

Ten Tips for Successful Search Engine Ranking by Martha Weaver

The EcoDevPro search service uses a customized version of Google's search results consisting of webpages from economic development and related websites. A particular page's ranking in the search results in part reflects its ranking by Google. Search engine optimization (SEO) can help your webpages rank higher in the search engine results (SER) and when done well help improve the accuracy of those results.

Search engines include many factors in their ranking algorithms with the aim of providing the most relevant search results possible. While these factors are not made public, there is a large body of analysis and speculation as to what these factors are and how they change over time. Using some basic SEO practices may not guarantee a webpage ranks in the top ten search results, but should make the page easier to find.

1. Follow Webmaster Guideline: Each search engine provides guidelines for creating webpages that make a website easy for a search engine spider (the program that indexes websites) to find, index, and rank. Follow them!
[Ask.com Webmaster Guide](#)
[Google Webmaster Guidelines](#)
[Live Search Guidelines for Indexing](#)
[Yahoo! Search Content Guidelines](#)
2. Key Words: Most everyone has heard of the importance of key words. Search engine spiders depend to a great extent on the words and phrases in a webpage to determine its relevance to a specific search. So if someone is searching for "site selection mexico" the results should be pages about Mexico, not Canada. A [keyword density tool](#) makes it easy to analyze a webpage. Determine the key words for each specific page and use those terms consistently throughout the page. Make sure each webpage has a clear topic.
3. Title Tags: These tags are contained within the head section of the webpage code, and the content of the tag only appears in the top area of the browser window. When a page is bookmarked the title tag becomes the bookmark name. Major search engines almost always use the contents of the title tag as the title of the search snippet. And, search engines use the contents of the title tag to help determine what a page is about. So be sure to include the page's key words in the title.
4. Use Text Well: The major search engines still aren't very good at indexing graphics so help them out with easily understandable text. Place descriptive content near the top of each webpage. Use text for links. Use keywords in page headers.
5. Meta Tags: Meta elements, contained within meta tags, are used to specify metadata about a webpage, such as copyright, page description and keywords. Due to earlier SEO abuse search engines ignore the keyword meta tag. The description meta tag however is still supported. Search engines often display this description as the page description in search engine results. A well written meta description can increase click-thru from the SER page to your webpage.
6. Sitemap.xml: A [sitemap](#) is an file that provides details to search engines about a website's pages. Your webmaster can generate a sitemap containing all accessible URLs on the website and submit it to the major search engines that recognize the protocol.
7. Robot Exclusion Files: Just as important as getting some webpages listed in search engine indexes is keeping other pages out. Determine if some webpages have private information or for other reasons—such as ecodcvpro.com beta pages—should not be displayed in search engine results. Have your webpage developer create a [robot exclusion file](#) that lists all these pages to tell search engines to not index them.
8. Links to Your Website: Search engine algorithms give significant weight to links to your website from other high-quality sites. Search engine's link analysis can even make pages relevant for words not included in the actual page. Submit your site to relevant directories and seek links from all organizations your EDO is a member of, local government websites and state level organizations.
9. Write for Your Audience: Search engine companies spend huge amounts of their resources trying to make their spiders more effective at finding webpages that people want to read so make your webpages readable and interesting.
10. Be Careful: Experienced SEO consultants can provide a very useful service, however, aggressive attempts to manipulate search engine results can cause a website to be banned from a search engine index. Here are [some cautions from Google](#).