



By Debbie Manning



Recently I've had a rash of people calling, concerned about their web presence with search engines. How can a small business maintain website visibility – and compete with large marketing budgets – without going broke?

My initial response is to explain that as designers we do not specifically deal with the unique field of search engine optimization (SEO). SEO companies fairly exclusively track search engine activities. However, as Internet participants, we do try to keep an eye on web trends. And, as you can imagine, it is a challenge to keep up with these frequent changes when the industry is evolving as fast as the Internet.

Search Engine Friendly Sites

Building search engine friendly sites is important to us. We want your site to be easily accessible to search engine indexing. So these are a few of the things we do before sending your website out into the world of the 'Net.

- **We submit our sites to dmoz.org.** Dmoz is an open directory project where editors manually enter sites into a database referenced by major search engines. Search engines feed off of each other's activities, so we consider dmoz a good launching directory.
- **We create meta tags,** including keyword-heavy titles and descriptions. Meta tags are hidden



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code that help web crawlers to "find," "read" and draw attention to your site. We also include keywords although current SEO thought is that search engines are indexing text rather than keywords (who knows? Keywords might be back in importance tomorrow!). We work with our clients to develop keyword-oriented text.

- **We try to impress upon clients that a stagnant site – one that never changes – will rarely get revisited by search engines.** Websites should be considered works in progress. They need to change periodically.

Then we encourage **our clients** to promote their sites. YOU are most most important in getting the name of your site in the eyes of the public! Consider this a networking opportunity. Share links (search engines like links), and become part of larger organizations promoting your domain name. Make sure your domain name is on every piece of paper you produce, every commercial you air, and every conversation you have. Web designers (like graphic designers in print) have limited options in terms of promoting your site – **YOU** can drive your promotional campaign best!

As designers, we try to stay current on the standards in our industry (web). For example, surveys show that the majority of people browsing the web are doing so on screens that are 1086 x 600 pixels, and using a variety of browsers, such as Safari, Firefox and Internet Explorer. So we try to design sites that look good on a variety of browsers and we encourage clients to view their site on other computers or in other browsers, especially if their computer is older than commonly used in the industry. Computers and monitors all vary!

Of course, these standards vary, too. What is common practice today is often archaic in a few months. Bigger monitors and improved resolutions, graphics and images will be replacing the common design standards of today.

Does Your Website Need a Facelift?

So what is current in today's websites? Ivana Katz (www.sitepronews.com, March 30, 2009) suggests that if your website features any of the following, your website needs an EXTREME MAKEOVER ... or at least a face lift:

1. Flash intros, revolving globes, animated mail boxes.
2. Loads of pop up or pop under boxes.
3. Autoplay music. Allow your customer to play music only if they choose.
4. Hit counters of the free variety.

Practical Website Promoting



Dempster Natural Health (www.dempsternaturalhealth.com) features a link to a video wellness minute!

5. Date and time stamps, unless your website is updated daily or weekly.
6. Busy backgrounds.

Remember that changing your website is not an admission of fault. It is a necessary part of your site's evolution – AND it will enhance your standings with the search engines. Think in baby steps about search engine promotion, and be enthusiastic about promoting your site yourself! The sheer numbers concerning the Internet are staggering, so do what you can and be practical

While it is virtually impossible to determine how many actual webpages exist on the World Wide Web, some sources suggest that approximately 7.3 million NEW pages are added **EVERY DAY**.* According to Netcraft, a company that has been tracking web statistics since 1995, "There were just 18,000 Web sites when Netcraft, based in Bath, England, began keeping track in August of 1995. It took until May of 2004 to reach the 50 million milestone; then only 30 more months to hit 100 million, late in the month of October 2006." (www.cnn.com)

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*<http://answers.google.com/answers/threadview?id=377611>