

Keyword Placement and Search Engine Optimization

Solving the Mysteries of Keyword Placement and Search Engine Optimization

Search engines work differently now from the way they did a few years ago. No longer can one simply submit keywords to the search engines and expect to come up at the top of the keyword search lists, and no longer do the search engines use bullion algorithms to search sites' keywords. There are several challenges that surface during the task of properly configuring, submitting, tracking, and supplementing keywords so that the major search engines can locate the information held within the site. These challenges and their solutions are as follows:

KEYWORD CONFIGURATION

If the current keywords listed within the index page are not delineated (there are no commas between keywords and keyword phrases) and only appear on the index page, the opportunity greatly decreases for the search engines to effectively spider the site for the appropriate content pages, especially when someone enters a search for a phrase that could well lead them to deeper nested content within the site. For instance, if a person entered “how to install mini-blinds” as a search, if a site's keywords are properly configured, the search results would yield a direct link to that instruction page within the listed website, rather than leading the user to the site's home page and leaving them to navigate the entire site on their own. We typically review the keywords and modify them as needed, making certain they are properly placed and delineated.

Often we have found keywords are not “commented out,” meaning they are only listed in the head or the title of the index page and not in the body content, as well. This also decreases the chances of the search engines “seeing” the keywords in the site. Just as an example, one might not notice a spot on a shirt if it's just on the collar, but if there are also spots on the chest or near the hem they become much more noticeable. The same theory applies to the likelihood of a search engine finding keywords within a website. Again, upon reviewing the site, we would modify the deeper nested content pages to contain properly configured keywords.

There are times when business opportunities may be lost since the search engines are not aware of what keywords are most beneficial to a company website. In such cases, we look at the current words within the website, along with competitor's keywords, and determine the market reach of those words. For example, we look at how many times certain words and phrases have been accessed within a span of time (usually a month). This calculation allows us to separate or eliminated keywords which serve no meaningful purpose and focus on more robust keywords and keyword phrases for the site. The process for implementing said keywords into a website would be the same as above—a matter of modifying the code to reflect the updated keywords.

In order to optimize keywords for search engines, we look at websites as a whole and determine whether or not they are “search engine friendly.” There are many obstacles along with improperly configured keywords, such as root directory issues and framesets.

Search engines look for a certain type of data within what is called the root directory. This directory contains data in certain files, and if those files are not properly configured, the search engines cannot find the data needed to spider the site. As with modifying keywords, it is also important to modify the site’s code to direct the search engines to the appropriate data files in the root directory.

Framesets were originally developed to improve load time and to allow users to see more robust content with less processor space. As technology moves forward and computers become faster and less expensive, the need for framed websites has greatly diminished.

Unfortunately, search engines perceive them to be spoofs, hiding content or displaying inappropriate matter. The frameset acts as a barrier, similar to a fence, so that the search engines will bypass a site, even if it is properly configured. The way around this is to either reconfigure or rebuild the site to exist without framesets, and we would invest some discovery time to determine the best way to proceed.

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

IntelQuence™ believes that the foundation of any successful Internet marketing campaign is search engine optimization (SEO)*. Over time, we have found this to be a necessary basis for any site that is looking to grow their business. MediaMetrix, a third-party traffic-monitoring firm, reports that over 90% of all U.S. Search Engine traffic come from the top engines. Our offerings give your client’s site a better chance to be found when people are searching for the site using specific search terms.

We have also found it to be short sighted to view only the US engines as important to a comprehensive and successful engine campaign. Our Globalization service was created with the knowledge that purchase power outside the US continues to grow and does so at a more significant rate than ever before. The basis of our service offering is to ensure the most consistent campaign everywhere. All optimization done worldwide is completed with the same fundamentals IntelQuence™ has established over the last six years to ensure the highest level of service.

Our services are based on the knowledge that:

- 86% of all Internet users discover new web sites via a query on a search engine. [Source: GVU]
- We view SEO as the combination of art and science to increase the likelihood that you will appear at the top of search engine results.
- Rankings are affected by a number of criteria including:
 - Keyword concentration
 - Link popularity
 - Meta Tags
 - Changing search engine algorithms
- Each engine’s set of ranking criteria is different to distinguish itself and provide fresh results.

- These criteria change frequently.
- Search engines try to extend their reach while discouraging unethical optimization tactics and highly competitive keywords.
- Optimization should be for long-term value- not just short-lived high rankings.

**Besides SEO, there are other forms of online marketing that are necessary to target potential clients that are not necessarily searching for your web site.*

The process of SEO registers certain words and phrases with Overture or with Google AdWords, which are both paid position programs, so that a site can appear higher up in the search engine results. Overture (representing about 90% of the search engine world) includes Yahoo, AltaVista, HotBot, Lycos, AskJeeves, and major metasearch engines such as DogPile. Statistically, approximately 80% of keyword searches are made through Google.com, so it logically follows that Google also offers a program called Google AdWords. Between these two services, there is substantial opportunity for pushing a website up to the first page of results in a search.

PAY-PER-CLICK/BIDDING MANAGEMENT THROUGH OVERTURE

Over the several years, some engines have started to sell top placement within its search results. Interested parties may place a bid amount that they are willing to pay each time someone clicks on their listing. People have the option to buy the #1 spot or place a bid amount that would list them somewhere lower in the rankings.

Overture offers this service and depending on your preference, they provide the broadest reach of the web. They pioneered the Pay Per Click (PPC) search engine model in 1997. They now deliver more than 700 million searches per month and are currently ranked #8 in the latest Jupiter Media Metrix reports of top search engines.

In the major search engines, typically the top 3 search results from Overture for the keyword searched will appear. Here are a couple examples. In Yahoo the top three Overture results will appear at the top of the page in a section titled "Sponsor Matches" and near the bottom of the page, an additional two results (positions 4 & 5) are displayed in a section called "More Sponsor Matches." In Lycos the top three results appear at the top of the page in a section titled "Featured Listings."

Advertisers can take advantage of additional partnerships with these major search engines by bidding for keyword placement in the top 3 results, which Overture refers to as Premium Listings. Overture claims that these Premium Listings reach approximately 85% of all Internet users, compared to 40% reach of the classic listings (sites ranking #4 & up). Overture also claims that Premium Listings receive twice as many clicks as Classic Listings.

Due to Overture's popularity, keyword bids are generally higher than bids at competing PPC engines. As Overture has become more popular, the bid amount needed to secure a good ranking has steadily increased. The average bid has increased from \$.11 last year to \$.21 cents this year. The bids for popular keywords have risen even more dramatically. Overture's minimum bid amount is \$.05. They also require a minimum monthly spending level of \$20.

GOOGLE ADWORDS COST PER CLICK

Google AdWords is a cost-per-click program. It is a quick and simple way to purchase highly targeted cost-per-click (CPC) advertising, regardless of your budget. AdWords ads are displayed along with search results on Google, as well as on a growing network of partner sites, including AOL, Earthlink, and Sympatico. With more than 150 million searches on Google each day and millions more on the partner sites, your Google AdWords ads reach a vast audience.

There is a small activation fee, and the only time a charge is incurred for these keyword listings is when a user actually clicks on the search engine result to go to your website, so your budget can be set and remain within those limits on a daily basis. After you choose your keywords and your maximum CPC (cost per click), the Traffic Estimator helps you predict the total cost of your Ad Group by estimating the number of clicks you will receive per day. This estimate is based on the maximum CPC you have specified and the average clickthrough rate (CTR) for the keywords you have chosen. You can then decide how much you are willing to spend and set your daily budget to reflect what you are comfortable paying.

Certain keywords and phrases cost more than others, and Google allows you to see all the viewing and click-through results of each keyword/phrase that has been listed in order to allow you to change positions based on cost-per-click. For instance, say you are paying \$.09 for the phrase “mini-blind installation” and \$3.12 for “mini-blind.” If the reporting module shows stellar click-through rates on “mini-blind installation” and zero results for “mini-blind,” the next logical step would be to delete “mini-blind” and stay with the lower cost, more focused keyword phrase that folks are actually using to access your website. As many or as few keywords as desirable may be listed, and once a daily budget limit has been reached, the AdWords are put on pause until the next 24-hour period begins, thus allowing even the smallest budgets to work toward an SEO capability.

VISIBILITY REPORTING

On a daily basis, IntelOquence™ runs a report showing the number of pages present in the major search engines. This report is then compared with previous reports for trend analysis. On a bi-weekly basis IntelOquence™ also checks the rankings for your Web site's top keywords. These results are posted in two formats, a detailed display, and a historic display.

The historical display is meant for trend analysis disclosing how changes in the engines are affecting your visibility. Adverse trends from either report may indicate the need for corrective action.

THE PPC PROCESS

➤ IntelOquence™ will identify the best terms on which to bid. We utilize many different tools to identify the appropriate terms for bidding. These tools include our InteloSoft™ Keyword Analysis & Strategy, other search engine provided info and our many years of experience. The Google and Overture tools give us an indication of the popularity of each term. In general, the best terms to bid on are those that are popular search terms but also have low bids or are extremely targeted for your industry.

➤ We will create the listings (title and descriptions) for all the terms we are promoting. From experience, we know the requirements of the PPC engines. We tailor each title and description to match the keyword in question, to make it enticing, but word them in a manner that pre-qualifies

the potential visitor. We also recommend pointing these listings to specific pages within the site that corresponds with the keyword/phrase.

➤ IntelOquence™ will manage the bids for the site on Overture and keep your site within the top three listings to take advantage of Google and Overture's premium listing service. Overture has partnered with leading search sites, such as Yahoo, Lycos, AltaVista and many others to maximize your exposure to 85% of all searchers. By monitoring current bid levels, we can maintain rankings within the top three results and benefit from the premium listing status.

➤ We will ensure the cost effectiveness of the campaign by eliminating unnecessary over-bidding for keywords. Keyword bids are constantly changing due to advertisers adding listings, removing listings, or changing their bids. You only need to bid \$.01 higher to be listed ahead of an advertiser. As the bids change it is possible to create a bidding gap over \$.01, and advertisers are wasting money every time someone clicks on their listing. We often see advertisers bidding well over a \$1.00 more than they need to be bidding to maintain their ranking. IntelOquence™ keeps an eye on these listings and changes keyword bids whenever a bid gap is detected.

Advertisers who are in competition for a specific term might inflate their bids to a level that is higher than your perceived value of the term. You may wish to set a keyword bid limit that we will stay within. This amount can be different for different terms. If the bids for the top 3 listings rise above this predetermined limit, we will drop your listing further down the list. We will monitor the bid levels and you may once again rise to within the top 3 rankings as bids change over time.

➤ IntelOquence™ will report to you monthly on PPC campaign activity and associated costs.

➤ We will work with you to evaluate the outcome of the initial phase. Through discussions with you, we will go over the terms that work and eliminate the terms that aren't providing a cost-effective source of targeted traffic.

We approach these cost-per-click/bid models as a way to enhance our clients' search engine positioning. In other words, we want our clients to have both an appearance in the actual search results and also be in the "Featured Sites" section through bid for ranking. This allows our clients more exposure for their key terms on the engines and a higher chance of a qualified click-through. When a client wants to use these tools, we carefully review the current keywords listed in the site and work together with the client to make keyword and phrase recommendations, as well as timeline recommendations, based upon our research results.

SEO is an ongoing process. When we are serving as the administrator of an SEO program, we review the website's positioning on a daily basis so that we may make changes when necessary in order to retain optimal positioning results. IntelOquence™ is duty-bound to manage our clients' websites and SEO programs with the goal of increasing web traffic, building a web community, deepening market knowledge and ultimately engaging the end-user.