



Helloooo... We're Over Here!

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Everyone wants to be at the top of Google - that's why not everyone can be! But there are things you can do to help your position.

This is what is known as Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), or search engine marketing, as it is also called, and some people lose a lot of sleep over it! Search engine placement and SEO may seem like a dark art to the uninitiated - that is why there are so many companies out there offering SEO services. Clearly the bigger firms may be well served by a reputable SEO company (and some of them aren't!), but for you as a small business or sole service provider, their costs are likely to be out of reach.

But don't despair, there are lots of things you can do for yourself. And Waving Moose will always try to design SEO into your website and help you keep it relevant.

1. How does it work?

Search engines, such as Google, work by sending out software programs — called bots — that trawl the web for information relevant to the search that a user types into the search page. Search engines read the contents of websites (extremely quickly!) and judge how relevant they are for a certain search.

These days by far the major player is Google, with 90% of the search engine market in the UK. The precise algorithms Google uses are kept secret of course, but we do know several factors that are of influence. However, these have changed progressively over the last few years and continue to do so.

So...

2. Be Realistic!

It's important to try to be realistic about securing pole positions on Google. You may have a lot of competition! Bear in mind too that there's **no such thing as permanent top rankings**. Positioning and traffic fluctuations are perfectly normal. New pages with unique content are added to the Web all the time. Old pages are deleted or updated. How pages and sites link to each other also changes. AND, search engine methods constantly evolve. We always advise that you see SEO as an **"organic" process**, which concentrates on building search engine awareness over time - developing your website content, building links and generating traffic. It takes time and effort to get good listings.

But still...

3. Content is King

However SEO priorities change, the primary consideration remains **relevant and appropriate content**. Remember that Google wants to stay as top search engine, so it wants to encourage quality websites and stop spammy, bad or irrelevant ones, so that people get good, relevant results from their searches.

Searches work by matching the words and phrases people search for with the subject and content of your website. It's easy to see therefore, that **developing the right keywords, terms and phrases** to include in your website content is the most important. But Google is getting more and more ingenious at acting like a real person! If your website content is relevant, well written and user-friendly to your potential visitors, it will be more appealing to Google.

Waving Moose tries to do this automatically if we are drafting your text content. But there is an element of **experimentation** and you should keep your message and website content **under review** and be prepared to modify it from time to time.

However, trying to **manipulate search engines artificially** (eg stuffing your pages full of certain words and phrases) is bad practice and we won't help you do it. Besides Google is wise to these techniques – at best they ignore them, at worst you risk your site being blacklisted. And - more importantly we think - you are obscuring the proper content and message of your website from your visitors (ie potential customers).

4. Keep It Under Review

Perhaps your website does include appropriate content, but you are still not ranking well. It may be time to think about whether the right words and messages have been chosen. **The key thing is to know your market.** What do people want? How can that be matched to your product or service. If you were looking for your service, what would you enter into Google? What do your competitors do? Ask around – friends, family and colleagues may have ideas.

5. Developing Links

Search engines look for web links to your site, and this influences ranking. So establishing reciprocal links with complementary businesses, or with forums, blogs and directories, will push your site higher up the results page. So **try and think of other businesses that you could exchange links with.** Please bear in mind that **quality link development takes time.** Steer clear of services which offer you *Instant Link Popularity*. Anyone who promises this is spamming search engines - building 'link farms' to artificially inflate link popularity. Results will be short-lived and the sites liable to be removed by search engines.

6. Local SEO

Big businesses of course invest a lot in all this. But as a small business you might be missing out locally by thinking too big. Most small businesses offering a service need to reach local customers.

Tips for local SEO:

- Submit a business profile to [Google My Business](#).
- Encourage reviews and links on relevant local sites (eg local groups, blogs, news sites, complementary local firms and local directories)
- If appropriate, add your address to each page of your website, as well as your local phone number (rather than mobile or 0800) and if you cover several areas/regions consider creating dedicated pages for each.
- Include a Google map of your location on your website.

7. Social Media

Yes, yes, more about Social Media... But Links to established sites, like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, TripAdvisor are good for SEO as they suggest to Google that you are a real business, and also increase brand profile.

8. Good Traffic... So What?

If you do all these things, you may get increased traffic to your website yet still not make 'sales'. The most important part of all of this is to provide a **welcoming and user-friendly experience** for your visitors and **content that is relevant to what they are seeking.** Again, this goes back to having a thorough understanding of what you are trying to portray, your customers, your geography and your market.

9. Paid SEO Services

We always advise that you should **give your website some time to settle down** before you consider paying for further services. But if you do want specialised help by all means look for one of the many companies out there who offer SEO services. Just bear in mind that *some* may promise the earth, whilst doing very little more than you could do yourself with a little thought and effort.

SUMMARY

1) WHAT GOOGLE CARES ABOUT

Google cares about relevancy and reputation when choosing which sites to rank in their listings. You want your site to be a reputable place with a lot of relevant quality content about your topic.

2) BE NATURAL

To be relevant you need to think about what your target group would type into Google to find your topic/business. Create relevant content, in regular English, in language that people in your target group speak.

3) REPUTATION

What people say about you, in social media, other websites etc. and how people link to you from these websites is important.

4) LINK QUALITY NOT QUANTITY

It is not all about the number of links pointing to you though, it is about the quality and importance of places that point to you. The higher the quality of a site that links to you the more important that link is considered, such as well established sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Tripadvisor etc. Associations, Directories, hub websites etc that are relevant to your industry/topic are also useful.

5) THINK LOCAL

Set up a [Google My Business](#) account and look for local links and opportunities.

And Finally...

For some further ideas focused on keeping your website effective and helping to generate business - see our briefing - **"So You've Got a Website – Now What?"**

And if you need any more help or advice about getting the most out of your website please do not hesitate to get in touch.