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Introduction

SEO has changed significantly in 2011. If you aren't on top of the changes, you're like to lose big time in the search engine game. Many websites have seen their rankings fall, or they've dropped out of the SERPS altogether.

If you want to rank well, you have to keep up with the changing landscape of SEO. You must ensure you keep your sites updated to the latest standards.

Unfortunately, search engines can change their algorithms at any time, and if you don't change your sites with them, you could lose any traffic you've managed to build.

In this report, you're going to learn about some of the newest developments in SEO, as well as some evergreen tips you can use to optimize your sites for lasting traffic.

So let's get started.

Content

Content is, by far, the single most important element in today's search engine game. It is no longer enough to upload thousands of PLR articles, or articles from directories, to your website and hope for the best. You need quality, unique content. It is more vital than ever.

If you've noticed your rankings drop recently, you may want to check on your content to see if you're following the best practices for SEO in 2011. Many sites got slapped badly in early 2011, and they lost their rankings.

Even EzineArticle.com, one of the biggest "authority sites" in the world, got hit really badly. The main reason they got slapped was because Google decided their content was no good.

If you want Google to love your site and give it good rankings, then you have to make sure you give Google what it wants – what its users want. They want quality content that is well written and useful!

Google has no definitive way to determine whether content is useful, but it does have several ways to figure out whether it is well written. It uses various methods to determine content quality.

Length

These days, length seems to be the primary deciding factor in the overall “quality” of your content. 250-word blog posts are no longer enough. Google seems to be favoring longer content, and a 400-word minimum is advised. In fact, 600-word content is even better.

If you outsource content, it may cost you a little more, but the results you will get from longer content will be well worth the added expense.

Quality

Obviously, the quality of your content is just as important as the length. You certainly can’t expect to throw up a 600-word article full of gibberish and expect to rank well.

It is rumored that some search engines may be using advanced spelling and grammar checking programs to identify poorly written content. If you’re using spun content, articles outsourced to people who can barely write coherent English, or put up gibberish in the hopes of capturing traffic, you may be in for a disappointment.

Make sure your content is well-written and useful. This is extremely important, because you never know when the search engines may change things and make content even more critical than it already is.

Plagiarism

Many people seem to think that if their content passes through a duplicate content checker like CopyScape.com, that they're safe. This is not true. As search engines become more advanced, they are able to detect when content is too similar to existing content, even if the same verbiage isn't used.

In order to ensure your content is unique (not just to plagiarism detectors, but in every way), make sure you are using multiple sources as research material. Never just rewrite a single article, even a PLR article, without adding any additional information.

If you outsource content, be sure to tell your writers not to rewrite content they find online, and to use multiple sources in order to create a truly unique piece of work.

It's understandable that there will be many articles online that say essentially the same thing about a particular subject, but you can make

yours a little more unique by varying the order of the topics in the article, using multiple sources, and adding unique information.

Keywords

Keywords used to be the be-all and end-all of SEO. They're still important, but times are changing. These days, it's not enough to optimize for a specific keyword phrase. You must also ensure you're including other words that help solidify your page's theme.

Let's say you were writing an article for the keyword "Improve your Golf Swing". You would want to include other words that solidify the page's theme. These would be words related to golfing, such as club, range, ball, cart, etc. Don't just stuff words in for the sake of theme, but include them when they are pertinent.

Remember that while keywords are certainly important, they are by no means the most important element in SEO. Instead, concentrate on writing quality content. You'll be surprised how easily you can rank without worrying much about keywords!

Over-Optimization

Something many people fail to understand about SEO that can give them a lot of trouble is that optimizing their pages too well can be counterproductive. Search engines want to list pages their users want to find, and many of those pages don't pay much attention to SEO.

Most of the pages with the best content are created by individuals who know little to nothing about SEO. They simply want to write about something they care about.

For this reason, search engines often favor content that isn't optimized "perfectly". If you do everything by the book, you risk search engines seeing your page as unnatural and hitting you with a penalty.

So what does it take to get an over-optimization penalty, anyway? Well, it's a combination of things, obviously. And you won't always be penalized for these things. However, if you do all of these things, there is a very good chance you could be penalized. You probably won't be banned, but your site could end up ten or more positions lower than it could be.

1. **Exact Keyword Title** – Never make the title of your page your exact keyword. Add a few words to it in order to change it slightly. For
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example, if your keyword phrase is “Lasagna Recipes”, you could make your page title “The 5 Best Lasagna Recipes Ever”.

2. **Exact Keyword in Heading Tags** – Never put your exact keyword in heading tags such as H1, H2, etc. Additionally, don’t use the exact same text in H1 tags as you do in your page’s title. If you use “The 5 Best Lasagna Recipes Ever” as your page title, you might put “Our Five Greatest Lasagna Recipes” in H1 tags.
3. **Using the Same Anchor Text Everywhere** – Obviously, getting links to your site is important. It’s one of the most vital elements in ranking well. However, it looks extremely unnatural if every backlink you have uses exactly the same text to link to you. Vary your anchor text between three or four different phrases. Use your main phrase for most links, but include a few variations, as well.
4. **High Keyword Density** – Many years ago, the more often you repeated your keyword, the better. These days, a high keyword density can do more harm than good. Use your keyword phrase two or three times in your content, or as many times as required to write your article. Don’t overdo it!

Backlinks

The backlink game is trickier than it used to be. Once upon a time, all you had to do was get more backlinks than your competition, and as long as your other SEO was relatively solid, you'd be nearly assured of ranking in the top ten. This was especially true if you had quality backlinks from authority sites.

These days, things aren't so simple. You have to be careful about where you get backlinks, and you can't get too many too quickly. There are many rules to follow if you want to make the most of your backlinks.

1. Don't get too many backlinks too quickly. This looks very unnatural. In the first few weeks, add just a few each day. You can gradually increase the number of backlinks, adding more each week.
 2. Go for quality, not quantity. A handful of backlinks from very high quality pages is more effective than hundreds of backlinks from free-for-all link pages and blog comments. Yes, quantity is still important, but spend more time seeking quality links.
 3. Never pay for backlinks. Google definitely does ban websites (or at least penalize them heavily) for buying links from known link
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brokers. If you're going to buy links, buy only from websites that sell links for traffic purposes, not for backlink purposes.

4. Keep things natural! Whatever you do, it's extremely important to make sure everything you do with regards to SEO, including backlinking, is as natural as possible.
 5. Remember that you need to diversify your backlinks. Everyone uses the old standards like Squidoo and HubPages, as well as commenting on blogs and other methods to gain links. It's alright to use these methods, but it's also important to find your own backlink sources. It doesn't seem natural for you to be using exactly the same backlink methods as everyone else.
 6. Be careful about "spammy" backlink methods. Some methods get exploited very badly. When this happens, they not only lose their effectiveness, but they can also cause you to get penalized, especially if you don't use them properly. For example, there are rumors that Google is penalizing sites that have an excessive number of links from social bookmarking sites, but only one vote from each link.
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Top SEO Ranking Factors

There are a few things experts agree on that are absolutely vital as far as search engine optimization. If you do nothing else, make sure you have these factors working in your favor!

1. Get backlinks from relevant websites containing keywords in the anchor text.
 2. Get a large number of high quality backlinks, especially from sites related to your site's niche.
 3. Get backlinks from a wide range of sources. Make sure you aren't getting most of your backlinks from the same few domains.
 4. Use your keyword in your title tag, but be sure to add a few additional words.
 5. Use keywords to link to other pages on your own domain.
 6. Use keywords to link **out** to high quality pages from your site.
 7. Use keywords in H1 tags, but not an exact keyword phrase.
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8. Use your keyword once in the first paragraph of your article.
9. Use your keyword in your domain name, or at least in your URL. If you don't have yourkeywordhere.com, use yourdomain.com/your-keyword-here.html.
10. Use keywords in a folder, such as yourdomain.com/keywordhere/file.html.

Negative Factors

These are the top factors that could cause your page to drop in the rankings.

1. Using cloaking or malicious redirects to hide content from search engines
 2. Buying links from text link brokers
 3. Linking to spammy websites or those that use black hat SEO
 4. Frequent outages or slow server
 5. Hidden text
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