

## Search Engine Optimization – The Basics

### BASIC OVERVIEW

Making it easy for people to find your website is essential. There are many factors in helping to gain top placement on search engines, but some of the more critical ones are usually the ones that are most commonly missed. People always want colorful images, a wow factor, and love to leverage technologies like Flash and other multi-media. These are fine to use and can add excitement; however, they should be leveraged only where appropriate. Nothing can replace the value of having leveraged content that truly highlights the words and phrases you want people to use to find you.

You need to understand that it may not be possible to be the top listing on all search engines. Also, depending upon your industry, you may need to invest more time, energy, and possibly money to achieve positive results and also scale back expectations. For instance, if you are a REALTOR that services Bernardsville NJ, then you should not try to capture all people searching for homes in New Jersey. First, it is too broad, you will spin your wheels more than gain traction, and you will be competing against very large companies with very large advertising budgets. You are better focusing on people looking for homes in Bernardsville and the surrounding towns, and in turn, the people that find you will be more qualified for your needs. It is always better to have fewer qualified leads than volumes of unknown potential.

### HOW TO TEST?

If you have not created a site or are looking to create a new site, then testing for search results can still be valuable to find your competition and what they are doing to achieve their results. The simplest way to test is to perform searches based on what you think your prospective clients will be asking.

- Perform the same search on the top search engines using key words and key search phrases. Each search engine uses different tests to place sites.
- Review your traffic report. These reports will analyze your log files in very detail order. Viewers, Unique Viewers, Pages Viewed, Most referrer sites, what words and phrases people used to find you
- Analyze the number of leads received over the past year from your site.

### WHAT ARE THE BASICS?

The best approach to achieving positive results is to make sure that your web site is built from the ground up using sound and proven techniques for placement. Here are some items and tips that you should keep in mind.

- Content is king
- Backlinks are needed for increased algorithm scores
- Headings are weighed heavier than normal text
- Page titles should be meaningful
- Leverage ALT tags for all images
- Include keywords and descriptions in the coding (*Although not as heavily weighed as in the past*)
- Limited repetition of keywords and phrases
- Don't abbreviate unless it will be searched
- Use actual readable text instead of images
- Avoid excessive use of Flash
- There are no shortcut to the top, so avoid anyone trying to sell you them
- Continued effort. Someone will always be trying to knock you down