

Why Search Optimization Matters

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What We'll Cover Today

- How search optimization is and how it works
- Technical elements in search engine optimization
- What it means for information professionals

First, Some Definitions

- Paid Inclusion
 - Paying for the site to be included in the index
 - Guarantees site will be spidered (theoretically)
- Paid Placement
 - Pay for link
 - Shows up as Sponsored Link
- Cost Per Click
 - Payment based on number of clicks

More Definitions

- Bidding (Auction)
 - Bid on keywords, can be automated or fixed
 - Highest bidder wins
- Submission
 - Use submission form or hire company
 - Which search engines?

Fooling the System

- The “bad guys” of search optimization
- Link farms
- Link bombing
- Ad clicking for pay (India)
- Reciprocal linking
- Innovative thinking? Flexibility?



Hoaxing the System

- Joke pages that come to the top of search results because so many people link to them – because they're funny
- Examples of bad results that teachers use in class
- Capitalizes on popularity algorithms

Ramifications of SEM for Search

- Not all search engines clearly label paid inclusion sites
- Google refuses to have paid inclusion
 - What about AdSense?
 - What about Google placing ads on non-Google sites?
- Yahoo just reintroduced its Site Match program

More Ramifications

- U.S. government Federal Trade Commission looking into clear and coherent labeling of paid search results
- Reputation of search companies
 - Easy to lose a good reputation
 - Word spreads quickly over the Internet
- Metasearch engines obscure paid listings

Organic Optimization

- Site design rather than outright payment
- More in line with philosophy of educational and non-profit sites; More palatable
- Usability techniques parallel organic optimization

Is Organic “Purer”?

- If being pure is not paying, then yes
- It’s certainly more in line with information professional ethos
- There’s the hope that there’s no chicanery, fraud, or deceit involved
- There are still ways to manipulate the system

Usability Issues

- Metatags largely discredited
 - Use them, but don't rely on them
- Language
 - Alternative terms
 - Look at log files
 - Avoid acronyms
- Title field important

More Usability Issues

- Navigation
 - Make it easy
 - Avoid Flash
 - Short bunches of text
 - Spell check
 - No passwords
- Think about what relevancy algorithms are in play

Borrow From the Best

- Look at pages you find when you do a search that you would expect would find your site
- Title, font size, keyword density
- Are you listed in the Open Directory? How about non-commercial guides such as LII and Infomine?

Internal SEO

- Popularity is not the best relevance attribute
- Tweaking the search engine
- Make friends with IT
 - Learn their language
 - Treat them as colleagues
- Use common sense
 - Library as stop word?

Teaching End-Users

- Make sure they know that “sponsored links” are paid advertising
- Explain the mechanics of SEO and SEM
- Encourage use of Advanced Search
- Train them to be skeptical
 - If you can
 - Find some relevant examples

When Ads Are Desirable

- The ad may actually be what they want
- Looking for suppliers, distributors
- Looking at how other companies present themselves
- Advertising is a form of content

New Content for Search Engines

- Yahoo's Content Acquisition Program
- Google's deals with
 - OCLC
 - » WorldCat
 - » DSpace Repositories
 - IEEE
 - Universities for scholarly materials
 - CrossRef (scholarly publishers)

Optimizing This New Content

- Will be very difficult
- Think about WorldCat
 - The records are very short
 - They don't work well with existing Google relevancy algorithms
 - Optimization seems to be the searcher's responsibility
- Similar situation with scholarly materials?

SEO and Information Professionals

- Why do we want to optimize our sites?
- For whom do we want our sites optimized?
- What is the desired outcome of site optimization?
- What do we want people to do when they arrive at our site?

Role of Information Professionals

- Bring our sites to the forefront
- Understand implications of SEO activities as it affects our Web sites and our users
- Educate clientele about results manipulation
- Raise our profile as Web search experts
- Gain respect of colleagues
- Be the experts for our organizations

Implications of SEO and SEM

- Searching Yahoo, Google, MSN not equivalent to Dialog or an OPAC
- Web results can be influenced by SEM manipulation
- Traditional online content not affected by marketing, advertising
- Are you retrieving honest, unbiased, believable search results?

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