



Getting The Most Out Of Search Engine Optimization

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is an essential tool for hotels and resorts to promote bookings and generate leads. Here are some tips on employing SEO to your best advantage so you can get better play for your Web site on search engines like Google.

Unlike other advertising methods, search engines can drive targeted traffic straight to your Website. The new style of advertising responds to consumer demand, expressed by their user behavior. With more than 85 percent of consumers actively searching for information, products and services they want directly online, search engines are now the ideal source for new hotel and resort leads. Customers will come to you -- if you know how to tell them you're there.

What Should You Expect From A SEO Campaign?

SEO naturally leads to increased market visibility. For years, the Internet was just a "place" to be seen. Today, that presence is vital to market visibility. Your customers now expect to easily find a Website for your business; if they can't find it quickly and within a few clicks on a search page, they will most likely choose a competitor. If done right, SEO can move you to the top of the search listings, letting your online customers know you take them seriously enough to make their search easier.

SEO can also lower customer acquisition costs. With search engines, you don't need to constantly chase after customers. Nearly all search traffic (more than 80 percent) is driven by the four major commercial engines: Google, Yahoo!, MSN, and Ask.com. Target your SEO campaign to those four and you maximize your SEO profit potential.

There are two main types of SEO: organic (the main results that show up for search queries) and sponsored (pay-per-click programs, like Google AdWords or Yahoo! Search Marketing). Several studies say that customers overwhelmingly prefer organic SEO to sponsored links, but sponsored links have proven effective for targeted campaigns. Utilizing both organic search listings and sponsored advertisements dramatically improves your chances of beating your competition's listings.

Additionally, real-time data tracking allows you to understand precisely how effective your SEO efforts are. Hotel Traffic Builders provided real time Web analytics software to all of its clients which allows us and our clients to analyze your incoming Web traffic and keyword conversions. Hotel Traffic Builders also routinely tracks 5 local primary hotel or resort competitors so that our clients always maintain a local competitive edge.

Hotel Traffic Builders tracks this kind of data and will tell you how your visitors are finding your Website, what search engines and keywords they are using, and which visitors are successfully converting to sales.

What does it take to optimize your Website for search engines? Content, content, and more content. A five-page site with basic product listings and contact

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information simply isn't enough to haul in traffic anymore. You must make your Website work for you by regularly posting and updating content.

Tips on producing engine-attracting content include:

- Have lots of quality information geared toward your target audience that's easily readable by the search engines. (For example, search engines can't see text embedded in graphics.)
- Create content useful to your visitors. Post things like destination information, room and resort amenities, newsletters, FAQ pages, top news stories, press release archives, etc. Make it easy for visitors to share your content with friends and colleagues.
- Always make your website easy to use from a hotel shopping guest perspective.

SEO efforts are geared toward boosting website rankings to the top three pages of search engine results pages (SERPs). Why? More than 50 percent of search engine users never go past the first page. Those who do almost never go past the second, and past the third is unheard of. Competition for those page listings grows daily, as more pages are added. The best way to stay ahead of the pack is to regularly update your Website content and monitor your keyword rankings.

Budgeting For Your SEO

Every SEO campaign budget varies, depending on the complexity of the Website and the competition for the keyword phrases you target. When researching SEO firms, make sure that your SEO project receives a tailored budget proposal based on your goals and your Website. "Out-of-the-box" SEO packages may not meet the needs of every business. Quality companies offering SEO services will have a well-rounded knowledge of the Web and offer complimentary services that might help your campaign, such as a Website redesign, customized web programming, database programming, ecommerce creation, and SEO copywriting.

If you plan to use pay-per-click advertisements, be sure to dedicate an appropriate monthly budget for their upkeep. The SEO firm you choose should be able to provide you with a baseline figure for minimum SEO requirements as well as an idea of what you can expect to achieve from different budget limits and different SEO choices.

All successful SEO campaigns need a steady, ongoing maintenance plan. Your SEO company should be able to offer you multiple maintenance options to help fit your marketing budget. Website content needs to be kept up-to-date by adding product updates, news articles, press releases, white papers, and more.

Stagnant Websites that have outdated content are crawled less often by the search engines and often start dropping below their competition within a few months. Your chosen SEO company should offer you a plan of action for keeping your Website up-to-date to stay on top of the premium listings.

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The most successful SEO campaigns utilize a combination of both targeted organic keywords and sponsored listings. Consumers respond to a repetition of a company name or brand name across multiple sections of the search engine listings, as it helps to establish authority and reliability.

Organic listings often take longer to get to the top, but they remain there longer because they're not price-driven. Sponsored listings jump as high up in the listings as the price will allow, and fast. However, if you're outbid for the top spot, you'll have to re-bid to keep your place.

Even if you focus more on sponsored listings, it's critical to pay attention to organic search results. While it may take less effort to grab the number one position via sponsored ads, research shows that visitors are still more likely to click on organic listings if there's a choice.

Judging The Success Of An SEO Campaign

The best way to find out if your SEO campaign is successful is to use a detailed analytics package to track your website statistics. "Success measured in number of hits" is no longer accurate. You need an advanced analytics package that provides statistics such as unique visitors, keyword referrals, search engine referrals, ecommerce tracking, and pay-per-click tracking.

Also ask about regular keyword ranking reports to see an overview about which keywords have achieved high placement across which engines and which still need concentrated efforts for improvement. Any reputable SEO firm will have tools to provide you ranking placement on your keywords, overall progress reports, and competition analysis (to compare where you are in relation to your competition).

Knowing these statistics helps you to figure out which SEO efforts are bringing you customers and how you can refocus your marketing campaign on what works. The more fine-tuned you make your SEO, the higher your profits will be.

Some companies decide to manage their website analytics in-house. Others hire SEO firms to create their campaigns, manage their statistics, and make recommendations on how to improve their results. The SEO industry is growing rapidly. New consulting firms offering tailored search engine marketing services are popping up everywhere. As a result, SEO campaign prices vary dramatically, so it's easy to get caught up in a bottom-dollar race, when quality is much more important.

Here are a few red flags to avoid if you are searching for SEO services regarding claims or promises you might encounter:

Guaranteed top rankings. There are no guarantees. There is no way for an SEO firm to guarantee the #1 spot in organic searches. Any SEO company that guarantees you top ranking could be using illegal, or "black hat" spamming techniques to do it. Using these techniques will eventually get your Website banned from the search engines. Be wary of consultants offering over-inflated promises like these.

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SEO firms that send mass e-mails that appear to be spam. As a website owner, you may have received those extremely generalized mass e-mails:

"To webmaster, I visited your website and noticed that you are not listed in most of the major search engines and directories. Act now...."

Reputable SEO companies do not try and reach potential customers through generalized unsolicited e-mails. Ask a fellow business owner who you know has gone through an SEO campaign for a referral. SEO consultants work with companies on many different sizes and in a variety of industries, so as long as you're not going directly to your competition, a company's reputation is a good measure of what pricing packages and success rates you should expect.

Other ways to find SEO companies are directly through the search engines. SEO companies typically start out by applying their own skills and knowledge base by optimizing their own websites to generate leads and bring potential customers to them. Try searching for SEO companies based in your local area so you can set up personal meetings to discuss the plan of action for your campaign and review the efforts being taken to help promote your products or services. Talk to a number of different companies and compare their strategies, pricing packages, and initial ideas about SEO. Be sure to look beyond price and focus on their knowledge about the industry and strategies, and legal versus illegal techniques.

Useless links. Avoid working with SEO consultants that offer submitting your Website link to thousands of search engines; that is useless and will not affect your rankings. Concentrating on the basic SEO principals and focusing your efforts on the primary search engines (Google, Yahoo!, MSN, and Ask.com) will prove to be the most successful. You may have SEO consultants approach you (or it might be discussed as a strategy for your site within your overall SEO campaign) to subscribe to third-party Websites that offer to place your Website link among hundreds of others, guaranteeing that it will help boost your search engine rankings. These Websites, often referred to as link farms, are an illegal technique used by many spammers claiming to be certified SEO consultants. This technique is not only ineffective, but search engines have started to ban these link farm Websites from their databases as well as sites or links affiliated with them. Reputable directories such as the Yahoo! Directory, ODP (Open Directory Project), or specific industry-related directories can prove to be a large benefit for your Website visibility and can increase your rankings. Talk to your SEO consultant about directories that might help your website.

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About Hotel Traffic Builders (HTB):

We are a full-service digital marketing agency dedicated to the boutique hotel & residential resort industry.

Our mission is very simple: ***"To maximize sales success by providing our clients with exceptional internet marketing results"***.

Our clients consistently enjoy industry leading success because of our dedicated focus and experience. Our use of state-of-the art tools, best in class technology and wealth of industry experience enable us to provide full solution applications. We recognize that our clients are experts at running their hotels, and our role is to develop and maintain online marketing leadership for our client hotels.

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We differentiate ourselves through:

Industry Expertise

We have a singular specialized focus on boutique hotel, resort and vacation home e-Marketing. Our sole goal is to be the best at what we do by ensuring maximum success for all of your e-marketing activities. Our 52 person design and development technology team delivers unparalleled quality and results. Our sole focus is resort marketing.

Individual Customized Creative Approach & Solutions

Every client has unique needs, opportunities and priorities, our e-Marketing plans are always custom built and based on in-depth research of your specific hotel.

Cutting Edge Technology

We use proprietary state of the art tools and applications that enable project efficiency, measurability and success of your e-marketing. We not only promise success, we document it in a 24/7 real-time secured private reporting platform that we create for every hotel client. Our clients never wonder about how hard their marketing dollars are working because they always know!

Return On Investment

The true measurement of our success is our proven ability to deliver reservation bookings. We grow booking results year over year, and we grow advance bookings, which result in higher occupancy levels and ADRs.

Contact us at: www.HotelTrafficBuilders.com or call us **954-421-6399**

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