

The Site Owners Guide to SEO for Content Writing

Updated for 2014

A step-by-step guide to
incorporating search engine
optimization into content
writing for the Web

Alan Bleiweiss

This guide offers the most important basic guidelines for incorporating SEO into your content that will ensure you've got a foundation in place to help your site be discovered and properly indexed by the search engines.

The Site Owners Guide to SEO for Content Writing

A step-by-step guide to incorporating search engine
optimization into content writing for the Web

Alan Bleiweiss

©Copyright 2011-2014

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form or by any means, except as permitted by United States Copyright law, without the express prior written permission of the author. Requests for permission should be sent to alan@alanbleiweiss.com

Limit of Liability:

Search engines maintain unique, proprietary trade secrets regarding how they determine relevance and value for any site or page on the web they choose to index. Additionally, such methods are changed, modified or otherwise enhanced on a frequent basis.

While the author has found success in implementing the recommendations communicated in this book, and while he believes, in his professional opinion, that such recommendations are, in fact, at the core of sound search engine optimization best practices, he cannot guarantee specific results for any site optimization implementation that incorporates any or all of the included recommendations described or communicated within this book. Anyone who claims to guarantee search-ranking results should be sent packing as fast as possible.

Contents

Introduction.....	6
Knowledge Assumption	6
Differing Opinions.....	7
User Experience.....	7
Beyond the Basics.....	8
A Word about Flash®	8
Web Designers and Style Sheets.....	9
1. Keyword Decisions.....	10
1a. Keyword Research	10
User Mind Model.....	10
Ask and You Shall Receive.....	11
Real World Search Data	11
1b. Two or Three Phrases per Page	12
1c. Topic Category Separation	13
2. Page Headers	14
2a. Page Title Tag.....	14
Title Separator	14
Example	14
Avoid Stop Words as separators.....	14
Brand or Company Name in Page Titles.....	15
Page Title Length	15
Combine Creatively.....	15
Example	15
Not Always Used.....	16
2b. Page Meta Description	16

- Careful Use of Keywords in Description 16
- Entice Clicks 17
- Not Always Used 17
- 150 Character Length 17
- ... Ending 17
- Meta Description Example 18
- Note 18
- A Word about Meta Keywords 18
- 3. On-Page Content: 19
 - 3a. Uniqueness of Content 19
 - 3b. How Much Content 19
 - Creative Content Expansion 20
 - 3c. Header Tags (H1, H2, H3) 20
 - Nesting Header Tags 21
 - Example: 21
 - Note 21
 - 3d. Bold or Italicized Text 22
 - 3e. Bullet Point Lists 22
 - 3f. Cross Page Linking 22
 - Keyword Seeding Links 23
 - 3g. Out-bound links 23
 - Wikipedia Warning 23
 - Resource Links 24
 - Avoid Over-Linking 24
 - Footer Links 25
 - Anchor Text Conflicts 25

3h. Write For Your Users	25
The User Mind Model	25
Ask yourself these questions	26
3i. Keyword Frequency	26
General Guidelines	26
3j. Additional Phrases	27
3k. Images & Embedded Video	27
Image & Video File Naming	28
Example	28
Image Alternate Attributes	28
Example	28
Image and Video Captions	28
3l. Charts.....	29
3m. PDF Documents	29
3n. Closing Paragraph	29
4. Brand Identity	30
Branded Page Titles	30
Example	31
5. The Five Super Signals of SEO	31
5a Quality	31
5b Uniqueness	32
5c Authority	32
5d Relevance	33
5e Trust.....	33
Additional Resources	35
Credits	36

About The Author37

Introduction

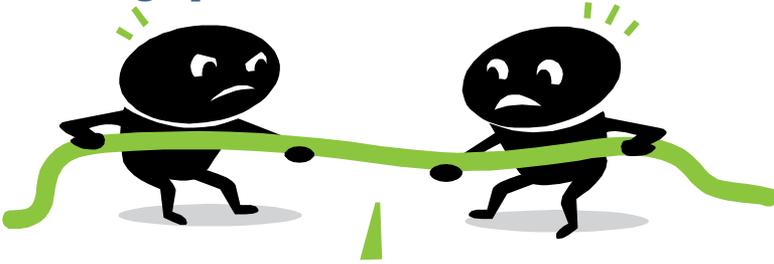
When done properly, the process of content level optimization ensures invaluable SEO strength that stands the test of time, regardless of how search engines change their rules of evaluation. While some individual factors might change over time, the fundamental guidelines provided here will ensure you are well on your way to having a properly optimized site.

Knowledge Assumption

This guide assumes the reader either has a fundamental understanding of basic HTML or has access to programmers capable of providing basic HTML assistance as necessary. Alternately, it is hoped that the site you are responsible for has a Content Management System (CMS) that allows for fundamental implementation of foundational SEO.

If you don't know basic HTML or have access to a functional CMS, you may find it helpful to explore an [HTML Tutorial](#).

Differing Opinions



Some SEO professionals will argue that some of the recommendations herein either no longer carry any weight in search ranking or carry insignificant weight compared to other recommendations not included in this document.

Fact: These recommendations are based on over ten years of SEO knowledge, testing, and implementation across hundreds of small, medium and large-scale Web sites. Even if some of the items listed here do not carry tremendous weight overall, the items included in this document are all considered true SEO best practices.

Additionally, from my experience, I've found that for every single item listed here that you do not do, you will need to implement that many other SEO methods and tactics. It's better to build a strong, stable foundation.

User Experience

Many of these recommendations come from a combination of SEO best practices and User Experience best practices. Where a recommendation carries less value for SEO, it carries that much more value for usability.

If you truly care about reaching the most people from a combination of these two perspectives, you would be wise to

implement as many of these recommendations as your time and budgetary resources allow.

Beyond the Basics

SEO in 2011 is an art form as much as it is a science. SEO as a process is complex. Every site has unique needs within its own unique market and even within individual areas of topical focus. As such, the information provided in this document covers the core principles of SEO for content optimization.

This document is not meant to be a complete guide to implementing SEO in advanced ways. If you can follow these guidelines and recommendations, you will go a long way toward achieving success in having your site's content found through search engines and will be way ahead of many others who are already online.

A Word about Flash®

Okay more than a word - a couple paragraphs.

While Macromedia® Flash® is no longer the bane of SEO it once was, many site owners still, to this day, get dazzled by fancy Flash®-enabled sites. And while Google has come a long way in its ability to read and index content within a Flash®-enabled site, the reality is that such a site can only be partially SEO-enabled no matter how skilled the designer.

This is especially true when a site nowadays could potentially need hundreds or thousands of pages built over time.

If you would like to read the many reasons for this, I wrote an article [on the subject](#) back in 2008, and for the most part, the same issues exist today.

While it's perfectly reasonable to integrate Flash® design into your site, if you want maximum SEO value in your content, it will need to be presented in actual HTML.

Web Designers and Style Sheets

Modern web design incorporates the use of Cascading Style Sheets for visual styling. While properly implemented Style Sheets don't by themselves, hinder SEO, one particular aspect of CSS does that needs to be mentioned here. That's the use of CSS to format header text.

Use H1 tags for all page headers. When you wrap your page's header text in CSS and fail to use H1 tags, you don't harm your site's optimization tremendously; however, it is a hindrance nonetheless. If it's implemented site-wide, think of it as death by a thousand cuts. So from a purely "best practices" perspective, always wrap individual page header text in H1 tags.

1. Keyword Decisions



Keywords. You've heard all about them. They're the golden ticket to success in having your site found in the search engine results.

You may have read Google's own suggestion to webmasters:

Think about the words users would type to find your pages, and make sure that your site actually includes those words within it.

The problem with a statement like that is it's so overly simplified that it leaves you really no better off than prior to hearing it in regards to choosing high value words, let alone how to apply them to your content in a way that gets maximum value.

1a. Keyword Research

Being able to do quality keyword research is one of the most important tasks content writers, bloggers, marketers, product managers, and journalists have in today's Web. If you take the time to properly research which words you're going to use, rather than just "think about it" you'll be light-years ahead of the pack.

User Mind Model

The first rule is to think like your user, as Google suggests. What you need to understand though is just how serious this statement is. It's too easy to think you know your users, your customers, your clients.

Most of the clients I deal with inevitably think about words their target market would use while still holding onto their own industry's rose-colored glasses.

I implore you – truly step out of your own way of thinking. Consider the different segments of your audience – some may have experience operating within your industry, others may be brand new to what you offer and have never heard of your products or services at all.

Ask and You Shall Receive



Consider asking current customers or clients how they would describe your offerings, in their own words. Ask your employees and co-workers.

This doesn't mean you should throw out the words you yourself would use, but instead, to expand your initial list. The more words you start with, the better.

Real World Search Data

Now that you have a starting point, it's time to do the footwork to find out "out of all these possible keywords, which are the ones that matter most?"

The simple answer is to find out by getting that data directly from the search engines. Using the [Google AdWords Keyword Planner](#), or a solution from [WordTracker](#) or [WordStream](#), you can enter a word, a phrase, or several at a time, into the tool's form, click a button and instantly be presented with dozens or even hundreds of results.

You'll discover data about not just the words you entered, but many other, potentially more valuable words and phrases, along with information about the number of people in your country or around the world who have performed a search using those actual words.

Search terms		Avg. monthly searches 
designer handbags		40,500
cheap designer handbags		6,600
discount designer handbags		3,600

Real World Keyword Search Volume Sampling

Rather than choosing the phrase or phrases that have the most search volume, it's best to find a balance between highly searched phrases and those phrases that have somewhat less activity but where you're more likely to get higher up in search results sooner.

Over time, as you build your site's authority and strength in the search engines, you'll be able to go after even higher value phrases.

Be warned though – performing advanced keyword evaluation can become a time-suck. Just know that it's important enough to go beyond the surface process and allow a reasonable amount of time for you to succeed...

1b. Two or Three Phrases per Page

While you can get found for many longer phrases on any given page or more phrases than your top three, that requires having your site powerfully optimized and having many links back to your site.

At the same time, size and repetition constraints for various aspects listed below mean that you can typically only get away with two or perhaps three keyword phrases as a focus for any single page.

Trying to optimize for more than two or three phrases per page is more often than not a losing battle. It's much better to focus on high quality user-readable content and let the search engines give you bonuses of additional phrase recognition.

Note

While I never designate more than two or three phrases for a single page, I do include closely related additional phrases within content when it's appropriate.

This allows you to ultimately be found for an exponential number of additional phrase combinations as the search engines evaluate the overall work. (See [section 3i](#) later in this eBook for more info on additional phrases.)



1c. Topic Category Separation

It's important to separate out content on your site wherever possible to ensure you don't get so much topical overlap that any individual section of your site becomes diluted in its own focus. Use of category sectioning is a great way to achieve this.

Conversely, don't go so overboard in topic separation that you end up with too many categories. Doing so can cause users to become confused when navigating your site!

2. Page Headers

Page headers are not part of the main content of pages; however, they set the stage for how a Web page is processed. For search engines, everything starts with page headers that are properly seeded with keywords.

2a. Page Title Tag

Each website page's Title is the single most important and vital aspect for search engines. All other attributes below are compared first against the page title. If the page title is not properly seeded, search engines are essentially hindered from knowing exactly what the page's topical focus is.

Title Separator

Page Titles should use only the pipe (|) symbol or a hyphen (-) as a visual separator. This will help visitors to visually read the page Title contents more readily. Other symbols can often have page validation problems (such as the ampersand (&)) or may cause the page title to look spammy, like commas (,).

Example

Designer Handbags Pocketbooks Purses (no separator)

Designer Handbags | Pocketbooks | Purses (with pipe separator)

Avoid Stop Words as separators

Unless your keyword research specifically shows that stop words (in, and, of, the, etc.) are part of the actual keyword phrase results, avoid using these in page Titles because we need to get as much real search words into a short space as we can.

Brand or Company Name in Page Titles

Generally speaking, the company name, brand or domain name can be included in every page Title; however, placement depends on the page in question:

About and Contact Pages

Company Name | Keyword Phrase | Keyword Phrase

All Other Pages

Keyword Phrase | Keyword Phrase | Company Name

See [section 4](#) below for more on brand optimization.

Page Title Length

Title length should be 60 – 70 characters, including spaces. (Google only displays up to the first 70 to people doing search.) The most important keyword phrases should be up front.

Combine Creatively

Never repeat any single keyword more than two or three times. With creativity you can often combine keyword phrases for the page Title but only if you do a lot of on-page work to bolster it. Otherwise have the phrases in sequential order.

Example

Real estate bay area
Bay area homes for sale

These two phrases can be placed in the page Title as:

Real Estate Bay Area | Homes for Sale

(Though I have placed a pipe symbol between “area” and “homes,” you could instead use a hyphen if you so choose.)

Not Always Used



Even when you create a page Title that truly defines the topical focus for that page, you are not guaranteed that search engines will actually use your chosen title.

The reason for this dilemma is that search engines' automated evaluation process can sometimes decide that the your page matches the intent of the person performing a unique search, but that automated evaluation determines other text on your page is more appropriate for use in displaying your page in the search results.

Given this reality, I can only recommend you implement page Title creation best practices, and trust that if yours is replaced for any single search, it really is text that encourages a click through to your site.

2b. Page Meta Description

This field is not used to determine your page ranking. Nonetheless, it is presented to people doing a search and thus can be invaluable in enticing someone to choose your site over another in the results.

Careful Use of Keywords in Description

When displayed, if a word searched is also in the meta description field, that word will be bolded in the search results, further encouraging someone to click through to the site.

Entice Clicks

A well-written meta description should be designed to entice visitors to click on your link as in “hey – this is the best choice you’re searching for, click me – click me!”

To do this, your descriptions have to sound readable and intelligent. Please, never stuff several comma-separated keywords in this field.

Not Always Used

If a search engine’s automated evaluation determines it is not really describing the page content, that search engine will ignore your meta description and grab a snippet of text from your page - not always choosing something that actually makes sense!

150 Character Length

While some search engines display up to 200 characters, others only display the first 150 or so. This is why it’s best to keep all descriptions to 150 characters or less.

... Ending

By placing an ellipsis (...) at the end of your description (and within the first 150 characters), it makes it seem as if more is being offered (and thus enticing click through).

Note

If your description is longer and is cut off, a search engine may put those ellipses (...) there automatically. However, if you don’t pay attention and it’s too long, their system will decide where to put that.

Meta Description Example

If your page's keyword phrases are:

Furniture bay area

Bay area designer furniture

Mary's Furniture

Your meta description might be:

Visit Mary's Furniture – the bay area's leading designer furniture store with only high quality and affordable custom home furnishings...

So if someone performs a search for "furniture bay area" the above description would look like this in the search results:

Visit Mary's **Furniture** – the **bay area**'s leading designer furniture store with only high quality and affordable custom home furnishings...

Note

Note how in the description you don't have to place your keyword phrases in sequence. You can split them apart to get the description to sound more natural.

A Word about Meta Keywords

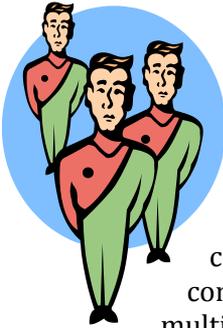
Some site owners and webmasters still use the meta Keywords field for adding keywords to their site. While you are free to do so, there is no value in this field from an SEO standpoint, nor has there been for quite some time. Major search engines no longer make use of this field for SEO evaluation purposes.

They do use an over-stuffed meta keywords field as an indication of over-optimization so this should be avoided.

3. On-Page Content:

On-Page content that is well written and well optimized carries significant weight in helping search engines validate that “this page is truly relevant to someone doing a search for a specific refined keyword topic.”

3a. Uniqueness of Content



The more content you provide that is unique to each page, and unique to your site (i.e. not found on other web sites), the less likely the search engines will flag multiple pages as being too similar.

Where this is also vital is if you have a lot of content (including headers, navigation, sidebar content, and footers) that is identical across multiple pages. The center main-content area thus becomes even less likely to be considered unique given the overall weight of the page.

3b. How Much Content

There is no hard and fast rule about exactly how much unique content you need on any given page. Too many factors are involved, including competitive content issues. A good rule of thumb from an SEO best practices perspective is 400 – 1,000 words per page.

Do NOT fixate on a consistent length though. Create content that’s appropriate for each page / article from a user perspective.

Generally speaking, the more competitors there are for the phrases you are optimizing this page for, the more likely you will need more content on that page.

Creative Content Expansion

When you think or know you need more content than you would prefer to have on a single page, this is an ideal opportunity to create a hierarchical group of content focused around a primary topic.

The first page in the group should be focused on the highest-level topic, and each page below that can then expand on and build upon that primary topic.

Links should then be placed within that top-level page pointing to each of the lower-level pages in that group.

3c. Header Tags (H1, H2, H3)

`<h1>Most Important</h1>`

`<h2>Second Most Important</h2>`

`<h3>Third Most Important</h3>`

Having text on your page wrapped in header tags like H1 where that text includes the page's keyword phrases tells Google – this page's emphasis really is about these phrases.

It's best to do this in an opening sentence or paragraph at the very top of the page, but if you do your other seeding work well, the H1 or H2 or H3 text can be anywhere in the content area and still be of some value.

Nesting Header Tags

Use the H1 tag for the topmost heading on the page, where the most important keyword phrase(s) are placed. If you then have the ability to break the content down into sections based on second, third or fourth phrase use, do so with nested Header tags.

Example:

```
<h1>Most Important</h1>
```

Descriptive content paragraph of text goes here related to the overall topic for the page. Content following right after the H1 tag should ideally be at least one paragraph in length, though more is okay as well.

Having less text is potentially not going to give enough strength to this most important phrase in most cases due to the need for truly unique content depth on every page of a site.

```
<h2>Second Most Important</h2>
```

Descriptive content related to this phrase then goes here, also in paragraph format – one, two or more paragraphs of content. Just having one sentence here is also probably not enough to emphasize relational importance of this section's keyword phrase.

Note

When implementing content headers, it is not necessary to use your keywords exactly. You may flip the words around, or even add other text around them if doing so sounds right from a readability perspective.

3d. Bold or Italicized Text

Applying **bold** or *italicized* treatment within the content to each of the top phrases for a given page helps confirm, “This text is important.” Unless it makes sense from a readability perspective, this should not be done more than once for each phrase on any single page.

Alternately, you can create headers above individual paragraphs, or sections of a page’s content, where that header text is bold instead of actually wrapped in a header tag.

3e. Bullet Point Lists

Creating bulleted lists within content is another signal to search engines that “this is important highlighted information.”

- Text with keyword or entire keyword phrase
- Text with 2nd keyword or phrase
- Text with 3rd keyword or phrase

Even if your bullet point list is not itself seeded with keywords, the header for the list should ideally include them. Just by having a bulleted list, you inform the search engines “this content is highly relevant to the page topic. “

Whether keywords exist in the list header or the list itself is less relevant from an SEO perspective and more relevant to readability.

3f. Cross Page Linking



Having a paragraph in one page’s content that can make reference to the content from another page and having a

phrase in that paragraph link to that other page tells search engines “important related and supporting information can be found over there.”

Doing this provides additional ranking strength to the page you point to in the link; however, you should do so only when you can ensure that it makes sense to readers and is truly communicating related concepts between the two pages.

Keyword Seeding Links

As search engines become more sophisticated and seek to provide the perceived most relevant content for a given search as well as thwart spammers, the concept of using keywords as the anchor text in links becomes more challenging all the time.

A general rule of thumb for choosing which words you use as the anchor text for your internal and outbound links is to mix it up. Have some of your link anchor text be keyword phrases matching those of the target page, others be variations of those, and still others be generic text such as “for more info.”

3g. Out-bound links

Within your content, just as you have links pointing to other pages on your site, on your most important pages have links pointing out to third party websites that again relate to that paragraph’s / page’s keyword phrases.

When possible, point to sites that are highly authoritative and highly ranked in the search engines.

Wikipedia Warning

Many people like to point to content on Wikipedia. Since that site has gotten so many inbound links, it shows up in search

results for many keyword phrases that actual, more relevant sites should otherwise show up for.

As such, we encourage you to find other sites to point to – professional journals, highly respected blogs, education sites (.edu) and government sites (.gov) being a few of the best types of sites to point to. However, please – only point to high quality content.

Resource Links

One example of good linking policy is to provide a link to the resource site(s) where you got information used in the writing of your content or blog article. This is both a professional courtesy and an ideal SEO tactic.

The value of outbound links comes from the belief that you are saying, “hey – we’re offering truly valuable content, but we go beyond that – we offer supporting references for our site visitors – more depth through outbound links...”

Note

“Resource links” as described above is NOT a page dedicated to all your outbound links. Such pages offer little to no value in today’s Web. Outbound links should be located on whichever page brings the most relevant context to that specific link.

Avoid Over-Linking

Too many links placed on a page or repeated on every page, can in fact cause the overall weight of each page to be diluted. This can also cause readers to consider your content less valuable.

Footer Links

It is best practices to link to only your most important pages from your site's main navigation or footer. Filling a footer area with links to every page on a site, or to more than the top five or ten pages, no longer offers any SEO value and is yet another way to confuse an individual page's topical focus.

Anchor Text Conflicts

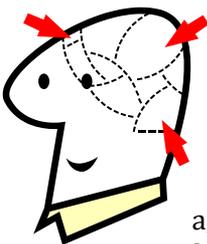
When deciding which text to use as the anchor for your outbound links, I recommend not using the same keyword phrases you have designated as the top phrases for the page you are linking from.

Doing so will give ranking credit to the target site for those phrases, which would mean you are helping that site rank better for the very phrase you are competing for.

3h. Write For Your Users

Write your content to speak to your site visitor. If someone reading your pages is not motivated to contact you or buy your products, then all the SEO in the world is useless!

The User Mind Model



Remember that your users don't necessarily think the same way you do. For example, they might not know the same industry jargon you use every day.

Just as I suggested earlier in this guide, once again I'm going to call on you to step out of your shoes when you're writing and into your target

market's shoes. This time, consider how they would feel or react to your content. This is especially important when integrating keywords into that content.

Ask yourself these questions

“Does this page appear to be polluted with keywords?”

“When I read this page as someone in my target market would read it, does this link really offer me value?”

“If I were someone in my target market reading this page, would I want to share this information with others?”

3i. Keyword Frequency

There are several myths about how often you should use a keyword phrase in your content. Don't believe the myth. There is no hard or fast rule about frequency. Hundreds of other factors are involved in SEO content evaluation.

Generally speaking, if you follow a few guidelines balanced against the previously described user mind model, you will find a happy medium that leads to long term success.

General Guidelines

- Repeat each phrase or each partial phrase as often as it makes valid sense from a reader perspective.
- Be sure each phrase is repeated at least once and ideally twice as a minimum rule.
- Split up each primary phrase – and use those partial phrase words at least once and ideally twice as a minimum rule.

- The more content you provide on a page, the more you should repeat full and partial phrases but **ONLY** when it does not butcher the readability.
-

3j. Additional Phrases

In addition to the two or three primary phrases for which you optimize a page, it is an SEO best practice to also include one, two or at most three additional phrases within the content area under certain rules:

- Each additional phrase should be highly related to the primary phrases – the more closely related the better.
- Use additional phrases sparingly – too much use of them and a page’s topical focus becomes diluted.
- Only use additional phrases when it makes sense to the reader perspective.

If you follow these rules, you will find that search engines are able to extract many other additional phrases you hadn’t even considered while writing – phrases that may be searched for less frequently, yet that nonetheless bring visitors to your site.

A bonus to optimizing content this way is that those visitors who find your site from these extended phrases you yourself didn’t intentionally seed the site for are typically much more likely to be highly relevant visitors.

3k. Images & Embedded Video

Placing images and embedded video on a page where that image or video is directly related to the primary page focus

helps the overall process of SEO. This is especially true in today's world of universal search.

Image & Video File Naming

The Name of the image file or video file, when reasonable, should include a keyword or keyword phrase.

Example

DSC19204954.jpg (Not optimized)

Blue-Widget.jpg (Optimized)

Image Alternate Attributes

Best Practices require the alternate text attribute of every image be filled out with information that helps visually impaired people know what the image is for, regardless of whether you use these fields to also add keywords.

Because this opportunity exists, if the image is closely related to your top phrases for a page, it makes sense both for visually impaired people and SEO to use keywords in the alternate attribute of that image.

Example

"Photo19r44" (not optimized)

"Best widgets – blue widgets" (over optimized)

"Photo of a blue widget" (optimized)

Image and Video Captions

Another way to signal page relevance to search engines is in the use of captions below images and video files. Including a

brief description of the image or video, and including a full or partial keyword phrase (when it makes sense to readers) is recommended.

3l. Charts



If you can legitimately have a statistical chart related to a page's content, do so. It can be an image or an embedded spreadsheet. If it's an image, use the same file name, alt attribute and caption rules described above.

If it's a spreadsheet in HTML, you may want to embed keywords as column or row names if that makes sense, or have a caption, table header (th), etc.

3m. PDF Documents

Having a PDF document related to the page's keyword focus linked from within the page is also a good move – but it has to be an actual PDF with copy-capable text, not a screen-capture of something that was saved as a PDF because search engines have to be able to read it.

The more high quality content within the PDF that's properly seeded with keywords the better.

3n. Closing Paragraph

At the bottom of the content area of a page, SEO best practices call for a closing paragraph that sums up the page's content where you include in that paragraph one instance of each of that page's top keyword phrases, or at the very least, include the single most important phrase.

4. Brand Identity



Many site owners come to me saying they want to be found in the search engines for their brand or their company name.

Surprisingly, many even think that's all they need to be found for, not comprehending the value in being found for words relevant to their offerings by people who don't yet know their brand.

Personally, I believe it's important to optimize your site for a combination of brand and more industry/market relevant non-branded phrases. If you feel the same way, all you need to do is mix your brand into the keyword seeding process.

Of course, there's a right way and a wrong way to do this; however, the core concept is to simply treat your brand as an important keyword or keyword phrase in your writing.

Branded Page Titles

Your brand can be incorporated into every page Title on your site. It is vital, however, to understand that, given the limited length of page Titles displayed in search results, and the fact that (generally speaking) the words at the beginning of the title string are more valuable, only a select number of pages should include the brand at the beginning of the Title tag.

These pages typically include:

- Home Page
- About Pages
- Contact Pages

On all other pages, if you want to incorporate your brand into the page title, it should go at the end of the string -- after your primary keyword phrases for that specific page.

Example

Home Page Title:

Acme Handbags | Designer Handbags Online

Main Widgets Product Page Title:

Handbags for Sale | Unique Designer Handbags | Acme Handbags

5. The Five Super Signals of SEO

Regardless of what your goals are, and though SEO comprises hundreds of signals on-site and off, my experience has shown me that SEO can be boiled down into five “Super” signals. Everything you do – every piece of content you create, every action you take needs to meet at least three of these.

5a Quality

Take the time necessary to craft content to convey the highest level of relevance, to reinforce to the visitor that your brand is trustworthy, and you have the experience (authority) to provide the best solution for that unique need.

Quality here also means unique content – not something people can find seven thousand other places on the web. Which means something about your products or services, or something about the supporting services around those, or other authority or trust signals truly do set you apart from the competition all in ways that users are effortlessly able to see, read and identify with.

5b Uniqueness

Basic SEO (yes, it really is a basic concept, not an advanced concept) dictates you need enough content that is truly unique to a given page, and within a given section of your site, and across your entire site, to even have a chance at ranking for any given phrase.

Yet we can't stop there. Within the unique content, you need to also communicate quality, relevance, trust and authority.

Because no matter how many sites you've been able to create, or your SEO provider created that were pure garbage and "tricked" the search engine algorithms over the years, the days of those methods are rapidly winding down.

5c Authority

What are you doing to convey that "in this field, area, market, we are the go-to source for the most trusted quality" or in a way that conveys "these people are hacks?"

Have you taken the time to ensure your blog article authors have a consistent web of multi-point presences across the Internet that reinforces the notion "this person knows what they're talking about" or are all your articles written by "admin" and posted to "uncategorized"?

Have you established your brand authority signals through Publisher markup, or is one author given the entire control over authority signals as if they are the entire organization?

Are you taking steps necessary to reinforce authority through quality relevant customer relations on multiple channels online? Or are you bombarding everyone everywhere with low quality noise because "we need a presence"?

5d Relevance

Nearly gone (they're on the way out, people) are the days of "relevance means matching keywords from page to page, link to link, site to site"... Nowadays, if you want the true win, you need to do what was always the best practice regarding relevance.

Every angle you approach the need to match your content with searcher intent, every signal in the multi-signal evaluation of relevance on site at the content and code level, and every signal in the multi-signal evaluation of relevance from off-site points of reference needs that relevance to also meet the QUART litmus test.

Relevance applies to a web site's purpose in regard to transactional or informational. And that needs to match relevance of searcher intent along the decision making timeline.

Relevance applies to topical focus grouping (upside down funnels and silos). And it applies to your presence in social media. Are you obtaining social profiles on "all the sites" or those aligned with where your customers / clients / prospective customers / clients are spending their time.

5e Trust

If you're obtaining profiles on "all the sites" because you heard it's important for ORM, do you realize you need to build every one of those up in an isolated organic way so as to prevent "low quality" presence signals?

Are you participating in social media as a one-way push of your own content? Or are you engaging your market / audience properly in a variety of ways that proves your brand has humans behind the brand?

Humans that care, and want to interact in ways aligned with your market's expectations?

Is all your content out around the web pure garbage that instills distrust? Are you spreading out or taking in guest posts that also reinforce trust? And build authority? Or just "because we heard guest blogging is the way to get links now"?

When people say bad things about your brand in social media, are you responding in respectful responsible ways, or are you going on the counter-attack? Or are you ignoring negative reviews entirely?

Have you matched up all your "location" directory profiles with the exact same NAP information? And does that match the NAP information you have on each of the unique location pages on your own web site? Or is it a complete mess that screams "I can't trust if this is accurate, real or fake?"

Have you so polluted every signal on site, at the code level and off site with keyword stuffing that real humans scratch their head and say WTF?

Or do you go about that work understanding that on-site you need consistency of signals without crossing into obnoxious? And do you go about the off-site link anchor effort in an abusive way or in a way that reflects the random nature of the larger web ecosystem?

Additional Resources

W3Schools HTML Tutorial

<http://www.w3schools.com/html/>

Google Keyword Tool

<https://adwords.google.com/ko/KeywordPlanner/Home>

Offline Keyword Research for Local Languages

<http://moz.com/ugc/offline-keyword-research-for-local-language>

8 Steps to Optimize your Blog for SEO

<http://searchmarketingwisdom.com/2008/07/8-steps-to-optimize-your-blog-for-seo/>

Adobe Flash and SEO

<http://searchmarketingwisdom.com/2008/07/adobe-flash-and-seo-the-latest-marketing-hype-dont-be-fooled/>

Marketing in the Age of Google

<http://www.ninebyblue.com/marketing-in-the-age-of-google/>

Credits

I would like to thank the following people for taking the time to read this guide and provide constructive feedback – either in grammatical structure, editorial insight, or technical perspective. Without my industry peer community, I would still be just another SEO, and for this I am truly grateful.

[Kris Roadruck](#)

Cofounder, Click2Rank

[Dawn Wentzell](#)

Project Manager Mobile Technology, SpeakFeel Mobile

[Steve Plunkett](#)

Sr. Manager Content Strategy, Search & Social, Rockfish Interactive

[Dana Lookadoo](#)

SEO Consultant, Founder, Yo! Yo! SEO

[Ben Cook](#)

Owner, Direct Match Media

About The Author

Alan Bleiweiss is a professional search engine optimization consultant specializing in forensic SEO audits for websites containing thousands and up to millions of pages.

His Web-consulting career began in January of 1995 when he created the first comprehensive database-driven real estate site in the state of California.

Since that earliest effort, Alan has worn many hats in the Web-consulting world including Director of Web Development for ANT Internet, where he managed the creation and maintenance of several world-class websites for such brands as Starkist Tuna, Heinz Ketchup, and Princess Cruises, among others.

His foray into all things SEO began in late 2000, early 2001, and since then, Alan has become known in the search industry as a leading advocate for SEO best practices implemented through the highest level of ethical standards.

Some of Alan's more notable recent SEO clients include NBC/Universal, Disney Interactive, Decker International (Ugg Boots), Mashable, GSN (Game Show Network).

If you have the willingness to put up with his wild rants and industry humor, you can also follow [@AlanBleiweiss](https://twitter.com/AlanBleiweiss) on Twitter.

Alan is also available to perform SEO audits and related consulting services, and can be reached at <http://AlanBleiweiss.com>