

SEO, or HOW TO RANK HIGH ON THE SEARCH ENGINES

FREE SEO (Search Engine Optimization) Guide

A White Paper by
SEOTrump - Montreal, Canada, SEO Consultants

1. Introduction to SEO

Have you ever wondered why search queries on the web will usually yield names, web sites, companies, or expressions that are **well-known** - such as "MacDonald's" - as opposed to "Uncle Joe's Diner"?

Did you ever put up a web site, ignored **SEO advice** yet hoped - in vain - for a lot of visits and a high Google ranking ? Or have you ever placed an ad in some ineffective **directories** - yet no-one noticed your ad?

There could be many reasons why your web site wasn't attracting enough traffic. But the most likely reason is that it hasn't been **Search Engine Optimized** (or not well enough). This might sound like a simplification. But once you understand what **SEO** is (and what it is about) you'll also understand much better its causes, inner workings and effects.

After such a bold statement, a definition of SEO (**Search Engine Optimization**) is in order. Thousands of pages been written, and much has been said about **SEO**, some loaded with scientific terms and difficult to grasp, some simplistic. So: what is **SEO** really?

Search Engine Optimization is (to put it very dryly and scientifically) the sum of strategies, tactics and methods used by webmasters to maximize and improve their **web site's search result position** on the major web-crawling Search Engines (Yahoo, Google, etc.), or to increase their web ranking on Google.

The **SEOTrump Montreal SEO** team's definition is more inclusive: we define **SEO** as the systematic improvement of any search engine result (even if it's not targeted to a web site).

SEO is therefore the science of having keywords or search terms (not just a web site) rank as high as possible on the major search engines' search result pages.

For **Wikipedia's definition of SEO**, [click here](#).

To sum up our research and findings, it seems fairly safe to define **SEO** simply as "the science of getting Search Engines to rank, or, more accurately, **position or place** your search term or web site higher."

This emphasis is important. In **SEO** language, *Position or Placement* is the *ranking on a search result page*, as opposed to *Page Ranking* which is the *ranking of a page* in Google's estimation. (SEO can often be confusing but it is our aim here at SEOTrump, your Montreal SEO Experts and Consultants, to demystify and simplify Search Engine Optimization.)

Thus, *position or placement* is simply the place that a search result (pointing to a web site **or to any other term**) is allocated on the result pages (for example, number 3 which is excellent, or 630 which is pathetic, on a given search engine). *Page ranking* ("*PR*") on the other hand, is, in the world of SEO, the importance (= grading) which Google (at this time no other engine does this in a major way) ascribes to a given **web page**, on a scale of 0 to 10.

Another important, and very practical, difference is that a search result's placement can vary almost on a daily basis; a site's PR does vary over time, but much more slowly (it can take months to gain just one rank), depending on its changing importance and web popularity.

Most sites, millions of them, have a PR of zero, or maybe 1 - if they are lucky. (Looks like lack of **SEO** work). Page rankings of 4-5 are already considered very good. There are very few web sites with a PR of 10 and even Google's home page itself has only PR 9. The US government's official site is one of the rare PR 10 birds.

A list of those Search Engine Optimization strategies and **SEO** tactics that we referred to before, has filled whole libraries. We'll develop some of them in this **SEO** White Paper and will then go into more detail in the occasional Reports by our Montreal SEO team as and when we publish them, and of course in our individual **SEO** consultations as they happen.

Above, we have discussed search result positioning. It's now time to explain how Google and their colleagues actually arrive at those results. This is a key SEO concept and applies to all businesses.

2. How Search Engines rank Search Results

When you search for a topic using a major search engine, results will be displayed by the tens of thousands nearly instantly. No, it's not wizardry. And no, the search engine has not raced through the Internet in a second. It has done its own internal search and then just accessed the millions of pages (collected during its relentless crawls) in its database and has come up with the matches to your search query. The matches are then ranked, based on "relevance" – incidentally another extremely important **SEO concept**.

Let's say you visit your library searching for a book on particular topic. The librarian will retrieve books for you, based on the subject you choose, but if your subject is too general, he/she will ask you for clarification, a kind of verbal SEO, i.e.: you will need to narrow down your topic intelligently so you can have a broad enough choice but still find the book.

A search engine is not a librarian and has no idea what you really want when you type in a general expression. But it applies all important SEO principles. It will compare your search query to the information in their database, find the contents which **most closely match** the requested information (**SEO** will have been highly important here, too), and then rank them in order of importance, or relevance, with the most important contents displayed first.

And these contents (as mentioned, regularly collected by the search engines) are simply SEO "material" that web designers or webmasters have written into their web sites, either explicitly in the copy, or - implicitly - as a set of logical SEO related connections, by way of code, or internal and external links to the individual web pages.

So it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that the better designed and written a web site is, the more **relevant** its contents will be for the search engines. In SEO, the world of Search Engine Optimization, this is a tried, tested and true rule. We at SEOTrump, the Montreal SEO Consultants, are specialized in this. Increased relevance will, in turn, rank the site higher on the search engines' results pages. Another key **SEO rule**.

But what is a "better designed or written" web site? And how does relevance work? It is extremely important to know this, or else it is virtually impossible to understand, let alone apply **Search Engine Optimization**.

3. SEO: Search Result Placement Factors

First, let's look at the question of what a "better designed" website is. We are obviously not talking about graphic design here but about "SEO ready" structure and content. These two components add up to strength.

And it stands to reason that the **greater prominence you give your own web site**, its structure, keywords and other content, in short: the more **SEOriously** (forgive the pun) you treat your **own site** (i.e.: the more importance you assign to it), the more **SEOriously** it will be taken by search engines such as Google and Yahoo.

3 a. Your site's contents

This is a vast topic and a science in itself, and way beyond the scope of this introduction. Suffice to say for now that keywords are vital in any SEO project. Keywords that are important, relevant and well thought out. Intelligently placed and reasonably repeated keywords are of course essential in SEO. It's very similar to the world of advertising.

After all, don't forget that effective SEO to a web site is even more than catchy creatives and intelligent timing to a TV commercial or good placement to magazine advertising.

3 b. Titles, Headlines, Tags

As part of any SEO lecture, we also have to mention headlines, titles, tags, and more, as well as the concept of content. Plus the fact that web pages have other SEO relevant components, too, albeit sometimes more technical ones (programming, logic, or language oriented in nature) ; the SEO experts in our Montreal SEO office will be pleased to provide you with more details, addressing your and your site's individual requirements.

4. SEO: Page Ranking Factors ("PR")

This is one of the better-known but often misunderstood factors. We are talking about links pointing to one's web site ("**web site popularity**"), another important **SEO concept** (careful, though: web popularity will lead your site to a better PR but won't **directly** result in higher search result placements, as PR is a different [though somewhat correlated] "branch" of SEO.)

A real life example can be useful here. A person's popularity in society is deemed high if she or he gets a lot of phone calls, e-mails, or visitors. Conversely, it's a sign of being ignored if no one calls or writes.

The same holds true for businesses in general, and websites in particular. And yet again, **SEO** guidance from Montreal : the more web sites "point" to your site with links or references, the more popular your site is considered to be. And the search engines will rank such popular sites higher, too! It is therefore important to have **links to your site** placed on other web sites (these are called **backlinks** in **SEO** lingo).

The common misconception here is that any link from any web site will do, and that many links, from many sites, will increase your popularity (if **SEO** was only that simple !) This is true if - and only if - those other sites are themselves popular (= reputable, high ranking or well-visited). It is **not** true for obscure, low-ranking web sites with bad or no SEO or for sites with no common theme with yours.

The problem is that it's difficult to find highly-ranked web sites that will accept your links, especially if you are still relatively unknown – unless you pay for it. It's a Catch 22 situation but a solvable problem – ask our SEO experts in our Montreal SEO center.

But what about **Link Exchanges** ("Give me yours, I'll give you mine")? Those are sites that host and connect web sites with one another, enabling them to exchange links. In our periodic **free SEO Reports** this topic, along with dozens of others, will be given detailed treatment.

We hope this overview was a useful introduction to **SEO** and a good overview. We don't claim it was much more than that. To get more detailed insights and knowledge, you are welcome to contact our SEO people at our Montreal SEO office.

There, you can receive totally free initial SEO guidance, tips, and dedicated Search Engine Optimization support. We encourage to contact us for a free SEO consultation, and discuss your needs, with absolutely no strings attached.

If you have any questions, feel free to [contact us](#) without any obligation.

5. Statistical Highlights

Below, you'll find some **SEO research results** and insights. We invite you to draw your own conclusions although some of the numbers might be pretty obvious in any case.

Further corroborating the general consensus about search behavior, a November 2005 SEO discussion of Search Engine Optimization experts yielded the following statistics:

- 16 % of **Internet users** only look at the first few search results
- 32 % will read through to the bottom of the first page - but not beyond.
- Only 23 % of **Internet searchers** go beyond the second page ; that number drops even further for third-page searches.
- Only 10.3 % of **web users** will actually read through the first three results pages.
- Just 8.7 % tend to open more than three pages.

And other relevant research shows extensive research to the effect that in average, searchers spend no more than 7 (!) seconds looking at a search result page. It goes without saying that during those 7 short seconds only very high-ranking results will be given more than a fleeting glance.

These SEO statistics sound a little harsh. But here's the good news:

SEOTrump's own research, conducted by our **Montreal SEO** experts, has yielded results that are much less discouraging. An August 2008 study goes deeper into the SEO soul and suggests that search behavior is more differentiated and in a way more complex : searchers' patience drastically **increases** when having to choose between very similar search results. In such cases, choices are more difficult and users will spend much more time before deciding. (Makes perfect sense to us !)

Conversely, the less subtle the differences between the choices, the more clear-cut they are. It is in such cases that searchers will decide much faster. (That's pretty logical, too).

Our **SEO study** suggests that when facing more clear-cut choices, users tend to spend closer to 18-22 seconds per page (not a mere 7 seconds) - and even longer when choices are more subtle. From an SEO marketing point of view, these numbers look quite a bit friendlier.

Either way, the above leads SEO researchers to conclude that the average web searcher will scan the results, form his opinion quickly if possible, and then click on the links he likes without bothering to look further.

All this tells us: it's not so easy to get a second chance. Which makes it even more necessary to plan your **SEO structure** very well and to apply the rules. Don't forget: Google is the boss !

Further SEO research highlights: only about 60 % of Internet searchers scroll below "the fold" (the part of the page that is below the bottom of the screen when first shown).

Users **returning to a search**, some SEO findings show, do tend to look further down the search results page for more results, but even then the "above the fold results" will still get looked at (and clicked) with significantly higher frequency. However, exact percentages are unavailable.

Other SEO research arrives at even more sobering results by claiming that many web searchers often consider only the top few listings on Page 1. We don't think this is very likely (unless a searcher is in a big hurry and has no time to dig further), although it would support the 7 % SEO hypothesis above. If this is correct, it would suggest that even a Page 1, Number 7 or 8 ranking may not always be satisfactory - certainly food for thought, and even more reason for the big SEO rush to Google's Page 1.

Again, though, those research findings should be qualified somewhat: additional SEO research indicates that as a user performs more and more searches **within the same session**, they are more likely to look at a second page of search results, perhaps even a third page (the reason probably being that - not having immediately found satisfactory search results - they will give deeper and more extensive searches a chance). But that's as far as they'll usually go.

It therefore seems to us that the buck stops on search result page 3 ...

However, there is good news.

6. SEO: The Good News

After all the gloomy **SEO** statistics, the good news is that you, too, can dramatically improve your web site's ranking.

How? With smart, Google-friendly (after all, Google is King !) and therefore effective, **SEO**.

It's never too late, and it can be done any time (during or after hours), and wherever you are - whether in **New York** (the largest US City), or in **Lost Springs, WY** (the smallest inhabited town in the USA, with exactly 1 [one] resident, according to Stateistics.com, a US State Facts information provider).

And yes, you can get high placement on search result pages with good SEO. Our Montreal SEO team can help with intelligent keyword application, Meta and Content Management, smart link management, and other up-to-date Search Engine Optimization weapons.

It's not a piece of cake ; and no, results of your SEO won't appear overnight (no matter what some submission artists and quick-fix marketers tell you). But it is realistically doable. And good **SEO** is absolutely vital for high search engine result placements.

And yes, it is possible to rank high - even without large SEO budgets or a big IT department.

You are welcome to ask us, at Montreal SEO Experts SEO Trump, at any time for guidance and tips. It is valuable SEO advice. And it is presented with expertise and a good deal of enthusiasm by our Montreal SEO team. And it's FREE, with no obligation at all.

Ask away, and we'll try to give you good answers, applicable to your individual situation. We'll also occasionally publish free **SEO** newsletters with more tips, such as

- How to place keywords in a Google-friendly way - and to the greatest effect !
- The Dos and Don'ts of **SEO**
- Which meta tags have lost their significance and what you can do about it
- The no-no SEO actions that can **cost you very dearly** on Google
- What has replaced meta tags as Google-friendly SEO components
- The truth about submission companies
- The **common SEO mistakes** that are sure to deny you a high web ranking
- **Secret keyword weapons in SEO**
- More avenues to visibility
- What makes a web site tick
- **Simple Google-friendly tricks !**
- **SEO** : All about Titles, Headlines, and Content
- Search Tips and Tricks
- How to **attract quality links** and build a link network (no, **not** with link exchanges!)

(These topics will be useful and apply mainly to web site owners and webmasters ; we realize, however, that non-web based companies need a lot of search engine attention, too, and will accommodate all kinds of businesses for advice).

Welcome, then, to SEOTrump's

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