

There's no sense in going to the trouble of putting a website together if you're not going to tell people it's there. But that's exactly what you are doing when you don't optimize your website for search engines.

This paper describes how to optimize your political campaign website for higher search engine rankings. You will learn:

- How to choose words that describe each page of your site for best search engine rankings.
- Where to put those words in the HTML files that make up your website.
- How to submit your site to search engines so they know your site exists.

The following sections describe how search engines work, how to optimize your website, how people search, and how to submit your site to all the important search engines for free.

How Search Engines Work

When someone is looking for something on the web, they start searching by entering descriptive words into a search engine, like Google. Google matches those words with special HTML words that describe your website content. It's sort of a guessing game played everyday by people looking for relevant sites. Conversely web site owners hope the right people can find them.

Search engines match people to web sites by matching up the search words with special HTML words, called meta tags. The web site builder uses meta tags to describe the website content.

You, as the web site owner, need to pay special attention to the meta tags called *title*, *description* and *keywords*. These are the ones that can put your website at the top of the search window, or bury you on the last page.

If you've never seen them before, you can find these meta tags by right-clicking on a web page and choose "View Page Source". A new page appears, filled with HTML code. Near the top of the HTML page, look for text that looks something like the following:

```
<title>Political Net Press</title>  
<meta name="description"  
<meta name="keywords"
```

Optimizing Your Website

Optimizing your website for search engines means selecting words that not only describe your site, but that also appear on the web page.

Search engine optimization (SEO) begins with a meta tag designing plan. Consider the following:

- site branding
- visitors navigating through your site

- the focus of each page

Look for a dozen possible keywords and phrases which are already present in each page of your web site. Write your tags and descriptions to entice people and search engines; consider the intention of the searcher. Only choose a word as a tag if you are certain it is also readable in the page. As you develop your site, remember to keep the tags relevant to page content, as search engines ignore keyword tags that are not part of the page. Write your Title tag for your audience first and the search engines second.

It is a delicate balance between tweaking the ratio to favor the search engines – always consider whether or not the Title tag would motivate someone to a click through to your web page. Once you have your initial set, optimize this word and phrase set.

The goal in developing a great set of key words is to obtain a high key word index (KWI) for each page. The KWI is the ratio of a popular search word to the number of other sites using that keyword. The higher the ratio, the higher your placement is on the search engine. Test the possible keywords with a Search-based keyword tool. Google has a free KWI tool at this site:

<http://www.google.com/sktool/>

Google's real interest in offering this tool for free is to help monetize your site with Google AdWords™. You can still use this free tool while ignoring Google's advertising opportunity.

How People Search

There are two kinds of searches you need to be aware of: a broad general search and a specific search. Getting a top 10 ranking for broad general keyword search is very difficult and nearly impossible. During a specific search, specific keywords work best for search engine optimization. People who use specific keyword types are looking for a solution to their desire and they are ready to join your cause or campaign. People looking for a specific search engine return use multiple word keywords.

82% of search engine users re-launch their search using the same search engine as they used for their initial search, but add more keywords to refine their subsequent search. This means website developers not only need to target a few short, broad terms for their search engine campaigns, but also determine an abundance of longer, more specific keyword phrases being queried when users are dissatisfied with the results of their initial searches.
-Source: *iProspect*

Search engines analyze all pages of your website and put them in a context. Start with multiple word keywords and then extend your keyword list. Unique searches that consist of several words bring targeted visitors, interested in your campaign website. To get best results with your search engine optimization efforts, concentrate on those keyword types.

Warning: Avoid using a competitor's keywords. Their set is likely optimized for their site. Yours will have different content and a mismatch can lower your rating.

Some search engines will permit misspelled Keywords, which are not actually found on the page. This is helpful because sometimes people search on misspelled words, such as "policial campain" rather than "political campaign". In this case, if you had the misspelled words in your meta tags, it would help the poorly typed search.

To get higher SEO, link your website to other relevant websites. The word you choose to link is also important. To gain the higher SEO with links, use words someone would search on, such as "campaign buttons" when linking to a campaign button web site. Conversely, linking words such as "Click here" to an outside website will do nothing for a higher SEO.

Submitting Your Site to Search Engines

After your site is optimized for search engines, you have to let the search engines know there is a new site. The fastest and best way to register with the top search engines is to go through the Open Directory Project (ODP), also known as DMOZ. DMOZ is the Internet's largest directory system and is maintained by volunteer human editors. Here again, it takes a little research, but most of the work you did to find your keywords prepares you to answer the questions during DMOZ registration.

Go to <http://www.dmoz.org/add.html> and follow their directions to be listed on sites such as AOL Search, Google, Netscape Search, Yahoo Search, and hundreds of other sites.

A lot of those search engines use your DMOZ Description tag. Google generates its own description based on current page content. However, sometimes Google uses DMOZ Description tag for your website.

Caution: The Title/Description tag can be truncated in a search result if it exceeds that search engine character limit. Put the most relevant information in the first 80 characters (including spaces).

Where to Place Meta Tags

The HTML format for title, description, and keywords is the following:

```
<HTML>
<HEAD>
<TITLE>An introduction to meta tags in your campaign web site</TITLE>
<META CONTENT=
"A guide to optimize your website for search engines and use social
media in a campaign"
NAME="DESCRIPTION">
<META CONTENT=
"word1,
word2,
word3,
word4,
word5,
word6"
NAME="KEYWORDS">
</HEAD>
<BODY>
```

~~~~~the rest of your website goes under the <BODY> tag ~~~~~

**Bottom line:** Know your tags and get to know your search engine optimization requirements.

### **Highlights**

- Title tag: 5 - 10 words, including the company name and relevant keywords, 90 characters with spaces.
- Description tag: A unique and concise summary of each page, an upper limit of perhaps, 170 characters with spaces.
- Keyword tag: A unique simple and relevant set of words. Place 10 to 20 Keywords per page, using synonyms if necessary.
- [www.dmoz.com](http://www.dmoz.com) Description: Make it compelling and succinct.