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Search Engine Optimization Articles

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Title: Search Engine Strategies for Success: 2006

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As you know, every year is always rocked by a plethora of changes in the search engine marketing world. The acquisition of smaller companies by the Big 3 changes the marketing landscape as we know it every month and with every update to the index that is made, we hold our breath and hope that we come out better (if not, the same) in the end. So when it comes to the new year, there are many things that we should look out for to stay on top of the rankings.

1. **Quality Content:** I say this so often and I cannot overemphasize this enough: Content is KING! Search engine spiders, crawl the net to find what? Content! Your site has information (hopefully) that you want the spiders to see and include in their index. By the creation and publication of quality content, you give the search engines more reason to return. You are feeding them what they want. In 2006, you should be finding creative ways to get your content noticed and viewed as well as finding creative ways to publish fresh content on a regular basis. A very good way this is done is through the use of message boards (hosted on your site) and by blogs (enabling you to publish more frequently).

2. **Don't Overextend Your Link Exchange Structure:** Backlinks were a popular way to increase your rankings fast in the search engines. The tradition holds: find a PR7 website and trade backlinks and you'll be indexed in Google within 24 hours. That strategy still holds true and is beneficial for new websites.

But in my opinion the days of tremendous link-swapping are coming to an end. Many websites have been founded with the purpose of allowing you to exchange links with other websites. This has caused a massive influx of webmasters who want to exchange a ton of links with the hope that it will help them in the search engines.

But what really matters when it comes to links is the amount of quality one-way backlinks that direct users to your website. You want the balance of links to be in your favor, that is what leads to success.

Also, there has been talk of search engines taking notice of these "link-farms" and penalizing those who take part in them. So if you do take part in link exchanges, please be moderate in respect to the number of exchanges you take part in.

3. RSS and XML: Two new technologies that have begun to take center stage especially in 2005 include a programming language that has been around for several years called XML. XML is shorthand for extensible markup language and is a derivative from HTML. The main difference is your ability to create descriptive tags for your data.

This has led to the advent of RSS or real simple syndication. RSS is a way for you to publish your data to an XML file hosted on your site. Users subscribe to your RSS feed via the XML file and whenever you make a change to your XML file they are notified. It's become a major technology used by news agencies and bloggers alike as a simple method of publishing your information across a wide variety of platforms.

XML has also proved useful with the Google Sitemaps program, newly released in 2005. The optional tags available with the XML sitemap allow you to be descriptive about the individual pages on your site including dates the individual pages were modified. There are some small things you need to pay attention to when creating this: namely you have to follow the Google xml schema, and you have to be diligent about tracking and fixing errors in the code. But if used correctly, it is a great way to help Google index the hidden pages of your website due to javascript or flash.

4. Stay away from Flash and Javascript for the time being: Flash and Javascript are very powerful tools for creating dynamic and eye catching websites. The most prominent problem with the two technologies is that the spiders can't index through them (at least not yet). This limits your ability to have the search engines index portions of your site. Many have speculated that the Big 3 are working on solving this problem, but for the time being, avoid or limit your use of these technologies.

5. Avoid Unethical SEO: There are a lot of programs out there that help you to achieve maximum linkback ratios in a very short amount of time. Some of them are good; some are bad. In fact, some of them will waste your effort trying to post trivial comments on blogs or trying to maximize your link exchanges. In my opinion, you should seek success in SEM the right, ethical way. Seek out honest web companies to exchange a moderate amount of links with. Post only relevant comments to forums and blogs because that behavior leads to lasting link backs. Also, don't try to manipulate your website to make it appear to have a higher PR than you really do. Google sees that one!

6. Last, but not least, Articles: There is a little bit of controversial talk about whether it is right to post articles for free use in directories. In my opinion, you are providing a well needed service to webmasters and I don't see this one as a potential loss for 2006. Information is valuable. And websites that need content (especially fresh content) desire what you do to make their efforts a success. So it is natural for your website rankings to benefit through backlinks from those articles. It's a win-win situation.

One other thought on this subject. Right now, the search engines can punish websites for having duplicate content, and that is an argument that many will propose. But, the search engines will usually only punish you if the html format of a web site is similar, not a couple of articles. So posting articles is safe for now.

But be cautious. Many lucrative methods of ethical SEO can be turned into a problem when too many people attempt to abuse the technology.

So that's it. Short, but informative. SEO is both an art and a technology that we have to use correctly for the right type of success. Who knows what the year ahead may bring, but playing your cards right, you can achieve success and avoid any pitfalls that may come.

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