

# Obtaining a Number One Ranking in the Search Engines

'The Guide Needed to Obtain a Number One Ranking on Any Keyword on All the Major Search Engines'

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# 1. Introduction

Dear Valued Client,

So you have a web site. You have spent hours getting the design to look just right, ensuring your navigation works properly, and adding all the content. You are now ready to get the word out. Search engines are a very effective way to do just this. The problem remains, however, how do you obtain top rankings on competitive keywords?

Most guides out there on the search engines are successful in showing you how to optimize a page for submission to the search engines. This guide is a bit different. I do, of course, start with the basics, but I go further. I will show you, step-by-step, how not only to optimize your web site, but how to obtain a number one ranking in all the major search engines for *any* keyword no matter how competitive.

If your goal is to obtain a top three ranking for relatively obscure keywords such as “Woonsocket Lawyer” or “Fly Fishing Techniques” this guide will surely show you how. Anyone who knows most of the general search engine techniques could in about six hours of time build an optimized site and within eight weeks have top rankings on these keywords. If your goal is to obtain a top ranking on a less competitive or moderately competitive keyword this guide will be very useful to you and you will be absolutely able to accomplish this goal.

This guide digs a bit deeper and goes a bit further, however. I have designed it to show you methodically, step-by-step, in an organized and detailed manner how to get a #1 ranking on those elusive one or two very competitive keywords that would ensure your business will always have thousands of targeted prospects clamoring at its doorstep. If this is your goal; if you have one, two, three, or more highly competitive keywords that you want to obtain a top ranking on across all the major engines, then you will be overjoyed by the resources, information, and detailed instruction which follows.

Search engines are the market makers of the Internet. They connect consumers with providers at the very moment of consumer interest and enable all of us to find exactly what we want, when we want it. They bring great efficiency to the Internet and our lives and shall exist as long as the network of servers and computers we call the Web is around.

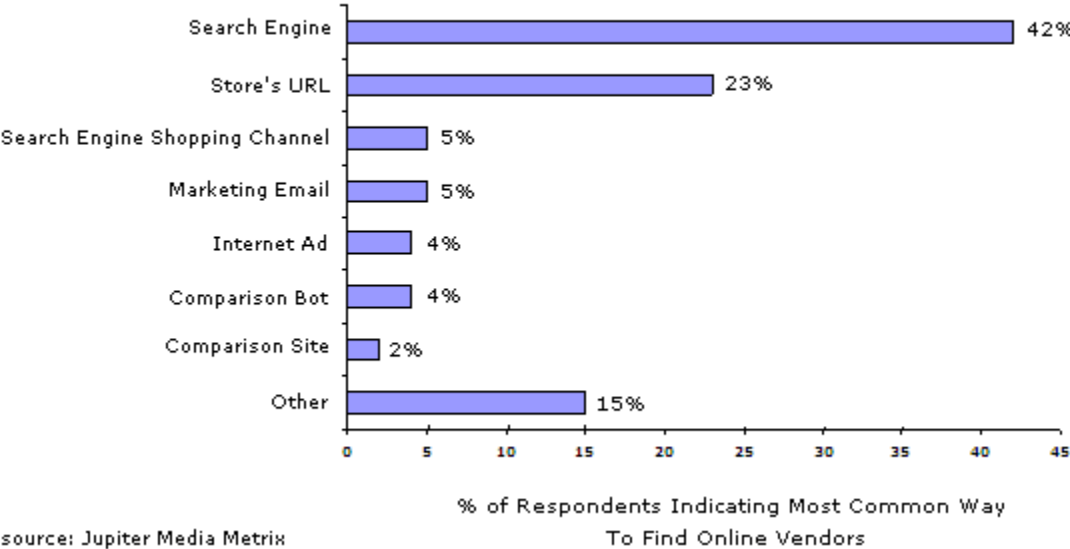
Positioning, one of the four Ps of marketing, is an absolutely critical component of the marketing mix. If you are not positioned to be where your customer is when your customer is ready to buy, you lose. Your competitor who is in that place at that time wins.

The first purpose of search engine optimization is to be positioned in the places where your customer is. The second purpose is to be positioned better than your competitors in these places. In the world of search engines, better means higher, and higher means a much greater probability that an individual will click on your link. While this figure varies by engine, recent search data has shown that approximately 70% of users, if they click, will click on one the first three listings in a search engine.<sup>1</sup>

Although a few people have given up on obtaining top rankings, saying it is just too hard and takes too much time, I disagree. In a survey by Jupiter Media Matrix, 42% of respondents cited search engine listings as the most common way they search for products and vendors online. Here are the full results.

Figure 1.1

**How Consumers Search for Products Online**



As you can see, it is crucial to be positioned well in the search engines.

To make a search engine positioning campaign worthwhile, however, you must have the right information and must execute your plan properly. While there is quite a bit of information available on the Internet, much of it is outdated and no longer effective.

<sup>1</sup> Figure computed from data at [www.7search.com/](http://www.7search.com/)

The dynamic nature of the Internet means that search engine technology, spidering capabilities, ranking criteria, and strategic alliances are all changing rapidly.

In this guide you will find the most up to date information as it is updated monthly. I will explain the current state of all the major search engines, show you how to select the proper keywords, detail step-by-step how to optimize your pages and site, show you how to build relevant links, and explain exactly what I did to obtain a top ranking on a highly competitive keyword for a client that directly contributes approximately an additional \$40,000 per month to sales.

Obtaining top rankings in the search engines is not an easy job, especially for some of the more competitive keywords. Having the right information makes it much easier, however. To obtain top rankings on the most competitive keywords, it may take dozens, perhaps hundreds of hours of your time, and you will have to wait two or more months to begin to see any results. However, the return on your invested time will be more than worth your efforts. The money you save by receiving traffic at no charge instead of paying per click to receive traffic will alone make your time well spent. The years of free prospects being sent your way without any further effort will just be icing on the cake – very valuable icing on the cake that is.

Obtaining top rankings in the search engines has spawned an entire sub-industry niche of search engine optimization (SEO). By reading and then applying the methods described in this guide you will know as much, if not more, as the most highly paid search engine consultants.

On a final note, this guide is intended to be used alongside action. You may wish to first read it through quickly in order to obtain an overall understanding of what you must do and develop a game plan. Then, as you proceed and reach each stage, use it as a companion and reference to further guide and refine your actions.

I thank you for reading this guide and wish you the very best. If you have any questions or need further guidance feel free to contact me via [ryan@virante.com](mailto:ryan@virante.com).

Warm regards,

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## 2. The Basics of Search Engine Optimization

One key to search engine positioning is submitting at the proper time. Before you submit your site you must properly prepare your site for submission. There are a number of steps that must be taken to do this. If you submit your site too early you will start out with a terrible ranking. As it is generally harder to bring up very poor rankings than to obtain a top ranking right off the bat, this should be avoided.

So how do you make your site ready to be submitted to the search engines? Throughout this guide I will discuss in detail, step-by-step, how to ensure your site is ready to be submitted. Here are the four basic steps.

### Four Basic Steps of Page Optimization

1. Select the keywords you want to focus on.
2. Create an optimized page for each of your targeted keywords by having ample page copy, focusing on keyword prominence, and using related page names, proper meta-tags, proper title tags, proper alt-tags, heading tags, and text links.
3. Avoid dynamic database-driven content, JavaScript, keyword spamming, and multiple use of content.
4. Make sure there are lots of web sites linking to yours.

You may already have learned most of the above. However, the main problem is not knowing you have to do each of the above four steps, but rather, knowing how to properly execute each.

## 3. Profiles of the Major Search Engines

As I stated above, one problem leading to so much confusion is that search engine technology, spidering capabilities, ranking criteria, and strategic alliances are all changing rapidly.

To address this problem, let's take a look at each of the major search engines.

First, however, let me make a very important distinction. Most people know who the major players are in the world of search engines. However, few know from where the search results come on each of these major engines. Many people believe that each provides its own results. This leads them to think they must submit to every single engine individually and manage their listings on each. This is simply not true.

In fact, all the results on the top ten search engines are derived from just five sources. What does this mean? Well, essentially, you only need to submit your web site to be spidered by five different engines.

Let's first look at the profile of each engine and then determine which five places we need to submit to.

Figure 3.1

| Profiles of the Major Search Engines |                    |   |                   |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|---|-------------------|
| Alexa Ranking <sup>1</sup>           | Engine             | Results come from                               | Paid Results from |
| 1                                    | Yahoo              | crawler-based results from Google <sup>2</sup>  | Overture          |
| 2                                    | MSN                | crawler-based results from Inktomi <sup>3</sup> | Overture          |
| 4                                    | Google             | own crawler-based database <sup>4</sup>         | Google AdWords    |
| 21                                   | AOL Search         | crawler-based results from Google               | Google AdWords    |
| 42                                   | Lycos              | crawler-based results from FAST <sup>4</sup>    | Overture          |
| 53                                   | Netscape Search    | crawler-based results from Google               | Google AdWords    |
| 62                                   | Altavista          | own crawler-based database <sup>5</sup>         | Overture          |
| 94                                   | Ask Jeeves         | crawler-based results from Teoma <sup>5</sup>   | Google AdWords    |
| 227                                  | FAST/Alltheweb.com | own crawler-based database                      | Overture          |
| 480                                  | Hotbot             | crawler-based results from Teoma                | Overture          |

<sup>1</sup> As of October 23, 2003. Note: Alexa rankings are an estimate of the popularity of the full web site, not of the popularity of the search feature on the site.

<sup>2</sup> Yahoo's main results changed from human directory listings to Google's in October 2002. Human-reviewed directory results are now found through the Yahoo Web Directory

<sup>3</sup> with additional results from the pay for inclusion directory Looksmart

<sup>4</sup> with additional results from human-developed directory DMOZ

<sup>5</sup> with additional results from human-developed directory and Goodle

From this comparison chart you can see that although there are ten major search engines, you really only must submit to five locations to be listed on all of them. These are Google, FAST, Inktomi, Teoma, and Altavista. Of these five, Google is undoubtedly the most important as it supplies listings for its own engine, Yahoo, AOL Search, and the default Netscape Search, among many others.

Many search engines today no longer crawl the Web to build their own unique index of Web sites. Instead, they will license an index from one of these five engines.

Now that we know which search engines we need to concentrate on, let's take a look at a fictional business and web site that I will use to illustrate the techniques given throughout the rest of this guide.

## 4. Our Case Study

In this guide we will be looking at a fictional gardening business in Columbus, Ohio called Garden Tips, Inc. I will be walking you through all the steps they must take to get their (fictional) web site, <http://www.mygardentips.com>, to the top of the search engines for each of their targeted keywords.

First, however, here is a bit of background.

Let's assume Garden Tips had the smarts to develop a few products that could be marketed through their web site. They have developed an ebook on landscape design, an ebook on creating a blooming flower garden, and a software product that enables homeowners to develop a horticultural design for their gardens (the owner worked with a local programming firm to get this done and paid them \$3000 up front plus 25% of all sales).

*Important marketing side note:* Originally Garden Tips was limited to providing a service to residents in and around Columbus. Their revenues were a direct function of how much they worked. The owner was working in his company instead of on his business. Now, the company has ability to sell products during all hours of the day to every corner of the world and make sales while the owner is sleeping. They could use the strategies in this guide to get to the top of the search engines for garden related keywords, start a sweepstakes, use autoresponders to convert prospects to customers, bid on CPC keywords, begin an email newsletter to turn customers into lifetime clients, get an affiliate program going, and do larger and larger joint ventures. If their products are good enough and they succeed in generating word of mouth and can obtain some press coverage the owner will soon very likely be a wealthy man or woman with

thousands daily being deposited directly to the company bank account. If you currently run a service business see what related products you can create and sell.

Now let's look at the step-by-step process the owner of mygardentips.com will go through to obtain top rankings in the major search engines for their targeted keywords.

## 5. Selecting Your Keywords

Selecting the keywords you want to focus on is one of the two most important steps in search engine optimization. Many web site owners or developers will simply list some related keywords in their meta tags and sporadically throughout their sales copy without any thought, structure, or plan.

By simply spending about thirty minutes using the methods I am about to demonstrate, you will develop an extensive listing of related keywords and know the following.

1. How many searches per month are done on each of these keywords across all search engines;
2. How many other web sites have used the same keywords on their sites;
3. Exactly how difficult it will be for you to gain a number one, two, or three position on each engine, and
4. Exactly which keywords you should focus on to maximize the return on your invested time.

How can these four crucial sets of data be collected? Well, you will need to use a few different tools.

### **Do This →**

First, let's do some brainstorming. Open up a Word or Excel file and make a list of the ten keywords you believe are most important to you. Do not make a list of very specific keywords, but rather, general, yet still related, keywords that you think are getting lots and lots of searches. Feel free to also add multiple keywords or keyphrases that you believe are common.

In a sixty second session the owner of Garden Tips came up with the following ten main keywords:

1. Garden
2. Home Garden
3. Gardens
4. Garden Tips
5. Gardening
6. Gardening Supply
7. Gardening Tip
8. Landscaping
9. Hydroponics
10. Flower and garden

Now that you have your ten main keywords you can use two tools to both extend and analyze your list.

#### *Keyword List Building Tool One*

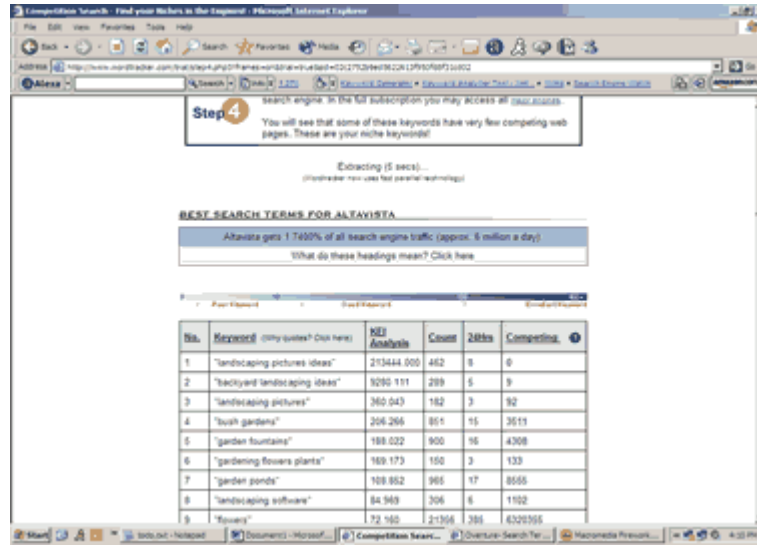
The first tool I recommend using is Wordtracker. Wordtracker's strengths are in providing data on related keywords, the number searches done in the past month and twenty-four hours on each selected keyword, and exactly how many other web sites are competing to be in the listings for each selected keyword. Wordtracker provides a free trial service. This will likely be all you'll need.



Go to <http://www.wordtracker.com/trial/> and start a trial. Then, in step two, type in the first of your main keywords and select up to thirty related keywords. Then continue on to do the analysis on these keywords.

Here is a screenshot of a sample final report.

Figure 5.1



Copy and paste this data to Word or Excel. Then repeat your free trial as many times as you need so that you analyze all your main and related keywords.

*Note:* For some niche web sites you may not be able to find a full thirty unique and related keywords for each search. Simply find as many as you can and then do the analysis.

Now, at the end of this process you will have a listing of perhaps a hundred or so unique and related keywords with complete data on recent searches performed, number of competitors, and Keyword Effectiveness Index (KEI) analysis. Here is a screenshot of the top five listings.

Figure 5.2

| No. | Keyword (Why quotes? Click here) | KEI Analysis | Count | 24Hrs | Competing |
|-----|----------------------------------|--------------|-------|-------|-----------|
| 1   | "landscaping pictures ideas"     | 213444.000   | 462   | 8     | 0         |
| 2   | "backyard landscaping ideas"     | 9280.111     | 289   | 5     | 9         |
| 3   | "flower pictures"                | 901.331      | 2049  | 37    | 4658      |
| 4   | "landscaping pictures"           | 360.043      | 182   | 3     | 92        |
| 5   | "bush gardens"                   | 206.266      | 851   | 15    | 3511      |

I tend to focus in on both the KEI analysis and the monthly count. The higher the KEI Analysis figure the better. Essentially, a high number means that there are a lot of people searching for the specific keyword but not too many web sites out there who are targeting that keyword or use that keyword on their page.

For example, “landscaping pictures ideas” is a wonderful keyword. Data show that in the past month 462 searches were done on this keyword (on the search engine Altavista, the only engine available in the free trial) in the past month and yet not a single web site (in Altavista’s database) has this same combination of words in their title tag, meta tags, or body.

In other words, if you were to create a page that had “landscaping pictures ideas” as the title, in the meta tag description and keyword, and in the body of the page a few times you could get a number one ranking for this keyword and receive an extra 32 (research shows approximately 7% of search engine users click on the first listing on any given search – this is 37% of the total who click on any listing<sup>2</sup>) visitors each month just from Altavista.

Now, considering that just 1.74%<sup>3</sup> of the approximately 350 million daily Internet searches<sup>4</sup> are done on Altavista, just by putting up an optimized page focusing on the keyword “landscaping pictures ideas” you can hope to have around 1,856 (32.3 x 100/1.74) unique visitors (each a potential customer) coming directly to your page each month at no cost to you besides the twenty minutes or so it took you to create the page on “landscaping pictures ideas.” This means that twenty minutes of work will have brought you 22,270 unique visitors during a year. This is surely a good investment of your time. See what gems you can find.

To contrast the above results with high KEI figures, let’s look at the bottom five results.

*Figure 5.3*

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<sup>2</sup> Figure computed from data at <http://conversion.7search.com/scripts/advertiser/tools/keywordsuggestion.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Data from WordTracker website – <http://www.wordtracker.com>

<sup>4</sup> Data from WordTracker website – <http://www.wordtracker.com>

|    |                         |       |      |    |         |
|----|-------------------------|-------|------|----|---------|
| 34 | "horticulture supplies" | 0.809 | 22   | 0  | 598     |
| 35 | "indoor gardening"      | 0.778 | 229  | 4  | 67429   |
| 36 | "garden"                | 0.726 | 1498 | 27 | 3090295 |
| 37 | "gardening tools"       | 0.603 | 157  | 3  | 40885   |
| 38 | "gardens"               | 0.351 | 979  | 18 | 2727751 |

You will notice that the KEI Analysis figures for these keywords are very low. In fact, there are 2,727,751 sites competing to be ranked at the top for the keyword "gardens." Clearly it would take a lot of time to attain a number one listing for this keyword. Further, notice that only 979 people have searched for this on Altavista in the last month. Generally, you will want to not focus on keywords with a low KEI Analysis or a very low traffic count. Focus your initial efforts on keywords with KEI Analysis figures above ten. Then, once you have developed optimized pages for these keywords move on to the more competitive ones using tips I will share with you in the following sections.

By using Wordtracker you have developed an extended list of potential keywords and determined which will give you the highest return on your invested time.

#### *Keyword List Building Tool Two*

Now let's use a second tool to further extend our list of keywords. In practice, it does not matter which of these tools you use first. In fact, you may wish to use them simultaneously for maximum benefit.

This second tool is the Search Term Suggestion Tool from Overture. You may already use Overture as part of your CPC strategy.

Overture is a pay-per-click search engine that provides search results based on the amount companies are willing to pay to be listed for each keyword. Some of the amounts paid to be in the top three listings on Overture (the listings that are syndicated on six of the ten major search engines listed in figure 4.1) are very high. Top bids will range from \$0.05 on obscure keywords to up to \$10.00 per click for the keyword casino.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> As of August 7, 2003 – Data from the Overture.com view bids application

**Important marketing side note:** If you choose to use a cost per click engine such as Overture, unless you have a very good prospect to customer conversion ratio and an effective back-end sales system you most likely should concentrate on bidding on keywords that are less than \$0.30 per visitor, or simply limit yourself to this amount. When using CPC engines such as Overture, know the lifetime value of an average customer and always have a tracking system in place so you know exactly how much you are spending to gain each customer. Make sure your customer acquisition cost does not exceed the present value of the lifetime value of an average customer. However, since the reason you are reading this guide is to get top listings in the search engines so that you receive free targeted traffic to your site, I would suggest focusing your efforts first on search engine positioning before you begin to test CPC engines.

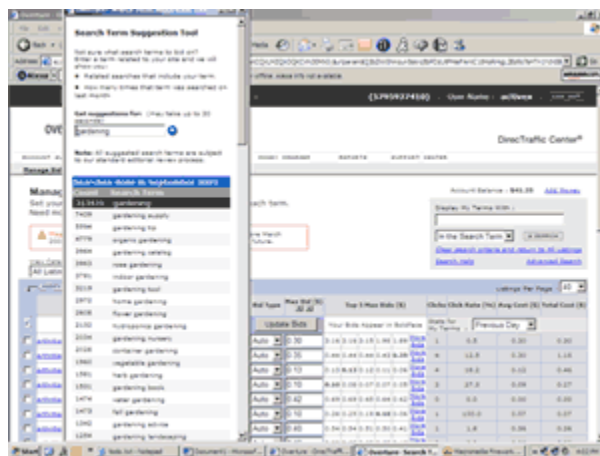
Even if you do not have an account with Overture, however, you can use their Search Engine Suggestion Tool (<http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/>) to generate an extensive list of potential keywords and determine exactly how many searches were done on that keyword in the previous month.



Go to the Search Engine Suggestion Tool via the link above.

Here's a screenshot of what the tool looks like.

Figure 5.4



*Step one:* Input each of your main keywords in the tool and copy and paste the data to Word document or Excel spreadsheet. As I noted earlier, you may use this tool concurrently with Wordtracker for full benefit. Here is a close up of the utility.

Figure 5.5

| Searches done in September 2002 |                       |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Count                           | Search Term           |
| 313431                          | gardening             |
| 7439                            | gardening supply      |
| 5594                            | gardening tip         |
| 4779                            | organic gardening     |
| 3964                            | gardening catalog     |
| 3963                            | rose gardening        |
| 3781                            | indoor gardening      |
| 3219                            | gardening tool        |
| 2972                            | home gardening        |
| 2608                            | flower gardening      |
| 2132                            | hydroponics gardening |
| 2034                            | gardening nursery     |

*Step two:* Now, compare the number of searches done in Overture with the respective results for the keyword from WordTracker to further refine your keyword priority list. Your goal now is to divide your keyword list into three priority levels. Take the top thirty keywords with the highest KEI Analysis figures and most traffic and put these in your A-list. Take the next thirty keywords and put them in your B-list. Put all the remaining keywords in your C-list.

Congratulations, you now have a prioritized list of top related keywords. Now, let's learn how to make your site show up in the top listings for each one of these keywords.

**Action Checkpoint:** This guide is meant to be used in parallel with action. If you have been reading passively to this point and not taking action, go back to the beginning of this section and take the prescribed action step by step. In order to benefit from the remaining part of this guide you will need to have your prioritized list of

keywords completed.

**Important Note:** In the below section, Creating Optimized Pages, I will show you how you can create an optimized page for each of your targeted keywords. Optimizing every page on your site for a separate targeted keyword is important for increasing the number of searches your site comes up on and can be effective in obtaining top rankings on niche-specific keywords.

Do note that for the most competitive keywords, however, you will need to optimize either your home page or purchase a separate keyword-rich domain name to have a chance at being in the top rankings for these terms. For information on obtaining a top ranking on highly competitive keywords, read section nine. All of the optimizing and link building tips in sections six, seven, and eight will still apply however.

## 6. Creating Optimized Pages

The first thing you need to do is create an optimized page for each one of your targeted keywords. This, unfortunately, will be the most time consuming part of the entire process. However, it is absolutely essential.

*Two Examples:* If you would like to reference an actual example of optimized web pages Virante has created, you may visit:

1. [www.email-marketing-software-resource.com](http://www.email-marketing-software-resource.com)
2. [www.search-engines-guide.com](http://www.search-engines-guide.com)
3. [www.colon-cleanse-constipation.com](http://www.colon-cleanse-constipation.com)

Before you can do anything you are going to need content. If you have thirty different keywords you want to show up in the top rankings for, you will need at least thirty different articles. Now, you do not have to write all these yourself. You can perhaps write two or three articles yourself and then spend a couple hours searching the Internet for quality related articles you'd like to syndicate on your site.

Be sure to ask for and obtain permission to syndicate the content. If you do not you will be violating copyright laws. If the author or copyright owner asks for a link to their web site or a short profile to be included with their article by all means go for it. This can be a great quid pro quo. They receive free publicity and you obtain free quality content.

Finally, know that the ideal page size is between 400 and 700 words, so if you have an article that is longer be sure to break it up into separate pages and optimize each for a separate keyword.

**Important Note:** From here on, I will assume that you have access to either an HTML editor (you can use Notepad, WordPad, or download one online) or a WYSIWYG web design program such as Macromedia Dreamweaver or Microsoft FrontPage that provides access to the page code. If your web master has been working on your site to date or if you have been outsourcing production to a third party, be sure to discuss with them that you would like to have control of the code so you can optimize your pages for the search engines. You'll also need to obtain your server hostname, username, and password so you can access your site and upload changes via File Transfer Protocol (FTP). If you do not have a FTP program, you can download a free trial of one at [www.wsftp.com](http://www.wsftp.com).

Now, let's say we want our first page to rank well for the keyword "gardening tips." Here is what you need to create the optimized page.

### *The Title*

The first tag after your <head> should be the <title> tag. Give the page a title of exactly the keyword you want to target. In this case, "Gardening Tips." Do not include your company name, web site name, or any other text; just the targeted keyword or keyword phrase. If you sell your product or provide your service only locally, then it will be a good idea to include your location in the title. Otherwise, have only the keyword. Here is an example of the HTML code that will create your title.

```
<head>  
<title>Gardening Tips</title>
```

### *The Meta Tags*

Meta tags just are not as important as they once were. However, since the Inktomi engine (which provides results to the MSN search portal) still takes them into

consideration and many engines use the description tag for the write up under your listing, it is still worth your time to add in optimized meta tags for each of your pages.

Here is what the meta tags would look like for the page you are optimizing for the keyword "Gardening Tips."

```
<meta name="description" content="Gardening Tips from the  
Gardening Tips Master"> <meta name="keywords"  
content="gardening tips">
```

The meta tag should be near the top of your HTML code between your <head> and </head> tags, following your <title> tag.

Do note that I've used only one keyword in the keywords tag. There is no use diluting the prominence of your keyword with other keywords if this is the one you wish to focus on for this page.

### *Alt-tags*

Placing your keywords in your alt tags will also be beneficial. The alt tag is placed within the <img> tag, the tag that displays an image. The purpose of the tag is to display a text alternative to the image in the case the visitor has images disabled or in the case that the image is broken (the path to the image is incorrect). Although your <img> tags do not require an alt tag, it is a good idea to have one as search engines look at these tags and weigh them into your keyword prominence and ranking.

The tag may look like:

```

```

### *Hyperlinks*

Another way to increase your chances of obtaining a good ranking is to hyperlink your targeted keywords. Search engines give a higher weight to words that are hyperlinked and if your targeted keyword is within the link your keyword prominence will increase. The idea is to work the keyword into the link. Here's an example of how the mygardentips.com web site would incorporate this strategy.

Have you ever wanted to grow a beautiful garden? Please read our [garden tips](#).

As you can see, the targeted keyword “garden tips” is hyperlinked. This will raise the chance the site will come up in the top rankings for this keyword.

So instead of hyperlinking words such as click here, learn more, and more info, try to use the targeted keyword for that page. Also, the earlier in your body you can use this keyword link the better. See if you can fit it in your first paragraph.

### *Site Map*

It is a very good idea to include a site map on your web site. A site map is simply a page that lists every page on your site with a text link to each. Once you've created your site map, link to it from your home page. This enables the search engines to easily traverse every one of your optimized pages, maximizing your listings and chances of obtaining a top ranking on your targeted keywords.

If, by chance, you have a web site that has a few hundred or more pages within it and it would take a long time to create a site map, search download.com for a site map creator. There are quite a few software programs which can automatically generate a page containing links to all your other pages. Make it easy for spiders to get to all the pages on your site.

### *Naming Convention*

In naming a page include your targeted keyword for that page. For instance, instead of calling a page tips.html, call it garden-tips.html. Also, if your page is within a directory it may be helpful to have that directory contain your targeted keyword as well.

### *Page Copy*

The page copy is perhaps the most crucial part of optimizing your page. You cannot just use any content, change the title tag, alt-tag, meta tags, and page name and expect good results.

Use the method I outlined earlier in this section for obtaining content from other authors for syndication on your web site. Once you have collected the articles, take a look at it to determine what the topic is and which keyword you should optimize on

that page of content. Of course, be sure the article contains the keyword you will be optimizing your page for a number of times.

As mentioned earlier, you will want each page to contain approximately 400 to 700 words. If you have an article that is longer, break it up into multiple pages and optimize for a different keyword on each one.

Whatever you do, do not use the same article more than once. Trying to save a few hours, many a site owner has used the same content to create multiple “doorway” pages for each of their targeted keywords. Search engines have the ability to detect if the same content is used more than one time within the same web site and will penalize your rankings rather severely if your site is tagged for this infraction.

### *Keyword Frequency*

Now that you have your content in place, let’s make a few changes to ensure you will receive optimal rankings. Let’s first look at your keyword frequency.

As the name implies, keyword frequency is simply the number of times that your targeted keyword shows up on your page. Generally, you’ll want to make sure that your keyword is on your page a minimum of eight times and a maximum of twenty-five. Any less and you will not be maximizing your potential prominence, which I will discuss in a minute. Any more and you may be seen as intentionally repeating your keyword and your ranking may be penalized.

### *Keyword Prominence (also known as Keyword Density)*

It is important to make sure the prominence of your keyword is high. Prominence is how close to the start of an area that your keyword appears. Prominence applies to the words within the title, body of the document, the meta tags, the heading tags, and the alt-tags.

For example, if you were optimizing a page for the keyword “Canine Breeding” you would want to make sure that “Canine Breeding” was the first in the title (and optimally, the only words in the title). All other things being equal, on a search for ‘Canine Breeding’ a site with the title Canine Breeding in Columbus would show up above a site Columbus Canine Breeding. You would also want to be sure to have “Canine Breeding” quite a few times near the beginning of you page.

In general, listing your optimized keyword closer to the top of your page will give you a better prominence.

### *Headings*

It has been shown that in some engines using your keyword within heading tags can help to increase your ranking. Essentially, a heading tag is used to specify larger text that is a title for a certain subsection of content. The HTML code will look like:

```
<H1>Subtopic Title</H1>
```

This code would display on your page something like:

# Subtopic Title

You can also use the <H2>, <H3>, <H4>, <H5>, <H6>, and <H7> tags. The higher the number, the smaller the text will be.

However, search engines will give the most relevance to keywords within the <H1> tag. This poses a problem since the text displayed in the browser that is within this tag is often too big to use aesthetically on a page. This can be solved by using Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) to change the size of the <H1> tag to something more readable.

In the <HEAD> area of the page, insert the following code:

```
<STYLE TYPE="text/css">
```

```
H1 {font-family: arial, helvetica; font-size: 12pt; color: black}
```

```
</STYLE>
```

The above will force all <H1> tags on the page to use a 12 pt Arial or Helvetica font in black text. You can modify the point size, font, and color to whatever you wish.

*Quick tip:* Use Cascading Style Sheets along with the <H1> tag to increase your rankings without sacrificing your site aesthetics.

## Review

Say you have a page in which your targeted keyword was “rose garden.” On the page you have a five hundred word article about growing the perfect rose garden. You have titled the page “Rose Garden” and have put the phrase in both the description and keywords. You have used the <H1> tag with Rose Garden as your header and used CSS to ensure the header display fits within your design. You have also been sure to use “rose garden” quite a number of times near the top of your page to ensure high prominence, have two text links on the page that contains your keyword, and have put the keyword in the alt tags of your images. Finally, you have named your page rose-garden.html.

Congratulations, you have done all the right things and have optimized your page. If the off-site factors are right (explained in a moment), you will have a good chance to be listed in the first three listings for the “rose garden” keyword on all the major search engines.

For ease of reference, here is a review of the above steps.

### Nine Steps for Optimizing Pages

1. Keep the length of your pages between 400 and 700 words. Split up any longer pages into two pages.
2. Put your keyword in the title.
3. Put your keyword in the meta tag description and keywords.
4. Use your keyword in heading tags for added prominence.
5. Use your keyword a number of times near the top of your page.
6. Put your keyword in a link (ex. Learn more about [Rose Gardens](#)).
7. Put your keyword in alt-tags.
8. Make your keyword the name of the page with every word separated by hyphens.
9. Review each part this section for further clarifications on each step.

You now know what to include on your optimized pages. There are, however, a few things you must be sure to avoid including. Let’s now look at some common optimization errors.

## 7. Avoiding Costly Errors

It is possible to follow all the steps provided in the previous section and still not receive a very high ranking or potentially be banned from the search engine all together. Think about the last section as the to-do's. In this section are the don't do's.

First, let me mention that some of these don'ts may be a bit complex for less experienced web site developers. If you do not understand a section, do not worry, just move on. The only crucial aspects you must know are to not use frames, to not keyword spam, and to have text links on every one of your pages.

Here is what you should avoid.

### *1. Do not use image maps without accompanying text links*

Image maps are simply images or graphics in which different parts of the image are linked to a different page. Often many horizontal or vertical navigation bars are simply images (buttons) that take you to another section of your site when clicked. There is nothing wrong with having images that are also links. However, if you do, you must make sure you also have text links on each of your pages (especially your home page) to each of the sections on your site.

As explained earlier, search engines collect their data through spiders. When a spider comes to your web site it first loads your robots.txt file if you have one. The robots.txt file can be used to tell a spider which, if any, sections and/or pages on your web site it should stay away from. Once the spider finishes with your robots.txt file, it will most likely move onto your home page. From there it will traverse your web site and index all of the pages it finds (with a maximum of a few dozen, usually). The problem is, however, that the spider cannot "see" images, only text. It can only move to another page if there is a text link to another page. Therefore, if all your links are within images, it will not know the rest of your web site exists and simply move on to the next site in its endless list.

As you can see, it is crucial to have text links to each main section of your web site on every one of your pages.

### *2. Do not use drop down menus without accompanying text links*

On the same topic, spiders are also unable to follow the links that are in drop down menus. If you use a drop down menu so the user can select which section of your site to go to next, be sure to also use text links somewhere else on your pages.

### *3. Do not use frames*

A cardinal sin in the world of search engines is using frames. Frames became popular a few years ago because they enable web site developers to easily change content displayed on a site across all pages by changing just one document. Since then, however, web site development programs such as Dreamweaver have provided the ability to use templates and coding such as server side includes and global variables have enabled more developers to change uniform features (such as design, navigation bars, or text footers) by only changing one document. However, some web site owners have persisted in using frames. This will be detrimental to their search engine efforts.

Frames start with a frameset. The frameset is simply code that tells the browser which two, or more, HTML files to display in the browser. The problem comes from the fact that the search engines are able to read the code in the frameset, but are unable to follow the code to the actual frames (the HTML files). This causes the frameset pages to receive very poor rankings.

If you must use frames, be sure to put optimized pages within the <noframes> tag on each frameset page. However, managing this will be very time consuming if you have more than a few pages. The best advice is to simply not use frames.

### *4. Do not use dynamic content on pages you want to be indexed*

Dynamic content, or pages that are generated on the fly from data in a database, can cause significant problems for the search engines spiders, and in turn, cause your site to be penalized and your dynamic content to not be indexed at all.

Dynamic content is generally only used by larger sites or experienced developers. So if you have no clue what dynamic content is or how to use databases on your web site you should have no cause for concern. Dynamic content can usually be spotted by looking for the ? or & symbol in a page name or a .pl, .cgi, .php, or .asp page ending.

There is no inherent problem in using dynamic content. What you must avoid is using dynamic content on pages you wish to optimize for the search engines. Also, if you

are using dynamic content be sure you create a robots.txt file on your server in which you tell spiders to refrain from indexing this area of your site.

The reason search engines have problems with dynamic content is quite simple. Again, they are simply mindless spiders that follow text links. Since dynamic pages really are not “there”, but rather created on the fly depending on what parameters are provided a spider could potentially become trapped in a large database driven page. It would have to index the entire database and would be stuck in a loop until it did so, potentially crashing the site it was on. For this reason, most search engines have disabled the ability to index dynamic content. Google is the only engine that will index dynamic content; although it will only index the few pages before it force stops the loop and moves on.

The reason this information on dynamic content is mentioned is that there are quite a few technically adept people out there who are able to create wonderful database driven web sites but do not learn about the marketing side until later. If you are one of these persons, simply make static copies of the dynamic pages that you will be optimizing (especially main pages) and be sure to restrict the spiders through your robots.txt file.

#### *5. Do not place JavaScript above your meta tags*

Search engines often have trouble reading meta tags placed after JavaScript on web pages. If your web site uses JavaScript, be sure to place all of your meta tags above the JavaScript code.

In general, having JavaScript in your source code will make it more difficult for the search engines to find what they are really looking for, the text on your page. If possible, do not use JavaScript on your optimized pages, and if you must, do so sparingly.

#### *6. Do not put optimized content deeper than three levels*

Search engines typically only index the top three levels of any site. A level is simply a directory. For example if the address of a page is <http://www.mygardentips.com/garden/tips/r/roses/info.html> it will most likely not be indexed by the search engines as it was buried five levels deep. If you wanted the page to be indexed it would need to be located at something like <http://www.mygardentips.com/rose/info.html>. Try to keep your navigation structure as flat as possible when creating your optimized pages.

## 7. Do not keyword spam

Keyword spamming, or spamdexing, was once a commonly known “trick” to increase keyword frequency and relevancy and in turn obtain a better search engine ranking on targeted keywords. Search engines caught on to this rather quickly, however, and now may penalize or even ban a site that attempts to keyword spam.

The strategy is simply repeating keywords over and over at the top, bottom, or margins of a page usually in very small (font size=1 or headline <H6>) type. Often this text would be made to be the same color as the background so that the visitor would not see it at all.

An example of keyword spamming could look like this:

```
<font size="1" color="ffffff">garden tips gardening landscaping garden tips gardening landscaping garden tips gardening landscaping garden tips gardening landscaping garden tips gardening landscaping garden tips gardening landscaping garden tips gardening landscaping garden tips gardening landscaping garden tips gardening landscaping</font>
```

The hexadecimal code FFFFFFFF will make this text white. Assuming the background of the page is white, the text will not be visible to the reader.

This strategy simply does not work any longer and as mentioned may get your site banned from the search engines. Do not do it.

It is however, surely good to have high keyword prominence and frequency. So instead of doing the above, you could try inserting a keyword-rich paragraph near the top of your page such as this:

Come learn about landscaping and gardening in our [garden tips](#) section. If you have ever wanted to have great landscaping in your yard or a wonderful garden you'll not want to miss these [garden tips](#).

These two sentences have all your targeted keywords multiple times without the risk of being penalized. Further, you have used one of your targeted keyword phrases in a link, further increasing your prominence and relevancy.

## 8. Do not use Macromedia Flash® Intros as your home page

Flash is a program that creates animations that are displayed on a web site. Its common uses are for animated intros, advertisements, and in some cases, even full web sites. There is no denying that Flash intros can impress the eyes and if used properly can be an effective means of presenting your business, product, or service. However, search engine spiders are unable to read anything in a Flash file. Therefore, you will not want to have a home page that only has a Flash intro on it.

Having small animations as part of your home page should not hurt your rankings as long as you have ample accompanying and text. But do not make the mistake some site owners have made by putting nothing but a Flash intro on their home page.

### *Review*

If you can optimize your pages to include all the elements on the to-do list while avoiding the eight above mistakes, you will have prepared your pages to rank well.

#### **Eight Page Optimization Mistakes to Avoid**

1. Do not use image maps without accompanying text links.
2. Do not use drop down menus without accompanying text links.
3. Do not use frames.
4. Do not use dynamic content on pages you want to be indexed.
5. Do not place JavaScript above your meta tags.
6. Do not put optimized content deeper than three levels.
7. Do not keyword spam.
8. Do not use Flash intros on your home page.

#### **Do This →**

Now, using the page optimization guidelines in section six and avoiding the mistakes listed above, go ahead and optimize each page on your site for a different targeted keyword. Do note that you should only do this if you want your site to be listed in top positions across a number of different and related keywords. If your goal is instead to obtain a top ranking a very competitive keyword, be sure to read section nine.

To ensure you pages are optimized properly for each engine and each attribute is in line with recommendations I use the Page Critic in WebPosition Gold. You can learn more about WebPosition at <http://www.edgepromote.com>.

## 8. Building Links to Your Site

I stated above that selecting your keywords was one of the two most important steps in search engine optimization. Well, the other “most important” step is building links to your web site. Without a good number of other related web sites linking to yours you will have no chance at obtaining a top ranking on a keyword that has any amount of significant competition.

The number and quality of incoming links to a site is highly weighted in the algorithms that search engines use to rank a web site. Therefore it is crucial that you focus on building links to your web site.

Search engines view links to a site as a vote of confidence. The fact that another web site owner has thought your site worthy of being linked to on his or her web site makes the search engines feel more comfortable that your site is of good quality and is here to stay. If a few hundred or a few thousand other web site owners link to a web site, that web site will most likely be a very good web site that provides true value to persons who visit it. The people and companies that develop the complex ranking algorithms understand this and increasingly link popularity is a major determinant of ranking.

Ceteris paribus, or, all other things being equal, if two web sites are optimized for the keyword “garden tips,” the site with a higher link popularity and better quality links will be ranked first.

So how do you build links to your web site? I have written a thirty-five page report on this very subject entitled “Building Thousands of Links to Your Site”. You may have already received it with this guide. If you have not, you may download the latest version of it at <http://www.search-engines-guide.com/pdf/building-links.pdf>. I would highly recommend downloading the guide and printing it out. It will be an invaluable resource to you as you progress with your very important link building campaign.

In order to build links to your site you will first need to create a reason for others to link to your site. You may wish to offer site owners a link in return or pay them for linking to your site (using a cost-per-acquisition or per-visitor affiliate program). Most likely, at first you will want to offer a link exchange with other web site owners.

To do this, use search engines to compile a list of the email addresses of persons who own or run web sites related to yours. Then email these persons and offer to exchange links.

There are many other strategies and tips and tricks that will help you build links to your site and a number of software programs that can be used to expedite the process. Read my report to learn about them all. However, this basic one I've mentioned here, with a few hours of work should enable you build a few dozen links. This may be all you need if you are not aiming for any very competitive keywords.

How do you know how competitive your keywords are? Well, first bring up the data from your Wordtracker analysis. This will tell you how many other web sites have the same keyword on one of their pages. While this number will help give you an idea, it may not accurately tell you how many web sites have optimized their pages for that keyword or how well the top few web sites are optimized.

The easiest way you can determine just how many links you will need to obtain a top position is to use a top search engine such as Google to search for the keyword you are targeting. Record the web site address of the first listing (be sure to obtain the actual first listing and not any paid listings from AdWords or Overture). Then, type in

link to:<http://www.competitorsite.com>

and, of course, replace competitorsite.com with the actual address of the top ranked site. This will tell you how many other web sites currently link to this top ranked site.



To find out how many other sites link to web sites that show up in the top rankings for your targeted keywords, go to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) and type in 'link to:<http://www.competitorsite.com>'. This will give you a good idea of how many links you'll need to build to obtain a higher ranking (although other factors such as proper on-page optimization and the domain name are of course important too).

However, simply obtaining more links than your competitor will not guarantee you a top spot. Assuming all other factors are equal, including the number of links, the site with the best quality links, or, the best link reputation, will be ranked highest.

So what is a high quality link and how do you obtain them? Well, a high quality link is simply a link that is from a closely related and highly trafficked site. Having a number of links from unrelated web sites will not help your rankings one bit and might even

hurt them. If you are trying to position your web site to come up in the first few listings for the keyword “Business Law” and there are a number of web sites about potato farming linking to you, the search engines are going to question whether your site really is about business law or not and penalize you in the rankings for that keyword. However, if you are able to convince your state bar and ten or twenty corporate law firms to exchange links with you, the search engines initial read of your site will be confirmed and you’ll be right up there in the “Business Law” listings.

How can you tell if another web site is highly trafficked and if it has a good link reputation itself? Well there are two tools you can use.

#### *Link Quality Check Tool One*

The first tool to use is the Alexa Toolbar. Alexa is a small bar that can be used with the Internet Explorer browser that tells you the respective ranking of each of the sites you visit. Each time a visitor who uses Alexa visits a site, the visit is recorded. The site with the most number of Alexa visits is ranked first, the site with the second most second, and so on. Presently [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com) has the number one Alexa ranking. The rankings go all the way to 2,000,000 or so with sites lower than this reporting “No Data.”

Generally, when you are searching for sites to ask to exchange links with, look for sites with lower Alexa ranking. As long as the site is related, an incoming link to your site from it will not hurt you, however, if you can obtain links from sites with very low Alexa rankings (shoot for under 200,000) then your link reputation will be greatly increased.

You can download the Alexa Toolbar from <http://download.alexa.com>.

#### *Link Quality Check Tool Two*

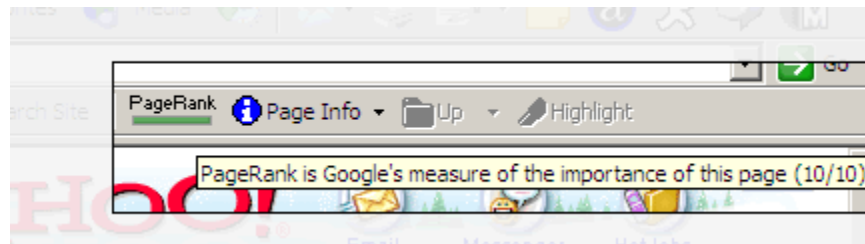
The second tool that is useful in analyzing potential link partners (and your competitors) is the Google Toolbar. The Google Toolbar is very much like Alexa, except that it ranks its sites from zero to ten with ten being the best possible ranking. It calls this numerical value the PageRank.

Since it is so important to obtain a top Google Ranking, using this tool is crucial. For each of your potential link partners, check out their PageRank. If you find any with a high rank, say, 6 or above, spend extra time in building a relationship with the webmaster or employees of that company. As you gain links from partners with high

PageRanks, your rank will increase as well, greatly improving your chance of obtaining a top ranking on your targeted keywords in Google. You can download the toolbar from <http://toolbar.google.com>.

Here is a screen shot of the Google PageRank feature.

Figure 8.1



As a final note on link reputation avoid obtaining links on Free for All (FFA) pages or link farms. These will simply give you low quality, unrelated links and are more likely to hurt your search engine rankings than help.

In sum, having other web sites linking to your web site is crucial. Many search engines will not even index (list) a web site until there is at least one other web site linking to it. Be sure you invest the time in building links BEFORE you submit to the search engines.

*Quick tip:* Submit the exact web address of every site that links to you to the search engines as soon as you are notified of the link. This will ensure that the search engines index these pages and give you credit for having others link to you. Only after you do this should you submit your own web site. You can use Submit Express (<http://www.submitexpress.com>) to submit these sites (and your own, eventually) to all the major search engines at no charge to you.

**Do This →**

If you have yet to download my thirty-five page report, “Building Thousands of Links to Your Site,” go ahead and do it now. It is at <http://www.search-engines-guide.com/pdf/building-links.pdf>. Print it out and use it as your companion

during your link building campaign. Do remember that link building is a crucial part of your overall search engine positioning campaign.

## **9. Obtaining a #1 Ranking on Highly Competitive Keywords**

In this guide so far I have shown you how to select your keywords, optimize your pages, and avoid the mistakes that many site owners make in creating their sites. The methodology I have promoted up to this point is for you to create a separate optimized page for each of your keywords. This will work well for lesser or moderately competitive keywords but it is unlikely you will be able to obtain top rankings on highly competitive keywords in this manner.

I have assumed that you would want to optimize your web site for a number of keywords. I instructed you to develop an A, B, and C list, each with about thirty terms and focus on the keywords in this order. This can be a great way for obtaining good rankings on a number of more obscure keywords. This can bring you significant traffic, perhaps a few thousand visitors a week. However, you will not be able to obtain top rankings on the most competitive keywords in this way.

The only real chance you have to obtain top rankings on the most competitive keywords is to optimize your home page for that keyword. You see, home pages (the first page that shows up when people type in your domain) are weighted much more heavily than pages in sub-directories on your web site.

To optimize your home page, simply follow the tips given above for optimizing regular pages. If you are going to optimize your home page, you will need to optimize for one keyword, two at maximum. Select the most competitive related keyword for which you have a chance at obtaining a top ten ranking for (compare the number of web sites that link to your site versus the incoming links to the sites in the top ten for that keyword to determine if you have a chance), then optimize your home page for this keyword using all the techniques and tips given earlier in this guide.

So if you are really trying to obtain a top ranking on a very competitive keyword (say for example, garden) you will need to optimize your home page for this keyword.

But what if no matter how much you optimize you cannot obtain a top ranking. Well, then your problem most likely lies in off-page attributes. On-page attributes are things such as the HTML code, the text on the page, etc. Following the optimization guidelines given in section six and seven one can create a perfectly optimized page. But this is only half of what matters. The other half is the off-page attributes. I talked about a very important off-page attribute in section eight, building links. Another off page attribute is the domain name. These off-page attributes, having a keyword rich domain name and lots of related links, are as important, if not more, as the on-page optimization.

*Crucial tip one:* To obtain a top ranking on a highly competitive keyword you must have more and higher quality links to your web site than any other listed site.

If you follow the steps outlined in my report, “Building Thousands of Links to Your Site” at <http://www.search-engines-guide.com/pdf/building-links.pdf>, you should be able to, within two or three months, obtain quite a few thousand links to your web site. If you need more to obtain a top ranking for your targeted keyword, simply repeat the process for as long as needed.

Now, you may have already known about the second off-page attribute, the domain name “secret.” The actual secret, however, is not the fact itself but how you execute your strategy based on the information. Keep this in mind.

This second very important piece of information is simply this:

*Crucial tip two:* To obtain a top ranking on a highly competitive keyword you must have the keyword in your domain name.

A significant part of weighting in the ranking algorithm is the domain name. Most sites’ domain names do not contain the keywords they are focusing on. This gives domains that do contain one or more of their targeted keywords a big advantage.

Obtaining a number one ranking on a highly competitive keyword can be a very valuable asset to your company. Through my efforts optimizing just one site for one keyword I brought one client many hundreds of thousands of dollars in sales. Considering a domain costs just about \$9 per year and hosting about \$15 per month, there is no reason not to register a domain name with your top keyword included.

Now, you most likely already have a domain name and web site if you are reading this. By no means am I suggesting that you replace your current domain with another. I am suggesting you create a separate site at your new domain and use this site as an addition to your current site and strategy, not a replacement. Will this mean extra work? Yes. Will it be worth it? Yes.

If optimized properly, this keyword-rich domain will have a great chance at obtaining some very good listings. Not only this, but by cross-linking your two sites you will create added relevant link popularity.

So what are those one, two, or three killer keywords? What are those search terms that a top position would give you tens of thousands of dollars in extra sales each month (one ranking I obtained for a client solely and directly contributes and extra \$40,000 in sales *per month*)?

Take a look again at the Search Engine Suggestion Tool and WordTracker, or your A-list of keywords. Pick one or two or three that are the most related and have the most number of searches done on them each month. Now, go to your preferred registrar and using combinations of these keywords, with each word set off by a hyphen, find a keyword rich domain name and register it. Dot com names are preferable but if not available, a .net will be fine as well. It is possible to register domain names up to 63 characters.

For example if you sold email marketing software online you may wish to register

[www.email-marketing-software-resource.com](http://www.email-marketing-software-resource.com)

Clearly not too many people would type this in their browsers, but remember your goal is to obtain search engine traffic. You can use your shorter regular domain, say, [yourcompany.com](http://yourcompany.com), for all of your other promotions.

Now, obtain hosting for this domain name. But do not use your usual host. In order for a cross-linking strategy from your other web sites to be effective you must use a different host. You see, search engines look at the Internet Protocol (IP) address of sites that link to you. If you do not have a different Class-C subnet address, the search engines may disregard these links, undermining your cross-linking strategy. An IP address is broken up into blocks, or subnets. There are four subnets, each consisting of three numbers. The first is the Class-A subnet, the second is Class-B, and so on. So if your current IP address was 255.255.255.255 you would want to

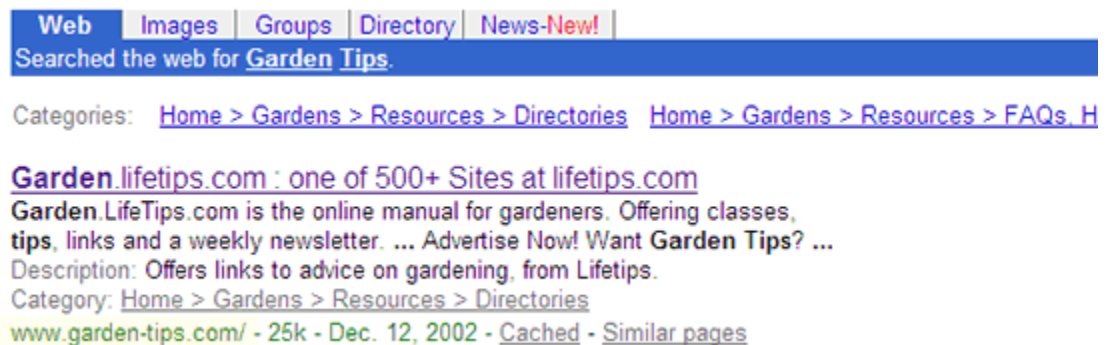
make sure the last six digits were different on your new domain. This can be assured by using a different hosting provider.

Now, let's take a look to see how our case study would implement this keyword rich domain technique. Garden Tips, Inc. has a pretty good domain name, mygardentips.com. You would think that since "garden tips" and "garden" is within their domain that it would have an advantage on these keywords. In fact, however, it really will not have much of an advantage at all. As stated above, search engines are better able to "see" the keywords when they are separated by hyphens.

If I were consulting with the owner of Garden Tips and he or she wanted to get a number one ranking on the keyword "gardening," a very competitive keyword with over 306000 people searching for in on Overture alone in February 2003<sup>6</sup>, I'd would suggest that he or she register gardening-tips.com.

Assuming the owner wanted to show up first for the keyword phrase "Garden Tips" I would recommend that she register garden-tips.com. However, a quick Whois search at register.com shows me that this domain, not surprisingly, is already taken. The registrants must have had some knowledge of search engine optimization. Go ahead and search Google for "Garden Tips." As shown in the graphic below, you'll see that the site with the garden-tips.com domain has the top position, as expected.

Figure 10.1



As you can see, having your targeted keyword or keyword phrase in your domain name will significantly increase your chances of obtaining a top ranking. From a strategy point of view, getting your keywords in your domain name is critical.

<sup>6</sup> Data from Overture's Search Term Suggestion Tool - <http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/>

Putting just any old page up on this domain will not bring you a top ranking for gardening or gardening tips, however. Unless you have numerous of links to your site, have built a content-rich resource on your site (a few dozen pages or more), and have optimized your home page following all the tips in this guide, you will not get a top ranking on competitive keywords. On the other hand, if you followed every one of these steps, there is a very good chance you will succeed. Once again, this will mean extra work. Within a few months, however, you will most likely be listed first for your targeted and very competitive keyword. And as long you continue to build you site and gain additional links, your top listing will be there to stay. These listing assets can literally be worth millions of dollars.

As a review, here are the seven steps to obtaining a top ranking on highly competitive keywords.

#### **Seven Steps to Obtaining a Top Ranking on Highly Competitive Keywords**

1. Register keyword-rich domain with keywords separated by hyphens.
2. Obtain quality content by writing it or obtaining permission to syndicate work of other authors
3. Create optimized pages using tips in sections six and seven
4. Optimize home page for most competitive keyword using tips in section six and seven
5. Build hundreds of relevant links to site (or simply build more than current top ranked site) using tips in section eight
6. Submit site to search engines
7. Wait 6-12 weeks.

Now let's leave our Garden Tips example for a minute and look at an actual case study.

## **10. A Real Life Case Study**

I have just revealed a strategy that I used to create a consistent \$40,000 of sales *per month* for a client. Our goal was to obtain a number one ranking on all the major search engines for a very competitive keyword. We already had another web site, the main corporate site, but our search engine rankings were not very high for this site for our targeted keywords. I had done everything right in optimizing the pages, and we were showing up in the number one positions on many lesser keywords, bringing us

a few thousand visitors each month. However, we could not break into the top ten on most of the major engines for our targeted and very competitive keyword – we were number eleven.

So what was our problem? Basically, we had done everything right. We had about 2,500 incoming links, the second most number of links, and we had optimized the home page perfectly. So I took a look at each of the top ten sites and realized something. I realized that every one but one (which had the most links and was the longest established) had the keyword we were targeting right there in their domain name.

So that day we registered our own domain name that contained the targeted keyword. As you can imagine, most of the domains containing that keyword were taken, so we had to be a bit creative. We combined the two keywords we were focusing on most and separated them with a hyphen.

As stated above, while visitors do not like to type in hyphens, search engines love hyphens. Well, they do not actually love the hyphen, but they will give you a much higher rank if your targeted keyword is clearly separated from the rest of domain name.

So we registered our domain and then began to build the site. We were starting, of course, without any incoming links. I knew we would have to build a very high quality site with lots of content in order to obtain the thousands of links we would need.

I started with a good looking, yet fairly simply three row by two column table-based design. A streamlined, professional design will help you build trust with visitors and gain credibility. However, do keep in mind that search engines prefer simple code structures. Therefore, try not to include complex image maps, long JavaScript, or intricate table structures before the main body of your page.

We then took all of the informational articles we had from our corporate site and added them to our new site. We came out with about twenty. Next, we contacted other web sites and obtained permission to syndicate their content on our web site. In all, we ended up with about one hundred very high quality articles.

I then took these articles and turned each into an optimized page. Even though our main goal was to obtain a number one position for our targeted keyword, there were still about one hundred or so other keywords – though a bit more obscure – that we would not mind having a top position on.

Our next step was to begin our linking campaign. We used software described in my report on building links to build a list of about ten thousand related web sites (see <http://www.search-engines-guide.com/pdf/building-links.pdf>). We then proceeded to ask the owner of each of these sites to exchange links with us. We'd put a link to them on our site in return for a link to us on theirs and add them automatically to our link directory. After about a week of work, I was able to generate about one thousand links to our new web site.

During this process, as I received notice of the location of the links to our web site, I submitted each of these pages to all the major search engines using the free utility at <http://www.submitexpress.com>. This ensured that each of these incoming links would be recognized by the search engines and credited to our site.

I waited another four or five days, and then proceeded to submit each and every one of our pages to all of the major search engines using Web Position Gold.

I had done everything I could. All I could do now was wait. Six weeks passed and nothing had happened. Eight weeks and still nothing. Finally, one day in mid-March nearly ten weeks later a search on Google for our keyword made us very happy. We were number one on Google, arguably the most important engine to have that number one ranking on.

Within another few weeks we showed up in either the number one, two, or three position on every one of the major search engines. Today, after obtaining a few more links and gaining the advantage of time (search engines prefer sites that have been around for a while) we now have the number one position on nine of the major search engines and the number two position on the other one.

So what have been the results? Well, presently the site is receiving 175,000 unique visitors per month, without paying for a single penny for advertising.

Consider what this means. My client now receives 40,000 very targeted prospects each and every week, contributing an approximate \$40,000 each month to sales. While the company, purposely, does not promote its product directly on the informational site, each article mentions the product in it and on every page they take the first step in turning our prospects into customers by offering a subscription to their monthly newsletter and eight day autoresponder course.

Once a prospect subscribes to our newsletter or autoresponder, and many do, there is a good probability that we will convert them into a customer. In each of their monthly newsletters they have an informational article or two. They also include an advertisement for our product. Soon, the prospect will have been exposed to our product a number of times. Eventually, most will make a purchase. Then all our systems designed to turn our customers into lifetime evangelizing clients can kick in.

*Important marketing side note:* This new web site should not replace your current site, but rather work in tandem with your overall marketing strategy. Be sure on your new web site that you also have a way to collect prospect's information such as a newsletter or autoresponder signup form. Then, be sure you stay in contact with them and continue to remind them of your product(s) and/or service(s). This constant exposure will be crucial to converting the maximum number of prospects to customers.

In review, if you are targeting a highly competitive keyword, register a domain name with your keyword in it, add quite a few pages of quality optimized content, and obtain quite a few thousand incoming links to your web site (read my article on building links to learn the top techniques to accomplish this). If you can do these three steps, there is a good chance you will succeed in your goal of obtaining a number one position on your highly competitive keyword.

For easy reference, here is a review of these steps.

#### **Three Steps for Off-page Optimization**

1. Register a domain name with your keyword in it.
2. Add quite a few pages of quality optimized content. You can write it yourself or obtain it through syndicating the works of authors you've received permission from.
3. Obtain more links to your site than the top ranked competitor using "Building Thousands of Links to Your Site."

## **11. Submitting to the Search Engines**

Throughout this guide I have talked extensively about how to optimize your web site in preparation for submission. Now that this has been done (and only after it has been done) you will be ready to submit each page on your site to the search engines.

Now, this is an important distinction. Many people believe they can simply submit their home page and all the pages on their site will be indexed. While this may work, to be sure, I would suggest that you submit each page that you have optimized. Also, you will want to submit the pages which are optimized for the most important keywords first, as some search engines have limits on how many pages they will index on your web site.

Here are the submission pages for the most important search engines.

Figure 11.1

| Submission URLs for Top Engines |   |      |                |
|---------------------------------|---|------|----------------|
| Engine                          | Submission URL  | Free | Paid Available |
| Google                          | <a href="http://www.google.com/addurl.html">http://www.google.com/addurl.html</a>                   | ✓    | No             |
| FAST/Alltheweb.com              | <a href="http://www.alltheweb.com/addurl.php">http://www.alltheweb.com/addurl.php</a>               | ✓    | Yes            |
| Inktomi                         | <a href="http://submitit.bcentral.com/msnsubmit.htm">http://submitit.bcentral.com/msnsubmit.htm</a> | ✓    | Yes            |
| Altavista                       | <a href="http://addurl.altavista.com/addurl/new">http://addurl.altavista.com/addurl/new</a>         | ✓    | Yes            |
| Teoma                           | <a href="http://ask.ineedhits.com/">http://ask.ineedhits.com/</a>                                   |      | Yes            |

## 12. Monitoring Your Rankings

Once you have submitted your site to these major search engines, I'd suggest that you start working on another project or continue to build your company in other ways. It will be at least six weeks and perhaps many more before your site will begin to show up in the engines.

To monitor my rankings I use a very good piece of software called WebPosition Gold. WebPosition not only monitors rankings, but also helps you optimize your pages and submit all of your pages to the search engines. I would highly recommend the software. More information on WebPosition Gold and all of the software we recommend can be found at <http://www.zeromillion.com/webmarketing/web-marketing-software.html>.

Once your site shows up in the search engines, if you get the results you desire, congratulations are in order. If you do not, take a critical look at your site and the sites that are ranking above yours and see what further changes you can make. Also, have a second round linking campaign and see how many new related links you can generate. Make it a contest for yourself, or your employees, and set rewards based on the number of related links you are able to generate in a week.

You will only be able to succeed in obtaining a top ranking if you take action. If you have read this guide through without yet taking action, get to it. Follow this guide to develop your plan of action and then execute. The key is in the execution. The key is to have a bias towards action.

Here are the six final notes I would like to leave you with.

#### **Six Points of Review**

1. Be certain to develop a good list of targeted keywords. Use WordTracker and the Search Term Suggestion Tool to do this.
2. Optimize a separate page on your site for each keyword. Follow all of the optimizing tips given in section six of this guide and pay attention to the

things to avoid listed in section seven.

3. For highly competitive keywords, optimize your home page, or purchase a separate domain (from a different hosting provider) that contains that keyword and build an optimized site there. Optimize that domain's home page for your most competitive keyword. Cross link all your sites for added link popularity and improved link reputation.
4. Link popularity and link reputation are very important. Be sure to check the number of links those in the top position for your targeted keywords have. Allocate sufficient time for a linking campaign of your own. Quality is equally as important as quantity so focus on exchanging links with sites with high Alexa rankings and Google PageRanks and do not encourage unrelated sites to link to you.
5. Submit your site to the major search engines manually using their submit page or with WebPosition Gold. You can also use WebPosition Gold to monitor your rankings.
6. Take action. Nothing will happen unless you stop passively reading at this very moment and get actively doing. Obtaining top rankings on competitive keywords will take hundreds of hours of your time and take months to show up. They will be worth it.

**Do This →**

If you have not yet printed this guide out, I would suggest it. As you progress I encourage you to use this as a reference and companion to your efforts. It will take time to obtain top rankings, but the payoff will make it time well spent.

Thank you very much for reading this guide. I wish you the best of luck in all your endeavors. I encourage you to visit the entrepreneurship resource I have developed at <http://www.zeromillion.com> often for all the resources you need to start, build, manage, and grow your business and to participate in our growing community of entrepreneurs. Once again, thank you!

My very best regards,  
Ryan P. Allis, President & CEO  
Virante, Inc.

P.S.: I invite to the Web Marketing Discussion Forum in the Entrepreneurship Community at <http://www.zeromillion.com/community/>. You can post your questions

on search engine marketing, optimization, building links, or just web marketing in general and I'll answer them myself.

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## Appendix A: Dispelling Common Myths

### *Common Myth #1: Getting Listed = Success*

You may have heard that being listed in the search engines is a very effective way of attracting visitors to your website. Well, this is only half-true. Simply being listed is not going to do a thing for you. Instead, your goal must be to be listed in the top few listings on a number of specific and related keywords that you target.

Simply having your site listed by the search engines will do you no good if your site shows up three hundredth or three thousandth in the results of the popular keywords you wish to target.

This is not to say, however, that submitting your site to be spidered by the search engine crawlers is pointless if you do not have hours and hours to invest in obtaining top rankings. Nearly every site with some content will, even if just by chance, show up in the top listing of one or more obscure searches, perhaps providing you with a few dozen or a few hundred visitors per month. So, if nothing else, I would surely suggest spending about ten minutes submitting your website to the search engines. However, do not think that just because you've submitted you will have a chance to show up in the top rankings for the most pertinent keywords.

### *Common Myth #2: Proper Meta-tags are the Holy Grail*

Many people believe that meta-tags are the most important variable in obtaining top placement in the search engines. There could not be a more inaccurate statement. Meta tags were once quite important in ranking algorithms. However, even then criteria such as body copy and number of incoming links were much more important.

Further, recently support for meta tags was dropped by a number of search engine spiders. In fact, the only major search provider that presently even takes meta tags

into consideration is Inktomi, which is the provider for some of the listings on the MSN search portal. Until this support is dropped, it will still be a good idea to have meta tags within your <head> tag. However, do not think that just by having meta tags on your page you will be guaranteed to obtain a top ranking for your targeted keywords.

*Common Myth #3: You Must Submit Your Site to the Search Engines to Become Listed*

Many people believe that their site will never be listed unless they submit it to the search engines. This is simply false.

Search engines compile their data using software called spiders (also known as crawlers). Every minute of every day, these spiders are visiting websites and using their respective ranking algorithms to build the massive databases that the search engines use to rank each website for each keyword.

Besides following the submitted list of sites to spider, the spiders follow the links on each website it visits. Therefore it is possible for a spider to find and index (the act of listing your site in its database so it will show up in search results) your website without ever submitting to the search engines (putting your website in line to be spidered) assuming there are other sites linking to yours.

This is not to say it is a bad idea to submit to the search engines. For newer sites, this will ensure that your site is listed. The point is simply that you should not be fooled into paying someone to submit your site to the search engines before you have had a chance to ensure it is ready to be submitted.

*Common Myth #4: You Must Pay a Submission Service to Submit Your Site to Search Engines*

There are many companies that offer a website submission service. There is absolutely no reason to pay anything to use a service such as this. First of all, you can do this yourself for free. Second of all, using these services too early will do more harm than good.

## **Appendix B: Search Engine Glossary**

Affiliate Program – Software that enables a business to pay affiliates a percentage or specific amount per sale. This is an effective way of obtaining incoming links.

Cost Per Click (CPC) – Search engines which display results not by relevancy but by the amount advertisers are willing to pay to be listed on each search term

Content Syndication – Either offering your own content for use on other sites in exchange for a plug or link or using content from other sites with permission. This is a good strategy and effective quid pro quo for both parties. One receives free publicity and the other receives unique and quality articles for keyword optimization without having to write each proprietarily. Offering your articles on other web sites is a great way to build incoming links.

Crawler – *see Spider*

Database – A collection of data in tables stored on a server. Generally content within a database is not able to be indexed by the search engines.

Domain Name – The top level web address or uniform resource locator (URL) that corresponds in the DNS records to the IP address where the site is hosted. Garden-tips.com is a domain name.

Dynamic Content – Content on a page from a database which is called based on the query parameters. This content is generally not able to be indexed by the search engines.

Frames – Multiple HTML sources (pages) that are displayed in the same page-view by a browser. The visitor will see a single page displayed that can contain top, bottom, left, right, and middle sections (the frames). Search engine spiders generally do not like frames.

File Transfer Protocol (FTP) – The means through which web pages are uploaded to a server.

Image Maps – A single image broken up into parts, or slices. These are often used for navigation. Different areas of a single image can be linked to different pages. Image maps are fine to use, as long as accompanying text links and ample body copy is included as well on all pages.

Incoming link – A link on another web site that is to your web site.

Indexing – The act of a search engine spider listing your site in its database so it will show up in search results

Hyper Text Markup Language (HTML) – A basic programming language used to create web pages. Optimizing the HTML code on a page is essential for obtaining top search engine rankings.

Hyperlinks – Text or images that, when clicked on, take the visitor to another web site or page within your site. These are most commonly known as simply links. The more web sites that link to your web site, the higher your search engine rankings.

JavaScript – A coding language used within browsers for various effects. Can cause a lower search engine ranking in some cases.

Keyword – A term for which you want your site to show up in the results when searched. Generally you will want to compile a list of relevant and potential keywords and then optimize a page on your site for each.

Keyword Effectiveness Index – A term coined by the Wordtracker service that is a function of the competitiveness of a keyword and the number of searches for that keyword.

Keyword Frequency – The number of times your targeted keyword is in a specific area of your page including the meta tags, heading tags, body tag, and alt-tag. Generally you will want your keyword to be listed a number of times in each. As an approximate rule of thumb, use your keyword no more than three times per meta tag, four times in heading tags, twenty times in the body tag, and ten times in the alt-tag.

Keyword Prominence - How close to the start of an area that your keyword appears. The closer to the beginning your targeted keyword appears, the higher the prominence, the higher the prominence the better. Prominence applies to the words within the title, body of the document, the meta tags, the heading tags, and the alt-tags.

Keyword Spamming – Using a keyword repeatedly out of context in an attempt to gain additional frequency and in turn obtain a better search engine ranking.

Meta Tags – the description and keyword tags with the <head> tag at the top of every web page. These are not as important as they once were, but it is still recommended to have them and insert your targeted keyword for that page within.

Links – see *Hyperlinks*

Link Popularity – The number of other web pages that link to your web site. Search engines view links as votes of confidence so the more links you can obtain, the better. You should avoid low quality links from places such as Free For All (FFA) pages and link farms.

Link Reputation – The quality of the incoming links to your site. The more closely related and greater trafficked sites you can obtain sites from, the better your link reputation and the higher your rankings.

Off-site optimization – Optimizing factors such as domain name, link popularity, and link reputation that cannot be changed through modifications in the HTML code.

On-site optimization – Optimizing by modifying page source code factors such as keyword frequency, keyword prominence, title, meta tags, body copy, alt-tags, navigation, etc.

Pay Per Click (PPC) – see *Cost Per Click*

Ranking – The number that your web site is listed for a specific search term in a specific search engine.

Ranking Algorithm – the proprietary mathematical formulas, variables, and set of weights that a search engines uses to determine a site's ranking for a keyword search. Search engines guard these carefully.

Registrar – Company through which you can register domain names

Search Engine – a utility that enables a user to quickly search the Internet to find web sites on searched for topics.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) – The act of optimizing a webpage and/or web site to perform well in the search engines. There is a growing niche of consultants and firms who specialize in this.

Search Term – *See Keyword*

Site Map – A page on a web site that lists and links to every other page on that web site.

Source Code – The code of a web page that must be optimized for the search engines. You can view top ranked sites source code to gain information on what they have done to obtain their top ranking.

Spider – A software robot that continuously crawls pages on the Internet and collects data that will be analyzed using a ranking algorithm.

Static Content – Content on a web site that is hard coded onto the page and does not come from a database. Search engines have no problems indexing this content, unlike dynamic content.

Submission Service – A service which charges a fee to submit your site to the search engines for you. Using these will usually be unnecessary as it is free to submit to the search engines and you only need to submit to five separate engines to be listing in every one of the top ten.

Wordtracker – A web-based service that enables you to research keywords for optimizing on your site.

## **Appendix C: Mentioned Links and Resources**

**Alexa Toolbar** - <http://download.alexa.com>

Toolbar for Internet Explorer which will tell you the Alexa ranking of the site you are on. This is useful for determining the quality and number of visits the site receives.

**Google Toolbar** - <http://toolbar.google.com>

Toolbar for Internet Explorer which will tell you the Alexa ranking of the site you are on. This is useful for determining the quality and number of visits the site receives.

**IntelliContact Pro** – <http://www.intellicontact.com>

Web-based email list management software that enables you to send out personalized updates, announcements, and newsletters to your subscribers from any

computer, use mail merge, track campaigns, manage subscribers, and send both text and HTML emails.

**Search Engine Discussion Forum** - <http://www.zeromillion.com/community/>

Have questions on search engine marketing, page optimization, building links, or web marketing in general? Come talk with other entrepreneurs, small business owners, and marketers in the Web Marketing Forum in the Entrepreneurship Community.

**Search Engine Watch** – <http://www.searchenginewatch.com>

One of the oldest and most resourceful sites for information on search engines and search engine optimization.

**Search Term Suggestion Tool** -

<http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/>

Overture's tool which provides similar keywords to the one you type in and gives search statistics on each.

**SubmitExpress.com** – <http://www.submitexpress.com>

A site which provides free search engine submission to six of the top ten major search engines. Follow the provided links in this guide for the other four. Using this site is an easy way to submit sites that link to you so they are indexed by the search engine spiders and your links are recognized sooner.

**Web Marketing Resource Center** – <http://www.zeromillion.com/webmarketing/>

Here you can read all the web marketing articles by author Ryan P. Allis and sign up for their newsletter, Web Marketing Monthly.

**WebPosition Gold** – <http://www.zeromillion.com/webmarketing/web-marketing-software.html>.

The de facto standard for web site submission, optimization critiquing and rank monitoring software. A highly recommended tool for submitting your own site to the search engines.

**WordTracker Trial** – <http://www.wordtracker.com/trial/>

An online utility that enables you to build a list of related keywords and learn how competitive each keyword is.

*About the author:* Ryan P. Allis is the CEO and President of [Virante, Inc.](http://www.virante.com) a web marketing consulting firm based in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, CEO of Broadwick Corporation, providers of the web based email list management software IntelliContact Pro, founder of <http://www.zeromillion.com>, a community of and resource for entrepreneurs, and founder of [The Entrepreneurs' Coalition](http://www.theentrepreneurscoalition.com) a nonprofit organization dedicated to building an international network of entrepreneurs. He is an internationally syndicated writer and speaker on the topics of entrepreneurship and web marketing. Ryan has recently published his first book, [Zero to One Million](http://www.zeromillion.com), a guide for young entrepreneurs, and is an economics major at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. For more information visit <http://www.ryanallis.com>.

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