

Q&A

Search Engine Optimization

A conversation with Kimberly Judd-Pennie of CyberMark International



There's no doubt that search engine optimization is the best investment you can make to increase leads and sales. There's nothing better than plugging your keywords into Google and seeing your URL pop up in the top ten. The great thing is that you don't need to spend a lot of money to get there.

To find out how to get that elusive top-ten listing, we talked to Kimberly Judd-Pennie, the founder of CyberMark International, who has been optimizing websites for search engines since the early 1990s, before the heyday of Google.

Q: What are the most common reasons websites DON'T get high listings on search engines?

Kimberly Judd-Pennie (KJP): There are a number of reasons, but most of the time it has to do with the way the site was built. Many web designers are not aware of what search engines like, don't like, and what they look for. This causes problems with the search engines and their indexing. What they don't know can hurt you!

Many web designers forget that search engines have no idea what a site is about if it doesn't provide good keyword integrated text on its pages -- especially on the homepage. Many homepages don't have text and this is a huge mistake as the homepage gets a ranking boost because of this.

Try this experiment. Go to your website. If you can't determine what your site is about, what you do, or what products you sell within three seconds, you are making some serious conversion mistakes. Also your contact information should be on every single page in your site along with an incentive. For example, on our site www.cybermarkintl.com, we have a "click here" for a free evaluation, which is how we prefer to be contacted.

Q: What are the most common reasons websites DO get high listings on search engines?

KJP: They are topic-specific, properly built, and feature keyword integrated text on all their pages. They also have great link popularity, meaning they have a lot of other websites linking to them, which is really critical to Google these days. Beware of using a Flash website, which is great for design, but can be fatal to good search engine exposure.

Q: We all know Google is the big search engine, so should we pay much attention to optimizing for the other sites?

KJP: Absolutely! Other search engines are around 57% of your exposure. Search engines can randomly dump listings or rotate them if you put all your eggs in one basket.

The latest search market share numbers released by market research provider comScore shows that Google is 43% of all US searches—up slightly from 42.7% a year ago. All other major search

engines experienced a reduction in share. Currently, Yahoo is 28%, Microsoft is 12%, and Ask is 6%.

Q: What are the benefits of using a company like Cybermark to help optimize a website?

KJP: We analyze your keywords to determine how many search pulls are done for those words, so we can find your target market online. We then apply twelve years in the business experience, proprietary techniques, and programming skills to work your site into shape for high rankings. In addition, we also address the linking requirements by providing links and listings in the free and paid directories. Combining all of this allows your site to achieve top-ten listings, even for very competitive terms.

Q: Other than improving your search engine listings, what other benefits do you get from search engine optimization?

KJP: Well obviously with more search engine rankings come more traffic and more exposure. If your business model is solid and you offer a good product or service that the masses want, it almost always results in more business.

Q: What comes first: Google Adwords or website optimization?

KJP: You can do both at once for the quickest exposure. Google Adwords or CPC (Cost Per Click) advertising can be up and running in ten business days while organic or natural optimization can take three months or longer, but the ROI on natural or organic optimization is usually much higher. Every company on the web that is serious about business should be doing both! And don't forget to try Overture, which is also a very valuable CPC program.

Q: How much should a company spend on optimization?

KJP: This depends on lots of different variables like the target market, keyword competition, and budget. Our organic marketing campaigns start at \$2495, and go up depending upon the site evaluation.

Q: What's the first thing you should do to start optimizing your website?

KJP: Make sure your site programming is SEO (Search Engine Optimization) compliant. Then analyze what terms you want to target by thinking about what your customer would enter in a search engine to find your product or service. Then make sure that these terms are repeated throughout your site in your text. Make sure your programming tags, called Meta tags, match the theme and keywords of each page. We obviously go much deeper into detail analyzing your keyword density percentage and also analyze those sites that rank at the top for your keyword terms.

Kimberly Judd-Pennie is the founder and president of CyberMark International, a Scottsdale, Arizona based firm specializing in website optimization. CyberMark has helped hundreds of companies over the past 12 years achieve greater search engine visibility. You can reach Kimberly at kim@cybermarkintl.com and have your website evaluated for free at www.cybermarkintl.com.