

# Search Engine Optimisation

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**There can be little doubt these days about the importance of having a website as part of your marketing strategy. The use of the web for research is well documented and growing exponentially across all ages and social economic groups. But how do people find your site?**

Generally, a potential patient will find your site in one of two ways, firstly through you adding your domain name to your advertising and all your collateral, from business cards to window signage. The second way and the topic of the article, is through search engines such as Google and Yahoo.

Getting a good result with the search engines is 'ever shifting sands' and is getting more and more complex. The following is an overview of what Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is all about and how you can improve your current chances of being found.

Search engine optimisation is one of most popular online marketing tools for any website. With most dental websites looking forward to increasing patient's enquiries, search engine optimisation can be a very cost-effective tool to target and procure more patients.

## 1. What is search engine optimisation?

Search engine optimisation (also known by various other names like search engine ranking, search engine promotion, website promotion, SEO etc.) is a method through which a website is given top rankings in various search engines. According to a recent industry study, 1 in every 20 people go to the second page of search results pages, but only 1 in every 100 people go beyond that. So, by top search engine rankings, we mean that your website should be within the first two pages of the search results, preferably in the first page (i.e. within top 10 rankings).

## 2. What are the prime benefits of search engine optimisation?

Top search engine rankings result in more pre-qualified patient leads coming to your website, which with the correct website content, will result in more of the patients you desire.

Search engine promotion is one of the cheapest methods of advertising for your practice. Compared to advertisements in the newspapers, magazines or in the television, search engine promotion costs are very low and can generate better results.

Search engine optimisation enhances online brand identity of your practice.

## 3. What are the key factors for your website to have top search engine rankings?

Search engines change their algorithms frequently, thereby forcing the search engine optimisation companies to re-strategise their search engine optimisation techniques. However, the following attributes are basic and play a major role in procuring top search engine rankings.

**a. Keyword Research** – Keywords play the most vital role in your search engine optimisation campaign. Keywords (can be 1, 2, 3 or more words) are the search terms which a user types in the search box of a search engine to reach your website. Let us consider the average dental website interested in optimising for top search engine rankings. The following are some of the keywords that web surfers will type to reach your website: -

Dentist, dental, cosmetic, endo, endodontics, veneers, crowns, bridge, white fillings, emergency, suburb, city, ortho, orthodontics, perio, periodontics, dentures, false teeth, the doctor's names, implants, tooth ache etc.

### Keyword research tips –

- Always target keywords that best describe the services you want to attract, don't put endodontics unless you want to attract more endo to your practice.
- Try to find multiword potential keywords compared to single keywords.
- Try formulating keywords that give answers- 'why/how/ what .....?'
- Utilize your server log files to know what your customers searched most while visiting your site.
- Use keyword generator softwares like Wordtracker (<http://www.wordtracker.com>) or Overture (<http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/>)



- Include popular common misspellings (e.g. orthodontic typed as orthodonetic etc.) in your keyword list.

**b. Title of the web page** – (situated at the top left hand corner of your web browser- the title has a deep impact on your website's search engine rankings. Experience shows that most companies use the following as title of their index page, which can prevent them from getting top search engine rankings.

Welcome to the website of XYZ.com

An ideally optimised title should contain the top 3-5 keywords of your business, e.g. dentist cosmetic, dentist implants, dentists suburb,

Optimised Title - Dentist Cosmetic, Dentist Implants, Dentists Suburb

**c. Description Meta tag of the web page** – Description of a web page also plays important role in getting top search engine rankings. An optimised description would be to develop a suitable description based on your top 3 keywords

Providing exceptional dental solutions for cosmetic and dental implants in the suburb of ...

**d. Keywords Meta Tag of the web page** - This meta tag was of great importance at one time. But rampant manipulations (i.e. multiple, often non-relevant keyword stuffing in the 'keywords' tag), leading to abuse has resulted in search engines giving lesser importance to 'keywords' tag while ranking sites. Nevertheless, you can always place top 3 – 5 keywords of your site in the 'keywords' tag.

Optimised Keywords - dentist cosmetic, dentists implant dentist suburb

**e. Importance of Content/Keyword-enriched optimised pages for top search engine rankings** – Well, if there is one aspect which holds supreme importance in search engine, especially in Google ranking, then it is this. Yes, content! The popular phrase 'Content is King' was perhaps devised by watching Google's love for content. Develop content based on the top keywords related to your business. While developing content for your web pages, keep in mind the keyword density (KD).

Mathematically speaking, Keyword Density is the ratio of the total number of times a keyword is repeated divided by the total content words. Since KD is normally represented in percentage, the figure is to be multiplied by 100.

For example, if you have developed a web page of around 250 words on the keyword 'search engine optimisation', and that particular keyword (search engine optimisation) is repeated 10 times, then Keyword Density (KD) =  $10/250 * 100 = 4\%$

As a thumb rule, Keyword Density of an optimised page for top search engine rankings should vary between 2 – 7 % (this figure varies among different search engines)

#### 4. Submission of Keyword-enriched optimised pages

After you have finished content development for the optimised pages based on the keywords targeted for top search engine rankings, submit those pages to various search engines.

**a. Google** - <http://www.google.com/addurl.html>

**b. AlltheWeb** - [http://addurl.alltheweb.com/add\\_url](http://addurl.alltheweb.com/add_url)

**c. AltaVista** - <http://addurl.altavista.com/addurl/new>

**d. MSN** - <http://submitit.bcentral.com/msnsubmit.htm>

#### 5. Role of Link Popularity in top search engine rankings

Link popularity has assumed tremendous importance for getting good ranks in Google nowadays. In fact, what started as a friendly reciprocal link exchange program among various webmasters has now become a sub-industry within the SEO industry itself, with thousands of link farms popping up every day! Yes, if you are interested in getting top ranks in search engines, especially Google, then you must pay effort in building up links for your site.

#### Key SEO Factors

- Targeting the right keywords for your website
- Title of your web page
- Description Meta tag of your web page
- Keywords Metatag of your web page
- Quality, Informative Content
- Link Popularity

#### Paid Search Engine Placement and Search Engine Optimisation

Paid search engine placement can also be used as part of your Internet marketing strategy to give your practice an increased competitive advantage. This is because it gives



you immediate control over your search engine rankings. This is one of the big differences between paying for rankings and rankings achieved through "organic" search engine optimisation.

Paid search engine placement usually takes the form of Pay Per Click (PPC). This requires you to pay only when someone clicks through to your site. PPC can be an effective addition to your overall search engine strategy as it can get you off and running quickly.

The main PPC providers, Overture and Google Adwords, use systems based on bidding, whoever pays the most gets the highest ranking. Adwords differs from Overture in that they also use a click-through-rate which rewards high click through rates with better pricing.

As with 'organic' search engine optimisation you will need to define the keywords that your audience will use to find your product. Your keywords are an important part of your sales message. Bear in mind that popular keywords will be more competitive and may have higher bids associated with them. This means that you will have to pay more if you use common keywords or phrases. Remember that if you use the wrong keywords you will get visitors that do not respond to your message.

The great thing about search engine placement through PPC is that you can get information and modify your campaign in real time. You can check the effectiveness of your PPC campaign by using the reporting tools that are offered by your PPC provider. This tells you how much business the campaign is bringing you. You can get immediate return on investment information. You can monitor your PPC ads and if they are not effective you can quickly change them. The key is to watch how much you spend and change the ads if they are not working.

Paid search engine placement can be an important part of your Internet marketing strategy. It is a great way to get it up and running very quickly. It also gives you a good insight

into how effective your keywords are and an opportunity to try out different ones. 'Organic' search engine optimisation is much more cost effective in the long term (3 months+). Search engine optimisation also gives your site exposure for a wide variety of keyword phrases across many directories and search engines. The two systems can be used effectively together so that you can make full use of your Internet marketing options over a period of time. This will help your practice maximise its online marketing efforts.

The whole topic of optimisation can sometimes seem a little confusing, but well worth the effort as you see the increase in patient enquiries. If you have not got time to investigate and do it yourself then employ a credible company to help, but be very cautious, as due to the apparent complexity of the subject, there are many companies that will try and take advantage of your lack of knowledge.

Integrated Dental Marketing offers Search Engine friendly website design and SEO solutions exclusively for the dental profession. Carl and his team at IDM can be contacted on (02) 9211 1477 or by visiting [www.dentalmarketing.com.au](http://www.dentalmarketing.com.au). Thanks is given to Mr Raychaudhuri and Mr Peggie for their input to this article.

