



The Jan Klin Essential Guide To Search Engine Optimisation

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Lesson 1 - Essential Pre-requisites

So, where to start your SEO activities. (I'll refer to the practice as SEO - you probably know that it stands for Search Engine Optimisation). There are some essential prerequisites:-

- ⤴ You will need to be able to change your site's textual content and 'meta data'. (This is the 'behind the scenes' information the search engine spiders see). You may have a content management system you can use to do this or some other method of changing the content. If not, its not a problem, you'll have to ask your website designer to put in the changes for you;
- ⤴ Its important to check that your site has textual content. If its developed totally in Flash it will be a problem. Here's a quick way of checking what the search engine spiders see at your site:
 - open up Notepad (its usually in 'accessories');
 - Go to the homepage of your target website;
 - Select all the content on the page (by typing CTRL-A);
 - Copy the content onto the clipboard (by typing CTRL-C);
 - Go to the notepad you have opened and type CTRL-V.

The resulting text is what the search engines can read off your page. Hopefully you will have some text in the notepad, if not you may have a problem. If you drop me an email (jan@janklin.com) I'll check it out for you.

Another check its useful to perform at this stage is whether the search engines can read all your web pages. There's a simple way to do this, if you go to Google and type in..... site:www.yourdomain.com at the search box (obviously substituting 'yourdomain' with, well, your domain name). See the example below.

The resulting list is a summary of how many of your web pages Google can read (actually this command lists the pages of your website google has a record of in its database)

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You can see here I have around 126 pages identified by Google (see Results 1 - 100 of about 126 from www.janklin.com in the right hand corner).

So, ideally, this number needs to be equal to the number of pages you have in your site. It doesn't matter if it doesn't, I'll show you later how to ensure you get more pages included. It does matter though if you are only getting your homepage listed. This means you may have a spidering issue. Drop me an email and I'll check it for you. (jan@janklin.com).

So those are the basic tests, if all was OK you're are ready to start the optimisation process. Here's a check list summary of what we've just gone through:

1. Check that you can change your website textual content (or your web designer will have to do it for you);
2. Check you can change your website meta data (again the alternative is your web designer does it for you);
3. Check that your site has textual content and the search engines can read the text

on your website;

4. Check to see that the search engines can access all, or most, of your web pages.

Drop me an email or give me a call (01928 788100) if you are unsure about any of this.

One final thing, we'll now ask you to set up 'Google Analytics' so you can monitor your results and traffic as we move through the process. There's lots of functionality at Google Analytics but you'll find it an invaluable way of finding the number of people visiting your site, the keywords they use, which countries they come from and much more.

If you haven't already got one, you'll need a Google account before you can set up Analytics, here's a short step by step guide to getting one - [Google Account Setup](#)

Then I suggest you so sign up for Google Analytics and familiarise yourself with what it can do for you. If you can do this between now and the next lesson that will be ideal - here's a step by step guide for the set up - [Google Analytics Setup](#)

Lesson 2 - Google Webmaster Central

Google Webmaster Central will enable you to kick start the SEO process and will also enable you to satisfy many of the basic requirements of SEO.

Incidentally, if you are beginning to think everything is a bit Google centric, its because in the UK (and most of Europe) Google is dominant. Also by optimising for Google you'll find you are optimising for the other search engines by default; Google being the most exacting for SEO. Later in the series we will address some specific international issues though and specifically look at other important search engines you need to be aware of.

So, to Google Webmaster Central (GWC). This will enable you to get recognised by Google, ensure all your pages get spidered, and give you lots of information about how Google sees your site. Its only a slight exaggeration to say it allows you to have a one to one conversation with Googlebot.

There's a useful link I will make you aware of in a moment which overviews all of the functionality available via GWC. I suggest you don't use this link right now but come back to it after going through the rest of the lesson. Here it is:-

<http://www.google.com/webmasters/edu/quickstartguide/index.html>

If you go through the 10 pages in this 'quick start guide' you'll get to understand what it covers. One word of warning though, don't sweat over it if there are bits of you don't fully understand. I'll cover the essential bits in detail for you.

So the first thing, if you haven't already, is to register your site with GWC, go to:-

<http://www.google.com/webmasters/>

and 'sign in to webmaster tools'

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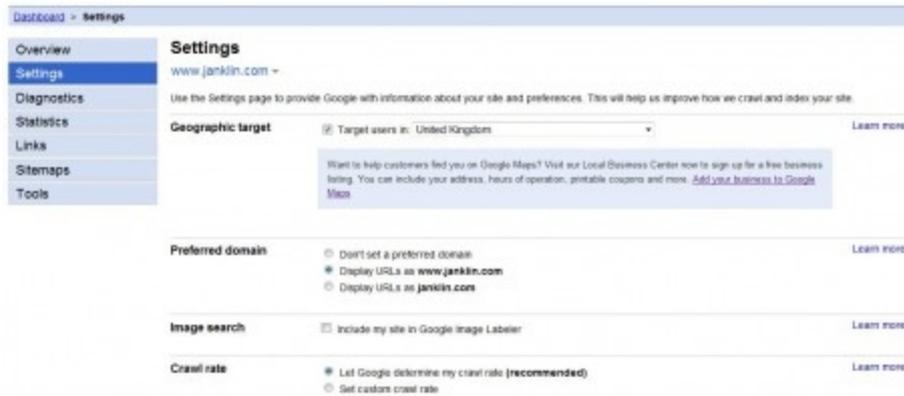
You'll see you need a Google account (Google mail address) so if you haven't already got one you need to [create one](#).

Once you have done this go back to <http://www.google.com/webmasters/> and sign in. The first task is to add your site and, very importantly, verify you site. This shows that you are the owner of the site. Google gives you some code to add to your site and once this has been done you can access all the GWC functionality.

The essential things to do via GWC are as follows (I suggest you do all of this between now and the next lesson in two weeks):-

Firstly, under 'Settings' do the following:

1. Set the geographic target date to reflect where you want rankings from....



This is only necessary if you have a neutral top level domain (.com, .info. , .net etc...). If you have a .co.uk or other country specific domain (e.g. www.yourdomain.de) Google knows where you want rankings from. If its neutral Google will assume you want rankings from where your site is hosted (e.g. if its hosted in the USA that's where you'll get rankings) so its important you give Google this information.

2. Still under 'settings' set the 'preferred domain' and 'crawl rate' as I have done in the screen-shot above.
3. Under 'sitemaps' you will need to submit one. On this page Google gives you the detail of how to do this...

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This will ensure all your pages get spidered and included in the Google database.

One other check to perform - under 'tools' you'll see reference to robots.txt files. This is a file that resides on the server which tells Google which pages to look at and which to ignore. You may want to check with the tools available here what is included in the robots.txt file. (use 'analyze robots.txt') Sometimes we find people (or their website designers) have inadvertently excluded important pages of their site. It may also be that you want to exclude certain pages - e.g. terms and conditions. So familiarise yourself with these options and make sure everything is in order before we move on.

These are the essentials, and over and above this play around with the other functionality to your hearts content and put right any other issues Google has with your site - like broken links for example.

We'll come back to GWC several times later if its necessary to troubleshoot any ranking issues.

That's it. Familiarise yourself well with GWC. We'll introduce you to more tools at relevant times.

Lesson 3 - Keyphrase Analysis 1

The first point to accept here is that this part of the process needs to be kept separate from other parts. Don't be concerned at this stage where these keyphrases will go on your website - we'll address this later. The important point is to find and record them. You'll find the best way to do this is to open up a spreadsheet. Here's a copy of one we use when doing this work with our clients....

Don't worry about all the columns at this stage, it's the first two only you'll be filling in at the moment - the phrase itself and the search volume (number of monthly searches). The other columns we'll fill in later.

How do you go about finding keyphrases that will bring relevant traffic to your site? I'll introduce you to a tool to take the guesswork out of it, courtesy of Google. The important thing about this is that this is an actual record of what real people have been searching for :- <https://adwords.google.co.uk/select/KeywordToolExternal>

You should go to this site and enter a phrase you think is important - you'll see in the example below I've typed in 'garden office' (you'll need to enter the access characters as well - once only though).

At the top of the 5th column you'll see the 'match type' option. You should set this to 'exact' (not 'broad'). This is important because we're looking to find the exact phrase people are typing in.

The two most important columns are the first, which is the exact phrase people are searching for, and the 4th column, the monthly number of searches. It's this information you should be transferring into your spreadsheet.

Clearly, the search volume is an important metric - the higher it is the more people will be arriving at your site if you capture this phrase. (You'll also notice here that the singular and plural are different, and we need to make a note of both of them.) However it's also important to capture some of the other variants, even if they have a small search volume they may have a high degree of relevance (also, they tend to be less competitive to get rankings for). So, in this case I would also make a note of 'home garden office', 'garden office UK' and 'garden office buildings'. Possibly more but as a general rule of thumb not phrases which have a search volume of less than 100. (although it does depend on what sort of products/services you are selling of course).

So this is the process, think of keyphrases you think your potential customers may be searching for, check out the actual phrases which are being used using this tool, and transfer relevant phrases to your spreadsheet.

How many entries in your spreadsheet? At this stage say between 10 and 20 - although we may want to supplement with additional phrases later. (Actually we'll revisit keyphrase analysis later particularly for e-commerce sites where there may be lots of products in a database)

The two major factors when identifying these phrases are relevance (to your business) and search volume.

So, that's your task for the next two weeks - get around 20 phrases in your spreadsheet. Speak to your colleagues about what they think people would type to find your products and services, if time you may also want to ask some of your existing customers.

Next time we'll look at where to include your more important phrases within your website. That is, start the actual optimisation process.

Lesson 4 - Homepage Optimisation 1

We're now ready to start the optimisation process. We'll start with your homepage.

Of course its necessary to optimise all pages you want rankings for and we'll come to that later. The homepage is a bit of a special case though, for two reasons - one, it should reflect the more general nature of your business - and keyphrases selected accordingly. Secondly, it is generally easier to get rankings for your homepage than others. This is because typically it will have more search engine 'equity' in it because links from other sites will direct to your homepage (we'll study this in greater detail at a later point).

There are two main parts to optimising any page - firstly optimising the on-page text and secondly optimising the meta data (meta tags). The latter we'll address next time but this time I want to focus on producing some good text for your homepage to capture the phrases you have targeted.

Before I ask you to select your homepage keyphrases I want to address the important point of SEO copy-writing

Copy-writing and SEO

We cant get away from the fact that search engines, at the moment, place lots of emphasis on the textual content of your site. What they read is important in assessing what your pages are all about. So, you need text, and as a rule of thumb at this stage lets say at least 250 words on each page you want rankings for.

A common misconception is that users don't like too much text. They do; its more a question of how the text is *structured* and *presented* to them. Here's an example of a great homepage that ranks number one for 'garden office' (out of 108,000,000 competing pages!).

Take a look at www.iobuild.co.uk. Scroll down the homepage and see how the text flows and how the images used interact and break up the text.

Here's another good example www.aardvarksafaris.co.uk - you'll see here the page is dominated by great photography and the left hand side navigation. If you scroll down though you'll see excellently presented copy. Most people wont necessarily read all this but if they do it reads well - and certainly Googlebot will gobble it all up.

So the trick is *presentation* and *structure*..

Choosing Keyphrases and Density Considerations

I would suggest you choose two, and a maximum of four phrases for your homepage optimisation. In the example above 'garden office' and 'garden offices' were selected.

So, go ahead and choose a couple of phrases from your list.

I suggest when you produce your copy you write the text to sound as natural as possible. The text is there for people not search engines. Having said that you want to make sure that you are repeating the target phrases a few times. Two to three repetitions in 250 words is fine. Lets again use www.iobuild.co.uk as our example.

Firstly carry out a google search for the phrase 'garden offices'...

If you now click on the 'cached' option - the one I've encircled in green - you will see google's record of this page and also the repetitions google has highlighted for you.

(Incidentally - this is a good way of checking the repetitions the top ranked site is using giving an indication of what is obviously working). You'll see in this case around 5 repetitions of the exact phrase in around 500 words. Its the same for the other term the page is optimised for - 'garden office'. This keyphrase density (1%) is fine for 500 words. I'd increase it to 2% for 250 words - that is 2 to 3 repetitions - max.

Hopefully that gives you an idea of how to produce optimised copy. There are a few other points worth remembering about keyphrase repetitions:-

1. They can be included in bullet points to break up the text
2. They can be included in navigation links
3. They can be included in links within the text
4. They can be included in footers in the page

...and other places to. But at the moment go ahead and produce some good copy to capture your main keyphrases and next time we'll build on this and do the meta tagging.

One last thing.... some people have a problem deciding what to write about on their homepage. In addition to the two examples I've given above, have a look at this example - www.deangroup-int.co.uk - you can see here they have been creative in their copy, using company history, the processes they use, quality procedures etc... as separate sections to capture their two main phrases 'investment casting' and investment castings'.

Best of luck with it. Its not the easiest thing in the world to do (and there are alternatives we'll discuss later) but its the best approach.

Produce your homepage copy but don't upload it yet. Let me know if you need any help.

Lesson 5 - Homepage Title Tag

Hopefully you have now got some keyphrase rich copy produced for your homepage.

Good SEO is about aligning the keyphrases people search for to both your on-page copy and the associated meta data. (Meta data being the behind-the-scenes code the search engines see, but human viewers typically don't).

The most important piece of meta data as far as search engines are concerned is the 'title' tag. Its into this tag that you need to position the keyphrases you identified for your homepage.

Firstly, lets look at a well structured title tag from one of the examples we looked at last time - iobuild. Then we'll look at your homepage title tag and work out how how to change it.

So, if you go to the iobuild homepage - www.iobuild.co.uk. The simplest way to see the tag is to select the 'view' drop down menu in your browser then click on 'page source' as below (I use Firefox but if you use Internet Explorer the option is 'view source').....

What you should now see is the code as listed below.

You will see at the top (fifth line down) we have the title tag with the contents ...

Garden Offices | Insulated Garden Office Rooms | Garden Offices | Garden Buildings UK | Studios

The important point about this tag is that the main keyphrase targeted - 'garden offices' is right at the beginning of the tag. 'insulated garden office' and 'garden office' are also important phrases so they appear near the beginning too.

Here are another few examples. Follow the process above to view the title tags and familiarise yourself with what well structured tags look like and work out which keyphrases they are targeting:-

www.noisekiller.co.uk

www.towmasteruk.co.uk

www.aardvarksafaris.co.uk

Then go and look at your own and make a note of it.

Structuring Your Homepage Title Tag

Here are some specific instructions for structuring your title tag:-

1. Include the main keyphrase at the beginning of the tag
2. Have the secondary phrase directly after it. You can use a hyphen or the 'pipe' character (|) as a separator. If in doubt look at the three examples directly above.
3. Put your company name at the end of the tag. (So that when people search for your company name your homepage appears)
4. No more than 10 words in total.
5. No unusual characters - stick to alphanumeric plus hyphens, pipes and commas.
6. Use caps for the first letter in each word and lower case for the rest (it needs to look good as it will show up in search results!)

example: **Car Soundproofing - Marine Soundproofing, Noisekiller Ltd**

One final point - many people conduct searches for local services (around 40%) so you may want to add a geo variable in the mix. This will also be less competitive than the more general phrases so you'll get ranked more quickly

example: **Car Soundproofing - Marine Soundproofing, Noisekiller, Liverpool**

This will ensure searches for 'car soundproofing Liverpool' and 'marine soundproofing Liverpool' show up in the search results.

If you do this make sure you have the location somewhere within the homepage content also.

You are now ready to upload your new text content and the title tag for your homepage. Go ahead and do it. The next time google bot comes calling (in a few weeks probably) the results of this activity should be apparent.

Lesson 6 - Optimising Other Meta Tags

In addition to the 'title' tag we optimised last time, there are a few other important tags which need our attention.

What follows is instruction on how to structure the rest of the tags for your homepage - although these same instructions will be applied to the rest of our website as we move forwards.

So, the 'title' tag is the most important from a ranking point of view, and here are the others we'll focus on:-

1. The 'description' tag - will have a marginal effect on ranking but its importance is that it will maximise click throughs to your site if we structure it properly
2. The 'keyword' tag - has little value for the main search engines nowadays, but we might as well structure it since lesser search engines still use it
3. The 'H1' tag - there are a series of 'H', or header tags which add structure to our on-page content. The H1 is the most important from a ranking point of view. Its not essential to have such a tag but it will make a difference in competitive situations.
4. 'Alt' tags - tags which enable us to add text to images. Essential for accessibility and also useful for general ranking (and certainly for ranking of images when image searches are conducted)

So, lets take a look at where these tags show up. If you go to google and search for 'industrial computers', you should get

You'll see the listing in 3rd place is [Bluechiptechnology.co.uk](http://bluechiptechnology.co.uk), one of our customers (you should be impressed if you notice top right that they are 3rd from almost 1 billion competing pages!). The blue/purple link is of course their 'title' tag, and the text immediately below is the contents of their 'description' tag.

If you go to their homepage - www.bluechiptechnology.co.uk - and view the source code (as you practised doing in the previous lesson 5), you will see the detail of the description tag in the 5th line down....

You'll also see, directly below it, the 'keyword' tag. So heres some detail on exactly how to structure your homepage description and keyword tags....

The Description Tag

The importance of this tag is that it will drive click throughs to your website if its well structured, so here's how to construct it:-

1. You have around 25 words you can show here, so use them all if you can to maximise the visibility of your listing
2. Make it a bit 'salesy' or 'call to action' oriented - again to encourage click throughs
3. You'll see that search engines highlight the keyphrases in this tag that have been search for, as you can see in this example of a search for 'Dr martens'....

So, I recommend you have at least one repetition of the phrase in the tag (and no more than two)

Keyword Tag

As mentioned previously it has little value nowadays but its 'best practice' to include one. I'd include no more than 4 phrases in this tag, and, importantly, make sure they are phrases which appear in the 'title' and 'description' tags....

Now the h1 tag...

H1 Tag

Content wise it should be very similar to your 'title' tag - except that its visible on your web page, so it should be modified accordingly.

In the following example you'll see the contents of the H1 tag displayed at the top of the web page, and if you view the source code you'll see the 'title' tag has similar content because the phrases 'label holders', 'floor marking solutions', and 'warehouse rack labels' are the phrases this page is optimised for...

If you view the source code and search for h1 you'll see exactly how this tag is structured...

I think that's enough tuition for now, we'll address the 'alt' tagging two lessons hence. If you have taken in all this that's great and if you now change these homepage tags you'll have a pretty well optimised homepage.

If you are itching for a bit more, here's a really useful tool you can play around with to see a 'spider's' view of your meta tags and content...[A Useful SEO Tool.](#)

Lesson 7 - Link Building 1

There are two broad categories of factors Google (and other engines) are looking at when ranking a site. One category - 'on-page factors' is what we have focused on already (changing text, meta data etc...). The other category is 'off page factors' and this is mainly to do with links coming into your site from external sites.

I'm going to give you plenty of detailed specific instruction about how to get these links and where to get them from (in this and other lessons), but it will be a necessary to give you a little background before doing this.

Back-links and Google

If you think about it you can say what you want about your own website through textual content, so Google is only going to give a certain amount of credence to this. However, what a link is saying is that someone external to you is endorsing your content by linking to you so Google considers this a vote in your favour, and the more links, the more votes and the higher the ranking.

This was Google's innovation; the method Google used to bypass all other search engines in terms of accuracy of search results and therefore user acceptance. It won't be necessary to go into the 'network theory' behind this - I want to keep these lessons as practically orientated as possible, but hopefully you can see that these links are important in determining your ranking. Just to emphasise (because some people get confused by this), what we are talking about here are links from other sites linking to you. Not links from your site linking out.

The good news bit is that these links happen naturally the longer your site has been around. People will see your site and link to it if you have interesting content. This is why we have concentrated on 'on page' optimisation initially, as you may already have a good back link infrastructure and therefore good rankings without doing any additional link building. However, if your site is new, or you are targeting competitive keyphrases, you will need to be proactive about your link building.

So, what we are going to focus on regarding links relates to the questions we always get asked about them, namely:-

1. How many do I need to build?
2. Where do I get them from?
3. How do I construct them

1. How many links do I need to build?

Quantity isn't everything. In fact quality is the overriding attribute to link building but we need some broad target to aim it so I'll give you a simple way of estimating the number to go for.

I should say though that we view link building as an on-going exercise which should be built in to your weekly processes to develop your web business. You also of course have the option of outsourcing this to the many companies providing this service (but select with care if you do this).

So, here's the simple method, it relies on firstly picking a keyphrase from the list you have already produced. One of the 2-3 word phrases that's important to you.

Carry out a search and make a note of the websites appearing in 3rd, 4th and 5th places

(our first task is to take the place of the 5th ranked site so we are above the scroll for an important phrase).

Determine the number of links these sites have (I'll show you how to do this in a moment). You now want to take the *lesser* number from these three. (The reason for this is that sometimes you'll find one of these has very large number of links, perhaps built by a 3rd party using low value links - and what we are looking for here is the number of good quality links we are competing against).

Then an estimate of the number of links you need to take this position is the difference between the links you have and the number this site has. As an example lets say one of these sites has 500 links and your site has 100, then the difference (400) is a broad estimate of the number you need to build.

To be on the safe side - add 20% to this, and this will give you a broad target number to aim at. This is not an accurate science, but we need some sort of target, and this number will put you there or thereabouts.

Here's a tool and method for finding your links and your competitors links...

[Opensite Explorer](#)

So, hopefully you have a measure of the *order of magnitude* of links you now need to get in the top rankings. In subsequent lessons we'll go into lots of detail about where to get links from and how to structure them, but at the moment I want to start you off building your 'link target spreadsheet' which we'll use going forwards to construct links from. Follow the link below to get started...

[Building your Link Target spreadsheet](#)

Lesson 8 - Optimising Inner Pages - Keyphrases 2

So by now you should have a completely optimised homepage, and, if you followed the last lesson, a target list of links to build in the future to help improve your ranking.

In this lesson we'll learn how to optimise our inner pages.

Using your whole site to capture many keyphrases

Good optimisation means that your whole site gets optimised - every page you have optimised represents additional search terms you can get rankings for, additional enquiries and additional sales.

How many keyphrases can you capture in total? It depends on the size of your site. Let's say that for each page of your site you have the opportunity to capture between 1 - 4 different keyphrases (maybe a head phrase and 2-3 'long tail' phrases).

When you start producing textual content for your site you'll see the factor that limits you straight away - its the task of copy-writing to capture multiple phrases - the more phrases the more difficult it is.

So taking this into consideration, and the fact that every page cannot be optimised (you wouldn't want to optimise your 'terms and conditions' page for example), we have a rule of thumb which says the number of phrases you can capture is about twice the number of the web pages you have; If you have a 20 page website you can capture around 40 phrases, a 50 page website means you can go on and capture around 100 keyphrases. Some e-commerce sites have 1000's of pages - we'll discuss this in more detail below.

The process of optimising your inner pages

Actually you know the process already its exactly the same as the process for optimising the homepage which you have already done. (repeated below). So its reasonably simple, but, if you have lots of pages, its time consuming, so we'll want to prioritise things.

If you have the time and you have a small site, you maybe want to do this in one hit. More likely though you'll want to do it over a period of time. For example, if you have 15 pages you want to optimise (you may decide to prioritise them in order of importance) then take 5 per month over 3 months to do the SEO work - or longer if you have more pages to do. How long you take to do it depends on your resources available and how many phrases and pages you have targeted.

So, here's the process to go through....

1. Allocating phrases to pages.

There are two ways to do this - either you can choose the phrases first (1 to 4 max) then decide which page to use to capture them. Alternatively you can select a page to be optimised then look at your keyphrase list to decide on what the best phrases are for the page selected.

As hinted to previously, until you get some good experience at doing this, try to restrict yourself to just a couple of phrases per page, at least initially.

2. Write the copy for the web page (or change the existing copy) to capture the phrases chosen. Full details on copy-writing for SEO is included in lesson 4.

3. Optimise the title tag for this page.

Full details on how to optimise the title tag are included in lesson 5.

4. Optimise the other meta tags for this page. Full details on optimising these tags are in lesson 6.

That's it, just wait for googlebot to come back to your site and you'll start getting rankings for your optimisation work.

There's a bit of fine tuning to do - not essential but ideal if you have the time ...

1. Ensuring your images are 'Alt tagged' - essentially including a keyphrase rich short sentence on each image (this helps with the SEO, accessibility AND image searches)

2. You also want to ensure links to these optimised pages (from other pages of your site) have the chosen keyphrase (s) as 'link text'

Best of luck with it.

If you have a e-commerce and/or a database driven site here's a supplementary post on optimising inner pages. [Keyphrase 2](#)

Lesson 9 - Checking and monitoring your Positions plus Google Analytics

An essential part of any online marketing activity is to monitor your progress and be prepared to change things to improve.

In order to monitor your SEO improvements and performance you need a couple of important tools:

1. An Analytics tool
2. A ranking checker

Web Site Analytics

We have already discussed using Google Analytics and you may already have signed up for this. If not I suggest you do so after reading this post.

There's specific detailed information here - [Google Analytics](#) sign up - where we show you how to sign up for the (free) service.

Its a pretty comprehensive tool and most businesses get by without needing any additional Analytics tool. You should play around with it and look at the product tour at the [Google Analytics website](#). This will give you a sense of the sort of things you can check with it.

Specifically the sort of metrics you should be looking at to help with your SEO are:-

- ✦ The daily visits - its the trend here that's more important rather than the actual figures. As you optimise more and more of your site you should see the graph moving in an upwards direction, which is very gratifying.
- ✦ Keywords - You can list out the keyphrases that people are using and finding your site with. Hopefully these will be the important phrases you have optimised your site for. If not, its a sign more work needs to be done to increase your rankings (probably link building if you have already done the on-page SEO).

These are the two main things to monitor; there are others of course which you will start to use once you are more familiar with the tool.

Ranking Checker

The simple way to check your rankings of course is just go to the relevant search engine and conduct searches for your important keyphrases. This will become impractical if you are targeting a reasonable number of phrases through several search engines - and this is where a ranking tool will help.

We use [Internet Business Promoter](#) which does a lot more than ranking checks. You may want to try out their trial version if you get serious about SEO. There are many free options available (as you'll see if you do a search) one we have used and particularly like is from [SEOBOOK](#). Again, these people offer several other tools you may find useful for SEO in addition to ranking checkers.

Whichever way you do it you'll want to check that your rankings are moving in the right direction over a period of time. Assuming your site is optimised correctly (which it will be if you have diligently followed the lessons), then additional link building to support your target keyphrases is the only other thing you will need to do to improve things.

Lesson 10 - Link Building 2

We've discussed the importance of 'link building', or off page SEO, previously and in this post I'm going to give you the definitive list of approaches to finding as many link targets as you need.

Remember, the on-page SEO will only take you so far, but its the systematic link building which will drive you up the rankings into the positions you want.

What makes a good link?

Before I show you how to find your link targets let me describe to you how best to create a link. I think a lot of you will already be aware of the importance of keyphrase rich 'anchor text' in the link. Here's an example of one which links through to my website....

Follow the link for a comprehensive overview of our [SEO training](#)

As you can see from this the link takes you to an overview of our SEO training course on my website. Importantly, the item of text which defines the hyper-link is the term 'SEO training', which is of course the keyphrase the target page is optimised for. So, two important points about this:-

1. Ensure the link text (or 'anchor text' as its often referred to) is the keyphrase the target page is optimised for.
2. Ensure the link goes directly to the target page (as opposed to the homepage) - sometimes referred to as 'deep linking'

The line of code which delivered this link is...

You can clearly see from this where the anchor text goes in the line of code. So, when asking others - be they directories or other sites - to link to you, be sure to ask them to use a line of code similar to this. This will make all the difference to the effectiveness of the link. Quality links, like this, from quality sources will win every time over quantity.

A List of approaches, tools and techniques for finding link targets

Hopefully you will already have your 'Link Target Spreadsheet' set up from the previous lesson on link building; what follows is a list of all the ways we use to build this list when doing this work for our clients:-

1. Examine your current links

You will probably already have some back links. Is the anchor text keyphrase rich as discussed above? Are they directed to the correct pages of your site?

It will be worth checking this as quite often just getting links reformed in this way is the easiest way to improved rankings.

You can use the [SEO Moz Opensite Explorer](#) I showed you previously, or a better one, which lists out the anchor text as well is [Backlinkwatch](#).

2. Study the links of top ranking competitors

Carry out a search using one of you important keyphrases. Look at the top three sites and identify their links using the SEO Moz tool. Record which ones you could go for.

3. Study the first three pages of ranking results

Similar to 2 - carry out a search and run down the list of results. Chances are if you can

get the top 3 to link to you you'll be number 1! Chances are you cant do this because they are competitors. However as you move down the list you'll eventually find some good link targets. Probably this will lose value after the first three results pages.

4. Identifying common links of top ranking sites

Here's the theory - if you can get all the links which the top 5 ranked sites have in common with each other, but which you don't have, then you'll be in the top 5.

To do this analysis of course might take a long time, since you'll need to list all the links the top five have then manually identify which ones they have in common. Its certainly worth doing though. We have a tool which can do this a lot quicker - its a paid for service (£95 plus vat) so let us know if you may be interested as it could save you a lot of time.

5. Using Social Bookmarking Sites

I produced a detailed post on this before - [Social Bookmarking and backlinking](#). Scroll down the post and you'll see how to identify the best social bookmarking sites which don't use 'nofollow' (nofollow tells the search engine spider not to pass on equity so such links are not useful for our purposes.).

Identify these and get your content - on your site or your blog - linked to.

An adjunct to this is to ensure you give your site visitors the opportunity of bookmarking your pages by giving a list of social media sites at the bottom of your page - or use [Add This](#) as I do....

6. Article and PR sites

I include this for completeness but we find producing articles and distributing them to article sites is generally not of great value - unless you are producing articles anyway. What is useful though if you use a PR company is to ensure when they distribute releases for you they ensure you have appropriate anchor text based hyper-links in the content, and of course they submit to online as well as offline sources.

7. Directories

There are thousand of directories out there from which you can gain links. Point 8 will show you some useful ways of finding them. Here's an additional site [ISEDDB.COM](#) where you can find free directories.

Also - in exchange for a link to my site I can give you a database full of directories we use when we do this work for our clients. Drop me an email if you want to do this - jan@janklin.com.

8. Use the SEOMOZ approach

Finally, here's an approach we quite often use to find relevant directories and other sources using Google advanced operators - its included in a blog posting at the SEOMoz blog which we use quite often...

[Finding directories and sites to get links from](#)

Once you've read through it - here's a useful tool which automates the process outlined for you....

[Automating the SEOMoz approach](#)

So, hopefully with this post and the previous one on link building, you can find as many

good quality and relevant sites as you need - there really are no shortages. The task now of course is to go through the process of getting these links. There will be easy ones to get - like directories - and more difficult ones where you'll need to use your charm and diplomatic skills via email and telephone. There's no rush - your web business is forever not just for Christmas. Just build the activity into your work schedule (say one day a week, two days per month or whatever) it really will pay enormous dividends in the end - and if you need help please call - we could even do some for you if you wish.

Lesson 11 - Local Search

Local Search is important - some recent research from Yahoo indicated that over 40% of all searches are for local services - 'dentist Kent', 'solicitor Northwest', 'Manchester air conditioning' etc...

One point to be aware of in this is that even if your services are national or international - you still want to capture individuals who put these geo variables into their search phrases because there are so many of them.

This post will show you what to do to optimise for local search, including having visibility on the Google map.

Here's an example...

You can see from this that the search for 'data cabling Liverpool' has delivered www.interconnect-ns.co.uk as number one.

(The 'map based results' come before of course - more about this later when I'll tell you how to get on this list also.)

The other thing to note about this is that a more specific search leads to more qualified traffic. If someone types in 'data cabling Liverpool' what is he interested in? Exactly, he's declared his intent and when he lands at your site he's a pretty well qualified opportunity to take advantage off.

So, here's what to do...

Decide on a specific geo term you want to capture - Kent, Manchester, Cheshire - along with your root phrase. Lets say you offer acupuncture services in York then the term to capture is 'acupuncture York'. Put this in your homepage 'title tag'. (make it the first two words in the tag and remember no more than 10 words in total)

Make sure you then repeat this phrase a couple of times in the text on your homepage and voilà! The next time the spider visits (give it a couple of weeks) you'll get a great google ranking.

Whether you are number one of course will depend on the level of competition, but most will be in the top 5 results

Google Maps - Local Business Centre

Now, let's get back to the map based results. I think its speaks for itself that its a great advantage to be in this listing. Its also free courtesy of google. All you need to do is register at Google Maps - Local Business Centre:-

www.google.com/local/add/businessCenter

You should see what's below, then just follow the instructions:-

Once you are in people can click on your snippet, see where you are and get directions using all the Google Maps/Google Earth functionality.

One bit of advice to optimise you listing and maximise the chances of being in the number one position. When filling in your description, position the keyphrase (e.g. 'acupuncture York') right at the beginning of the text you enter.

So, here's a summary of what to do...

1. Register with Google local - either as above or directly at :-
www.google.com/local/add/businessCenter

Be as comprehensive as you with can the information you provide. Google will contact you for verification purposes.

2. Ensure the geo location you are targeting (e.g. Kent) is included in the homepage and contact us page tags. Also include in the title tags of any other pages that discuss local services/products.

3. As 2. but include the geo location in the description and keywords meta tags also.

4. Ensure your full address details are included on the homepage, contact us page and other pages that discuss local products/services. (you could include this information in a 'footer' on other pages).

It also helps if your phone number (with area code) is on your homepage.

5. Ensure the text within these pages also includes the phrase you wish to capture - e.g. 'Garden Nurseries Kent'- at least a couple of times

6. What will really drive you into a prominent position, as well as in the maps position, will be if you can add some local inbound links e.g. yell, other local directories, chamber of commerce, local business associations, touchlocal.com , thelocalweb.net, scoot, Thomson Local, craigslist UK etc.

7. Where possible ensure the anchor text from these links includes the target phrase.

The above concentrates on Google, but [Yahoo](#) and [MSN](#) have local services too

Lesson 12 - International SEO

International SEO has become a lot easier since Google Webmaster Central hit the streets. Specifically, and regardless of where the site is hosted, we can direct relevant country specific traffic to the relevant part of our website. More on this later.

Of course if you have a country specific domain - e.g. - www.yoursite.de, www.yoursite.co.uk etc... then its no real problem anyway - these domains will deliver appropriate traffic providing you have done the SEO work. Incidentally doing the relevant SEO work means translating into the relevant language - the text and the meta data of course - as described in all previous lessons.

Its worth pointing out that the keyphrase analysis cannot necessarily be translated it will need to be redone. For example translating 'city breaks' literally will mean something very different in most other languages.

The good news is that we can use the google keyword tool to help us with foreign language keyphrase analysis....

The problem arises when we have a country specific domain - for example .co.uk - but we wish to attract foreign language searches. Lets say we wish to attract people searching in French. We can translate some pages on our .co.uk site and do the SEO work on these. This will deliver some listings if people search the web, but you'll never do as well as the .fr and .com sites. If they just search for local pages you would get no visibility whatsoever.

If they search local pages they will see something like this...

So you can see .fr sites show up and .com sites which are either hosted in France OR have had the Google Webmaster Central treatment.

So this is the solution if you don't want to go to the trouble of setting up country specific domains for all countries you want visibility in. Use a .com (or .eu) or any other country neutral domain - and use Google Webmaster Central (GWC) to direct relevant traffic to relevant parts of your site.

To be a bit more specific lets take a example. You could use www.yoursite.com and have separate folders for separate countries - e.g. www.yoursite.com/fr, www.yoursite.com/de etc. These folders would of course be translated and optimised.

You would then use GWC to tell Google which parts of the site are relevant to which countries. So international SEO has got a whole lot easier (for Google visibility at least). There's a really useful video clip directly from Google about how to do this.....

[Google Video on Geographic Targeting](#)

And here's my original [Google Webmaster Central](#) post which will help you.

Incidentally - Google isn't dominant in every country - although it is in the US and most of Europe. Notable exceptions are Russia, where Yandex is dominant, China - Baidu, and Korea - Naver. There's more information on other local search engines at the following links....

www.searchenginelinks.co.uk

www.searchenginecolossus.com

Contact Jan Klin

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