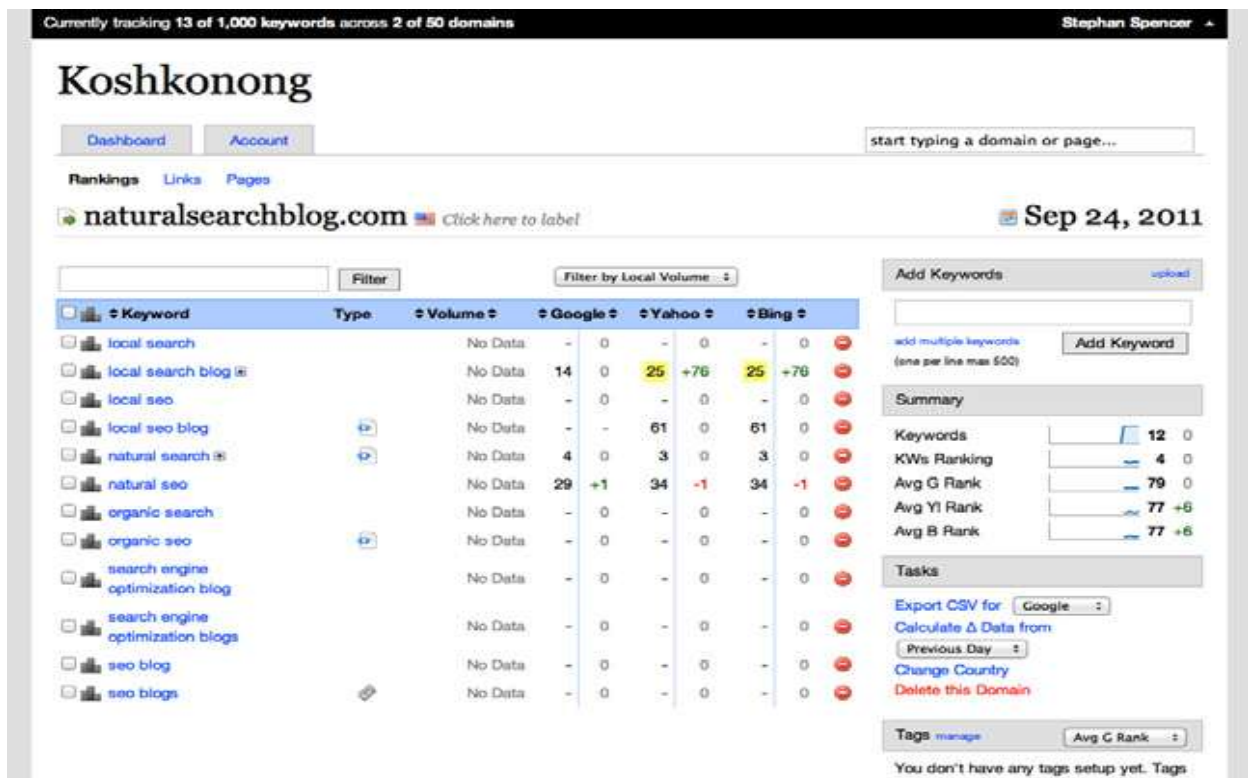
FIGURE : Authority Labs report

Many other tools allow you to collect rankings data, too. Some of the most important ones are:
• AdGooroo
• Covario
• Rank Checker
• Sycara
• Stone Temple Consulting
• Web CEO

➢ **Crawl Errors:**

Complex websites will eventually develop errors. For example, the publisher may move pages and forget to redirect the old pages to the new ones, or make a mistake in the robots.txt file that prevents the crawling of key parts of the site.

All of these issues are easy to diagnose in either Google Webmaster Tools or Bing Webmaster Tools. Figure 10-35 shows the Pages with Crawl Errors report in Bing WMT.

Bing will provide data on 404 pages, pages blocked by the Robots Exclusion Protocol (REP), dynamic URLs that might be troublesome for Bing, malware-infected pages, and unsupported content types.
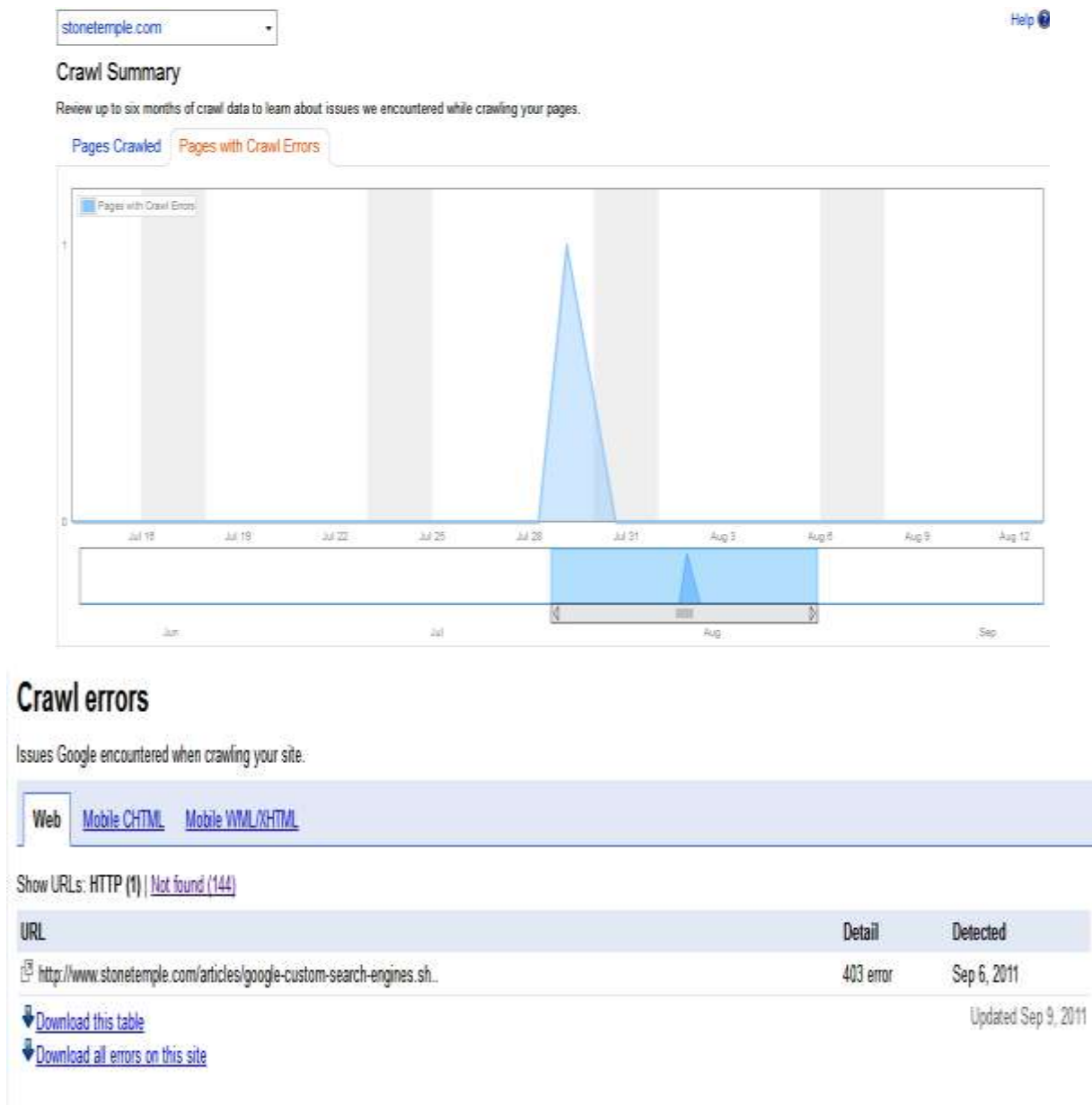
FIGURE : Google crawl errors report

Tracking the Blogosphere

The blogosphere is a very dynamic part of the Web—always fresh and constantly updated. News tends to break in the blogosphere, and in Twitter, before it hits mainstream media or the Web at large.

Tracking the blogosphere will help you stay current on both your industry and the SEO industry. Major influencers tend to hang out in the blogosphere and have their own blogs. Identifying these influencers is the first step to reaching them.

Here are four major uses for tracking blogs:

Reputation monitorinii (identify risk AND problems)

Tracking buzz and public relations campaigns(tracking the effect on the web)

Identifying potential influencers(link building)

Competitive analysis

Tracking Your Blog(s)

Blogs offer a variety of benefits to the online marketer. They can be a great way to position yourself or the team behind your site as experts, enabling you to reach major influencers as well as a broad

audience of people at the same time. This can become a nice source of links as a part of your link-building campaign.

Blog subscribers

Measuring the number of subscribers to your blog is one basic way to monitor the blog's progress. One way to do this is to create your RSS feed with Feed Burner and have users' use that RSS feed instead of any other solution, such as the one that comes with your blog software.

By having users subscribe to the Feed Burner-based RSS feed, you can get much more granular statistics on your subscriber base, as shown in Figure 10-41.
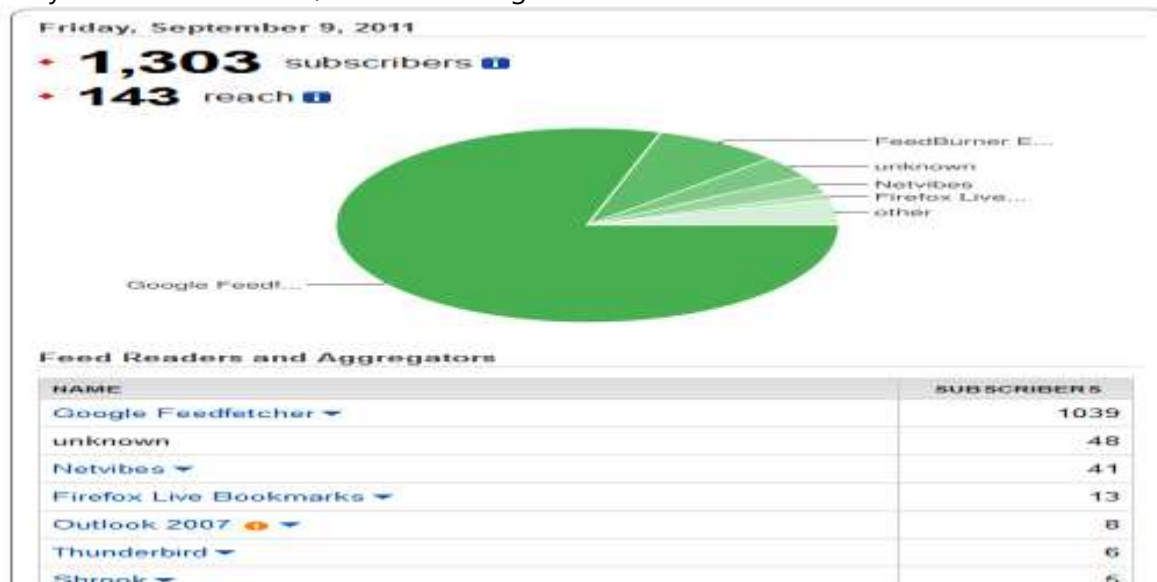
> **Blog links**

There are a few ways to extract data on the number of links to your posts. You can also use either Google Webmaster Tools or Bing Webmaster Tools to track the number of links to your blog.

Search Engine Robot Traffic Analysis

As an expert SEO practitioner, you should know how robots are spidering your site. For one thing, spidering frequency is a clue as to which pages on your site have the highest Page Rank and trust, because Google crawls the Web in reverse Page Rank order. Monitoring this can also help you detect spidering problems on your site.

For pages that are indexed, you can look at how often the spiders visit/crawl your pages versus how often the engine actually shows a new version of your page in the index. To do this, look at the last cached date the search engine reported, and compare it with your crawling data.

Log file analysis programs include:

• Analog • AWStats • Sawmill • Visitors • Webalizer • W3Perl • Piwik

 Key Performance Indicators for Long-Tail SEO

 Branded-to-no branded ratio

This is the percentage of your natural search traffic that comes from branded versus non branded keywords. If the ratio is high and most of your traffic is coming from searches for your brand, this signals that your SEO is fundamentally broken. The lower the ratio, the more of the long tail of natural search you likely are capturing. This metric is an excellent gauge of the success of your optimization initiatives.

Unique crawled URLs

This is the number of unique (non duplicate) web pages on your site that are crawled by search engine spiders such as Googlebot.

Search visitors per contributing page

This is the percentage of unique pages that yield search-delivered traffic in a given month. This ratio essentially is a key driver of the length of your long tail of natural search.

Keywords per page

This is the average number of keywords each page (minus the freeloaders) yields in a given month. Put another way, it is the ratio of keywords to pages yielding search traffic.

Search visitors per keyword

This is the ratio of search engine–delivered visitors to search terms. This metric indicates how much traffic each keyword drives and is a function of your rankings in the SERPs.

Index-to-crawl ratio

This is the ratio of pages indexed to unique crawled pages. Just because Googlebot crawls a page doesn't guarantee it will show up in Google's index.

Search visitors per crawled page

Calculated for each search engine separately, this is a measure of how much traffic the engine delivers for every page it crawls. Each search engine has a different audience size.

Other Third-Party Tools

Throughout this chapter, several third-party tools have been mentioned or recommended for
Analysis, research, and testing. This section introduces a few more that are worth mentioning.

SEO for Firefox
Aaron Wall of SEO Book created a useful data enhancement tool with the SEO for Firefox
Extension (http://tools.seobook.com/firefox/seo-for-firefox.html). When turned on, this tool provides extra data that can be populated automatically or on request from within the regular search results of Google, Yahoo!, and Bing. Some of the most popular data points this add-on provides for the URL or domain of each search result include: Google Page Rank, site age, various back link metrics, .edu and .gov link counts, bookmarking and social metrics (such as number of Digg votes), DMOZ listings, and additional reporting from other third-party tools.

UrlTrends
UrlTrends provides a monitoring dashboard that automatically tracks basic metrics for a site
And offers a comparison against the entire list of domains being monitored by UrlTrends. In
Addition to link popularity, Google Page Rank, and Alexa Rank, UrlTrends also records outgoing links, a snapshot of keyword rankings, and social bookmarking metrics. UrlTrends offers a free account that provides basic reporting for a limited number of domains.

SpyFu
SpyFu is primarily geared toward PPC advertisers, but it offers valuable keyword data for SEOprofessionals as well. There is a free version that provides valuable but limited data, as well as a paid version that provides additional data. SpyFu can provide information on a site's estimated daily ad budget, total ad clicks per day, average cost per click, average ad clicks per day, average ad position, average ad competitors, average ad percentile, paid and organic Keywords, top paid and organic competitors, and other domains that share the same owner.

SEMRush
SEMRush is another tool that offers keyword information of use to SEO and paid search
Professionals. Figure shows a paid search report that is interesting from an SEO

Perspective because it shows the target landing page for the keyword, as well as the estimated CPC. This can provide insight into the value your competition is placing on various keywords and landing pages on their sites.

Covario Organic Search Insight (OSI)
Covario's OSI is an enterprise-class SEO platform that includes many more features than basicrank checking, crawl error alerts, and simple recommendations. Some of the features include:

• Keyword research solutions
• Long-tail analysis and recommendations
• Workflow tracking and automation
• Portfolio analysis for multiple sites, micro sites, and landing pages
• Prioritization mechanisms
• Competitive analysis features
• Advanced link analytics
• Ad hoc analysis capabilities
• Advanced reporting capabilities
• Alerting capabilities
• Universal search metrics (image, video, etc.)
• Social signal inclusion and analytics

Covario Organic Search Optimizer (OSO):

In some enterprise environments there are fundamental challenges with the content
Management systems (CMSs) or the ecommerce platform that make it very difficult to
Implement desired SEO changes. There are only a few solutions in this space. One well-known tool is
Covario's Organic Search Optimizer (http://www.covario.com/solutions/seo/seo-software),
Originally developed by Stephan Spencer (one of the coauthors of this book) at Net concepts
And previously known as Gravity Stream.
Covario's OSO takes a complementary approach to whatever system is currently in place and helps SEOs get around IT to dynamically fix the SEO errors. OSO enables the modification of the pages without having to directly deal with the CMS or ecommerce platform.

Search metrics Essentials
Search metrics Essentials (http://www.searchmetrics.com/en/) allows you to rapidly see how your competition is doing in organic search, paid search, news search, image search, video search, and more. The keywords tab gives you search volume, cost per click, competition for keywords, and the average ad spend on a per-keyword basis. This is a lot more helpful and informative than simply using the Google Keyword Tool: you can actually see what people are spending to target specific keywords.

The platform offers many other features as well. For example, Search metrics Essentials lets you Peer deep into your competition's social media campaigns, allowing you to see which pages are the most liked, commented on, and shared throughout all of the popular networks.

CH – 9 an Evolving Art from the Future of SEO

Intro....

The role of the SEO professional is to bring more targeted traffic to an organization's website. This underlying role will not change as technology evolves, but the mechanics of how it is done will continue to evolve as technology improves and adapts to users, and vice versa.

Driving this is the fact that the complexity of search will continue to grow, as all search engines (not simply Google!) seek to locate and index all of the world's digital information. It is reasonable, then, to expect various levels of expansion and evolution in the following areas:

• Mobile search, and with it voice search, as the world continues to increase its demand for this capability

• Social search, as users begin to leverage social networks to discover new and interesting Content and solutions to problems from their friends

• Indexation of multimedia content, such as images, video, and audio, including a better understanding of the content of these types of files

• Indexing of data behind forms (something that Google already does in some cases)

• Extraction and analysis of Flash, JavaScript, and AJAX-based content

• Localization of search

• Personalization capabilities

Mobile search is already driving an increasing demand for linguistic user interfaces, including voice recognition–based search. In October 2011, Apple released the iPhone 4S with Siri, an "intelligent personal assistant" that lets users send messages, make calls, and more with voice commands. (Iphone 6 is also best example)

While most of its capabilities were already present in Google Voice Actions, Siri introduced a more conversational interface, and also shows some personality.

Voice search greatly improves the ease of use and accessibility of search on mobile devices, and this technology will continue to evolve and improve.

➢ The Ongoing Evolution of Search:

Search has come a long way, and will continue to progress at a faster and faster pace. Keeping up with these changes, the competitive environment, and new and emerging technologies provides both a challenge and an opportunity.

• Google search volume had grown 1,000 times since 1999.

• Google has more than 1,000 times the machines it had in 1999.

• Latency dropped from less than 1,000 ms in 1999 to less than 200 ms in 2009.

• Index updates latency improved by about 10,000 times over this period. Whereas updates took Google months in 1999, in 2009 Google was detecting and indexing changes on web pages in just a few minutes.

These are staggering changes in Google's performance power, but this is just part of the changing search environment.

Some of the early commercial search engines, such as Web Crawler, InfoSeek, and AltaVista, launched in the mid-1990s.

At that time, web search engines' relevancy and ranking algorithms were largely based on keyword analysis. This was a simple model to execute and initially provided pretty decent results.

By 1999, Google had launched, and the next generation of search was born. Google was the search engine that most effectively implemented the concept of citation analysis (or link analysis).

This created a situation that initially made the job of the spammer more difficult, but the spammers began to catch up with this advance by purchasing links.

Throughout 2010 and 2011, both Google and Face book have invested in making use of social signals as well.

As we discussed in Chapter 8, links and mentions on social media sites are now also considered votes for content. They are probably weighted differently than links, but you can expect that their cumulative importance will grow as social media becomes more and more pervasive.

In May 2007, Google made a big splash with the announcement of Universal Search.

This was only the very beginning of improved indexing for multimedia content

Search engines continue to look for more ways to improve search quality. Google has launched efforts toward personalization, where it can look at a user's search history to get a better idea of what results will best satisfy that particular user.

Following these advances, what will be next? Artificial intelligence (AI) already plays a huge role in search.

One example of this is how Google Translate works. It examines and analyzes millions of real-world translations to learn how one language translates into another.

Voice search works much the same way. Historically, speech recognition solutions did not work very well and required the user to train the system to her voice.

➢ Google's Dominance:

Thousands of posts, news articles, and analysis pieces have covered the central topic of battling Google's dominance in web search, but few have discussed the most telling example of the search giant's superiority.

Some also believe that Google's biggest impact in the search engine market is its advertising platform, which is the world's largest.

Fundamentally, testers find (again and again) that the brand preference for Google outweighs the logical consideration of the quality of the search results.

Google's social media network, Google+, is popular and growing fast.

On July 14, 2011, Google announced that Google+ membership had reached 10 million users just two weeks after it was launched in an invitation-only phase.

Four weeks after launch, it had reached 25 million unique users, and by January 2012, Google announced it had passed 90 million users (http:// investor.google.com/earnings/2011/Q4_google_earnings.html). In under a day, the Google+ iPhone app became the most popular free application in the Apple App Store.

Google will continue to push Google+ as its response to Face book, as well as the Bing/Face book partnership.

Another potential future involves Google becoming a more general-purpose pattern-matching and searching engine.

The concept of performing pattern matching on text (e.g., the current Google on the current Web) is only the first stage of an evolving process.

Imagine the impact if Google turns its attention to the human genome and creates a pattern-matching engine that revolutionizes the way in which new medicines are developed!

More Searchable Content and Content Types

The crawlers with textual content semantically marked up using HTML.

However, the less accessible document types—such as multimedia, content behind forms, and scanned historical documents—are being integrated into the search engine results pages (SERPs) more and more, as search algorithms evolve in the ways that the data is collected, parsed, and interpreted. Greater demand, availability, and usage also fuel the trend.

Engines Will Make Crawling Improvements

in November 2011, Google announced that it had increased its capability to execute JavaScript, discover content embedded in AJAX, and process forms.

In June 2009, Google announced that it had improved the crawling and indexing of Flash content (http://googlewebmastercentral.blogspot.com/2009/06/flash-indexing-with-external-resource .html).

Another major historical limitation of search engines is dealing with forms. The classic example is a search query box on a publisher's website.

Engines Are Getting New Content Sources

As we noted earlier, Google's stated mission is "to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful." This is a powerful statement, particularly in light of the fact that so much information has not yet made its way online.

As part of its efforts to move more data to the Web, in 2004 Google launched an initiative to scan in books so that they could be incorporated into a Book Search (http://books.google.com) search engine.

in addition to books, other historical documents are worth scanning. To aid in that, Google acquired reCAPTCHA (http://www.google.com/recaptcha) in 2009.

Another approach to this would be to allow media sites and bloggers to submit content to the search engines via RSS feeds.

This could potentially speed up indexing times and reduce the crawl burden at the same time.

Another direction they can go with this is to find more ways to collect information directly from the public.

Multimedia Is Becoming Index able

Content in images, audio, and video is currently not easily indexed by the search engines, but its metadata (tags, captioning, descriptions) and the anchor text of inbound links and surrounding content make it visible in search results.

Consider also http://www.google.com/recaptcha. This site is being used by Google to complete the digitization of books from the Internet Archive and old editions of the New York Times. These have been partially digitized using scanning and OCR software.

However, reCAPTCHA is assisting by using humans to figure out what these words are and feeding them back into the database of digitized documents.

In this example, the user is expected to type in morning and upon. However, in this case, recaptcha.net is using the human input in these CAPTCHA screens to translate text that wasn't recognized by OCR. It makes use of this CAPTCHA information to improve the quality of a digitized book.

Similarly, speech-to-text solutions can be applied to audio and video files to extract more data from them.

Personalization, Localization, and User Influence on Search

Personalization efforts have been underway at the search engines for some time. As we discussed earlier in this book, the most basic form of personalization is to perform an IP location lookup to determine where the searcher is located, and tweak the results based on that location.

Determining User Intent

The success of Internet search has always relied (and will continue to rely) on search engines' abilities to identify searcher intent.

Google personalization and Universal Search are already tapping into that intent as well, taking previous search history into account and serving up a mix of content types, including maps, blog posts, videos, and traditional textual results.

User Interactions

One area that will see great exploration will be how users interact with search engines. As RSS adoption continues to grow and the sheer amount of information available in its many formats expands,

Users will continue to look to search engines to be not just search destinations, but also sources of information aggregation: the search engine as portal, pulling and updating news and other content based on the user's preferences.

Although Chris Sherman, executive editor of Search Engine Land, feels that advancement within search personalization is still fairly limited, he offered up an interesting interactive approach that the search engines might pursue, as a way to allow users to interact with search engines and help bring about better results:

"Until search engines can find a way to let us search by example—submitting a page of content and analyzing the full text of that page and then tying that in conjunction with our past behavior..."

New Search Patterns

This is all part of increasing the focus on the users, tying into their intent and interests at the time of search.

Who needs memory when you have your "life stream" captured 24/7 with instant retrieval via something akin to Google Desktop Search? When you have instant perfect recall of all of human history?

Over time, smart marketers will recognize that the attention of a potential customer is a scarce and limited quantity.

As the quantity of information available to us grows, the amount of time we have available for each piece of information declines, creating an attention deficit.

How people search, and how advertisers interact with them, may change dramatically as a result.

These types of changes, if and when they occur, could transform what we today call "SEO" into something else,

With the SEO of tomorrow being responsible for helping publishers gain access to potential customers through a vast array of new mechanisms that currently do not exist.

Growing Reliance on the Cloud

Cloud computing is transforming how the Internet-connected population uses computers.

Oracle founder Larry Ellison's vision of thin-client computing may yet come to pass, but in the form of a pervasive Google "operating system" and its associated, extensive suite of applications.

Widespread adoption by users of cloud-based (rather than desktop) software and seemingly limitless data storage, all supplied for free by Google, will usher in a new era of personalized advertising within these apps.

Google is actively advancing the mass migration of desktop computing to the cloud, with initiatives such as

Google Docs & Spreadsheets, Gmail, Google Calendar, Google Reader, Google App Engine, and Google Cloud Connect.

These types of services encourage users to entrust their valuable data to the Google cloud.

In May 2011, Apple also made a move in this direction when it announced iCloud, which is seamlessly integrated into Apple devices.

One simple example of a basic application for cloud computing is for backing up all your data.

Google (and Apple) benefits by having a repository of user data available for analysis—which is very helpful in Google's quest to deliver ever more relevant ads and search results.

Increasing Importance of Local, Mobile, and Voice Recognition Search

New forms of vertical search are becoming increasingly important. Areas that the search engines have already embraced include local search and mobile search.

In addition, voice recognition–based search is an area in which all the major engines are actively investing.

➢ **Local search:**

Local search was an active business before the advent of the Internet, when the Yellow Pages as supplied by your phone company were the tool of choice.

As the World Wide Web gained prominence in our lives, the Yellow Pages began migrating online.

As the major search engines developed, they integrated sophisticated mapping technology into their systems, and then began to map in local business data as well.

Some of that data came from the same types of data sources that drive the Yellow Pages websites, such as Acxiom, InfoUSA, and Localeze.

You can find these local search engines at http://maps.google.com, http:// local.yahoo.com, and http://www.bing.com/maps.

Consumers are becoming increasingly reliant on local search and its auxiliary services—street maps, directions, satellite views, street views, 3-D visualizations (Google Earth), enhanced listings, user reviews, and ratings.

Through Google Goggles, Google even has the capability of searching based on photos you take with your mobile device.

➢ Mobile Search:

With over 1 billion mobile phones in use worldwide (http://www.digitalbuzzblog.com/2011-mobile -statistics-stats-facts-marketing-infographic/), the opportunity for mobile search has begun to grow rapidly.

An April 2011 Google study showed that search engines were the most visited sites on mobile devices, with 77% of those surveyed reporting their use (http://www.clickz.com/clickz/ column/2072688/stats-mobile-search).

The same study showed that 9 out of 10 searchers took action as a result of conducting a search.

The ever-expanding versatility and power of tablet and mobile devices—from indispensable utility apps, to immersive multimedia players, to massively multiplayer online games, to paradigm-shifting hardware advances such as the iPhone's multitouch display, proximity sensor, GPS, and gyroscopes—will fuel this growth.

The small keyboard/typing surface is currently a severe limitation, but Apple and Google's voice-based solutions have already made great strides in replacing the keyboard as the input device of choice.

The Linguistic User Interface (LUI) is beginning to revolutionize mobile search, and when this happens a whole new set of skills will be required of the SEO practitioner.

➢ Voice-Recognition Search:

When users are mobile they must deal with the limitations of their mobile devices, specifically the small screen and small keyboard.

These make web surfing and mobile searching more challenging than they are in the PC environment.

Voice search could be a great way to improve the mobile search experience. It eliminates the need for the keyboard, and provides users with a simple and elegant interface.

Speech recognition technology has been around for a long time, and the main challenge has always been that it requires a lot of computing power.

Processing power continues to increase, though, even on mobile devices, and the feasibility of this type of technology is growing.

Google Voice Search

This is a free service from Google that enables you to perform a web search based on text-to-speech voice queries instead of traditional text-typed queries.

Google Mobile App for iPhone

Included in this application is voice searching capability. You can speak your query into the application and the results are displayed on the screen.

Google Voice Actions for Android

This application allows you to control Android through voice commands, and includes the ability to perform searches using spoken queries.

Apple Siri

What makes a significant leap forward is its use of more natural human speech. This is the start of a movement toward the device learning the user, rather than the user learning the device.

Increased Market Saturation and Competition

One thing you can count on with the Web is continued growth. Despite its constantly growing index, a lot of the pages in Google may be low-quality or duplicate-content-type pages that will never see the light of day. The Web is a big place, but one where the signal-to-noise ratio is very low.

With the growth in Internet users has come an increasing awareness of what needs to be done to obtain traffic. The search engines are the dominant suppliers of traffic for many publishers, and will continue to be for some time to come. For that reason, awareness of SEO will only continue to increase. Here are some reasons why:

The Web outperforms other sales channels

When organizations look at the paths leading to sales and income—a critical analysis whenever budgets are under scrutiny—the Web almost always comes out with one of two assessments: either it is a leading sales channel (especially from an ROI perspective), or it is deemed to be the area with the greatest opportunity for growth. In both scenarios, web marketing (and, in correlation, SEO) takes center stage.

It is the right time to retool

Established companies frequently use down cycles as a chance to focus attention inward and analyze themselves. Consequently, there's a spike in website redesigns and, along with it, SEO.

Paid search drives interest in SEO

Paid search spending is still reaching all-time highs, and when companies evaluate the cost and value, there's a nagging little voice saying "75%+ of the clicks do not even happen in the ads; use SEO."

➢ SEO is losing its stigma:

Google is releasing SEO guides, Microsoft and Yahoo! have in-house SEO departments, and the "SEO is BS" crowd have lost a little of their swagger and a lot of their arguments.

Marketing departments are in a brainstorming cycle

A high percentage of companies are asking the big questions: "how do we get new customers?" and "what avenues still offer opportunity?" Whenever that happens, SEO is bound to show up near the top of the "to be investigated" pile.

Search traffic will be relatively unscathed by the market

Sales might drop, conversion rates might falter a bit, but raw search traffic isn't going anywhere. A recession doesn't mean people stop searching the Web, and with the rates of broadband adoption, Internet penetration, and searches per user consistently rising, search is no fad. It is here for the long haul.

Web budgets are being reassessed

We've all seen the news about display advertising falling considerably; that can happen only when managers meet to discuss how to address budget concerns.

Get 10 Internet marketing managers into rooms with their teams, and at least 4 or 5 of them are bound to discuss SEO and how they can grab that "free" traffic.

Someone finally looked at the web analytics

It's sad, but true. When a downturn arrives or panic sets in, someone, maybe the first someone in a long time, inevitably checks the web analytics to see where revenue is still coming in. Not surprisingly, search engine referrals with their exceptional targeting and intent matching tend to rank high on the list.

➢ SEO as an Enduring Art Form:

Today, SEO can be fairly easily categorized as having five major objectives:
• Make content accessible to search engine crawlers.

• Find the keywords that searchers employ (i.e., understand your target audience) and make your site speak their language.

• Build content that users will find useful, valuable, and worthy of sharing. Ensure that they'll have a good experience on your site to improve the likelihood that you'll earn links and references.

• Earn votes for your content in the form of editorial links and social media mentions from good sources by building inviting, shareable content and applying classic marketing techniques to the online world.

• Create web pages that allow users to find what they want extremely quickly, ideally in the blink of an eye.

Note, though, that the tactics an SEO practitioner might use to get links from editorial sources have been subject to rapid evolution, and will continue to be in the future. In addition, mastery of social media environments is now required of most SEO professionals.

One thing that you can be sure about in the world of search is change, as forces from all over the Web are impacting search in a dramatic way.

you can be certain that websites are here to stay, and also that websites are never finished and, just like any other direct marketing channel, need continuous optimization.

SEO expertise will be needed for a long time to come—and no existing person is better suited to map the changing environment and lead companies to success in this new, ever-evolving landscape than today's SEO practitioner.

Conclusion

SEO is both art and science. The artistic aspect of SEO requires dynamic creativity and intuition. The search engine algorithms are too complex to reverse engineer every part of them. The scientific aspect involves challenging assumptions, testing hypotheses, making observations, drawing conclusions, and achieving reproducible results. Embracing these two ways of thinking will remain a requirement as SEO evolves into the future.

Ad Sense According to Google, "AdSense is a fast and easy way for website publishers of all sizes to display relevant Google ads on their website's content pages and earn money. Keyword density The number of occurrences of a given keyword on a web page.	**Cache** A collection of copies of web pages stored locally on an Internet user's hard drive or within a search engine's database. The cache is what allows web pages to load so quickly when a user hits the Back button in the web browser; the page is stored, so it does not have to be downloaded again.
Absolute link A link that specifies the exact location on the Web of a particular page. An example of this would be http://www.netconcepts.com/ learning-center, which specifies all aspects of where the content is to be found.	**Click-through rate (CTR)** A measure of the number of clicks received from the number of impressions delivered. If your page or ad is viewed 100 times and this generates 8 clicks, the CTR is 8%.
adCenter Microsoft's cost per click (CPC) advertising program. These are ads that you see in Bing's search results.	**Content management system (CMS)** A publishing platform intended to make the task of publishing and maintaining a website easier.
Affiliate site An affiliate site markets products or services on behalf of another website. It sends visitors to another website to complete the sale, in exchange for fees or commissions.	**Conversion** The act of converting a website visitor into a customer, or at least taking that visitor a step closer to customer acquisition
Analytics tool A program that assists in gathering and	**Conversion rate** The rate at which visitors get converted to

analyzing data about website usage. Google Analytics is a feature-rich, popular, free analytics program.	customers or are moved a step closer to customer acquisition.

Backlinks
    Inbound links pointing to a web page or site that originates from another page or site.
	Cost per click (CPC)
	    The cost incurred or price paid for a click through to your landing page.

Bingbot
    The name of the program that Bing uses to crawl the Web.
	Cookie
	    Information placed on a visitor's computer by a web server.

Blog (a.k.a. weblog)
    An online diary or journal with entries made on a regular if not daily basis. Blog authors choose whether to blog openly or anonymously
	Crawler
	    Another name for a search engine's program for traversing the Web by following hyperlinks. This program can also be referred to as a bot, robot, or spider.

Bot
    Short for "robot," often also referred to as a spider or crawler. Bots are programs that perform a task in an automated fashion. Search engines use bots to find web pages and add them to their search indexes.
	Inbound link
	    Any link that points to your site from a site other than your own.
	
	IP (Internet protocol)
	    The communications protocol used for sending datagrams (packets of information) across the Internet.

Bounce rate
    The percentage of users who enter a site and then leave it without viewing any other pages (i.e., who visit only one page).
	IP address
	    Each server or device connected to the Internet is assigned a unique permanent (static) or temporary (dynamic) IP address.

Breadcrumbs
    Website navigation in a horizontal bar above the main content that helps the users to understand where they are on the site and how to get back to the root areas.
	Key performance indicators (KPIs)
	    Metrics selected by an organization to help it achieve organizational goals through the definition and measurement of progress.