

MY DRUPAL SEO RECIPE

Cooking Time: 2-4 hour set-up / Monitor Weekly

Ingredients

Must Install Modules

- Clean URLs
- Path
- Path Auto
- Page Title
- Tokens
- Global Redirect
- Path Redirect
- SEO Checklist
- SEO Friend
- Nodewords (by_path & nodetype)
- Menu Attributes
- Automatic Node Titles
- XML Site-Map
- HTML Purifier

Good To Have Modules

- Search 404
- Links Checker
- Service Links



Overview

The science of Search Engine Optimization is an ever evolving art form. No way can it be mastered. We can only manipulate, test and watch.

About the Author

After earning a BFA with a focus in Information Architecture and Digital Media Production from Maine College of Art in 1999, I moved to Boston. Working for some of the top agencies in New England gave me the experience to think big and outside the creative norm. Currently I am the Digital Manager at [Rinck Advertising](#) in Auburn Maine where I development and oversee all digital media production for clients such as: Gorton's Seafood, Dean Foods, Garelick Farms, TruMoo Chocolate Milk, Panos Brands and many others.

Thomas P. Scola Jr. - <http://423interactive.com> (Personal Portfolio)

Analyzing Your Business

When working with a new client, my first evaluation usually evolves reviewing the Web site's Google Analytics and Web Master Tool stats. This would help me determine a base point and setting realistic goals to reach. If these are not configured, this should be done before proceeding.

Next step would be for the client providing two lists of terms and/or phrases. This should be done by the client/team and then reviewed together.

Create a list of terms that you would use to describe your business. Now, create a list of terms that you would expect a user to type in when searching for your business on a search engine like Google.

With these 2 lists, we now have what I call your "Word Bucket". We will start the analytic process to determine the words we should focus or target. Some of the initial terms will get thrown out or put aside for now.

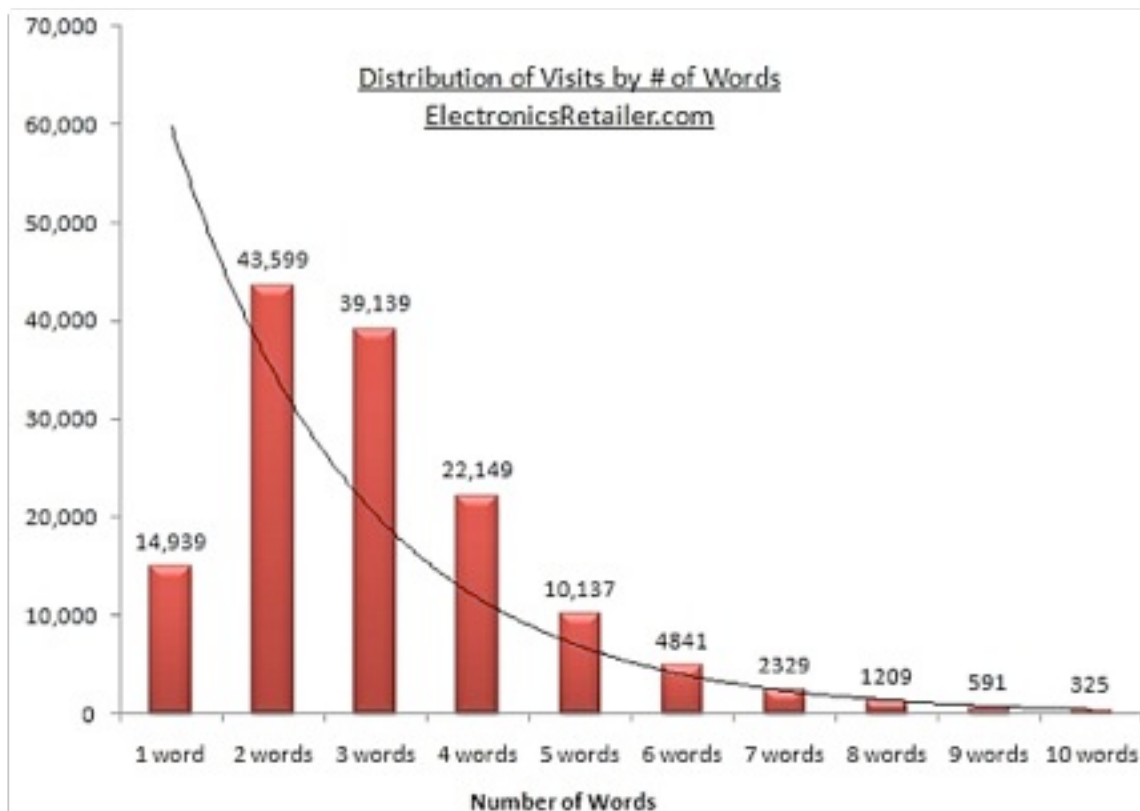
SEO Research - Get Creative

- Review initial list of terms and phrases suggested by client
- Develop Web site traffic "funnel" and over-all goals
- Determine initial list of terms to research (See Image below)

SEO Keyword Research & Analyzation

Researching initial keywords using online software to measure strength of each term. Suggested Web sites include:

- <http://www.google.com/trends>
- <http://www.google.com/sktool>
- <http://www.searchquertypedia.com/downloads/phrases>
- <http://www.keyworddiscovery.com/search.html>
- <http://www.wordtracker.com/> (paid service)



Some Background Information

Above is some recommendations for configuring drupal. There are many more steps to take for true optimization. Below, I explain in more detail the different pieces of the puzzle to the best of my knowledge.

Differentiate the descriptions for different pages.

Using identical or similar descriptions on every page of a site isn't very helpful when individual pages appear in the web results. In these cases we're less likely to display the correct text. Wherever possible, create descriptions that accurately describe the specific page. Use site-level descriptions on the main home page or other aggregation pages, and use page-level descriptions everywhere else.

Developing Correct Title Tags

One of the main parts in Google ranking is played by <TITLE> tag. When searching in its database, Google matches the title tag first. Google will try to match keywords in the title tag with links and text in the web page, so you better put all the keywords you need. Google will do the rest . Start by the most important keyword. Google's matching action is an aspect that you should take in great consideration, the keyword relevancy starts from here, if you're willing to appear with a certain keyword, this MUST be in the title first. Another point is that people tend to link to pages using the title as anchor text. Always give attention to titles, just stuffing the title tag full with keywords is bad practice.

According to the experts, Google will try to match the first 14 (fourteen) words included in the title tag, so don't worry about the character length (many say not to put more than 50-60 character), just try not to put more than 14 words.

Keyword in H1, H2 and H3

Search engines see words that show in the page headline Tags H1, H2, H3 to be important during the indexing process. It's beneficial to include your keywords and phrases in your websites H-tags.

Use keywords tags H1, H2, and H3 to help search engines optimally rank your web pages. H-tags are given greater weight than regular page content. The higher the H-tag(x) the more weight it carries. H1 tags have more authority than an H2 tag and so on. Emphasize the use of the H-tags to highlight the relevant keywords in the headings of your web pages.

Because search engines use H tags to help index keywords for proper rankings. Google's algorithm suggests that if you're using an H1 & H2 tags that they are more important than the content on the rest of your page. Write unique keywords within the H1 tag with a short sentence or a tag line including your relevant keyword. The Use of H tags is a great way to emphasis your website's keywords.

Image Alt Tags and Anchor Tags

Keyword use in Images Alt and Title Attributes - when an image is used in place of anchor text, the alt acts as anchor text. Alt attributes for linked images do have some importance. It is an important ranking factor for Image search. Use the Alt and title tags strategically to help Google determine what the relationship to your site the link has.

Keywords in anchor tags are for some years an important criterion of the Google algorithm. Links from the target site to the target page weight the same as an inbound link from another site to the target page. That's one reason why a good sites link structure is very important.



Above is a simple chart to show the importance of content and page structure when optimizing your site for search engines like Google.

Installing & Configuring The Modules

Using the research found above we can now set up and configure the Drupal modules. We start this process with the client providing a couple lists of terms and/or phrases.

Start the Installation Process

- Install base modules (clean urls, path, path auto, page title, global redirect, xml site map, automatic page title, search 404)
- Install SEO Checklist - Review the list and check off the items you have already done. Keep this list up-to-date.
- Install/Configuring XML site-map and PageTitle module
- NOTE: Do not install Site map Module. Configure custom view for site map.

Why does Google care about meta descriptions?

“We want snippets to accurately represent the web result. We frequently prefer to display meta descriptions of pages (when available) because it gives users a clear idea of the URL's content. This directs them to good results faster and reduces the click-and-backtrack behavior that frustrates visitors and inflates web traffic metrics. Keep in mind that meta descriptions comprised of long strings of keywords don't achieve this goal and are less likely to be displayed in place of a regular, non-meta description, snippet. And it's worth noting that while accurate meta descriptions can improve click-through, they won't affect your ranking within search results.”

~ Quoted from: <http://googlewebmastercentral.blogspot.com/2007/09/improve-snippets-with-meta-description.html>

Finish Your Custom Configuration

- Configure Nodewords with your “word bucket list”. Use terms specific to that page.

Reasons for Using Analytics & Other Tools

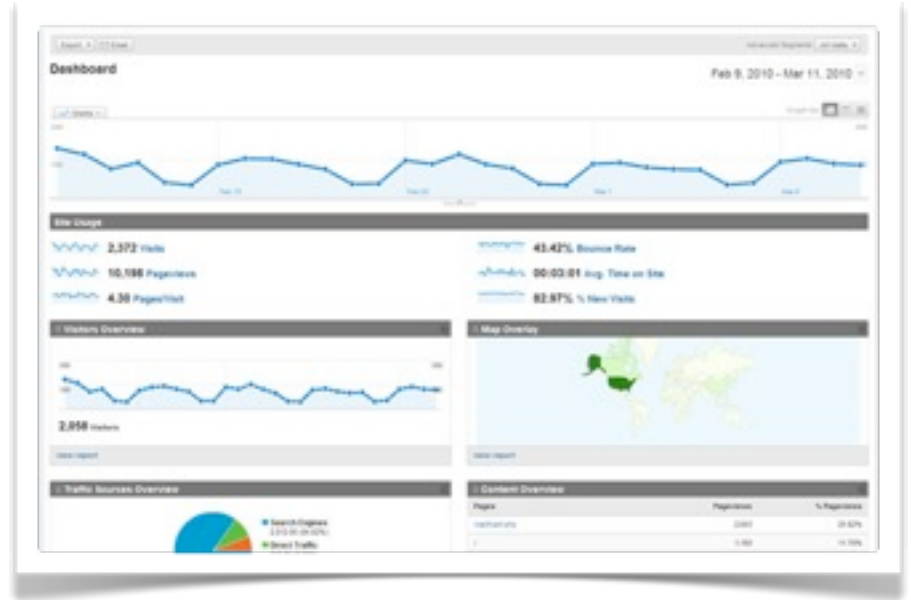
- Configure Web site to Google Analytics
- **Google's Web Master Tool Kit** can tell Google when to crawl the site. This will also tell us our current rankings on the top keywords that are driving traffic. The Tool Kit will also help us determine duplicate title tags, Meta Keywords and Meta Descriptions. Google lowers your ranking when there are duplicate pages with similar titles.

Other Recommendations

- Configure the Pathauto Module
- Fix .htaccess to redirect to "www" or remove the "www" subdomain.
- Fix your theme's HTML headers if they aren't right
- Create a custom front page
- Modify your robots.txt file.

Working With Google Analytics

Google Analytics is a free and extremely powerful service that gives you insights into your website's traffic. The amount of information that is tracked is amazing... Google accurately tracks visitors to your site... from a source, such as a search engine or email link, to a conversion or transaction, but don't worry, I will just cover the basics



Understanding Traffic

- **Organic campaigns** can come from an unpaid search engine results link, a referral from another website (such as a blog) and direct traffic.
- **Paid campaigns** can come from AdWords, paid search engine keywords, or paid ad campaigns from non-Adwords providers.

Understanding Traffic Sources

Google Analytics tracks online campaigns using a combination of the following five marketing dimensions:

Source- Every referral to a web site has an origin, or source. Examples of sources are the Google search engine, the AOL search engine, the name of a newsletter, or the name of a referring web site.

Medium- The medium helps to qualify the source; together, the source and medium provide specific information about the origin of a referral. For example, in the case of a Google search engine source, the medium might be "cost-per-click", indicating a sponsored link for which the advertiser paid, or "organic", indicating a link in the unpaid search engine results. In the case of a newsletter source, examples of medium include "email" and "print".

Term- The term or keyword is the word or phrase that a user types into a search engine.

Content- The content dimension describes the version of an advertisement on which a visitor clicked. It is used in content-targeted advertising and Content (A/B) Testing to determine which version of an advertisement is most effective at attracting profitable leads.

Campaign- The campaign dimension differentiates product promotions such as "Spring Ski Sale" or slogan campaigns such as "Get Fit For Summer".

Waiting & Watching

As we stated above, this is a science. In all forms of science there is some trial and error. We need to monitor the analytics / toolkit for trends, good or bad.

SEO Keyword Adjustments

Over the next couple weeks we will use Google Analytics to review traffic sources and the adjustments we made. Watch for trends in traffic. Adjust your configurations.

- Review Analytics and Toolkit for insight on traffic and source
- Set / adjust new page titles based on analytics
- Set / adjust meta data to reflect content

Reviewing Drupal SEO Modules

Below is a list of Drupal Modules we have reviewed.

Module	Project Page	Importance
Path	http://drupal.org/handbook/modules/path	must have
Path Auto	http://drupal.org/project/pathauto	must have
Page Title	http://drupal.org/project/page_title	must have
Global Redirect	http://drupal.org/project/globalredirect	must have
Path Redirect	http://drupal.org/project/path_redirect	must have
Meta Tags (nodewords)	http://drupal.org/project/nodewords	must have
Meta Tags by Path (nodewords_bypath)	http://drupal.org/project/nodewords_bypath	good to have
Meta Tags Node Type (nodewords_nodetype)	http://drupal.org/project/nodewords_nodetype	optional
XML Sitemap	http://drupal.org/project/xmlsitemap	good to have
Menu Attributes	http://drupal.org/project/menu_attributes	good to have
Automatic Node titles	http://drupal.org/project/auto_nodetitle	good to have
Search 404	http://drupal.org/project/search404	good to have
Links Checker	http://drupal.org/project/linkchecker	good to have
SEO Checklist	http://drupal.org/project/seo_checklist	good to have
SEO Friend	http://drupal.org/project/seo_friend	good to have
HTML Purifier	http://drupal.org/project/htmlpurifier	good to have
Service Links	http://drupal.org/project/service_links	optional
Google Analytics	http://drupal.org/project/google_analytics	must have

Disclaimer

I am not an expert on SEO or drupal. Nor am I responsible for any content. Above is my own process from my experience / research. This content should not be published or copied; educational purposes only.