1. What is a Search Engine Optimization or SEO?

Search Engine Optimization or simply SEO is the active practice of optimizing a web site by improving internal as well as external aspects in order to get higher rank in search engine result pages (SERP) and to increase the traffic the site receives from search engines. Various firms can practice SEO in various ways- some may have a highly specialized focus, while others have a more generalized approach. If we want to optimize a web site for search engines, we need to look at so many unique elements that many SEO practitioners consider being in the broad field of website optimization since it involves intertwining of so many of those elements.

When dealing with SEO one has to understand all its aspects – starting from the discovery of the terms and phrases that will generate traffic, to making a site search engine friendly to its user, to building the links and marketing the unique value of the site or the organization's offerings. One must not be disheartened if he or she is confused about what a Search Engine Optimization is because they are not the only ones to be so. In simple words, SEO is a technique, which helps search engines find and rank your site higher than the millions of other sites in response to a search query. SEO thus helps you get traffic from search engine.

What is a Search query?

Those words that user's type into the search box, which contain terms and phrases best describes or is suited to your site are known as Search queries. These search queries are of immensely great importance. Years of experience has shown that search engine traffic is responsible for making or breaking an organization's success. Targeted visitors (usually those people who frequently visit the website) to a website can provide publicity, revenue, and exposure like no other. Investing in SEO, whether by means of time or finances, can provide your organization with exceptional benefit and prove to be the most important factor behind the success of your organization.

Why does a company, organization or any other website need SEO?

The more popular commercial search engines like Google, Bing, and Yahoo drive the majority of web traffic and so on. If your site fails to be found by the search engines or else your content cannot be put into databases of these search engines, then you miss out on the incredible opportunities that are available to websites provided via search. This stops the people who want to visit your site from finding your site. Whether your site provides content, services, products, or information, search engines are a primary method of navigation for almost all Internet users.

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2. How Search Engines Operate

The first basic truth you need to know to learn SEO is that search engines are not humans. While this might be obvious for everybody, the differences between how humans and search engines view web pages are not. Unlike humans, search engines are text-driven. Search engines normally have two major functions, which involves crawling & building an index, and providing answers by calculating relevancy & serving results.

Let us consider the World Wide Web as a network of stops in a big city subway system. Each stop then becomes its own unique document, which is usually in the form of a web page, but sometimes may also be a PDF, JPG or other file. The search engines need a way to "crawl" the entire city and find all the stops along the way, so they use the best path available, which is most commonly called links. The link structure of the web, serves to bind all of the pages together.

Through links, search engines' automated robots more commonly known as crawlers or spiders can reach the many billions of interconnected documents. First, search engines crawl the Web to see what is there. The web spiders then follow links from one page to another and index everything they find on their way. Once the engines find these pages, they next decipher the code from them and store selected pieces in massive hard drives, to be recalled later when needed for a search query. To accomplish the difficult and tedious task of holding billions of pages that can be accessed in a fraction of a second, the search engines have constructed datacenters all over the world.

After a page is crawled, the next step is to index its content. The indexed page is stored in a giant database, from where it can later be retrieved. Essentially, the process of indexing is identifying the words and expressions that best describe the page and assigning the page to particular expression popularly known as keywords. For a human it will not be possible to process such amounts of information but generally, search engines deal just fine with this task. Sometimes they might not get the meaning of a page right but if you help them by optimizing it, it will be easier for them to classify your pages correctly. These monstrous storage facilities hold thousands of machines processing large quantities of information. After all, when a person performs a search at any of the major engines, they demand results instantaneously – even a 1 or 2 second delay can cause dissatisfaction. Thus, it is very important for the engines to work hard to provide answers as fast as possible.

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3. Functions of Search Engine

The main purpose of using a search engine is to get the answers, which we are looking for in a short period of time. Search engines are answer machines. When a person looks for something information online, it requires the search engines to scour their corpus of billions of documents present in the web. For this, a search engine has to do two things. First, it needs to return only those results that are relevant or useful to the searcher's query, and second, rank those results in order of perceived usefulness. It is both "relevance" and "importance" that the process of SEO is meant to influence for the benefit of its users.

To a search engine, relevance means more than simply finding a page with the correct keyword. In the early days of the web, search engines did not go deeper than this simplistic step, and their results suffered consequently. Thus, through evolution, smart engineers at the engines devised better ways to find valuable results that searchers would appreciate and enjoy. Today, 100s of factors influence relevance.

How Do Search Engines Determine Importance?

Currently, the major engines typically interpret importance by means of popularity. That is to say the more popular a site, page or document is the more valuable the information contained therein must be. This assumption has proven successful in practice, as the engines have continued to increase users' satisfaction by this method.

Popularity and relevance are not determined manually. Instead, the engines construct careful, mathematical equations or algorithms to sort the information and then rank them in order of their importance. These algorithms are often comprised of hundreds of components. In the search-marketing field, we often refer to them as "ranking factors".

"*How Search Marketers Succeed*"

The complicated algorithms of search engines may appear at first glance to be impenetrable and very difficult to understand. However, the engines themselves provide little insight into how to achieve better results or garner more traffic. What information on optimization and best practices that the engines themselves do provide is listed below:

1. Make pages primarily for users and not for search engines. Do not deceive your users or present different content to search engines than you display to users, which is commonly referred to as cloaking.

2. Make a site with a clear hierarchy and text links. Every page should be reachable from at least one static text link.

3. Create a useful, information-rich site, and write pages that clearly and accurately describe your content. Make sure that your title elements and ALT attributes are descriptive and accurate.

4. Use keywords to create descriptive, human friendly URLs. Ensure a clean, keyword rich URL structure is in place.

How to Interact with search Engine

You need to be empathetic with your target audience, when it comes to search engine marketing. This is, in fact, one of the most essential elements for creating an online marketing strategy. You need to grasp what the average searcher, especially what your target market is seeking for, to reach them more effectively. Besides, such practice will help you to keep those users. In other words, build your online marketing strategies for users and not just for search engines. A user who had bad experience at your site, which may include failing to accomplish a task or finding what they were searching for, will also correlate with your poor search engine performance. In fact, search engines too give special important to user experience, while determining the ranking of your site. As a result, when a happy user has a positive experience with your site, the search engine takes it to your credibility and the effect is visible in your search ranking result.

If you are wondering what users are looking for, there is hardly any definite answer. The users can search for anything ranging from hairpin to helicopter, based on your market or niche. However, it is possible to categorize the search queries of the users into three types of queries. These are:

> Do or the Transactional Queries: These are action queries made with the intention of doing or buying something. For example, buy a laptop, download a PDF file or watch a movie online.

> Know or the Informational Queries: These include the queries that users make while seeking information. Examples may include queries made to know about a particular brand or about a travel destination along with information about related our package.

> Go or the Navigation Queries: These are relatively simple queries where the users know where they want to go. Examples include when a user search for a particular online destination like Twitter, Facebook or the homepage of Apple.

The next factor that you need to understand is the kind of user experience your site is likely to provide. For example, can your site satisfy the visitors with what they find there? It is the most important question that search engines had to figure out millions of times in a day. When a search engine ranks your page on their search result, they are actually recommending you to the visitors. Thus, they are risking their credibility as well, as it was their responsibility to serve relevant results to the users.

Power of Inbound Marketing in SEO

Search engine marketing starts with a few words typed into a small box.

Though the usage of search engines evolved over the years, the basic principles of conducting search

queries remained mostly unchanged. Most search processes include the following steps:

The need for an answer, information or solution

Formulating the needs in a few words or phrase, popularly referred to as query

Entering the query or the search phrases into a search engine

Browsing through the matching results

Click a particular result

Scan the suite for solution/ answer

Return to the search results in unsatisfied and click another link/ search result

Perform a fresh search with some new search queries or with refinements to existing query

But the question is why even invest your time and resource on search engine optimization? The answer is simple – to increase your website's visibility and boost your sales/ revenue. To explain the broad picture of SEO usage, we have compiled some fascinating and relevant data that will also explain the power of search engines.

Google leads the way

The search engine giant Google leads the way when it comes to SEO, found the study conducted in October 2011 by comScore. In April, Google led the U.S. core search market by conducting 65.4 percent of the total searches. It was followed by Yahoo! with 17.2 percent and Microsoft with 13.4 percent. In USA alone, 20.3 billion searches were conducted in a month. Google accounted for 13.4 billion of these searches, followed by Yahoo! for 3.3 billion, Microsoft for 2.7 billion, Ask for 518 million and AOL for 277 million. The total number of search powered by Google equaled 67.7 percent followed by Bing responsible for 26.7 percent of the total search.

Billions spent on online marketing

According to an August 2011 Forrester report, billions are spent on online marketing. The report forecasts that the investment on interactive marketing will be around $77 billion in 2016, which will represent 26% of all the advertising budgets combined

Search is the new Yellow Pages

A Burke 2011 report says that online search is the new Yellow Pages. Around 76% of the participants of the people surveyed reported that they use search engines for finding local business information, whereas 74% used print yellow pages. Moreover, 57% use Internet yellow pages in comparison to the 44% using traditional newspapers. Among the people using search engines for finding local business information, 67% use search engines and the remaining 23% use online social networks to find such information.

Studies to Illustrate the Power of Inbound Marketing & SEO

A PEW Internet Study published in August 2011 reveals that percentage of Internet users using search engines has been rising steadily from around one-third of the total users in 2002 to 59% of the Internet users. This increase has also resulted in raising the number of people using e-mail by 61 percent on a given day.

Another report from StatCounter Global Stats lists the 5 leading search engines sending traffic worldwide. Google tops the list by sending 90.62% of traffic, followed by Yahoo! with 3.78% of traffic, Bing with 3.72%, Ask Jeeves .36%, and Baidu .35%. The study conducted by Slingshot SEO in 2011 revealed the click-through rates for the top ranking sites. According to this study, the website achieving #1 position in the search results of Google receives around 18.2% of the total number of click-through traffic. The second ranking receives 10.1%, while the third and forth receive 7.2% and 4.8% respectively. The rest of the search results receive less than 2% of the total click-through traffic. For Bing, the #1 position search result has a click-through rate of 9.66%. The total average click-through rate for first search ten results for Google is 52.32%, while it was 26.32% for Bing.

Considering all these studies, you can understand that little attention is paid to the search results ranking at the lower end of the page. In comparison, sites with higher page ranking receive the prime attention. Also, you need to consider that the search engines help to draw the users eye to the organic search results with bolded keywords, title and description, rather than on the paid search listings.

Based on these studies and reports we can say that web search and online/ search marketing is a very popular platform, which is growing at a steady rate of around 20% every year. It has affected and reached every Americans using Internet and billions of people across the world. Search engine drives a great amount of online and offline economic activity. Besides, it is found that higher search rankings are critical to visibility in the first few results

Once you achieve the top ranking in the search engine's result page, it will not only help you to achieve a great amount of organic traffic but also instills trust in your consumers, when it comes to determine the relative importance and worthiness of your website.

As a marketer, you need to understand that Internet as a whole and more specifically search engines is the best and more important way to build your business and reach your consumers, irrespective of the size, reach and focus of your company.

Next step is to learn the foundations of SEO to achieve these goals.

1. Why Search Engine Marketing is Necessary

One of the most important aspects of Search Engine Optimization is to makethe website easy for both users and search engine spiders to understand. However sophisticated todays Search Engines have become, in many ways they still can't see and understand a web page the same way a human does. SEO helps the engines figure out what each page is about, and how it may be useful for users.

Search engine optimization can be vital to a business because 90% of all online traffic is achieved through the various search engines. Therefore, knowing how to properly market your company through search engine optimization is virtually the only way to be found on the expansive Internet. Today's search engines operate much like the phone book used to—just on a much larger scale. By searching a topic, you are able to find thousands of businesses that are offering the services you need. How your company's site is found can be difficult with so many regional, national, and even international options. That is why utilizing a specialized search engine optimization techniques can be the difference between high visitor frequency and being lost amidst the numerous other businesses found on the Internet.

Imagine you posted online a picture of your family cat. A human might describe it as "a white,small-sized cat - playing fetch in the park." On the other hand, the best search engine in the world would not understand the photo at anywhere near that level of sophistication. How do you make a search engine understand a photograph? Fortunately, SEO allows webmasters to provide much needed relevant data regarding that photograph that the engines can use to understand content. In fact, adding proper structure to your content is essential to SEO.

Understanding both the abilities and limitations of search engines allows you to properly build, format and annotate your web content in a way that search spiders can digest. Without SEO, many websites remain invisible to search engines.

You want to be seen by potential customers who are actually interested in what you provide, and are located in the area you are marketing in. Utilizing the major Search Engines such as Google and Yahoo in your online marketing efforts can give you an edge over the competition, quickly. It doesn't matter the size of your organization, Search engine optimization is one method, which helps you to attract the higher number of traffic to your website.

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2. The Limits of Search Engine Technology

The major search engines all operate on the same principles. Automated search bots crawl the web, follow links and index content in massive databases. Modern search technology is not all-powerful. There are technical limitations of all kinds that cause immense problems in both inclusion and rankings, a few common limitations are listed below

Spidering and Indexing Problems: Search engines aren't good at completing online, and thus any content contained behind them may remain hidden. Websites using a CMS (Content Management System) often create duplicate versions of the same page, which is a major problem for search engines looking for completely original content. Poor link structures lead to search engines failing to reach all of a website's content. Although the engines are getting better at reading non-HTML text, content in rich media format is traditionally difficult for search engines to parse.

Content to Query Matching: Text that is not written in common terms that people use to search. Language and internationalization subtleties. Location targeting, such as targeting content in Chinese when the majority of the people who would visit your website are from India. Mixed contextual signals. For example, the title of your blog post is "India's Best Tea" but the post itself is about a vacation resort in Australia that happens to serve great Tea. These mixed messages send confusing signals to search engines.

The "Tree falls in a forest": SEO isn't just about getting the technical details of search-engine friendly web development correct. It's also about marketing. This is perhaps the most important concept to grasp about the functionality of search engines. The contents of a website can remain

invisible to the search engines unless you promote it. This is due to the nature of search technology, which relies on the importance to display results and the metrics of relevance. The "tree falls in a forest" adage postulates that if no one is around to hear the sound, it may not exist at all - and this translates perfectly to search engines and web content. The search engines may choose to ignore it, if no one links to your content.

The engines by themselves have no potential way to discover fantastic pieces of content on the web and no inherent gauge of quality. Only humans have the power to discover, react, comment and link to. So, great content cannot simply be created - it must be shared and talked about. Search engines already do a great job of promoting high quality content on websites that have become popular, but they cannot generate this popularity, this is a task that demands talented Internet marketers.

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3. The Competitive Nature of Search Engines in a Constantly Shifting Landscape

In most of the modern search engines, the listing of the results is usually ten positions, ordered by rank, with click-through traffic based on their relative position & ability to attract searchers. Results in positions 1, 2 and 3 receive much more traffic than results down the page, and considerably more than results on deeper pages. The fact that so much attention goes to so few listings means that there will always be a financial incentive for search engine rankings. No matter how search may change in the future, websites and businesses will compete with one another for this traffic, branding, and visibility it provides.

Since the mid 1990's , when search marketing began , the meta keywords tag , manual submission and keyword stuffing were all regular parts of the tactics necessary to rank well . Then in 2004, buying hordes of links from automated blog-comment spam injectors, link bombing with anchor text and the construction of inter-linking farms of websites could all be leveraged for traffic. Finally, in 2011, vertical search inclusion and social media marketing are mainstream methods for conducting search engine optimization.

Research shows that websites that rank higher in the natural search results, also known as organic search results, are visited more often than sites lower down in the results. The relevance of a particular web page with relation to the search term is determined by 100s of factors. Some of the determining factors of where your web page will rank in search engine results include:

web page title

content headings

accessibility of a web page

contextual relevance of the content on sites that link to a web page

consistent home page link

content quantity contextual relevance within a page

keyword or phrase prominence

incoming links from government websites ,educational websites, major directories vertical industry directories

age of the content

frequency of updates to the web page and website

Search Engine Optimization is not a set-and-forget proposition. Business focus, direction and competitor influences are constantly changing and require regular monitoring and updates to counter changes. Another factor of the constantly changing landscape is that search engine algorithms change constantly to improve results for their users.

In the world of search, change is a constant; search marketing will remain a steadfast need for those who wish to remain competitive on the web. Websites compete for attention and placement in the search engines, and those with the best knowledge and experience with these rankings receive the benefits of increased traffic and visibility.

1. The Basics of Search Engine Friendly Design & Development

Indexable Content

The most important content required to be listed in the search engines is the HTML text format. Despite advances in crawling technology of the search engine spiders, Images, Flash files, Java applets, and other non-text content are often ignored or devalued. The easiest way to ensure the words and phrases displayed to the visitors are visible to search engines is to place it in the HTML text on the page. However, there are other more advanced formatting methods are:

- Images in gif, jpg, or png format can be assigned as alt attributes in HTML, this provides the search engines a text description of the visual content.

- Navigation and crawlable links can be supplemented with the search boxes.

- Flash or java plugin contained content can be supplemented with text on the page.

- If the words and phrases used are meant to be indexed by the engines, they should accompany the video, audio, flash files and other rich content.

Search engines find it difficult to interpret the relevancy of rich content. By using tools like Google'scache, and other SEO tools we can see what elements of the content are visible and indexable to the engines.

Crawlable link structures

Just as search engines need to see content in order to list pages in their massive keyword-based indices, they also need to see links in order to find the content. A crawlable link structure lets their spiders browse the pathways of a website - is vital in order to find all of the pages on a website. Hundreds of thousands of sites make the critical mistake of structuring their navigation in ways that search engines cannot access, thus impacting their ability to get pages listed in the search engines' indices.

Some common reasons why pages may not be reachable are:

- Forms can include a drop down menu or a full-blown survey. In either case, search spiders will not attempt to submit forms and thus, any content or links that would be accessible via a form are invisible to the engines.

- If you use Javascript for links, you may find that search engines either do not crawl or give very little weight to the links embedded within. For SEO, Standard HTML links should replace Javascript on any page where you'd like spiders to crawl.

- Search engines tend to only crawl about 100 links on any given page. This loose restriction is necessary to keep down on spam and conserve rankings.

Links in both frames and I-Frames are crawlable, but both present structural issues for the engines in terms of organization and following.

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2. Keyword Usage & Targeting

The most fundamental feature of a search engine is keywords. Keywords are the building blocks of language and of search. In fact, the entire science of information retrieval is based on keywords. As the engines crawl and index the contents of pages around the web, they keep track of those pages in keyword-based indices. Thus, rather than storing 25 billion web pages all in one database, the engines have millions and millions of smaller databases, where each is centered on a particular keyword term or phrase. This makes retrieving data much faster.

Keyword Domination

Keywords dominate our search intent and interaction with the engines. For example, a common search query pattern might go something like this:

When a search is performed, the engine matches pages to retrieve based on the words entered into the search box. Other data, such as the order of the words, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization of those keywords provide additional information that the engines use to help retrieve the right pages and rank them correctly.

To help accomplish this, search engines measure the ways keywords are used on pages to help determine the relevance of a particular document to a query. One of the best ways to "optimize" a page's rankings is to ensure that keywords are prominently used in titles, text, and meta data.

Generally, the more specific your keywords, the better your chances of ranking based on less competition. The map graphic to the left shows the relevance of the broad term books to the specific title. Notice that while there are a lot of results for the broad term, there are a lot less results and thus competition for the specific result.

Keyword Abuse

Since the beginning of online search, folks have abused keywords in a misguided effort to manipulate the engines. This involves including keywords into text, the URL, meta tags and links. Unfortunately, this tactic does not always harm your site.

In the past, search engines relied on keyword usage as a prime relevancy signal, no matter how the keywords were actually used. Today, although search engines still cannot read and comprehend text as well as a human, the use of machine learning has allowed them to get closer to this ideal.

The best practice is to use your keywords naturally and strategically as per the objective of your organization. If your page targets the keyword phrase "Eiffel Tower" then you might naturally include content about the Eiffel Tower itself, the history of the tower, or even recommended Paris hotels. On the other hand, if you simply sprinkle the words "Eiffel Tower" onto a page with irrelevant content, then your efforts to rank for "Eiffel Tower" will be a long, uphill battle.

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3. Title Tags

The title element of a page is meant to be an accurate, concise description of a page's content. It is critical to both user experience and search engine optimization.

As title tags are such an important part of search engine optimization, the recommendations below cover the critical parts of optimizing title tags for search engine and usability goals.

- Be mindful of length: Search engines display only the first 65-75 characters of a title after this length, the engines show an ellipsis - "..." to indicate when a title tag has been cut off.

- Place important keywords close to the front: close proximity of keywords helps the ranking.

- Descriptive and readable: A compelling title tag with a positive impression will help pull in more visits to the site.

Meta Tags

Meta tags were originally intended to provide a proxy for information about a website's content. A few basic Meta tags and their description are as follows:

Meta Robots: The Meta Robots tag can be used to control search engine spider activity. a few ways in using the meta robots are :-

1. Index/noindex tells the engines whether the page should be crawled and kept in the engines' index for retrieval. If you opt to use "noindex", the page will be excluded from the engines.

2. follow/nofollow tells the engines whether links on the page should be crawled. If you elect to employ "nofollow," the engines will disregard the links on the page both for discovery and ranking purposes.

3. noarchive is used to restrict search engines from saving a cached copy of the page.

4. nosnippet informs the engines that they should refrain from displaying a descriptive block of text next to the page's title and URL in the search results.

Meta Description

The Meta description tag exists as a short description of a page's content. The search engines for rankings do not use keywords or phrases of this tag, but Meta descriptions are the primary source for the snippet of text displayed beneath a listing in the results.

The Meta description tag serves the function of advertising copy, drawing readers to your site from the results and thus, is an extremely important part of search marketing. Crafting a readable, compelling description using important keywords are useful in drawing a much higher click-through rate of searchers to your page.

Meta descriptions can be any length, but search engines generally will cut snippets longer than 160 characters, so it's generally wise to stay in these limits.

1. Keyword Research

Keyword research is a practice used by SEO professionals to find and research actual search terms people enter into the search engines when conducting a search. Search engine optimization professionals research keywords in order to achieve better rankings in their desired keywords.

Keyword research is one of the most important as well as valuable and high return activities in the search-marketing field. Ranking for the "right" keywords can make or break your website. Through the detective work of puzzling out your market's keyword demand, you not only learn which terms and phrases to target with SEO, but also learn more about your customers as a whole.

It is not always about getting visitors to your site, but about getting the right kind of visitors. The usefulness of this intelligence cannot be overstated. With keyword research, you can learn as well as predict about demand, respond to changing market conditions, and produce the products, services, and content that web searchers are actively seeking. In the history of marketing, there has never been such a low barrier to entry in understanding the motivations of consumers in virtually every niche.

How to Judge the Value of a Keyword

A frequent question that comes to our mind is how important a keyword to one's website. If you own an online shoe store, do you make more sales from visitors searching for "brown shoes" or "black boots?" The keywords visitors' type into search engines is often available to webmasters, and keyword research tools allow us to find this information. However, those tools cannot show us directly how valuable it is to receive traffic from those searches. To understand the value of a keyword, we need to understand our own websites, make some hypotheses, test, and repeat - the classic web marketing formula.

Problems in judging the value of a keyword

One of the most common misconceptions about conducting keyword research for a search-engine optimization campaign is the belief that you already know which terms a customer would use to find your site. You do not- not without first doing some research on your own. You may know what your site is about and how you, the site owner, would find it, but it is difficult to predict how a paying customer would go about looking for it.

Another misconception is that generic terms are the most important for rankings, even if the term you are going after has nothing to do with your site. Imagine a women's clothing store trying to rank for the term "Google". Thousands of searchers type that word into their search bar daily, but they are not looking for you. Being ranked number one for a term no one would associate with your site is a waste of time and money.

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2. Long Tail Keywords & Their Demand

If we consider having an online shoe store and taking it as an example for our study of keyword demand, it would be great to rank #1 for the keyword "shoes" - or would it?

It is a wonderful thing to deal with keywords that have more than 5,000 searches a day, or even 500 searches a day, but in reality, these "popular" search terms actually make up less than 30% of the searches performed on the web. The remaining 70% lie in what has been called the "long tail" of search. The long tail contains hundreds of millions of unique searches that might be conducted a few times in any given day, but, when taken together, they comprise the majority of the world's demand for information through search engines. Long tail keywords are the longer, more specific keywords that are less common, individually, but add up to account for the majority of search-driven traffic. Long tail keywords are the opposite of "head" terms, which are more popular or more frequently searched on. For example, "fish tanks" is a head term, but "compare prices whisper aquarium filters" is a long-tail keyword, which is more specific.

Another lesson search marketers have learned is that long tail keywords often convert better, because they catch people later in the buying and conversion cycle. A person searching for "shoes" is probably browsing, and not ready to buy. On the other hand, someone searching for "best price on Air Jordan size 12" practically has his or her wallet out to buy it. Long tail keywords are those three and four keyword, terms or phrases, which are very, very specific to whatever you are selling. You see, whenever a customer uses a highly specific search phrase, they tend to be looking for exactly what they are actually going to buy. To help illustrate this phenomenon, let us look at the typical systematic buying path that a customer travels on the way to a making a purchase.

1. Consumer becomes aware of a product.

2. Consumer seeks information about that product in preparation for possible purchase.

3. Consumer evaluates alternatives to product (features, pricing, etc...).

4. Consumer makes their purchase decision.

5. Consumer pulls out their credit card and completes the transaction.

6. Consumer then evaluates the product after buying it and decides if they want to keep or return it.

Understanding the search demand curve is critical. To the right we have included a sample keyword demand curve, illustrating the small number of queries sending larger amounts of traffic alongside the volume of less-searched terms and phrases that bring the bulk of our search referrals.

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3. Keyword Difficulties & How to overcome it

In order to know which keywords to target, it is very important to not only understand the demand for a given term or phrase, but also the work required to achieve those rankings. If big and more successful brands take the top 10 results and you are just starting out on the web, the uphill battle for rankings can take years of effort. This is why it is essential to understand keyword difficulty.

Keyword Difficulty is determined by the competitiveness of the keyword. Keyword Difficulty can determine whether it is easy for your webpage to be listed in the first page of the search engines. If you are planning to target a keyword, which has a difficulty level of less than 60%, it is easy to be listed in the Search Engine Rankings. In simple words, a less competitive keyword can give your site a higher ranking in the search engine than a more competitive one.

The wise choice of the right keywords you will optimize for your site is the first and crucial step to a successful SEO campaign. If you fail on this very first step, the road ahead is going to be very bumpy and most likely you will only waste your money and time. There are many ways to determine which keywords to optimize for and usually the final list of them is made after a careful analysis of what the online population is searching for, which keywords have your competitors chosen and above all - which are the keywords that you feel describe your site best.

Search for the term/phrase in the major engines

Understanding which websites already rank for your keyword gives you valuable insight into the competition, and how hard it will be to rank for the given term. Are there search advertisements running along the top and right-hand side of the organic results? Typically, many search ads means a high value keyword, and multiple search ads above the organic results often means a highly lucrative and directly conversion-prone keyword.

Buy a sample campaign for the keyword at Google AdWords and/or Bing Adcenter

If your website does not rank for the keyword, you can nonetheless buy "test" traffic to see how well it converts. In Google Adwords, choose "exact match" and point the traffic to the relevant page on your website.

Using the data you have collected, determine the exact value of each keyword.

For example, if your search ad generated 5,000 impressions, of which 100 visitors have come to your site and 3 have converted for total profit of $300, then a single visitor for that keyword is worth $3 to your business.

Effect of Usability, User Experience & Content on Search Ranking

The main focus of the search engines is to provide the best possible search results to the users, based on their queries. However, the term 'best' is subjective. The search engines have their own sets of rules determining the type of sites and pages that can satisfy their searchers. Though the site or pages may differ from each other, they have a common trait. These are:

They are easy to navigate, use and understand

Provide an actionable and direct information that are relevant to the search quires'

These sites/ pages are designed professionally and is accessible to the modern browsers

They deliver legitimate, high quality and credible content

You need to consider the fact that search engines cannot understand text, watch video or view images they way you or your users can. Hence, they depend on Meta information to understand the content of your site or page in order to determine its search ranking. Here, you need to understand one factor that the aforementioned "meta information" does not necessarily means Meta tags. Since its inception, search engines give special importance to link structure of a site to determine the popularity and value of a website. In fact, link structure works as a proxy for votes. The search engines believe that an informative and high quality website will have more site linking back to it that the lesser useful or low quality sites. However, marketers have considerably exploited this particular factor of SEO. As a result, the link analysis algorithms of search engines have considerably advanced, eradicating the earlier loopholes. Even with all these advancements, the basic principles of search engines' link analysis algorithms hold true these days.

The search engine algorithms take certain factors directly into account, apart from the link structure. These are keywords, content quality and site structure. Search engines use the linking pattern to determine its user engagement metrics and also to understand the popularity of the website. Another factor that influences the search engine rankings is the site's usability and its user experience. Though they provide an indirect benefit, they are measurable to the external popularity of a site. The search engines interpret this benefit as a signal of higher quality.

Thus, it is necessary to craft a thoughtful and empathetic user experience to ensure a positive feedback from your users or visitors. Apart from persuading them for return visits, you need to encourage users to share your content, bookmark the site and link back (if/ wherever possible). These are the signals trickling down the algorithms of search engines, contributing to higher search rankings.

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2. What Signifies the Quality of Content?

Next comes the quality of content. This is one of the major factors determining the quality of your website, especially with the launching of Google's Panda updates. The following are some factors signifying the quality of your website content:

Engagement Metrics: All those user engagements that your seniors keep telling you are not for just for bragging their knowledge. They have a practical implementation and importance. While delivering a page of search results, the search engine can measure the success of the websites displayed in their search results simply by observing the way users engage with those results. If one clicks the first link and then

clicks the 'back' button almost immediately, it means that the user was not satisfied with the website's content.

Search engines sought the "long click" in determining the success of their search results, since the beginning. The term 'long click' signifies those clicks where users do not return back to the search page immediately and try again with another search result. And with the millions of queries that the search engines take in everyday, they do have a good database to judge the quality of their search results.

Machine Learning: Speaking about the quality of content, Google has a lot to do, especially after it launched the Panda Updates in 2011 to its ranking algorithm. The series of updates significantly changed the way the search giant judged the quality of a website. Google used human evaluators to rate 1000s of sites, manually. They searched for content that are of 'low quality'. Later, the search giant incorporated machine learning, impersonating the human evaluators.

After the computers started predicting accurately what human evaluators thought to be a low quality site, Google introduced the algorithm across millions of sites over the Internet. And these updates changed the world of Internet like never before. More than 20% of the search results of Google were rearranged.

Linking Patterns: If you though linking pattern has nothing to do with the quality of your content, you are far from being right. Long ago, the search engines discovered that your website's link structure has the ability to serve as a proxy for popularity and votes. The general believe is that sites with informative and higher quality content get more number of link that the sites with less useful and lower quality content. Though these principles still hold true, there has been considerable advancement in link analysis algorithms.

All the positive attention around the algorithmically valuable content also translates into collection of valuable links. In fact, the ranking of a site for relevant queries at search pages also depends on the number of links, its source, anchor text and timing.

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3. How to Create Content for Better Search Ranking

Now that you know what it takes to create quality content, next comes creating some to gain better search engine ranking. Yes, this is the only way to secure better ranking results on major search engines. In fact, develop great and quality content is one of the most repeated suggestions given in the world of SEO. However, it is far more difficult to achieve in practical life. Creating appealing and useful content is a rather difficult task, especially when it is critical to search engine optimization.

Every search result provided by the search engines comes with intent. It can be to find, solve, learn, fix, buy, treat and/ or understand. Search engines though through the content of the site and display web pages in their search results to satisfy the intent working behind the query in the best possible way. Thus, it is essential to craft the most fulfilling and thorough content to address the need of the searchers in order to secure top ranking positions.

As mentioned, various motives can work behind a query. And it is essential to indent and understand the motives or intent for providing the best possible answer/ solution through your website content.

Transactional Searches: These are search queries about to identify local business, complete a tack or make an online purchase. However, these searches need not necessarily involve a wire or credit card transfer. The transactional queries can even include search queries for finding a local Pizza Hut outlet, or for creating an account in LinkedIn or Facebook or Gmail, and/ or for signing up a free trial account in any website.

Navigational Searches: This is like visiting an online destination, which is pre-determined by sourcing the exact URL of the website. These searches are conducted with the intention of surfing to a particular website directly. In case, the user does not know the exact URL or misses out a part of it, the search engine work as the "White Pages" to pass along suggestions for correct location.

Informational Searches: These are search queries dealing with non-transactional information to get quick answers as well as ego searching. Informational searches include a wide range of search queries from getting a map and directions to finding local weather, and from finding details about the latest NASA expeditions to reviews of the latest Avenger movie. However, all the search categorized under Informational searches has a common thread. They are all primarily non-commercial as well as non-transaction-oriented. The main goal is providing the information and the only interaction required is clicking the link and reading the content.

How you fulfill these intents is all up to you. However, you need to be creative and use high quality writing, images, best use of examples, and if required multimedia to create a perfectly fit content to satisfy the searcher's goals. And the searcher's demonstration of positive experience and engaged activity is your reward, which will also affect (positively) in your search rankings.

1. Importance of Links

Search engines have been using back links as votes, since the late 1990s. It signifies that content of the page is important and useful, and is popular among users. Besides, the search engines use the link data to complex algorithms, creating a set of norms to evaluate the quality of sites and pages. Though links are not the all-encompassing factor of SEO, a large portion of search engine algorithms are attributed to link-based factors. Search engines use them to evaluate the popularity of a website, its trustworthiness, identifying expert documents, and for determining metrics like spam and authority.

The following are some factors essential to consider while measuring link value of a site:

Global Popularity: The more number of back links a site has, the more popular they are. In fact, Wikipedia has more than 1000 different sites linking back to it, and hardly anyone would like to question the impotence or popularity of Wikipedia. Thus, get more number of back links to your site to gain trust, authority and popularity with the search engines.

Anchor Text: These are one of the strongest signals for search engines for determining their ranking. Site with a large number of back links and optimized with the right keywords, are more likely to rank well. However, the key here is to target the right and most appropriate keywords.

Topic Specific Popularity: The Teoma search engine coined the concept of "local" link popularity. According to it, links coming from topic-specific community are considered more important for determining the importance of a site.

Trust Rank: Internet has no shortage of spam. In fact, there are many sites having almost 60% of spam content. In order to get rid of sites with irrelevant content, the search engines use the link graph of a site for measuring its trust rank. But for that, you need to achieve links from highly trusted domains including websites of governments, non-profit organizations and universities.

Link Neighborhood: Spam links go both ways. For search engines, a site giving link to a spam site is also likely to be a spam site. In fact, it is often the case, where the site giving link is itself a spam with back links from several other spam sites. Search engines can sense your link neighborhood; thus, it is essential to check the sites linking back to you and ensure that there are no spam sites in your list of back

links.

Link Freshness: The popularity of a site may decrease with time. Thus, you need to ensure that you earn new links on a regular basis. Search engines use the link's freshness signals to judge the relevance and popularity of a website.

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2. Basics of Link Building

Link building to improve your website's ranking is an art, and the most challenging task of SEO. Nevertheless, it is the most critical to success of your online business. Apart from creativity, you need hustle and a budget for a proper link building. Not every link building campaigns can be treated similarly and have same strategy. The way you choose to build back links depends mostly on your website as well as on your marketing style.

The following are some basic forms of link acquisition:

Manual Link Building: This is the most common and over-used form of link building. Manual link building depends much on your outreach as a marketer. To create links, you need to email bloggers asking for reciprocal or one-way links. Another common form of acquiring links manually is by submitting sites to directories. Those who have a budget for link building can pay for listings of any kind. You need to explain to your link target why they should consider exchanging/ creating the link and how will be they benefitted. This is essential for creating a value proposition.

Natural Links: These links provided by other sites that want to link to your company or content. In most cases, these are editorial link. As a SEO, you hardly have to do anything specific to obtain such links. However, you do need to create useful and worthy content s well as to create awareness about it.

Self-Created Link: This is another popular way of creating links. Unlike the natural links, the self-created links are non-editorial. There are thousands of sites allowing you to crate links through forum signatures, guest book signings, user profiles and/ or blog comments. Though they have the lowest value, these links have an impact for several sites, especially when created in volume. Another pitfall bout them is that pursuing these links aggressively is likely to result in penalizing by search engines. Besides, many of the sites have made these links "no-follow", so that you don't drive out their link juice.

A new trend has been popularized with the advent of social networking sites – social sharing. In the last few years, we have seen the explosion of the amount of content being shared through social media sites like Twitter, Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn, Digg, Delicious, and StumbleUpon. They became a good source to generate links. Though search engines treat such links differently, they do notice them. In 2011-2012, there was a huge rise in social sharing. As a result, the search giant Google started incorporating numerous social signals into the search results, ensuring the social influence of such links.

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3. Start Your Link Building Campaign

Just like your other marketing campaigns, you need to create achievable goals and strategies for link building activity. However, measuring link building is one of the most difficult the task, especially when it comes to quality. Though search engines will weigh each link internally with precise, applying proven mathematical metrics, you can hardly know anything about this data. Here, you need to understand that

SEO depends on various factors to create a rating scale for determining link value.

The following are some of these metrics:

Check with Relevant Search Terms: This is one of the best ways to judge how search engines value a particular page. Search with some of the targeted keywords and phrases to determine the search value of the page. You best bet would be the keywords used in title tag and headline and obtain link from pages that rank for the searched term.

Domain Authority: It is a query independent measure to help you understand the value or authority of a domain, when it comes to ranking for any particular query. Domain authority is calculated by analyzing the domain graph of the Internet and comparing it to the millions of queries in Google.

SEOmoz mozRank: The mozRank or mR helps to determine the popularity of a given web page on the Internet. Higher mozRank sites are considered as popular and they tend to rank better on search results. This factor depends on the number of links the web page has and the quality too matters. To increase your link popularity, try to obtain link from authority domains like .gov, .mil, .org, or o.edu sites. Besides, there are several other .com sites that are considered important such as www.cnn.com or other similar sites.

Competitor's Backlinks: A must checklist for the SEO professionals, examining the competitors' backlinks ranking well for your targeted keywords help you to gain valuable intelligence regarding the links that assisted in achieving their ranking.

Number of Links on a given Page: The original PageRank formula says that the more number of links a page have, the more its value is diluted. Thus, ensure that the page has fewer numbers of links while conducting link acquisition.

Potential Referral Traffic: Link building is just not about search engines. There are links able to send you a good number of direct click-through traffic. Besides, they provide better search engine value when it comes to ranking. You can use the site analytics to determine the pages sending your direct referral traffic.

Link building takes time and patience. You need to practice and experiment with the variables to increase your search page ranking and referring link traffic.

1. Common Search Engine Tools & Services

SEO uses a number of tools and services to evaluate your site. In fact, search engines themselves provide some of the most useful tools. In fact, major search engines want to assist webmasters to create sites with content that are easy to access for the crawlers. Thus, search engines provide various tool and analytics for guidance. These free resources are good in providing data points, creating opportunities for exchanging information with the major search engines. The biggest catch is that such information is not provided elsewhere. Though each of these tools provides varying levels of information and value to search marketers, not all of them are worth understanding.

The following section will explain some of the common interactive elements. Every major search engine identifies their usefulness and supports them.

Sitemaps: A sitemap is like a list or record of files to give the search engines a hint regarding how they can crawl your website. These lists assist search engines to find and categorize the content of your

website. Without a proper sitemap, it becomes difficult for search engines to find and index all your content including images, video, mobile content and news.

To read details about this search engine protocol, you can visit Sitemaps.org. Another popular site to know the full details of the protocols is the XML-Sitemaps.com.

Sitemaps are categorized into three varieties:

XML: Stands for Extensible Markup Language, this is the recommended and most widely accepted format for creating sitemaps. For search engines, it is extremely easy to parse XML sitemaps. Besides, you can create them by a number of sitemap generators. Another advantage of XML sitemaps is that they can work with the most granular control of the page parameters. However, it has relatively large file sizes. XML sitemaps require open tags and close tags around each element. Thus, the size of the files can get really large.

RSS: It stands for Really Simple Syndication or Rich Site Summary. These are easy to maintain. Besides, you can easily code RSS sitemaps and automatically update it whenever you add new content to your site. However, it is little tough to manage them. Even though RSS sitemap is a dialect of XML sitemaps, it is much harder to manage them because of their automated updating properties.

TXT: It stands for Text File. These are extremely easy to handle. The TXT sitemap format includes one URL per line up to 50,000 lines. However, you cannot add Meta data to pages with TXT sitemaps.

Robots.txt: It is a product of Robots Exclusion Protocol. The robots.txt file is stored on the root directory of your website e.g. www.google.com/robots.txt. This file gives instructions to the automated web crawlers, including the search engine spiders, which visit your website. By using this file, you actually indicate the search engine crawlers the locations of sitemap files. Besides, it indicated the areas of your site where search engines would like to disallow the bots from crawling. The robots.txt file even indicates crawl-delay parameters. Find more information about this protocol at the robots.txt Knowledge Center page.

These are the commands available with robots.txt files:

Disallow: It stops compliant robots from finding specific pages or folders of your site.

Sitemap: This indicates the location of the sitemap/ sitemaps of your website.

Crawl Delay: This command is used for indicating the speed used by the robot to crawl a server. The speed is in milliseconds.

Note: However, some web robots do not follow robots.txt files. Spammers, e-mail address scrapers and other people with bad intentions build bots, which do not follow this protocol. Worse still, they can also use this protocol for indentifying the location of your private information. Thus, you should avoid including the location of your administration sections as well as other private sections of your publicly accessible websites in the robots.txt files. Instead, use meta robots tag in these pages so that the major search engines do not index your high-risk content.

Meta Robots: You can use the meta robots tag for creating page-level instructions for the search engine bots. The tags are included in the header section of your HTML document.

Rel="Nofollow": We have already discussed something about the "No Follow" link in our Link Building part. As mentioned, search engines use links as votes to determine the popularity of a site. With rel=nofollow attribute, you can link to a resource, but give command to the search engine crawler not to "follow" the link for ranking purposes. In other words, you are removing your 'vote' used for any kind of search engine purposes. The search engine will not follow the link. However, some search engines may still follow it for discovering new pages, though they won't use these links for determining the latter's link popularity. No follow links have less search engine value, but are good option when linking to an untrusted source.

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2. Search Engine Tools

Google Webmaster Tools – Popular Features

Geographic Target: It helps to target users in a given location. Webmasters need to provide information to the search giant that help them determine how the site appears in locality-specific search results. Geographic Target also improves the search results of Google for geographic queries.

Preferred Domain: This is used to index your site's pages. You need to specify your preferred domain such as http://www.abc.com and Google will find a link to that site with the given URL and treat it as if the link were pointing at http://www.abc.com.

URL Parameters: You can inform Google about each of your site's parameter to help it crawl your site more efficiently. This helps Google to ignore parameters producing duplicate content. The result is more number of unique pages crawled by Google on your website.

Crawl Rate: It affects the Googlebot's speed of requests during the website crawl process. Crawl Rate has no effect on the frequency of the crawls of Googlebot on a given site. Google, based on the number of your website's pages, determines the rate.

Diagnostics: Google informs you if there is Malware on your website. It has a severe negative effect on your website's rankings.

Crawl Errors: Googlebot will report if it finds any significant error on your site while crawling, such as 404s.

HTML Suggestions: If your site has HTML elements that are unfriendly to search engines, HTML Suggestions will identify it and report it. It lists non-indexable content issues, meta description issues, and title tag issues.

Your Site on the Web: To gain unique insight to your site's SEO, use these statistics. It reports top landing pages delivered in search results, click-through rates, keyword impressions, and linking statistics. Many consider the Webmaster tools incomplete and it usually offers rough estimates.

Site Configuration: Here, you need to submit sitemaps and change of address requests, adjust site links, and test robots.txt files, while moving your website from a domain to another.

+1 Metrics: As the content of your site is shared on Google+, it is usually annotated in search results. The Webmaster Tools of Google also help you to understand the effect of +1 sharing on the performance of your site in search results.

Labs: Labs section's reports are still considered in its experimental stage by Google. However, they are important for webmasters, especially in determining the Site Performance. This how fast or slow the site loads for visitors.

Bing Webmaster Center – Key Features

Just like Google, the search engine Bing too offers certain search engine tools including Sites Overview, Crawl Stats, Index, and Traffic. The functionality of these tools is similar to the Google Webmaster Tools.

Search engines are now providing advanced tools for webmasters to improve the search rankings of their sites. This is an amazing step taken by search engines to improve their relationship with webmasters. However, this is the maximum search engines can do for webmasters. The webmasters and markers hold the ultimate responsibility for SEO.

1. Myths and Misconceptions about Search Engines

Search engine Submission: In the late 1990's, search engines had submission forms that were part of the optimization process. Site owners &Webmasters would tag their sites & pages with keyword information, and submit them to the engines. Soon after submission, a bot would crawl and include those resources in their index. However, this process didn't scale very well, the submissions were often spam, and the practice eventually gave way to purely crawl-based engines. Since 2001, not only has search engine submission not been required, but it is actually virtually useless. The engines all publicly note that they rarely use submission URLs, and that the best practice is to earn links from other sites.

Meta tags: Earlier Meta tags were also an important part of the SEO process. When a user typed the keywords that are included in the site, the site would come up in the query and get ranked. However, this process was quickly spammed and eventually dropped by all the major engines as an important ranking method. Other tags as the title tags and meta description tag are critical to SEO, the meta robots tag is an important tool for controlling spider access.

Keyword Density and Keyword Stuffing: A persistent myth in SEO revolves around the concept that keyword density i.e., the search engines use a mathematical formula for relevancy & ranking calculations by dividing the number of words on a page by the number of instances of a given keyword. Many SEO tools still feed on the concept that keyword density is an important metric, despite being proven untrue time and again. 10 extra instances of a keyword on a page is far less valuable than earning one good editorial link from a source that doesn't think you're a search spammer.

Paid search strengthens organic results: This has never been proven nor has it ever been a probable explanation for effects in the organic results. Google, Yahoo! & Bing all have very effective walls in their organizations to prevent precisely this type of crossover. At Google, advertisers spending tens of millions of dollars each month have noted that even they cannot get special access or consideration from the search quality or web spam teams. As long as the existing barriers are in place and the search engines cultures maintain their separation, this will remain a myth. Bidding on keywords you already organically rank for can help increase your organic click through rate.

2. Search Engine Spam

The practice of spamming the search has been rising for a long time. It's no surprise that manipulating the engines is such a popular activity on the web with high payouts. However, it's become increasingly difficult and less and less worthwhile as it is not worth the effort. Users hate spam, and the search engines have a financial incentive to fight it. Google's greatest product advantage over the last 10 years has been their ability to control and remove spam better than their competitors. It's something all the engines spend a great deal of time, effort and resources on. Nowadays search engines have done a remarkable job identifying scalable, intelligent methodologies for fighting spam manipulation, making it dramatically more difficult to adversely impact their intended algorithms.

Page Level Spam Analysis

Search engines perform spam analysis across individual pages and entire websites. A few ways the search engines evaluate manipulative practices on the URL level are discussed below:

Keyword Stuffing: The most obvious and unfortunate spamming techniques, keyword stuffing, involves littering repetitions of keyword terms or phrases into a page in order to make it appear more relevant to the search engines. However, increasing the number of times a term is mentioned can considerably boost a page's ranking is false conception. Scanning a page for stuffed keywords is not massively challenging for the engines' algorithms.

Manipulative Linking: Manipulative link acquisition relies on the search engines' use of link popularity in their ranking algorithms to attempt to artificially inflate these metrics and improve visibility. This can come in many forms so it is one of the most difficult forms of spamming for the search engines to overcome. A few of its forms are:

➢ *Link Schemes:* Link schemes, including link networks and link farms where fake or low value websites are built or maintained purely as link sources to artificially inflate popularity.

➢ *Reciprocal link exchange programs:* Here, sites create link pages that point back and forth to one another in an attempt to inflate link popularity.

Cloaking: When text is hidden in the html code of a website, the engines call it cloaking. Cloaking can be accomplished in many ways and for both positive and negative reasons. The engines may let practices that are technically "cloaking" pass, as they're done for positive user experience reasons.

Low Value Pages: The engines determine if a page provides unique content and value to its searchers before including it in their web indices and search results. The engines are against including the pages that are thin affiliate content, duplicate content, and dynamically generated content pages that provide very little unique text or value.

3. Recommendations for Getting Penalties Lifted

The task of requesting re-inclusion or re-consideration in the engines is painful and usually unsuccessful. It's also never accompanied by any feedback to let you know why or what happened. It is important to know what to do in the event of a penalty or banning, as discussed below:

If the site is not registered with the engine's Webmaster Tools service as Google's and Bing's. The registration creates an additional layer of connection and trust between the webmaster teams and your site.

Thoroughly review the data in your Webmaster Tools accounts, from spam alert messages or broken pages to server or crawl errors to warnings. What's often perceived initially as a mistaken spam penalty is, in fact, related to accessibility issues.

Re-inclusion or re-consideration request should be sent through the engine's Webmaster Tools service rather than the public form. This creates a greater trust layer and a better chance of feedback.

Full disclosure is critical to getting consideration. If you've been spamming, - links you've acquired, how you got them, who sold them to your you own up to everything you've done, etc. The engines, want the details, as they'll apply this information to their algorithms for the future. If you hold back, they are likely to view you as dishonest, corrupt or simply incorrigible and as a result, no feedback occurs.

Remove or fix everything you can. If you've acquired bad links, try to get them taken down. If you've done any manipulation on your own site, such as over-optimized internal linking, keyword stuffing, etc., get it off before you submit your request.

Get ready to wait as responses can take months, and re-inclusion itself is a lengthy process. Hundreds of sites are penalized every week, so backlog the webmaster teams encounter is huge.

If you run a large, powerful brand on the web, re-inclusion can be faster by going directly to an individual source at a conference or event. Engineers from all of the engines regularly participate in search industry conferences, such as SMX, SES, Pubcon, etc., and the cost of a ticket can easily outweigh the value of being re-included more quickly than a standard request might take.

Be aware that with the search engines, lifting a penalty is not their obligation or responsibility. Legally, they have the right to include or reject any site/page for any reason. Inclusion is a privilege, not a right, so be cautious and don't apply techniques you're unsure or skeptical of - or you could find yourself in a very rough spot.

1. Measuring and Tracking Success

Measurement is critical to success in search engine optimization. A few critical metrics critical to SEO are discussed below:-

Search engine share of referring visits: It is critical to keep periodical track of the contribution of each traffic source for the site these include-

➢ **Direct navigation:** Typed in traffic, bookmarks, and email links without tracking codes, etc

➢ **Referral traffic:** Traceable email or from links across the web or in promotion & branding campaign links

➢ **Search traffic:** Queries that sent traffic from any major or minor web search engine.

Visits referred by specific search engines, in the US 3 major engines (Google, Yahoo & Bing) make up 95% of all traffic. For most other countries, Google make up to 80%. Measuring the contribution of the traffic can be critical for several reasons :

➢ **Performance vs. Market Share:** Broadly tracking the search engines in a countrywide scale can give the exact contribution level of each engine in accordance with its estimated market share.

➢ **Visibility of Potential Drops:** When search traffic drops significantly at any point, the relative and exact contributions from each engine will be essential to diagnosing the issue.

➢ **Uncovering Strategic Value:** Identifying the tactics that gives a greater positive result on some engines can give a boost in strategizing the effort.

Conversion rate by search query term/phrase: When it comes to the bottom line for your organization, few metrics matter as much as conversion. There are a few keywords, which attracts conversion ratio those few words, can be used to check the rankings, and improving on those words can undoubtedly lead to more conversion.

Number of pages receiving visits from search engines: Knowing the number of pages that receive search engine traffic is an essential metric for monitoring overall SEO performance. From this number, we can get a glimpse into indexation - the number of pages the engines are keeping in their indices from our site. For most large websites (50,000+ pages), mere inclusion is essential to earning traffic, and this metric delivers a traceable number that's indicative of success or failure. As you work on issues like site architecture, link acquisition, XML Sitemaps, uniqueness of content and metadata, etc., the trend line should rise, showing that more and more pages are earning their way into the engines' results. Pages receiving search traffic is, quite possibly, the best long tail metric around.

While other analytics data points are of great importance, those mentioned above should be universally

applied to get the maximum value from your SEO campaigns.

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2. Metrics for Measuring

It can be difficult to track the specific elements of the engines' algorithms effectively given that this data is not public, nor is it even well researched, in organic SEO. A combination of tactics has become best practices, and new data is constantly emerging to help track direct ranking elements and positive/negative ranking signals.

Metrics Provided by Search Engines

The engines provide some insight through publicly available queries and competitive intelligence. Employing these queries & tools effectively requires that you have an informational need with an actionable solution. The data is valuable if you have a plan of what to change/build/do once you learn what you need to know.

Below is a list of queries/tools/metrics from the engines, along with their respective applications.

Google: Google Site Query

e.g., site: www.abdcba.co.uk- useful to see the number and list of pages indexed on a particular domain. You can expand the value by adding additional query parameters. For example - site: abdcba.co.uk/h/Sportinurl:tools - will show only those pages in Google's index that are in the blog and contain the word "tools" in the URL. While this number fluctuates, it's still a good rough measurement.

Google: Google Trends

Available at Google.com/Trends - this shows keyword search volume/popularity data over time. If you're logged into your Google account, you can also get specific numbers on the charts, rather than just trend lines.

Google: Google Trends for Websites

Available at trends.google.com/websites - This shows traffic data for websites according to Google's data sources. A logged in user account will show numbers in the chart to indicate estimated traffic levels.

Google: Google Insights for Search

Available at google.com/insights/search - this tool provides data about regional usage, popularity and related queries for keywords.

Bing: Bing Site Query

Bing allows queries to show the number and list of pages in their index from a given site. Bing's counts are given to wild fluctuation and massive inaccuracy, often rendering the counts themselves useless.

Bing: Bing IP Query

E.g., IP: 123.00.321.213 - this query will show pages that Microsoft's engine has found on the given IP address. This can be useful in identifying shared hosting and seeing what other sites are hosted on a given IP address.

Microsoft: Ad Intelligence

Microsoft Advertising is a great variety of keyword research and audience intelligence tools are provided by Microsoft for search and display advertising. This guide won't dive deep into the value of each individual tool, but they are worth investigating and many can be applied to SEO.

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3. Applying the Metrics to Your Campaign

Only the knowledge of the numbers and queries won't help unless it can be effectively interpreted and applied. Below are some of the most common directional signals provided by tracking data points and how to respond with actions to improve or execute on opportunities.

Fluctuation In Search Engine Page and Link Count Numbers: The numbers reported in "site:" and "link:" queries are rarely precise, it is recommend not to get too worried about fluctuations showing massive increases or decreases unless they are accompanied by traffic drops. If you do see significant drops in links or pages indexed accompanied by similar traffic referral drops from the search engines, you may be experiencing a real loss of link juice, check to see if important links that were previously sending traffic/rankings boosts still exist, or a loss of indexation due to penalties, hacking, malware, etc. A thorough analysis using your own web analytics and Google's Webmaster Tools can help to identify potential problems.

Falling Search Traffic from Multiple Engines: If there is something on your site, that is blocking crawlers or stopping indexation, this could be something in the robots.txt or Meta robots tags, a problem with hosting/uptime, a DNS resolution issue or a number of other technical breakdowns. Carefully review your Webmaster Tools accounts and analytics to help determine potential causes.

Individual Ranking Fluctuations: Ranking algorithms fluctuate, competitors gain and lose links and on-page optimization tactics and search engines even flux between indices and may sometimes even make mistakes in their crawling, inclusion or ranking processes. When a dramatic rankings decrease occurs, you might want to carefully review on-page elements for any signs of over-optimization or violation of guidelines such as cloaking, keyword stuffing, and check to see if links have recently been gained or lost. When a temporary period of high visibility followed by a dramatic drop is common, a freshness boost occurs with sudden spikes in rankings for new content.

Positive Increases in Link Metrics without Rankings Increases: For new sites, pages and content that are competing in very difficult results, rankings take time and even earning lots of great links is not a sure recipe to instantly reach the top. The engines need to not only crawl all those pages where you've acquired links, but index and process them too. The metrics and rankings you're seeking may be days or even weeks behind the progress you've made, given the almost certain use of delta indices by the engines to help with freshness.

References:

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Debajyoti Banerjee is a veteran web strategist and Founder & CEO of Seven Boats Info-System Pvt. Ltd., a full service online marketing company from Kolkata, India. Debajyoti helps other businesses to transform their online presence, to attract new leads and to convert their prospects by his expert web consultancy. In his own words," You don't have to be a big brand to leverage digital media. Every click, every search, every tweet is an opportunity to engage them and to turn clicks into customers. Your clients are ready to buy. The question is – are you ready to be found? Online marketing can help take your business to the next level and I have founded Seven Boats to fully get involved to help your business grows, more as a true partner in your success." He has received the national level award "Indian Leadership Award for Industrial Development" by IEDRA & AIAF in 2012.

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