



## Search Engine Marketing Explained

Ranking your website highly on one of the “big three” search engines (Google, Yahoo or MSN) is a daunting task let alone ranking your website highly on all three. Three engines, three algorithms, three different sets of rules - and yet there are websites out there that have first page rankings across them all – how do they do it?

While all of the major search engines use different algorithms the end goal of all three is the same: to provide the searcher with the most relevant results available. It is this one common thread that makes it possible for an SEO to rank a website highly across all the major engines. While there are a variety of factors at play and an even wider variation in the weight each of these factors are given– the possible variations that can produce relevant results are limited, especially among hotel websites given the proliferation of thousands of inter linked 3<sup>rd</sup> party booking sites that saturate keywords including all hotel names and vacation destinations.

For example, if inbound links are given 0% weight then insignificant sites will rank highly for high-competition phrases. Many reputable companies such as Microsoft could lose rankings for their own names so links must and will always hold value. On the other hand, if links were to hold 100% weight then sp@Hotelxyz the search engines would be a simple matter and so there are a limited number of possible variables in between these extremes that this factor can have, no matter which engine we are optimizing for.

That said, there are still three main engines with three distinct algorithms despite common requirements. To clarify how to optimize for all of them it's easiest to discuss them individually first. Due to the way their algorithms work one is best to expect rankings on MSN first, followed by Yahoo! and finally Google (I am assuming that the phrase is of at least moderate competition). For this reason we will discuss them individually in that order.

### SEO For MSN

Proper SEO for MSN requires that a site be structured well with a distinct theme throughout and many inbound links. The advantage an SEO has while optimizing a site for MSN is that MSN tends to pick up and credit new content and inbound links very quickly. That means that with the right tactics in place one can rank a website relatively quickly on this important engine.

While MSN has the lowest number of searches performed on it, ComScore's report back in July revealed that MSN searchers were also 48% more likely to book a room or purchase a product online than the average Internet user. A very important statistic for website owners that sell online.

To rank highly on MSN one needs to build a solid sized site (exactly how large will depend on your industry – look at the size of your competitor's sites for an idea), a relevant theme throughout the site that focuses on your primary keywords and a

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good number of links. MSN doesn't (at this time) employ an aging delay on links such as the one employed by both Google and Yahoo! so the effects of the site and inbound links can be picked up very quickly and with good SEO efforts one can rank well within a few months on MSN for competitive phrases.

### **SEO For Yahoo!**

Until recently Yahoo! acted very much like MSN, now it's leaning a bit more towards Google. Ranking a website well on Yahoo! requires a solid-sized site with unique content and a very good number of links.

While PageRank is a Google factor, Yahoo! does have some type of page value factor at play. Many moons ago Yahoo! was playing with a PageRank-like calculation called WebRank. They even went so far as to put out a beta toolbar testing it. This indicates that there is a factor at play in the Yahoo! algorithm similar to Google's PageRank – they just don't advertise what a specific page's value is.

Yahoo! is placing a large amount of emphasis on the age of links though not in the same way that Google is. We will get to Google shortly however to understand what to expect from Yahoo! one must understand that when you get a link to your website it won't hold it's full value for a number of months. While the exact number of months is unknown it appears to be around 8 before it hold it's full weight though it will hold some from day one and this weight will increase as time passes.

To rank well on Yahoo! you must optimize your site similar to what you would do for MSN and you must build a large number of inbound links and have patience as these links age. You will not see a sudden spike 2 weeks after a large link-building campaign, you will likely have to wait 3-4 months to notice any significant effect.

### **SEO For Google**

Virtually every webmaster and website owner is primarily concerned about attaining Google rankings due to the significantly higher number of searchers using it. Provided that you are building your website following the best practices of SEO (i.e. unique content, a sizable amount of content, and a good number of incoming links) then your rankings are sure to follow, however due to their aging delay it will likely take longer than on MSN or Yahoo! Google considers the age of your links, your domain and even the individual page to be a factor and the longer your page has been online the better.

Essentially, ranking a site on Google requires that you take the same actions as for the other two, continue your link building efforts on an ongoing basis to insure that you end up with more-and-more links, and that you update your content and add content on a fairly regular basis (though the addition of a blog for example).

### **Tying It Together**

The logical process for a new website or one at the first stages of SEO is to first target MSN. At this point you can focus your attention on continuing to build high-

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quality, relevant links to and content on your site which will continue to increase your value on Yahoo! and Google.

Analysis will be required to determine exactly what weight you will be giving to different areas. For example, if your onsite factors are optimized for MSN then you know that you will need to make up for this in the offsite factors for Yahoo! and Google. If you figured you would need 100 links to rank on Google then you will now need to up that number to account for the fact that you have optimized your site itself for a different engine.

At Hotel Traffic Builders we more than a dozen of the industry leading tools and apply proprietary processes along with untold hours of data review to guide our SEO effectiveness results. One method we use that is extremely popular with our clients is that we also monitor 5 competitor hotels on their rankings for up to 25 keywords on all major search engines so that we can effectively benchmark and measure success for our hotel clients.

## Conclusion

I am hoping that none of you read the title and were expecting to rank on the first page of all three major engines next week. In the hotel marketing business and especially for hotels in competitive destination areas, this is all but impossible for any keyword other than the name of the hotel web site. Ranking highly on all three major engines takes time, patience and a good few rounds of tweaking to get the perfect balance of onsite and offsite optimization. Of course, as you can gather, done properly it's well worth the effort.

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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.

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,

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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](http://www.HotelTrafficBuilders.com) or call us **954-421-6399**