



seo tips and tricks

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The goal of online PR is to increase awareness of your firm, build credibility and convert prospects to sales — the same as traditional PR. Search engine optimization can help you drive more traffic to your firm website, which is the hub of your online PR and marketing efforts. Here are some ways to do that.

Keywords

After determining the proper keywords to use for your website, make sure they are included in your meta tags and meta description as well as in content. Create a different description for each page as well as a unique page title for the top of each page. For example, on the Services page, describe a call to action or use a key message rather than your firm name. You might now be asking: What are you talking about here?

SEO terms (site-wide): These are overall terms or keywords for the site that should occur on each page and include company name, industry, location, niche and any recommended/important keywords

Page title: This is the name of the page as it appears across the top of the web browser window, including the company name, industry or niche, location and keywords specific to the content

Meta-keywords: a few phrases and keywords drawn from the information that is found on each web page. This could be the same as the general SEO terms if it's a page without a lot of unique content.

Meta-description: This is a brief description of what the page is about. This could be the same as the Page title if it's a page without a lot of unique content. The first line or two of this description is what will appear when the company comes up on a Google search.

Headline: what appears on the page as a headline above the written copy on the page; you can use keywords here if possible.

Content: What you say about your firm on each website page; keywords should be part of the content.

Search engines are looking for both relevant content AND who is talking about you and what you do. They will rank sites higher when the keywords they use match their content and when other websites are agreeing that you are the best source for a certain type of information.

To search for relevant keywords, we recommend Wordtracker.com, a subscription based service that cost-effectively searches the universe of keywords people are searching for and the keywords your competitors are using.

Links

Which brings us to links. Ask other sites to link to your site and give them the proper keywords to use for the link. This could include clients, vendors, associations in which you are a member and universities or colleges in which you are attending a career fair or other event. Explain the benefits of the link (enhanced exposure for their event, a list of recommended experts for their clients or a members-only networking contact list). Offer to link back to them for SEO.

Another way to increase external links to your site is to create unique niche pages or “microsites” that are designed as a separate site and focus on a specific service or practice area. To deal with this demand in Internet real estate, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) approved a massive change to the Internet's address system. Companies, organizations and countries can soon apply for domain names that end in pretty much anything of 64 characters or less. Right now, domain names are restricted to about 20 suffixes — .com (for companies), .org (for organizations) and identifying labels for countries like .uk.

If several parties want one name — for instance .lawnmoweraccident — an auction will be held to settle the dispute. This change could create opportunities for trademarked firms and organizations willing to pay a higher price for a more specific domain. To see more information on this topic, visit <http://www.icann.org/en/factsheets/>

Conversion/Call to Action

The primary goal of driving traffic to your website is conversion. In addition to including contact information on every page of your site, you might also consider including a contact form. Keep it simple with name, email, phone and a space to ask a question. Include a basic question in the form such as, “Who should I talk to about...?” or “How can you help me with...?” Place this contact form on every page to reinforce a call to action.

On the Careers page, you could tailor the contact form to attract university students for a tour or to ask about internships. If you do this, however, make sure that someone is always monitoring the requests so that the appropriate person can respond promptly. Get a small group of key staff on board to handle requests.

Monitoring

How do you know that your online PR efforts are working? One way is to monitor your web statistics and note any peaks right after an event, media coverage, email campaign or newsletter. Monitor which pages get the most views. Notice how long people are staying on your site. Make sure that the pages that are viewed most often offer a call to action. Survey prospects and clients regularly to find out which parts of your site are the most helpful and what else they would like to see or learn about.

Another way to find out if you have optimized SEO for your site is to launch a pay-per-click campaign through Google AdWords. Be careful of the words you bid on and how much you bid because it can get expensive if you don't know what you are doing. Consider hiring a consultant to put together a campaign for you.

For more options in monitoring, you should review how your newsletters, blog posts and website articles are coded. Updated, topical coding per article can give you clues as to which articles and posts are getting the most attention and for how long. Use this data to address the most pressing areas of interest among prospects through your other marketing and sales efforts.

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