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Kristopher B. Jones

Founder of Pepperjam

# Search Engine Optimization

2nd Edition



- Target your audience, create strong pages, use keywords, and build links
- Master powerful techniques with visual instructions

*Your visual blueprint™ for effective Internet marketing*

*“This book is an excellent learning tool. Like any other tool, you get out of it exactly what you put in. My advice is to spend as much time with each section as YOU need. If you do that, you will walk away with every bit of the knowledge an industry thought leader can provide.”*

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*“Search-engine optimization (SEO) is an integral part of an effective online marketing strategy. With this book Kris offers a step-by-step guide to get your Web site ranked by the major search engines. At 1-800-PetMeds we have worked with Kris and his team at Pepperjam for the last three years to implement a range of online marketing strategies that have worked very effectively. I highly recommend you read this book and implement the strategies contained within.”*

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*“Kris Jones is one of the most entertaining and knowledgeable speakers I have had the pleasure to spend time with. If you are serious about making money on the net this is a must read book.”*

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*“Kris envisioned search-engine optimization as an integral element of online marketing before the phrase was even coined. This book reveals his secrets for success in getting competitive words and phrases highly ranked on the major search engines. Since 2000, Kris and his team at Pepperjam have implemented successful SEO strategies for igourmet.com, helping grow our revenues and shape our product mix. I highly recommend this book as either an easy-to-follow roadmap for novices or a valuable reference for experts.”*

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*“Search-engine optimization is such an integral part of an effective online marketing strategy that companies cannot afford to be unsuccessful. Yet, many continue to spend valuable internal resources without the experience to achieve their desired results. With this book, Kris offers a step-by-step guide to get your Web site ranked by all of the major search-engines and to reach your target audience. At Brigade Quartermasters, we have worked with Kris and his team at Pepperjam for the last three years to implement a wide range of online marketing strategies that have worked very effectively in increasing our traffic, sales, and ROI. I highly recommend you read this book and encourage you to implement the strategies contained within.”*

Wendy M. Abney, Director of Marketing, Brigade Quartermasters, Ltd.

*“Kristopher Jones is one a small number of entrepreneurial executives whose confidence, innovation and creativity has been instrumental in developing and framing search-engine, social media optimization and internet marketing. Kristopher is a modern day blend of John Wayne, Thomas Edison and Andy Warhol. Kristopher Jones and his Pepperjam team tirelessly implement innovative search-engine optimization, pay-per-click, affiliate marketing, and social media optimization solutions for a broad base of corporate customers. Kristopher Jones will continue to have a profound effect on internet marketing and social networking.”*

Jack Kiefer, President and CEO, BabyAge.com

*“Search-engine optimization has emerged as the flagship service in the growing Internet Marketing landscape, and Kristopher Jones is a leader in explaining the intricate details and subtle balances that make it all work.”*

Bruce Clay, President, Bruce Clay, Inc.

*“Search-engine optimization is, without question, one of the highest ROI activities a business can undertake. It’s also one of the most misunderstood. Fortunately, we’ve got people like Kris to act as our tour guide and translator. A solid strategy and attention to detail are essential to a successful SEO campaign and that’s exactly what Kris delivers.”*

Rand Fishkin, Chief Blogger and CEO, SEOmoz

# Search Engine Optimization

*Your visual blueprint™ for effective  
Internet marketing, 2nd Edition*



*by Kristopher B. Jones*



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## About the Author



**Kristopher B. Jones** is considered one of the top Internet marketing experts in the world. Kris is a frequent keynote speaker, presenter, and moderator at major national and international marketing conferences, including Search Engine Strategies (SES), Affiliate Summit, and the Electronic Retailer Association. Kris is also a sought-after speaker at colleges and universities around the country and has delivered inspirational lectures to thousands of college and graduate students at schools such as Penn State University, the University of Pittsburgh, and Villanova University.

Kristopher was the former President and CEO of Pepperjam, a full-service internet marketing agency and affiliate network, which Kris founded in 1999. During Kris' tenure at Pepperjam the company was recognized for three consecutive years by *Inc.* magazine as one of the fastest growing companies in the United States, and was celebrated as one of the best places to work in the State of Pennsylvania. Pepperjam was acquired by GSI Commerce (NASDAQ - GSIC), an e-commerce solutions and marketing services provider, in September 2009.

Kristopher was recognized as an Entrepreneur of the Year by Bank of America (2005), finalist for the prestigious Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year (2008), and twice as one of the "Top 20 Business Leaders" in northeastern Pennsylvania under the age of 40 (2006, 2010). Kris' first book, *Search Engine Optimization: Your visual blueprint for effective Internet marketing*, sold more than 20,000 copies in its first two years in print and was ranked on Amazon.com as the best-selling book within the search-engine marketing category in 2008 and 2009.

An avid reader, traveler, public speaker, entrepreneur, and business leader, Kristopher truly defines a spiritually motivated individual dedicated to the community in which he lives. Since selling Pepperjam in 2009 Kris has launched several successful businesses and is in the process of writing his third book. Kris is a former senior staff member to Congressman Paul E. Kanjorski (PA-11).

Kristopher has participated on numerous technology, educational, and non-profit boards of director and advisory committees, including the Misericordia University Board of Trustees, the Great Valley Technology Alliance (Co-Chair), Penn State University (WB) Department of Information Science and Technology, Albany Law School Alumni Association, Pennsylvania Keystone Innovation Grant Committee (KIG), CAN BE Business Incubator, Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce Strategic Planning Committee, Luzerne Foundation Millennium Circle, and the United Way, among others.

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# How to Use This Visual Blueprint Book

## Who This Book Is For

This book is for advanced computer users who want to take their knowledge of this particular technology or software application to the next level.

## The Conventions in This Book

### 1 Steps

This book uses a step-by-step format to guide you easily through each task. Numbered steps are actions you must do; bulleted steps clarify a point, step, or optional feature; and indented steps give you the result.

### 2 Notes

Notes give additional information — special conditions that may occur during an operation, a situation that you want to avoid, or a cross reference to a related area of the book.

### 3 Icons and Buttons

Icons and buttons show you exactly what you need to click to perform a step.

### 4 Extra or Apply It

An Extra section provides additional information about the preceding task — insider information and tips for ease and efficiency. An Apply It section takes the code from the preceding task one step further and allows you to take full advantage of it.

### 5 Bold

**Bold** type shows text or numbers you must type.

### 6 Italics

*Italic* type introduces and defines a new term.

### 7 Courier Font

`Courier` font indicates the use of scripting language code such as statements, operators, or functions, and code such as objects, methods, or properties.

**Using the SEO for Firefox Plugin**

One of the most popular SEO browser extensions is SEO for Firefox, which was created by SEO expert Aaron Wall. SEO for Firefox gathers multiple pieces of marketing data about a Web site and displays that data within your browser alongside the search results from the Google or Yahoo search engine. Because the data is provided to you alongside the actual search results, the SEO for Firefox extension allows you to check the most important statistics of a Web site before you even visit the domain.

Some of the statistics made available by SEO for Firefox for quick view include Google PageRank, Yahoo page and domain links, and number of backlinks. These stats are all valuable pieces of information that, when used together, can give you a clear picture of the relative strength of a Web site.

SEO for Firefox provides a very useful gauge for the number of backlinks a Web page and Web site have, as reported by Yahoo and Bing. The number and topical relevancy of a Web site's backlinks are two of the most critical off-site SEO factors search engines use to determine ranking position in the organic search-engine results. The SEO for Firefox backlinks indicator also provides the number of backlinks that come from a page on an education (.edu) domain, which is usually a primary indicator of the quality of any particular Web site. Links from a page on an .edu domain are generally believed to be more "trusted" because they are more difficult to attain than other domain extensions such as .com or .info.

You can download SEO for Firefox at <http://tools.seobook.com/firefox/seo-for-firefox.html>.

**1** Navigate to <http://tools.seobook.com/firefox/seo-for-firefox.html>.

**2** Sign up for the SEOBROOK newsletter to receive free tools and gain access to download the SEO for Firefox Plugin.

**3** Log into your account and then click the Download Now button.

**4** Click Install.

**5** Click Restart Firefox to restart Firefox and complete the installation.

**6** SEO for Firefox is now installed and displays marketing data within the search results.

**Extra**

The SEO for Firefox extension offers a useful feature that allows you to look up the statistics of a Web page by simply right-clicking anywhere on that page, selecting SEO for Firefox from the menu that appears, and then clicking Lookup This Page. This feature returns all the data for that particular Web page, without you having to perform a search at Google or Yahoo, which can save you considerable time as you evaluate the Web page.

Be warned that the SEO for Firefox extension is resource intensive because it pulls data from multiple search-engine backend systems all at once. For this reason, you should do your day-to-day surfing with the extension turned off, and use it only while you are doing market research. Setting the data to be retrieved "on demand" rather than automatically is another alternative.

SEO for Firefox has gone through multiple upgrades, so future upgrades and improvements are likely to occur. According to SEO expert Aaron Wall, the SEO for Firefox extension is currently being used by more than 130,000 Webmasters and Internet professionals.

Chapter 15: Installing SEO Plugins



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# THE HISTORY OF SEARCH-ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

*Search-engine optimization*, or *SEO*, is the process of setting up your Web site so that it ranks well for particular keywords within the organic search results of major search engines, including Google, Yahoo, and Bing. Unlike paid search marketing, which requires you to pay for every click sent to your Web site from a search engine, traffic sent to your site from a search engine's organic results is free.

In the early days of SEO, the process of gaining top ranking for keywords was much easier than it is today. In those "good old days," search-engine algorithms were easy to crack. All you had to do was include the keyword you wanted to rank for in the title tag of your Web page and sprinkle that keyword throughout the content of your page, and chances were you would rank within the top ten results of your favorite search engine. Not surprisingly, over the years search-engine algorithms have become increasingly complex, which has resulted in Web site owners either outsourcing SEO to professional firms or self-educating through books like this one.

Dating back to 1996 or so, search engines started to become a very popular tool for Web surfers looking for all sorts of information. Long before Google and Yahoo became popular, search engines such as AltaVista and InfoSeek were pioneers at providing search results to users within a fraction of a second. Search results in the early days were nowhere near as relevant as they are today. However, search-engine users in the millions began relying on Web sites like AltaVista more and more frequently to retrieve information about everything from health abnormalities to pricing on the latest gadget.

Search-engine optimization found its start in 1997 through public reports and commentary provided by search-engine experts, including Danny Sullivan and Bruce Clay, among others. Early reports about SEO looked at search-engine algorithms and how the various search engines ranked search results. Inspired entrepreneurs and Web site owners began studying these reports and testing strategies for how they could rank well within the search results. Before long the profession of search-engine optimization emerged and individuals were offering services to help rank Web sites on major search engines.

As the World Wide Web grew at a remarkable pace the popularity of AltaVista and Infoseek started to wane. Other search engines came and went, but no company has had more of an impact on search-engine marketing than Google.

## Google: The Birth Child of Larry and Sergey

Google was cofounded by Larry Page and Sergey Brin while they were students at Stanford University. Although the company was officially incorporated in 1998, the idea of creating a search engine that would "organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful" began as part of a doctoral research project Larry and Sergey began in 1996.

The key to Google's early success was that the algorithm behind the Google search engine was different from the algorithms before it. Based on Larry and Sergey's experience with the process of academic research, they believed that Web page authority and relevance could be derived algorithmically by indexing the entire Web, and then analyzing who links to whom. This idea came from the fact that in academia authority is derived when researchers advance their own research by citing one another as part of the research process. Indeed, each piece of published scholarly work (including Larry and Sergey's dissertation) has a works-cited page at the end of each finished piece of written research, which includes a list of resources that were cited as relevant to the work being advanced.

Larry and Sergey took the process of citing in academic research, and hypothesized that Web pages with the most links to them from other highly relevant Web pages must be the most relevant pages associated with a particular search. To further bolster the concept, Larry and Sergey created PageRank (named after Larry Page), which not only counts how many links point to any given page, but also determines the quality of those links.

Although the Google algorithm is more complex than just analyzing who links to whom, the process of algorithmically analyzing links was a great idea that has separated Google from its competition. In fact, today Google is the leading search engine with more than 60 percent market share in the United States and is quickly becoming the preferred search engine in other parts of the world.

## SEO: Beware of Snake Oil Salesman

Search-engine optimization is a critical component of a well-rounded Internet marketing strategy. Having a great Web site is simply not enough. Hundreds of millions of people use search engines every day to scour the Internet and find information from relevant Web sites just like yours. In order to appear alongside your competition in the search results, your Web site must be search engine

friendly. Moreover, to be competitive within the search results you need to take steps that convince search engines that your Web site is an authority and that your content is relevant for particular keywords related to your business or enterprise.

If you are reading this book, you do not need convincing that SEO is integral to your online marketing success. However, the profession of SEO has taken significant criticism for being nothing more than a spammy attempt to manipulate search-engine results. Unfortunately, criticism has come primarily as a result of so-called SEO experts who sell guaranteed top ten placements and instant success formulas for achieving front page search-engine rankings. Fortunately, such unethical, get-rich-quick, snake oil salesman represent a very small percentage of SEO professionals.

The majority of SEO experts are ethical professionals who understand the complex dynamics of search-engine algorithms and offer assistance and counsel on how to maximize your placement on search engines. The truth is that there are no guarantees in SEO. In fact, if an alleged SEO professional tells you he offers guaranteed placement within Google's top ten organic rankings, you need to decline the offer. The process of SEO requires great skill and is not quick. You must have patience. In fact, you should look at SEO as an ongoing process that is necessary for you to maintain and maximize your position in the organic search results in the long term. You should set your expectations accordingly and educate other Web site owners of the process so they do not waste money based on hollow pitches from unethical SEO professionals.

## Get Started

The first step to getting started with your search-engine-optimization campaign is to select a topic. If you already have a Web site covering a topic that you are satisfied with, then you may want to skip this step. However, keep in mind that you need to set realistic expectations based on your chosen topic. Increasing your Web site rankings for competitive topics is much more difficult than increasing rankings for less competitive topics.

To get the most from your SEO efforts, you must carefully consider your target audience. Your target audience includes the specific people you are trying to put your Web site in front of. Understanding who your target audience is and what they are searching for can greatly increase the effectiveness of a search-engine-optimization campaign.

Prior to beginning your SEO efforts, you should set goals, including how much money you want to dedicate to your efforts. If you are going to conduct SEO internally, you need to set a budget only around the tools you need and the amount of money you must allocate to paying your internal SEO team. If you intend to outsource your SEO, you should set aside a minimum of \$3,000 to \$5,000 monthly for a dedicated SEO professional.

Putting together an internal team of people to help with your SEO requires you to select one or more individuals with varying proficiency in HTML writing, knowledge of CSS, data analysis, graphical design, server administration, copywriting, link building, and blogging. Although the scope of your project dictates how many people you need to fill out your team, you can always consider outsourcing one or more components of the job.

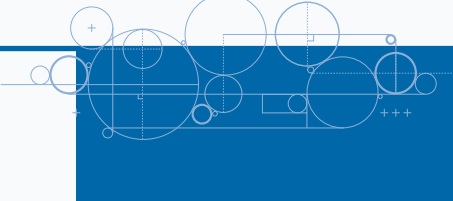
Although writing large amounts of original content may seem like a daunting task, there are countless professional copywriters that can provide you with well-written content at a reasonable price. Moreover, online services such as Elance allow you to hire copywriters and other service providers through an auction system. The auction system allows you to post your work so that multiple service providers compete for the job. You have the option of comparing multiple vendors and ultimately choosing one or more based on skill level and past performance within the Elance network.

One of the best places to keep up-to-date with what is happening in the search-engine marketing industry is to read blogs and other online news sources. Blogs such as SearchEngineLand.com, seroundtable.com, and SEOmoz.com provide current perspectives and tips, and news Web sites including DMNews.com, ClickZ.com, and WebProNews.com provide breaking news and commentary on search-engine marketing.

Another way to increase your knowledge about the search-engine marketing space is to attend an industry conference. Leading search marketing conferences, including Search Engine Strategies (SES) ([www.searchenginestrategies.com](http://www.searchenginestrategies.com)) and Search Marketing Expo (SMX) ([www.searchmarketingexpo.com](http://www.searchmarketingexpo.com)) offer dozens of educational sessions led by panels of search marketing experts.

## Keyword Generation

Effective keyword generation is one of the most critical elements of successful search-engine optimization. All keywords are not created equal; some keywords are easier



to rank for than others, and some keywords tend to be almost impossible to rank for. Broad or general keywords tend to be highly competitive and therefore should represent only a small portion of your overall SEO efforts. Specific keywords, which include those keywords that describe your specific product or service and are more than three keywords in length, are less competitive and therefore should make up the bulk of your keyword generation efforts.

For example, if you own an e-commerce Web site you stand a better chance of ranking within the top search results for product-level keywords than you do for broad keywords that generally describe your business. Although broad keywords tend to generate higher levels of search volume, product-level terms can generate significant search volume and tend to convert at higher rates than broad terms.

There are numerous useful keyword generation tools that can help you discover effective keywords for your Web site. Keyword generation tools such as Keyword Discovery, Wordtracker, and Google's Keyword Suggestion Tool allow you to carefully research, analyze, and filter potential keywords. It is not enough to just generate massive lists of keywords. Instead, your keyword lists should represent a cross section of broad and specific terms that your Web site stands a legitimate chance of ranking for. Because keyword generation is so critical to your SEO success, consider making a modest financial investment by purchasing subscriptions to tools such as Keyword Discovery, Rapid Keyword, and Wordtracker even though Google and other companies offer tools for free.

Keep in mind that despite the fact that keyword generation tools can quickly generate thousands upon thousands of keywords, each page of your Web site should be search engine optimized for only one or two keywords. Therefore, focus less on generating massive lists of keywords and more on generating keyword lists that directly relate to your Web site and give you the best shot at ranking well on search engines.

One of the most effective ways to generate target keywords beyond basic keyword generation is through competitive research. Readily available competitive research tools such as SEMRush, KeywordSpy, Compete.com, and KeyCompete provide various data about your competition, including what keywords your competitors rank for in the organic search results, as well as what keywords your competitors are using on pay-per-click search engines such as Google. Armed with competitive research information, you can

compare your success to your competition and use the information to devise a plan of attack to improve your own ranking within the organic and paid search results.

## Create Pages

For the purposes of search-engine optimization, keep in mind that search engines do not actually rank Web sites; instead, search engines rank individual Web pages. Therefore, in order to succeed with SEO each and every page of your Web site must be optimized for search-engine purposes. The most important element of each of your Web pages is substantial unique content. However, you can optimize numerous other important structural and technological factors on your Web pages to ensure that you position yourself to rank well within the search-engine results.

For example, optimizing technical on-site Web page factors such as adding correct filenames, title tags, meta description tags, meta keyword tags, and meta robots tags is crucial to making sure the search-engine spiders can determine the relevance of your Web site. Besides your domain name, the first things search engines discover when spidering through the pages of your Web site are your filenames. Every single page of your Web site resides in a different file. By titling your pages with search-engine optimization in mind, you have a powerful opportunity to establish relevance to a certain topic or keyword.

Each page of your Web site should contain a unique title tag that includes the target keywords you want to rank for. Search engines place great importance on the text contained within your title tag and use it as a primary indicator of what your Web page is about. Therefore, your title tag should include your target keywords and also provide a concise statement summarizing the content of your Web page.

Although search engines rarely use description and keyword tags for ranking purposes, each page of your Web site should include unique description and keyword tags. Description tags can be especially important because search engines often use them as the display text shown when a search query triggers your Web page. Therefore, your description tag should include a call-to-action marketing message so that your listing stands out among other listings and gets clicked.

Optimizing your content with header tags and other text modifiers allows you to stress the main ideas and topics that your content covers. Header tags are HTML tags used to apply significance to keywords or phrases within a Web page. Placing a selection of text within a header tag tells the search-engine spiders that the text is of a certain level of importance. Using text modifiers, you can emphasize certain blocks of text by bolding, italicizing, or underlining.

Taking care to optimize Web page images is important for those Web browsers that do not support images, and because search-engine spiders are unable to accurately read the content of an image, doing so presents an extra opportunity to add keyword-rich content to your page. Links provide the pathways that search-engine spiders need to find your Web pages. Creating links with search-engine optimization in mind is necessary for optimal results.

Throughout the process of creating Web pages you should try to adhere to the standards set forth by the W3 Consortium, which works to create standards in Web design and development that ensure Internet-wide compatibility.

## Basic Web Site Structure

A well-optimized Web site design and structure helps to improve the overall performance of your Web site, making it easier for users to navigate and for search engines to find and index all of your content. You want to balance your Web site design between the needs of your users and the needs of the search engines. To be successful, your Web site should not only provide a superior user experience, but also include an optimal structure so that search engines index your content.

One way to ensure that search engines find all of your content is by submitting a sitemap. Think of your sitemap as an outline of your entire Web site. A sitemap displays the inner framework and organization of your Web site's structure to the search engines. A sitemap should reflect the entire navigational structure of your Web site so that search-engine spiders can find and index all of your content. As you add new content to your Web site, you should submit your sitemap to the search engines on a regular basis, every 24 hours or so.

To establish trust and credibility in the eyes of your visitors and search engines, your Web site should include both a company information and privacy page. A company

information page helps to strengthen your reputation in the eyes of both your Web site visitors and the search engines. Adding a company information page helps build trust with your visitors by explaining who you are and where you come from by providing company biographies, history, and staff photos.

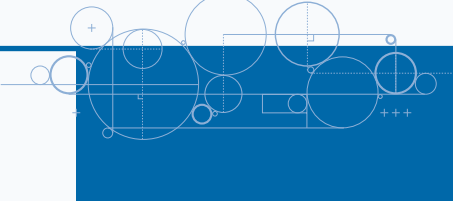
In addition to a company information page, your Web site should also contain a page explaining your privacy policy. A privacy policy page helps to establish trust by declaring that you are committed to protecting the privacy of your visitors' personal information. Try to keep your privacy policy simple and make it easy to read, easy to understand, and easy to find on your Web site. You should consider adding a link to your privacy policy next to a link to your company information page. This way, your visitors can see that you are a trustworthy and legitimate entity.

## Advanced Web Site Structuring

Once you have the basic structure of your Web site in place, you can implement several additional advanced structural considerations to optimize your site for search-engine purposes. For example, beyond setting up your Web site so that it is indexed, you may want to instruct the search engines not to index a particular page. A robots.txt file allows you to tell the spiders what they may and may not do when they arrive at your domain. Robots.txt files also provide you a means to prevent both potential copyright infringements and search-engine spiders from consuming excessive amounts of bandwidth on your server.

One primary example of advanced Web site structuring includes the use of the `nofollow` attribute. The `nofollow` attribute instructs search-engine spiders that they should not follow a particular link or view that link as anything of significance when determining ranking. Because search engines count links from your Web site to another Web site as a vote for search-engine ranking purposes, you can add `nofollow` if you do not want the search-engine spider to credit the link.

A second advanced Web site structural consideration is the way you structure your URLs. URLs must be structured so that they are easily spidered and organized and create a user-friendly Web site navigation system. For example, search engines as well as people prefer URLs that are simple and that include the keywords describing the page within the URL string.



A third structural consideration is the use of an .htaccess file. An .htaccess file is the Apache Web server's configuration file. It is a straightforward yet powerful text file that can accomplish a wide variety of functions that allow you to protect your Web site from content-stealing robots. Moreover, .htaccess is useful in that it allows you to dynamically rewrite poorly formed URLs that shopping cart or blog software generate.

Other advanced Web site structural considerations include using `mod_rewrite` to rewrite URLs, redirecting non-www traffic to your www domain, and using 301 redirects whenever you change or redesign your Web site. Each advanced structuring technique provides you with procedures to ensure that search engines recognize your Web site and that each of your Web pages are correctly indexed.

## Content Creation

Creating well-written, original content is absolutely critical to your long-term search-engine-optimization success. Content is what visitors use to determine value and one of the primary factors that search engines use to rank your Web site. Whether your Web site ends up on the first page or the one-hundredth page of Google largely depends on the quality and relevance of your content.

Although you should keep SEO principles in mind when you create content, the key to building long-term ranking on search engines is to write content for people, not search engines. Original and naturally flowing content provides your readers with a positive, enjoyable user experience and greatly improves your chances of top search-engine rankings. Avoid writing content solely for search-engine-optimization purposes and you can greatly increase your likelihood of long-term SEO success.

When you write content, you must avoid duplicate content. Duplicate content occurs when your Web site contains content that already exists on the World Wide Web. Duplicate content issues can have a detrimental effect on your SEO success and should be avoided at all costs. Writing original content is the most obvious way to avoid duplicate content. If you feel that you do not have the time to build large amounts of unique content, you can employ tools on your Web site, such as user reviews, that allow for user-generated content. User-generated content allows your content to remain fresh, which is one of the factors search engines use to rank one Web site over another with similar authority.

Writing original content and adding user-generated content does not entirely protect you from duplicate content issues. You must protect yourself from others stealing your content because Google cannot algorithmically detect who owns content. Fortunately, tools such as Copyscape are available that help you avoid and prevent duplicate content issues.

Although you should write content for people and not search engines, you should also use proper keyword density throughout each page of your Web site. First, you want to optimize each page of your Web site for no more than one or two target keywords, while at the same time making sure that you do not inadvertently repeat nontarget keywords. By using available tools to maximize optimal keyword density, you can incorporate a substantial number of target keywords throughout your content without compromising the naturally flowing aesthetics of the writing.

You should keep in mind a few important content creation principles as you build your Web site. First, search-engine algorithms cannot read text that is included in images. Therefore, always include important text and target keywords that appear in images in text form. You can still use images, but search engines cannot read the text contained within them. Second, when drafting your content you can use a powerful content creation principle called *latent semantic content*, which involves using keywords very similar to your target keywords to enhance the theme and relevance of your page. For example, if your target keyword is "Old Spice," you can also use words like "deodorant" and "cologne" to enhance the thematic relatedness and relevancy of your page for your target keyword "Old Spice."

## Create Communities

Creating a community such as a blog or forum on your Web site is one of the most effective ways to keep your content fresh, while helping to establish your site as an authority for your given area of business. Search engines such as Google favor Web sites with fresh content over similarly authoritative Web sites that do not update content as often. Starting a community is easy and inexpensive.

A clear benefit of creating a community on your Web site is the fact that communities promote interaction and content creation among your users. User-generated content from blogs and forums is a great way to build a reputation as an authority and provides you with opportunities to gain additional, unanticipated search-engine rankings.

A *blog* is an online journal or diary that is frequently updated by an author and typically allows readers to interact by providing comments after each blog post is published. Regardless of what kind of Web site you own, having a blog is a good idea. First, a blog provides clear search-engine-optimization benefits through controlled content creation and user-generated content via user comments. Second, a blog helps to establish you as an expert. As an expert, other Web sites will link to your content, which helps to improve your search-engine ranking. Third, blogs are sticky. In other words, your users will want to join your RSS feed and come back to your Web site frequently to check for new content and learn about your products and services.

Blogs are a great tool for communicating special offers and deals to loyal readers, and they allow you to go into detail about specific products that might require detailed explanation. For example, if you are about to launch a new product that includes a new, revolutionary way of doing something, a blog allows you to make the case for the benefits and usefulness of the product versus older-generation products.

Unlike a blog, a *community forum* is a discussion board where members and forum moderators interact by posting questions and answers and discussing common problems. A forum encourages your visitors to return again and again by allowing interaction and information sharing.

Because forums are ultimately message boards where people ask and answer questions, a forum can provide a great place to refer a customer who has a question that may be shared by other members of the community. If a visitor has a question about the durability of a particular product or is unsure about one product over another, a forum provides a venue to get feedback and to generate interest in your products.

Having a forum on your Web site allows you to understand more about your visitors by reading the conversations and discussions between them. You can use this type of information to minimize demand placed on your customer service by addressing a customer concern before it spreads. Additionally, you can use a forum to ask your customers about what products they want that you do not currently have.

Regardless of whether it is good or bad, consumer feedback can be invaluable and can help you market your products or services more effectively. Keep in mind that a forum on

your Web site does not solely have to be about promoting your products and services. Equally valuable is the information that you can get from your customers to improve your overall Web site initiatives.

## Build Links

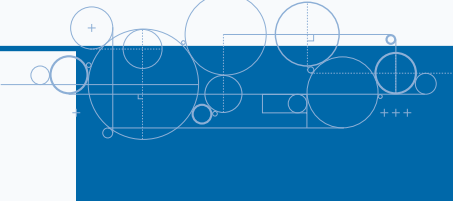
If creating large amounts of original, well-written content is considered King for search-engine-optimization purposes, building quality links back to your Web site might be considered the Holy Grail. You must have more than just quality content, because Google and other major search-engine algorithms evaluate the number and quality of Web sites that link to your Web pages as a primary and fundamental component of ranking your Web site over another.

Search engines conclude that Web sites with more backlinks must be more popular and authoritative than Web sites with fewer backlinks. Keep in mind that search-engine algorithms not only evaluate the number and quality of backlinks going to your Web site, but also what those links say in the form of anchor text. *Anchor text* is the text contained in front of a hyperlink from one page to another.

Building links is sort of like trying to answer the age-old question of what comes first, the chicken or the egg. Should you just build great content and wait for other Web sites to link to you, or should you proactively recruit others to link to your site?

If you are serious about search-engine optimization, you should proactively and aggressively build links. It is true that if you build original, compelling content, others are likely to link to your Web site, and over time Google might conclude that you are an authority. However, the process of gaining and maintaining search-engine ranking is very competitive, and if you want to rank well in the search results you need to have not only great content, but also quality, relevant backlinks.

All links are not created equal. Although quantity is important, focus on trying to build quality and relevant links. Relevant links come from Web sites related to your line of business and content. For example, if you have a gourmet food Web site, getting a link from *Gourmet Retailer* magazine is better than getting a link from an equally popular celebrity gossip Web site. Quality links tend to come from popular Web sites that are generally trusted sources. Two of the main measures of popularity are Google's PageRank and the Alexa ranking system.



PageRank gives you a rough idea of how authoritative Google thinks the Web site is, and Alexa provides a measure to compare the traffic volume of potential linking partners. In general, you should look for quality and relevant linking partners that have PageRank scores and Alexa rankings as good as or better than your own. A popular tool for helping you evaluate the quality of links is called Linkscape, which includes both free and paid versions.

Building links can be extremely time consuming and may even cost money if you decide to use a link broker or a pay-per-post network. One of the more time-consuming forms of link building includes requesting one-way or reciprocal links directly from other Web sites. The process usually involves reaching out to potential link partners via e-mail and asking politely for a link or suggesting a barter situation where you link to them if they link to you.

Another way of building links is through blog and forum participation. However, in many cases, search engines such as Google either devalue or do not count blog and forum comments as links toward your PageRank. Despite this, other search engines use links from blogs and forums for ranking purposes.

Sending out online press releases through companies such as PRWeb and the PR Newswire is a great way to build links. Blogs and other content providers use press release services as a source for article ideas. Typically, when other people use your release as a basis or a source for an article, they also provide a link back to your Web site. In other cases, content aggregators reproduce and distribute your content, keeping in place any anchor-text-rich links that you may have strategically inserted into the body of your press release.

The most simple and easy way to build links is to buy them through link brokers and pay-per-post networks. However, consider carefully before you use link brokers and pay-per-post networks because search engines such as Google have strict policies against the use of paid links as a way of increasing PageRank. If Google concludes that one of your links is not natural, the link is likely to be devalued for PageRank purposes. Keep in mind that despite Google's policies against buying links for purposes of boosting PageRank, purchasing links from high-quality, relevant Web sites has other benefits, including branding and traffic generation.

## Google Analytics

Google Analytics is a free analytics solution that was designed to give you a complete view of every aspect of activity on your Web site. Understanding how to properly analyze and implement the numerous types of data Google Analytics provides gives you a considerable edge over your competition in the quest for top organic search rankings. Moreover, Google Analytics gives you a high-level view of your Web site traffic and user interaction, which allows you to analyze the various traffic sources coming to your Web site. You can take this information to improve your overall traffic-generation strategies, including pay-per-click, search-engine optimization, affiliate marketing, and any other traffic sources.

Google Analytics is free and easy to install. The most important detail in the installation process is making sure that your tracking code is correctly placed on every single page of your Web site. This ensures that all of your Google Analytics reports are as accurate and reliable as possible. After you have Google Analytics in place, you can analyze your traffic data in various ways. Looking through your traffic sources in Google Analytics is a simple way of finding out what keywords are sending you traffic.

Another way to use Google Analytics is to set and track goals. For example, if your Web site tracks orders through a shopping cart or leads in the form of a newsletter subscription, e-mail submit, or catalog request, goal tracking allows you to evaluate the number of transactions that occurred and the keyword that triggered the conversion. Goal tracking is especially useful when targeting keywords in your SEO efforts. Knowing ahead of time what keywords are already converting for your site and targeting those keywords until you reach the top organic positions is a very effective SEO strategy.

Google Analytics allows you to not only track traffic that is coming to your Web site, but also any traffic that may leave in the form of an external click. For example, if you are setting up any traffic trades or promoting any affiliate offers on your Web site, you will want to keep track of how many clicks you are sending to external sites.

A key benefit of Google Analytics is that you can send yourself or colleagues e-mail reports. You can also provide others with access to your Analytics account with full or restricted access. Moreover, reports can be sent and downloaded in multiple popular formats including PDF and CSV, which make it very easy to combine or compare reports across different online and offline sources.



## Social Media Optimization

*Social media optimization*, or *SMO*, is a form of online marketing that focuses on participating on various social media Web sites to generate traffic, buzz, and links back to your Web site. Social media Web sites include social news Web sites such as Digg, Sphinn, and StumbleUpon; video-sharing Web sites such as YouTube and Rever; and social network Web sites, including Facebook, Twitter, Google Buzz, and LinkedIn. Various recognized SEO and SMO pundits have referred to SMO as “the new SEO” because SMO is often used as an effective and powerful method to quickly build large numbers of links back to your Web site, which can lead to improved organic search-engine rankings.

Leading social networks contain millions of active members. Although there is a common misconception that only teenagers use Web sites like MySpace and Facebook, millions of adults also use social networks to stay in touch with old and new friends and interact through sharing pictures, videos, and more. In fact, an increasing number of businesses are currently using Facebook and most recently Twitter as a vehicle to manage reputation, build brand recognition, promote products, and generate buzz.

Facebook has become the largest and most actively used social network with more than 400 million members. You can use Facebook to interact with current and prospective business associates while generating considerable traffic to your Web site and buzz about your business. Facebook is a service used by businesses of all sizes and people of all ages to network and communicate in real time.

In addition to a personal profile page, Facebook also allows you to create dedicated pages, commonly referred to as “fan pages,” to promote your business. A dedicated Facebook fan page allows you to provide fans with your company overview, Web site(s), contact info, press releases, videos, blog RSS, Twitter updates, company news, and status. You can also interact with your fans by responding to comments they post to your fan page, as well as through other social networking tools made available through Facebook.

StumbleUpon is a peer- and social-networking technology that includes a toolbar that you install in your Web browser. The StumbleUpon toolbar allows you to discover and rate Web pages, videos, photos, and news articles. Getting your Web pages, videos, photos, and news articles submitted to StumbleUpon is an effective way to generate buzz, traffic, and build backlinks to your Web site.

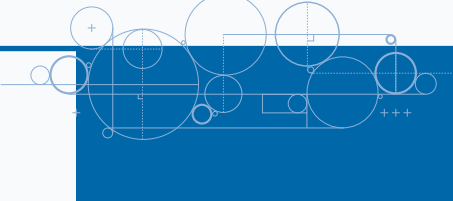
Twitter is a free social networking service that allows you to micro-blog by sending short “updates” of 140 characters or less to others via a text message from your mobile phone, by typing a message from the Twitter site, or using instant messaging from Jabber or Google Talk. Twitter is a great way to build a list of followers. For business purposes, you can quickly send messages to your Twitter friends when a popular item comes back into stock or as a means to share a special offer or deal.

Twitter Search is Twitter’s powerful and increasingly popular real-time search engine. Unlike major search engines like Google, Bing, and Yahoo that update their search indexes every few days or weeks, Twitter Search updates its entire database of news and personal updates, also known as *tweets*, as they occur. The most powerful way to use Twitter Search and build the amount of people who follow you on Twitter is to type keywords into Twitter Search that relate to your specific product or service. Once Twitter delivers search results, you should follow those users who mention the target keyword.

LinkedIn is a popular business-oriented social networking site that allows you to network with like-minded business professionals and build a list of contacts. By building a database of contacts with people you know and trust in business, you have access to a large network of friends with whom you can conduct business, offer jobs, and promote your business. LinkedIn is an effective network for sharing professional information and news about your business-related activities.

Video sharing Web sites such as YouTube and Rever allow users to upload, view, and share video clips. Videos are a great way to promote your business or to generate buzz and interest in your Web site. The most effective videos either tend to make people laugh or are extremely creative and unique. For example, some of the most viral videos on YouTube are homegrown videos that contain something outrageous or embarrassing. In addition, videos put a face on an otherwise faceless business pitch. Videos build trust in your users and can even result in a “celebrity” or “cult” following if people find your videos interesting.

Social news Web sites such as Digg and Sphinn allow users to submit news stories for other members to view and vote on. News stories that are most timely or interesting tend to make it to the front page of social news Web sites like Digg, which can generate thousands of unique visitors and hundreds of links back to your Web site within a few hours.



Getting a news story about your Web site on the front page of Digg is not easy; however, there are numerous proven strategies that are likely to significantly increase your odds.

## Create Pay-per-Click Campaigns

With search-engine optimization (SEO), your goal is to rank for free within the organic search results for target keywords related to your Web site. In contrast, with pay-per-click (PPC) your goal is to pay for placement by competing with other advertisers for ranking within the sponsored results section of search results. There is no charge when someone clicks your organic listing, but you are charged every time someone clicks your PPC listing. PPC listings are typically designated as sponsored listings and appear above and to the right of the organic results.

Regardless of your SEO success you should also use PPC as a primary method to promote your Web site. In fact, research suggests that having both a high-sponsored and high-organic ranking greatly increases the credibility of your Web site and, therefore, increases the traffic to your Web site. If you think of the search results page as a piece of real estate, a powerful strategy is to get your Web site onto that piece of property as many times as you can.

The largest and most popular PPC advertising platform is Google AdWords, but competitive platforms are available through Yahoo Search Marketing and MSN adCenter. Before you open a PPC account on Google and start spending money, familiarize yourself with the structure of various components of an AdWords account. You should also study the various free educational resources Google provides.

All major PPC engines allow you to target your ads in various ways. The most common form of targeting is *geo-targeting*, which allows you to display your PPC ads in specific geographical regions. Geo-targeting is especially effective for regional businesses and can be used as a strategy to test various regional markets.

Another popular form of targeting is called *dayparting*, which involves showing your PPC ads only during specific times of the day or week. For example, you may find that your conversion rate slips on Mondays and Wednesdays and peaks from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Tuesdays and Fridays. With dayparting technology you tell the search engines what days and at what times you want to activate or pause your PPC ads.

Writing effective ad copy, using available keyword matching options, and setting effective bid strategies are important components of a successful PPC advertising campaign. Each of the major search engines allows you to draft multiple advertisements. The search engines test each of your advertisements and serve the ads with the highest click-through rates most often. Writing effective ad copy means using compelling language that separates your ads from the competition, entices people to click, and contains a high conversion rate.

Keyword matching options are important because they tell the search engine how broadly or specifically you want to advertise based on the keywords you bid on. For example, using a broad-match option on the keyword “cheese” might trigger your advertisement when a user types the popular keyword “Chuck E. Cheese” into a search engine. On the other hand, using an exact-match option on the keyword “cheese” will trigger your advertisement only when the exact word “cheese” is typed into a search engine.

Understanding basic and advanced PPC account reporting is critical to maximizing your advertising spend and analyzing your PPC advertising success. A major benefit of PPC advertising is robust, real-time, keyword-level PPC reporting. If you choose, you have the option of digging as deep as you want into the efficacy of your PPC initiatives. In addition, you can select to use conversion tracking, which allows you to set conversion goals and monitor return-on-investment, or *ROI*, at the keyword level.

Once you have spent a reasonable amount of time getting to know the inner workings of a PPC account, you are ready to deposit money and begin generating targeted Web site traffic. Keep in mind that you will be charged for all clicks in real time. Make sure you set strict budget limits at first and go slow. Your methodology and diligence will determine your ultimate success, not how many keywords and campaigns you have active at any given time.

## Quality Score Optimization

*Quality score optimization*, or *QSO*, is a set of strategies for improving quality score. Quality score is a principal ranking factor that search engines use to determine your relative ranking and pricing for a particular keyword listing. In today’s PPC advertising environment, the highest bidder does not always win. Instead, Google and other leading search engines rank Web sites based on numerous quality factors, and use your designated maximum cost per click as

only one of many factors that determine whether you achieve a given keyword placement. The goal of QSO is to understand the factors that Google and others use to calculate quality score so that you can maintain PPC advertisements at the highest possible position and the lowest cost per click.

The primary factors that search engines consider for calculating quality score are click-through rate, ad group and campaign structure, ad copy, landing page quality, and keyword bid. Note that many of the quality score factors influence one another. For example, the quality of your ad copy almost certainly affects your click-through rates, and your ad group and campaign structure is likely to influence your perceived landing page quality.

*Click-through rate* refers to the percentage of times your ad was clicked compared to how many times it was shown. The higher your click-through rate is for any given keyword-ad combination, the higher quality the search engines are likely to rate your advertisement, and the lower the price you will have to pay for placement. One way of quickly improving your click-through rates is to remove keywords with low click-through rates from your ad groups. Another way to improve click-through rates is to write more appealing ad copy.

The structure of your ad groups and campaign can influence quality score. For example, ad groups that have large numbers of unrelated keywords are likely to have low-quality scores because the search engines conclude that your advertisements do not accurately reflect each keyword in your ad group. Similarly, the search engines might perceive campaigns that contain numerous unrelated ad groups as less relevant. Ad groups that contain keywords that are tightly related and include well-written ad copy tend to have higher-quality scores. Moreover, making sure that your campaigns are closely related is likely to improve your quality score.

Writing multiple advertisements and making sure that your ad copy is well written and appealing is one of the most effective ways to improve your quality score. As mentioned earlier, your ad copy must directly relate to the keywords in your ad group. One way of doing this is to use advanced methods that allow you to dynamically insert your target keyword into the advertisement.

Google and the other search engines allow you to test multiple advertisements. Therefore, you should submit numerous advertisements, making sure that you include enticing ad copy that contains the keywords you want to

rank for. The search engines show each of the advertisements until one or more of the ads emerge with the highest click-through rate.

*Landing page quality* refers to the perceived value and relevancy of the page that you send your PPC traffic to. Landing page quality is so important that a low landing page score can be disastrous to your overall PPC advertising initiatives. In fact, if you have a poor landing page score you may be required to pay as much as 10 dollars per click for placement on a keyword, whereas another advertiser deemed to have a high landing page score pays only 35 cents for the same keyword placement. Some of the factors that affect your landing page score are the relatedness of your ad copy and landing page and whether the keyword you are bidding on is included on the landing page. Google also appears to take into consideration the PageRank of your Web site, as well as how many people link to the landing page in question.

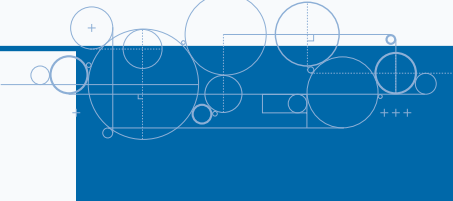
Your *keyword bid* is the maximum that you are willing to pay for a click on a particular keyword or ad group of keywords. Your quality score directly and significantly affects the amount you pay for a given click. In general, the more you are willing to pay, the more likely your ad will appear. However, as an overall ranking factor, keyword bid is much less a primary indicator of position that it was in the past. The more effective you are in increasing your quality score based on the factors mentioned earlier, the less you have to pay per click and the higher your ranking is likely to be.

This approach to QSO is not exhaustive. Quality score is a very dynamic and complex algorithm and is likely to be tweaked and changed as Google and the other search engines constantly strive to improve search quality and make more money.

## Optimize for Other Engines

Internet search allows you to retrieve information at lightning speed. Although search engines such as Google, Yahoo, and Bing are the most common forms of search sites, many Web sites specialize in organizing very specific types of Web sites rather than trying to index the entire Internet. Getting your site exposure on these more-targeted search engines can send extra traffic or allow you to target a niche that may be too competitive to rank for in the major search engines.

Technorati is a popular search engine for searching blogs. If you can get your blog to rank well on Technorati, you can gain considerable exposure and traffic. Moreover, other



bloggers use Technorati to look for stories to write about. In this way, getting your blog ranked on Technorati can be used as an effective link-building strategy.

Del.icio.us is a popular social bookmarking Web site that allows users to share the sites that they visit most frequently and allows other users to gauge which sites on the Internet are most popular. Many users like to browse the bookmarks of other people with similar tastes, so showing up on these lists is essential to your success. Be sure to build out your own del.icio.us profile and become part of the community.

Google Images is a popular service for searching images. Getting Google Images to index your images can potentially lead to significant traffic, especially because Google recently began to show their image results at the top of their regular organic listings.

If you sell products, chances are you can benefit from having your products listed in shopping search engines, such as Shopping.com, Shopzilla, and BizRate.com. Shopping search engines accept product feeds from online retailers and allow users to search and sort these lists by various criteria. Keep in mind that most shopping search engines require you to pay them on a cost-per-click or cost-per-action basis.

Whether potential customers find your products on auction services such as eBay and classified services such as Craigslist greatly depends on whether your listings are optimized for the eBay and Craigslist search engines. Your title and description for both services should include keywords that someone looking for your product is most likely to use. Moreover, you should include text to describe each of the images you use to promote your products.

## Monetize Web Site Traffic

You may not have an e-commerce Web site that has an obvious monetization method. Instead, you may have a great Web site with unique, well-written content that generates a lot of traffic, and you may wonder how you can effectively monetize your traffic. The Internet opens up the door to making lots of money without having to actually sell anything. In fact, with revolutionary money-making models such as affiliate marketing, contextual advertising, and ad widgets, many Web site owners can make enough money to significantly supplement existing income or in some cases support lucrative full-time employment.

The most commonly used tool for making money from your Web site traffic is Google AdSense. Google AdSense is a contextual advertising technology that serves ads from the Google AdWords Content Network based on contextual relevance. All you have to do is insert a piece of code into your Web site where you want the ads to appear and Google does the rest. The most impressive thing about Google AdSense is the sophistication of the technology. Instead of having to worry that Google might serve ads unrelated to your content, Google's technology has an incredible track record of serving highly relevant advertisements, which enhances the user experience and encourages visitors to come back to your Web site in the future. Even if they leave your Web site by clicking an ad, you get paid a percentage of the amount that the advertiser pays Google to display the ad. Affiliate marketing is responsible for generating billions of dollars in e-commerce each year. Affiliate marketing allows you to monetize your Web site traffic by partnering with various merchants on a pay-for-performance basis. You get paid only when a lead or sale is referred through your Web site. Thousands of merchants, including many of the largest and most recognized brands in the United States such as Target, Apple, Dell, Amazon, and Wal-Mart, have affiliate programs. These companies pay you a percentage of any sales referred when you promote them on your Web site. In addition, a number of businesses, including many notable insurance, real estate, and dating companies, pay you a flat fee every time you refer a lead through your Web site.

Top affiliates such as Upromise, Cashbaq.com, and Brad's Deals make millions of dollars per year in commission. If you have a niche Web site or know how to effectively supplement your organic traffic with targeted pay-per-click traffic, you are likely to benefit significantly from promoting affiliate marketing offers. The big three affiliate networks are Commission Junction, LinkShare, and Performics. Other newer networks such as AZN and Pepperjam Network are using innovative approaches and technologies to help affiliates monetize Web site traffic and bank large commission checks.

## SEO Plugins

SEO plugins provide you with on-demand information about various aspects of search-engine optimization. Instead of having to run a specific program every time you want to learn more about a Web site, you simply install an

SEO plugin, such as the Google Toolbar, that directly interacts with your Web browser in real time to retrieve important technical information about the Web site you are visiting. SEO plugins typically display information in the form of a toolbar or by integrating with your Web browser or e-mail client.

The Google Toolbar is a plugin that interacts with your Web browser to provide useful information about the Web pages you visit. The Google Toolbar includes a range of useful SEO features, including the PageRank of each page you visit, a tool to highlight a given keyword within a page, and an AutoFill option to cut down on the time you spend typing the same information over and over again. The Google Toolbar is free and is highly customizable based on your needs. Note that during installation you will be asked if you approve of Google collecting information about your browsing behavior. Although Google may use this information to serve more relevant advertisements and deliver a more personalized search experience, you need to consider the benefits versus legitimate privacy concerns.

The Alexa Toolbar is a useful plugin that provides information about the traffic ranking of Web sites. Note that Alexa collects information from users who have installed an Alexa Toolbar, allowing Alexa to provide statistics on Web site traffic. Because Alexa collects data only from individuals who install the Alexa Toolbar, many commentators have

suggested that Alexa rankings are skewed toward the Webmaster community because a high proportion of Webmasters install the toolbar and the average person surfing the Web does not. Despite this, the Alexa Toolbar allows you to perform multiple levels of competitive analysis and community research throughout your SEO campaigns, while also offering you a shortcut to the information provided on the [www.alexa.com](http://www.alexa.com) Web site.

One of the most useful and popular SEO browser extensions is SEO for Firefox, which gathers multiple pieces of marketing data about a Web site and displays that data within your browser alongside the search results from the Google or Yahoo search engines. Some of the statistics SEO for Firefox makes available for quick view include Google PageRank, Yahoo page and domain links, and number of backlinks.

If you use WordPress to manage your blog, you can benefit from various plugins that assist the search-engine-optimization process. For example, installing a WordPress Title Tag plugin allows you to customize each title tag on your Web site. Installing a WordPress Description Tag plugin allows you to easily customize the description meta tag on each of your Web pages, and installing a WordPress Sitemap Generator makes sure that you are notifying the search engines each time content is updated on your Web site.

# Choose a Topic

If you are starting from scratch and do not have a previously developed Web site to begin working on, choosing a topic for your Web site is the first step in starting a successful search-engine-optimization plan. The topic you choose can have a dramatic effect on both the quality of the results your search-engine optimization achieves as well as the speed at which you can achieve them.

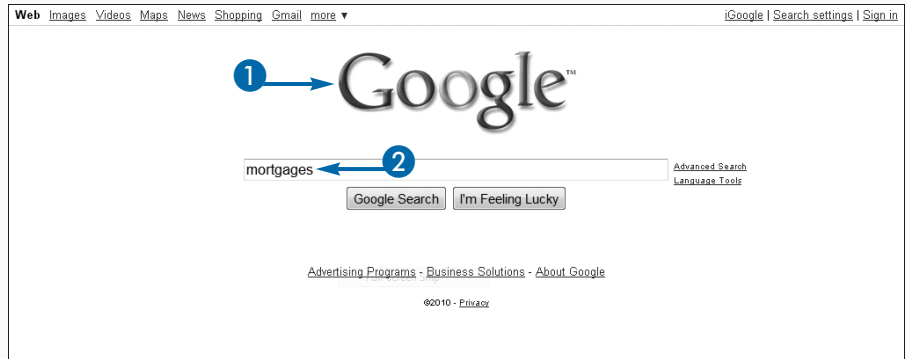
Increasing your Web site rankings for competitive topics is much more difficult than increasing rankings for less competitive topics. Examples of highly competitive topics include mortgages, debt relief, and prescription medications. Web sites concentrating on these topics can be extremely lucrative to Web site owners if they manage to generate visitors. Even one visitor to a mortgage application Web site can produce a large profit if that visitor applies and is approved for a mortgage.

If you are starting a brand-new Web site with dreams of becoming profitable quickly, you may not want to start by focusing on these highly competitive terms. Web sites ranking highly for terms like “mortgages” have likely been around for many years, contain a tremendous amount of content, and possess thousands of relevant inbound links. The importance of factors such as Web site age, quality and quantity of content, and quality and quantity of inbound links are discussed in later chapters.

Unless your Web site already possesses those factors, you should choose a less competitive topic. Optimizing for less competitive topics can provide quicker and more impressive ranking results. If you are developing a Web site about mortgages, consider focusing on a specific topic within the overall topic of “mortgages,” such as “Pennsylvania mortgages” or the even more specific “Wilkes-Barre mortgages.” Although less traffic exists for these more specific terms, there is also less competition and a higher likelihood of early success.

## Choose a Topic

- 1 Navigate to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com).
- 2 Search for a popular topic, such as “mortgages.”



- Notice 37,800,000 results.

