



Articles: The Great Search Engine War, Where Content is King

When search engines first appeared, they were simple affairs consisting of a relatively basic database containing small amounts of information about websites. The search engine database allowed web-surfers to search for specific words or phrases. The search engine would then provide a list of hyperlinks to websites containing those words or phrases in several Search Engine Results Pages (SERPS). The basics of concepts of a search engine are still the same, but much has changed since those innocent days.

The Birth of Search Engine Optimisation

Once search engines were on the scene, it wasn't long before website owners started to manipulate their websites in order to take advantage of them. The impetus behind this was the higher a website places in the SERPS, then the more visitors it gets and the more money it can generate for the business it represents.

To start with the techniques used to 'encourage' search engines to place websites higher in the SERPS were fairly innocuous: More thought was given to crucial elements of a website such as Title Tags, meta-keywords and keyword density. These elements of a website were considered important because the contents of them were used by the search engines to catalogue and categorise the entire website.

As the use of search engines increased and more and more website traffic was generated by the SERPS, it became increasingly important to ensure that your website was optimised as well as possible in order to maximise its rankings within the SERPS. The practise of Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) was born.

The Outbreak of War

As with most things that involve commercial or financial gains, the practises of Search Engine Optimisation soon took a sinister turn. The importance of optimising a website so that it ranked highly in the SERPS meant that some people began using dubious techniques to trick the



search engines. There are many of these dubious 'spamming' techniques such as:

- Huge lists of keywords
- Using keywords that are commonly searched for but irrelevant to a particular website
- Adding long lists of words that are invisible to most website visitors but readable by the search engines.

The search engines soon caught on to these spam practises and they weren't happy. The main aim of a search engine is to make money usually through advertising. In order to do this it needs to get huge numbers of people to use its search engine services. The only way to encourage people to continue to use these services is if the SERPS provide links to useful, relevant sites. It is therefore within a search engines interests to ensure that the results within its SERPS are as accurate as possible. The spamming of search engines forced them to improve the algorithms they use to determine where in the SERPS a particular site would rank. These new algorithms included calculations to defend against the spam SEO practises and in some cases websites practising certain spam SEO techniques were black-listed and excluded completely from the SERPS.

Of course, the dubious practitioners of spam SEO techniques soon came up with new ways to trick the system, and so the war between spam SEO practitioners and the search engines began.

The increased complexity of search engine algorithms also meant that the legitimate side of Search Engine Optimisation became more complex and SEO became a growing industry in itself.

Google and Link Popularity

As the world of search engines grew and increased in complexity, Google established itself as the big player and became the most widely used search engine. Getting good rankings within the Google SERPS became increasingly important leading SEO experts to spend much time and effort trying to decipher the fundamental points of the Google algorithm.

The most fundamental addition to the Google algorithm was that of Link Popularity and Page Rank. Simply put, this is a measure of the number of sites that link to a website. The idea being that if lots of sites



link to a particular web-page then the content on that page must be useful and relevant to those sites from which the links come. Once this part of the Google algorithm was known, much of the emphasis of promoting a website shifted towards the acquisition of Inbound Links (IBL).

As before, the SEO spammers found their own ways to manipulate the SERPS by creating large networks of mini-sites to increase the number of IBL to another website. The growth of large web-directories, web-rings, huge links pages and link-exchange websites are also often aimed at allowing webmasters to increase the number of IBL to their sites.

Google, and the other search engines fought back, their algorithms become more complex and so the war continues.

How to Win the War.

You may by now be wondering how it is possible to compete with the SEO spam practitioners who manipulate SERPS in dubious ways to get their sites well-ranked, whilst avoiding spam practises yourself and keeping up with the latest changes to the search engine algorithms. Well, the answer is surprisingly easy and not only will it give you long-lasting results, and rankings in the SERPS that your site deserves, but it will also benefit the real human visitors to your website. The answer is to give the search engines what they want – Good, relevant, up to date content.

That's it, it is as simple as that, Content is King.

Admittedly your website will still need a small amount of legitimate SEO, the most important of which are:

- Well chosen keywords
- A good meta-tag description
- An informative, keyword-rich title tag
- Informative, relevant header tags
- Conformable HTML

With these in place and good quality relevant content updated regularly then the most important weapon in your arsenal for gaining good SERPS Rankings, Inbound Links, should start coming automatically. I can't stress it enough, good quality relevant content is king!. Once you have



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this content on your website, other webmasters will want to link to it and your network of IBLs will increase and continue to increase.

There are lots of other ways to generate IBLs to your website, but many are time consuming and even though they may drive visitors to your website, if there is no substance when they get there all the time and effort invested will have been in vain. Instead of wasting time generating IBLs from obscure websites and trying out the latest SEO spam techniques, spend your time writing new content for your website. Not only will it lead to an increase in your SERPS rankings, but when real visitors do come calling they will find useful, relevant content and are much more likely to use the goods, services and facilities your website offers.

Good quality, regularly updated content is good for your website, good for your search engine rankings, good for your visitors and good for you business.

Here at Pixelwave Design all new websites I build are optimised in legitimate ways for search engines. I also carry out SEO on existing websites and always encourage my clients to think long and hard about the content their website will include. I give guidance on the type and structure of a websites' content and suggest ways in which this content can be added to and kept up to date in simple, cost effective ways. For more information on how your website could benefit from better content please feel free to contact me.

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