

use SEO to
Build More Traffic
for your blog



by
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What is SEO?

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of improving the volume and quality of traffic to a web site from search engines via "natural" ("organic" or "algorithmic") search results. This is in contrast to traffic that comes from paid search (or pay-per-click advertising.)

Typically, the earlier a site appears in the search results list, the more visitors it will receive from the search engine. SEO may target different kinds of search, including image search, local search, and industry-specific vertical search engines.



Typical Google search results page

1. Keyword search box
2. Top of page pay-per-click ads
3. Ads embedded in Google maps
4. **Organic search results**
5. Number of search results
6. Right-side pay-per-click ads

Why is SEO important?



Popular search engines

There are many sources of traffic for your blog that you can develop over time. However, the first and most important will be from search engines like Google, Yahoo! and MSN. When a user performs a keyword search that is relevant to the topic of your blog, your site will be listed in the search results.

Most users will only search the first few pages of search results for the information they want. The lower your blog falls in the search results, the less likely it is someone will click on your link to visit your site. SEO helps move your blog to a higher position in these searches, which helps you build traffic and establish your readership.

Off-site vs. Onsite SEO

Basically, SEO comes in two flavors:

- ▶ **Off site SEO** – These are factors from outside the site itself (i.e. from other sites) that impact your blog's ranking in search engines .
- ▶ **On site SEO** – These are techniques you do on your blog that help build a higher ranking in search results on relevant keywords.

Both types of SEO are important. Search rank algorithms take into account hundreds of factors when trying to determine where a site should be listed in search results for a given keyword. SEO techniques and practices change as the search rank algorithms of the major search engines get modified.

Most of the techniques we present here have endured over time and proven to be effective traffic builders. However, you should use the resources listed at the end of this document to keep informed about new SEO strategies.

SEO Tip #1 - Off Site

Start with quality content

Providing quality content on your blog that is relevant and useful to your readers is the single most effective technique you can employ. People who visit your site and find it informative and helpful will link back to it. These organic links are a true indicator that your blog is gaining credibility in the community of blogs around your topic. Some simple things you can do to improve the quality of your blog include:

1. Spend some time planning your blog to identify what it's about, who the intended audience is, and what keywords they use to find the type of content you will provide.
2. Use category labels and post tags that are meaningful to your readers
3. Stay on topic with your posts; topic focus will improve your search rankings and also be more interesting to your readers
4. Create a list of useful resources and plan to put it on a separate page so it can be easily referenced

SEO Tip #2 - Off Site

Develop inbound links

Inbound links are very important for two reasons:

- ▶ **Improved search rankings** – “Authority,” or the number of inbound links you have to your blog, is one of the key factors taken into account in the ranking algorithms of major search engines.
- ▶ **Inbound links are traffic annuities** – When someone creates a link to your blog it typically remains in place for a long, long time. Over time, people will continue to find you by clicking on these links. Each link thus becomes a continuing source of new visitors.

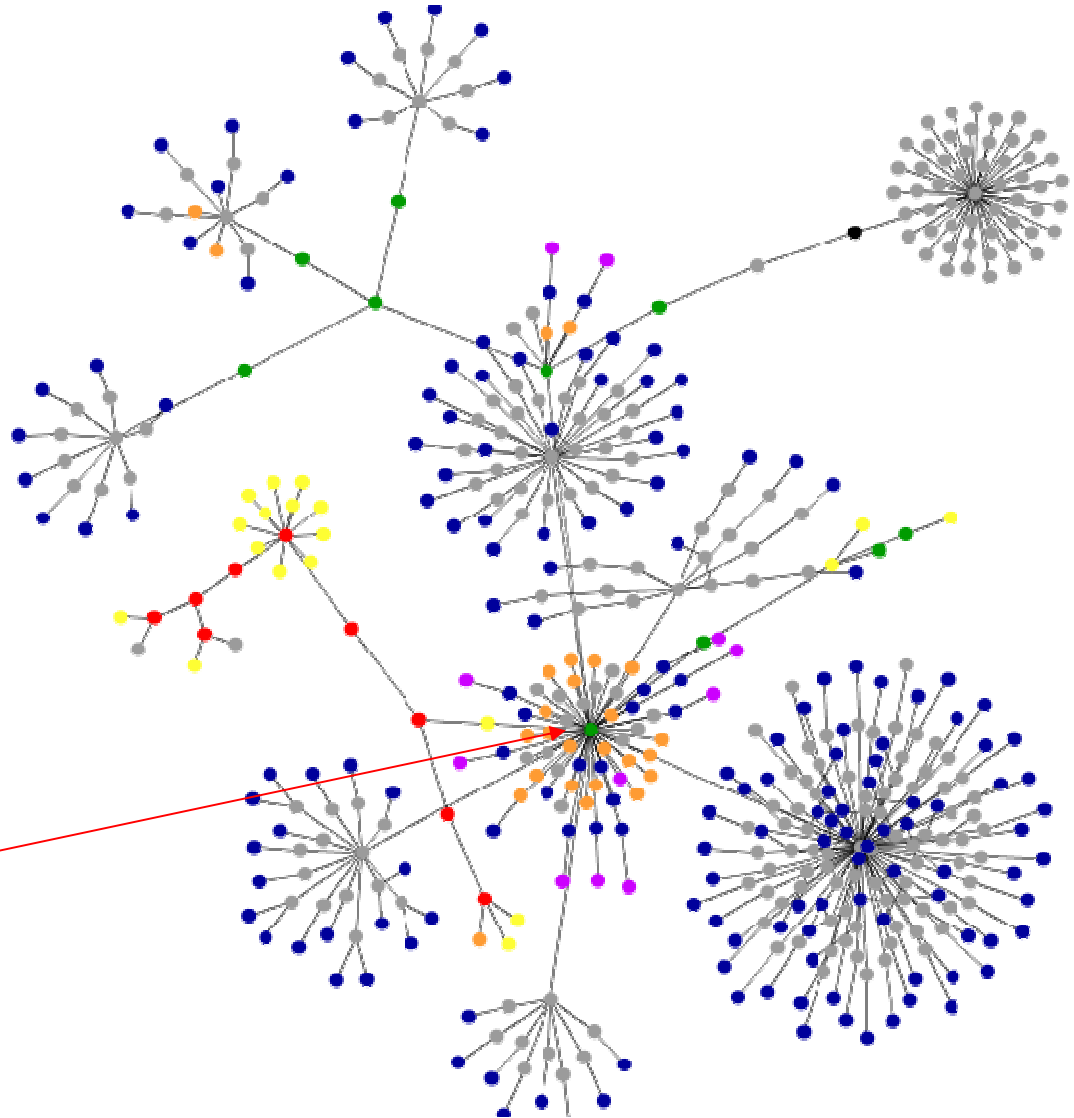
The best inbound links:

- ▶ Come from sources that have higher traffic than you do
- ▶ Are relevant to the topic you are writing about
- ▶ Link to you using keywords relevant to your page

Inbound Links - the Tao of Blogging

Ultimately, traffic flows along the links that other sites make to your blog. Each link can potentially connect your blog to a constellation of other sites and refer even more traffic.

Imagine your blog is here and you are receiving traffic from all of these inbound links, as well as the links to those links and so on.



SEO Tip #3 - Off Site

Inbound links – notify other bloggers about your content

When you write a quality post on a topic that you know will interest another blogger that it might be worth shooting them a brief, polite email letting them know about your post. They may not want to link up with your blog, but it is possible they might. At least they have become aware of you and your blog. And if they do link to your blog, in addition to the direct traffic that link generates, it also helps build your own page rank in the search engines.

To get some useful tips on how to ask other bloggers for links, check out this great post on ProBlogger: [13 Tips on Asking other Bloggers for Links](#).

SEO Tip #4 - Off Site

Inbound links – leave comments at “neighbor” blogs

Your blog neighbors are blogs that are in the same topic space as yours. These blogs already have an audience and they may become referral sites to yours if they find your comments worthwhile.

Comments show your interest and help establish your credibility. You can leave your e-mail and blog address for readers to follow-up with you. Also, blog posts and their comments have a long shelf life so your comment may have many readers over time.

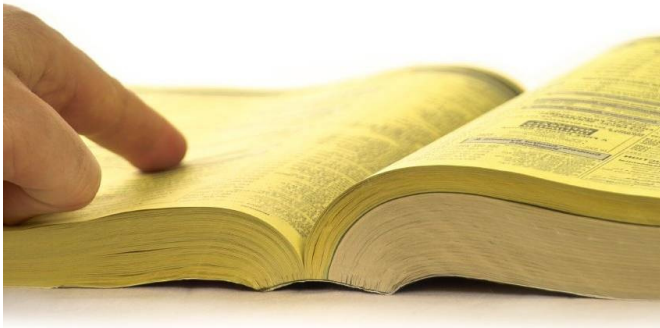
Leave a Reply

The screenshot shows a 'Leave a Reply' form. It consists of three input fields: 'Name (required)', 'Mail (will not be published) (required)', and 'Website'. Below these is a large text area for the comment. A red arrow points from the bottom of the text area to the 'Submit Comment' button.

Leave your blog name and URL at the end of your comment. Be sure to make a relevant comment that will be of interest to the blog's readers and its owner.

SEO Tip #5 - Off Site

Inbound links – get listed in directories



Important Search Directories

- **Google**
www.google.com/addurl.html
- **MSN**
search.msn.com//docs/submit.aspx?
FORM=WSDD2
- **AskJeeves**
www.askjeeves.com
- **AlltheWeb**
www.alltheweb.com/add_url.php
- **AltaVista**
addurl.altavista.com/addurl / default
- **DMOZ**
www.dmoz.org/add.html
- **Yahho!** (note this requires a yearly
premium)

Another way to generate inbound links is to submit your links to directories. Start researching directories and submitting links to key pages on your blog with appropriate keywords embedded in the links. Some directories charge for a listing, but there are plenty of free directories available.

Ari Paparo has compiled a [list of blog directories](#) that is a good starting point. In addition to blog directories, there are other

SEO Tip #6 - Off Site

Inbound links – join a blog network

One good way to increase the number of inbound links to your blog is to join a blog network. Blog networks are simply a group of blogs operated under one company/entity. About.com is probably the most famous blog network. The advantage of joining a blog network are:

- ▶ Traffic – Sites in the network tend to share links to each which build traffic faster
- ▶ Income – Most blog networks pay you to post based on traffic, percent of ad revenues or flat fee per month or per post
- ▶ Back-end support – The network handles the hosting and design issues for you.
- ▶ Professional writing environment – You are usually required to post on time and on topic in a more professional manner.

An extensive list of blog networks can be found on *Bloggers Blog* at:
<http://www.bloggersblog.com/blognetworklinks/>

SEO Tip #7 - Off Site

Inbound links – buy or swap links

Many professional webmasters maintain a budget for purchasing links from other highly ranked and relevant sites. Many bloggers also swap links with other bloggers. This can occur naturally; you see someone linking to you so you link back. However, in many cases the link swaps are arranged between site owners. There are also a variety of systems around that say they'll take care of such interlinking for you – for example the Digital Point's Free Co-Op Advertising system at <http://www.digitalpoint.com/tools/ad-network/>.

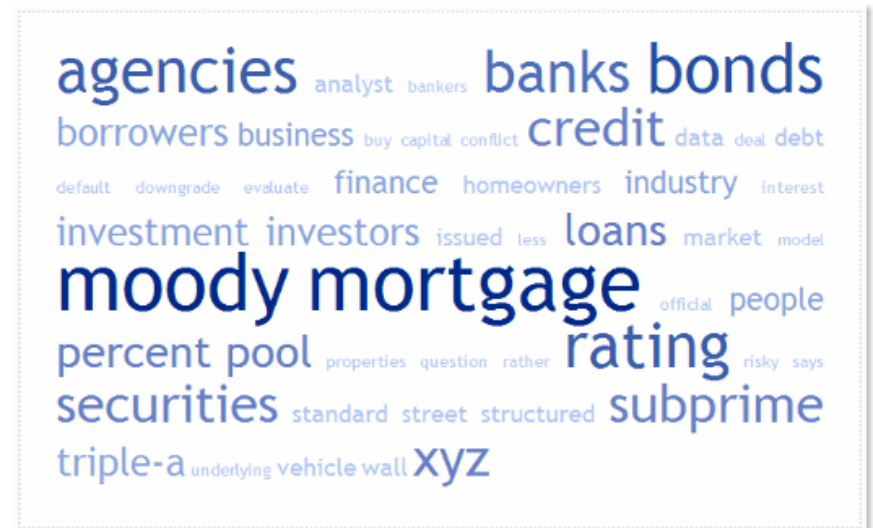
Be careful when either buying or swapping links. Many SEO experts believe that search engines now have methods for tracking such patterns and devaluing the links. It is really better in the long run to build links naturally based on quality content.

SEO Tip #8 - On Site

Use keyword rich content

Keywords are the words and phrases you expect people to use to find the content contained in your blog posts. They should to be the most common words used in your post. Here are some of the ways to use keywords:

- ▶ In post and page titles
- ▶ In the URL of page
- ▶ In outbound links
- ▶ In bold tags
- ▶ In heading tags
- ▶ In image alt tags
- ▶ In the text of your post, especially in the first few sentences



keywords related to mortgages

Keyword density indicates the percentage of keywords in your post. A keyword density of 5-10% is probably reasonable and effective.

Keyword Discovery Tools

Keyword discovery tools – like SEO Book below - let you enter a keyword and discover how often it is being used. They also suggest related keywords and show their usage as well.

SEO Book Keyword Suggestion Tool Features

Cross References:
[Yahoo! \(Overture\)](#)
[Google](#)
[WordTracker](#)
[Keyword Discovery](#)
[Regional Search Volume Estimates](#)
[Bid Prices](#)

Displays / Links to:
[Related Search Results](#)
[Semantically Related Phrases](#)

More Information:
[Learn How it Works](#)
[Put this Tool on Your Site](#)

Try The Coolest Keyword Research Tool Today!

Country:

USA Results ▼

If this tool is down try [Google](#), [Keyword Discovery](#), or [Wordtracker](#).

- New: Generate keywords using our [keyword list generator](#).
- Clean up your keyword lists using our [keyword list cleaner](#).

Overture Suggestions	Monthly Search Volume estimated	Google estimated	Yahoo! (Overture) estimated	MSN Suggest	Yahoo! Suggest	Wordtracker	KW Discovery	Google Trends	Google Traffic Estimator	Google Suggest	Google Synonym ~	AdWords Keyword Tool	Quintura
wood working	122,763	70,150	35,075	17,538	YI Sugg	WT	KD	wood working	wood working	G Sugg	Goog ~	AdWords KW	Quin
wood working tool	66,084	37,762	18,881	9,441	YI Sugg	WT	KD	wood working tool	wood working tool	G Sugg	Goog ~	AdWords KW	Quin
wood working plan	37,443	21,396	10,698	5,349	YI Sugg	WT	KD	wood working plan	wood working plan	G Sugg	Goog ~	AdWords KW	Quin
free wood working plan	29,908	17,090	8,545	4,273	YI Sugg	WT	KD	free wood working	free wood working	G Sugg	Goog ~	AdWords KW	Quin

Paid Tools

- Keyword Discovery
- Wordtracker
- Overture
- Digital Point
- Google keyword tool
- Niche Bot

Free Tools

- ▶ SEOBook
- Good Keywords
- Keyword Spider
- Keyword Tumbler

SEO Tip #9 - On Site

Stay on topic

Your blog is more likely to rank well if you have a substantial number of pages related to a similar topic. Thus a niche blog will probably rank higher than a general one that covers multiple topics. For example, search engines are more likely to view a blog as an authority on a topic if it has 200+ posts of content on that subject. You are better off having a topic, niche or theme for your blog and ensuring that your categories and post tags relate strongly to that topic.

The more tightly focused the subject matter of a post the better when it comes to search engine rankings. If you are writing a long post and it winds up covering a number of different topics, you might want to consider breaking it into smaller posts if you are concerned about its search engine ranking.

SEO Tip #10 - On Site

Use a simple, effective site design

Search engines like sites that are well laid out, well coded and easy to navigate. Keep it simple and clean and the search robots will index your site much faster and more accurately.

- ▶ Avoid using too much Flash, frames and Java Script
- ▶ Get rid of “dead” links
- ▶ Use the Google web developer tools to ensure your site validates
- ▶ Make sure pages are viewable on all the major browsers – e.g. Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari and perhaps Google Chrome
- ▶ Include a site map of your blog

SEO Tip #11 - On Site

Interlink the pages of your blog

Make it easier for search engine crawlers that are indexing your blog to get around it by using internal linking wisely.

- ▶ Put your category pages in your sidebars
- ▶ Make sure every page links back to your main page and any other important pages on your site.
- ▶ If you're writing on a topic you've previously written about, add links to the previous posts discussing that topic – e.g. in a “Related Posts” section.
- ▶ Include key categories and posts in your menus. This is a way to get them more highly ranked since they are linked to from every page of your blog.

The **Library in Alexandria**, represented an attempt by the ancients to create a store of all human knowledge and thinking up to that point. Today, Google's Book Search database could realize their dream. Of course, Google stands to benefit hugely from the settlement. Its index will become far more comprehensive; and the book database created will be a “store” in the commercial sense that will pump billions of dollars of revenue into the company. Google could certainly become the world's largest librarian and bookseller.



Related Posts

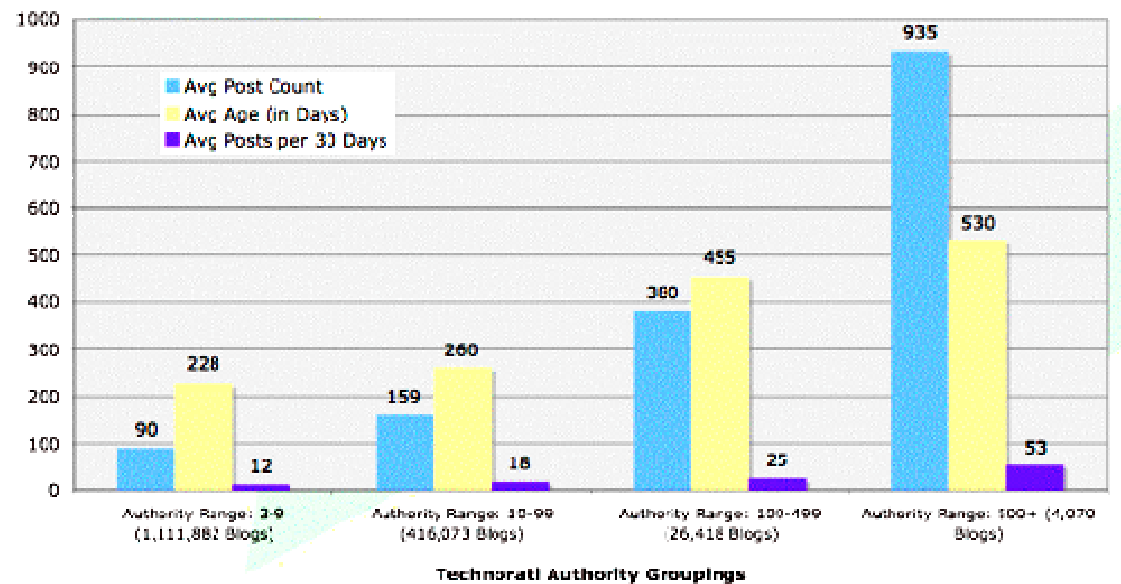
- ✦ [The Novel Always Rings Twice - Books on Mobile Phones](#)
- ✦ [The Growing Influence of Non-traditional Book Sales Channels](#)
- ✦ [Managing Your Book Marketing Portfolio](#)
- ✦ [Return of the Backlist or Life on the Long, Long Tail](#)
- ✦ [Long Tail Dynamics vs. the 80-20 Rule](#)

The “related posts” are links to previous posts about the same or a similar topic as the current post.

SEO Tip #12 - On Site

Post frequently

Tehcnorati, the top blog search engine, has demonstrated there is a high correlation between blog authority (the number of inbound links from relevant sites), posting frequency and the size of your post archives (which is also related to the length of time you have been blogging). See the graph below. The more you update your blog, the more often search engines will send their crawlers to your site to index it. Which means your new blog posts could appear in their index within days or even hours rather than weeks.



SEO Tip #13 - On Site

Outbound links - link to quality, relevant sites

Relevant links to other sites enhance your blog's ranking in search engines. Such links help your readers find useful additional information. Linking to sites outside your own blog does mean you end up sending traffic away from your blog, so carefully weigh the value of these links and always try to link to reputable and relevant sites.

SEO Tip #14 - On Site

Be smart about your domain name

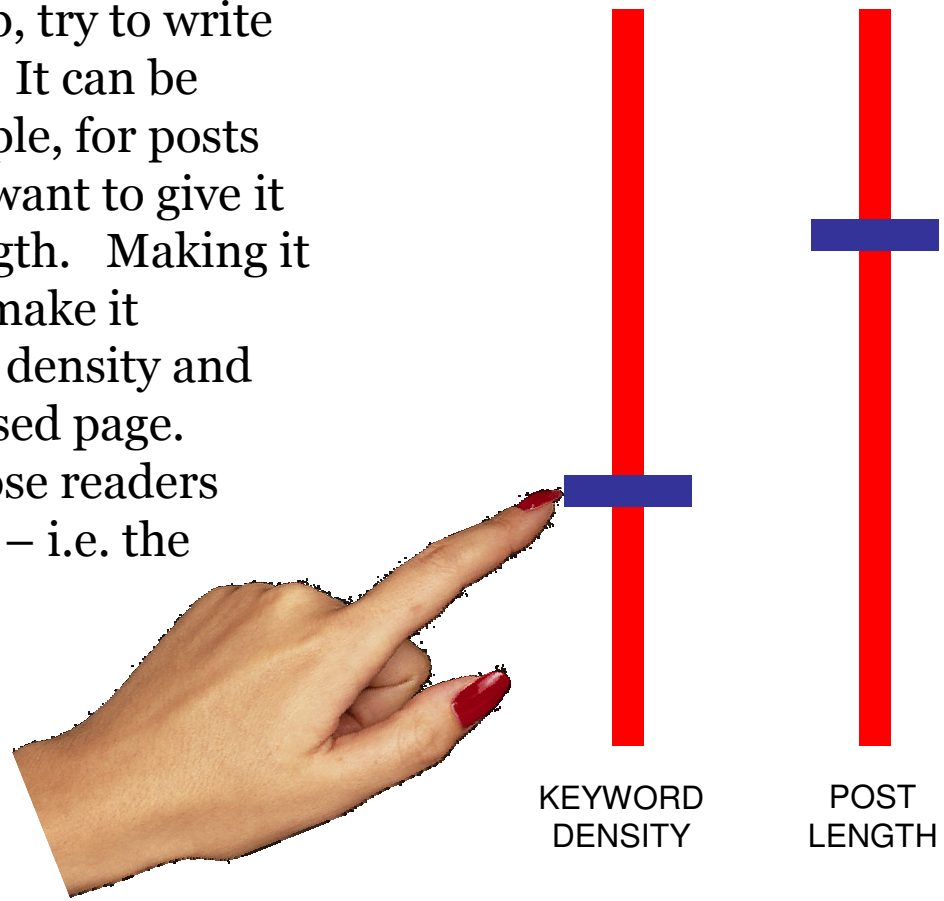
There are many things to consider with regard SEO and your choice of domain name. Here are just a few:

- ▶ Include one of your primary keywords in it if possible.
- ▶ Research to see if your domain has previously been used. This is positive if the site was a quality site with many inbound links; it's a negative if it was a spam site that got banned by the search engines. You can check out the history of your domain at www.archive.org.
- ▶ Due to Google's aging delay for all new domains, your best bet is to use your existing domain/website if at all possible. If you're redesigning or starting from scratch and you have to use a brand-new domain for some reason, you can expect to wait a good 9-12 months before your site will show up in Google for any keyword phrases that are important to you. Google does this to reduce the impact of spam sites which are only designed to generate heavy traffic to generate ad revenue.

SEO Tip #15 - On Site

Write longer, but relevant posts

Pages that are too short can get passed over for high rankings. As a rule of thumb, try to write posts that are at least 250 words. It can be a balancing act, though. For example, for posts that you want to rank well you'll want to give it some "meatiness" in terms of length. Making it too long, on the other hand, can make it difficult to keep up your keyword density and ending up with a less tightly focused page. Research also shows you might lose readers once the text gets below the fold" – i.e. the bottom edge of the screen.



SEO Tip #16 - On Site

Avoid duplicate content

Google warns publishers in its guidelines about having the same content on multiple pages. This goes for both multiple pages that you own but also pages that others own. This is to deter spammers who often to reproduce content on many pages and/or steal content from other sites. Here are a few cautions:

- ▶ Be careful with the use of free articles as these articles often appear on hundreds and even thousands of other sites around the web and could be seen as duplicate content)
- ▶ Also be careful about how many places your own content appears. If you do republish posts, try to add elements that are unique on each occasion that the posts are republished.

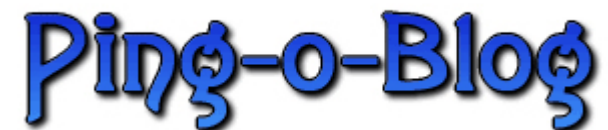


SEO Tip #17 - On Site

Use ping services

Ping services alert search engines to the fact that you have new content on your blog. Services like Pingomatic will ping a variety of websites for you to notify them that you've updated. When you ping the search engines it will trigger their robots to come visit your blog.

You'll find a huge list of ping services at Daily Blog Tips: <http://www.dailyblogtips.com/ping-list/>

The logo for Pingomatic features the text "PING-O-MATIC" in a green, sans-serif font. The letter "O" is replaced by a green icon of a hand with fingers spread, as if holding or pointing.The logo for Ping-o-Blog features the text "Ping-o-Blog" in a large, blue, rounded font with a black outline. The letter "o" is replaced by a blue icon of a hand with fingers spread, similar to the one in the Pingomatic logo.

There are many ping services to choose from.

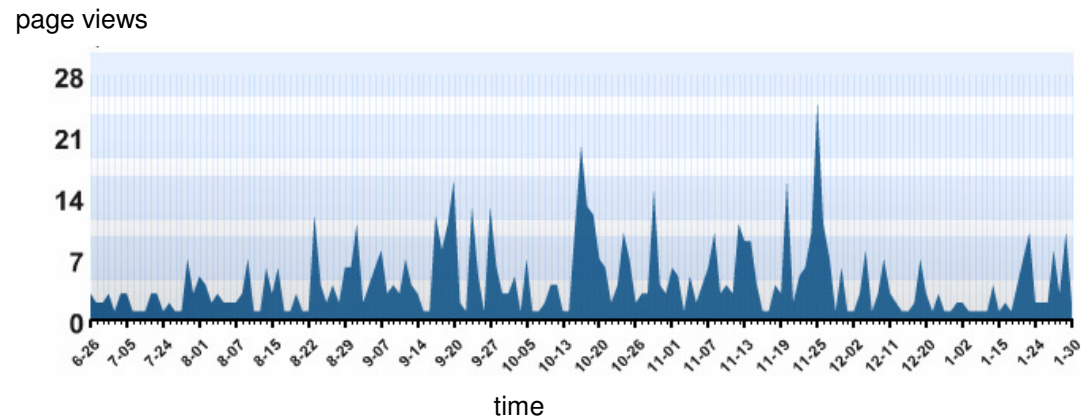
SEO Tip #18 - On Site

Create a large site over time

Just as Technorati showed that the number of inbound links tended to go up with posting frequency, depth of archives and blog longevity, there is some evidence that larger sites rank higher than smaller sites. It is certainly possible to rank highly with a small site, but it is less likely. Search engines will see your site as more comprehensive the more content you have.

You also are more likely to be found by Search engines if you have more pages. It pays to work at building a comprehensive and large set of blog posts over time. But only you maintain quality in your posting!

A blog post – no matter how old - can always be accessed through its permalink. as long as the blog is online. As other sites or blogs link to a post, it becomes a “magnet” and acts as a “traffic annuity.”



SEO Tip #19 - On Site

Optimize your most popular posts

Identify and analyze the pages that people are arriving to your blog on from search engines. If you're like most blogs you'll find that a handful of your old posts generate a significant percentage of your search engine traffic. Once you identify these pages, you can increase the ranking of those pages even further in Google by doing the following:

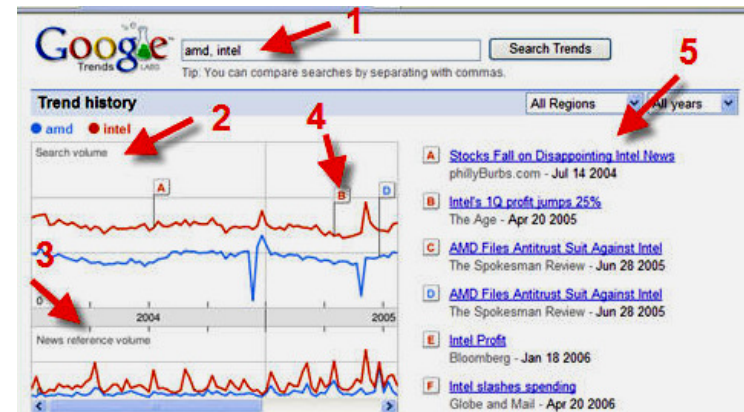
- ▶ **Increase the keyword density of these pages** - Don't add the keywords that people are searching for too many more times, but it can help to add them 1-2 times more, bold the keywords, add them to heading tags, add them to image tags etc.
- ▶ **Increase the internal links to these pages** - If you find a page that is getting a lot of search traffic, any extra links to the page that you can generate (from both within your blog and outside it) can help its authority. You might want to highlight some of these pages in your sidebar or menu navigation - or link to them within other posts on your blog that focus on a similar topic.

SEO Tip #20 - On Site

Update your keywords to match your audience interests

Once you understand what type of information that people are searching for you should make a list of the related topics you might want to write about. Examine the keywords people use to find your blog, develop synonyms for those words and use tools like Google Trends (<http://www.google.com/trends>) which tracks what people are searching for currently.

Another useful tool is the Lijit search widget (<http://www.lijit.com/>) which tracks what terms people are searching for on your blog. It also shows what terms people searched for that turned up no search result. This can be a good guide for finding new topics of interest to your readers.



Typical Google Trends results page

1. Keyword search box
2. Search volume by month
3. Number of news references
4. Event markers
5. Stories about the item

More SEO Resources

Here are some excellent online resources to learn more about SEO:

- ▶ Search Engine Land - www.searchengineland.com/
- ▶ SEOBook – www.seobook.com
- ▶ SEO Moz – www.seomoz.org/blog/
- ▶ Matt Cutts – www.mattcutts.com/blog/

And for more SEO online resources, check out the “Top 25 SEO Blogs” at:
<http://www.dailyblogtips.com/top-25-seo-blogs/>

Two good print references are:

- ▶ Kristopher Jones, *Search Engine Optimization*, John Wiley & Sons, Indianapolis, IN, 2008
- ▶ Grappone, J. & Couzin, G., *Search Engine Optimization: An Hour a Day*, John Wiley & Sons, Indianapolis, IN, 2008