

Put Your Web Site at the Top of the List

Is your web site at the top of Google when you do an Internet search? You can have the best looking, most informative web site in the world, but it's worthless if it can't be found.

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of improving the visibility of your web site by search engines. In general, the higher on the page and more frequently a site appears in the list of search results, the more visitors it will receive.

Every practice's marketing and business plan should include strategies on how to drive more traffic to its web site. You will incur no incremental costs in servicing additional visitors and will likely profit from your efforts as you gain new patients from that traffic.

How does a web site make it to the top of the list? Search engines, like Google and Bing, investigate billions of documents and return only those results that are relevant or useful to the searcher's query, ranking those results in order of perceived value or importance. Algorithms (formulas) that calculate where a web site ranks in the search engine are tremendously complex. However, the two factors that have the biggest impact on site rankings are content and links.

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Save the date: SEO webinar

Content: Your goal is to provide information about your practice to patients and potential patients. A search engine is looking for key words such as *office*, *book*, *appointment*, *visit* and *patients*. Search engines don't read your site with the same eyes that a prospective patient would. Instead, they scan every word and note where it's positioned, how it's formatted and how frequently it's used on every page. The search engines then run that data through their calculations. So, the content on your site needs to make sense to a patient and the eyes of a search engine.

Links: Links to your site build credibility. From a search engine perspective, the more links to your site from external sites, the more people value your web site. Once search engines determine that your site is really about optometry and that it is credible, your rankings will increase.

Conceptually, SEO is quite simple. But practically, optimizing your web site requires lots of attention in choosing the best key words, and identifying and convincing the right sites to link back to you.

Bing engineers recommend the following to improve your web site's SEO.

- In the visible page text, be sure to include words users might choose as search query terms.
- Limit all pages to a reasonable size. They recommend one topic per page. An HTML page with no pictures should be under 150 KB.
- Make sure that each page is accessible by at least one static text link.
- Don't put the text that you want indexed inside images. For example, make sure your practice name is not displayed solely inside a logo. Google engineers issue these recommendations for better results.
- Make pages primarily for users, not for search engines. Don't deceive users or present different content to search engines than you display to users.
- Create a useful, information-rich site, and write pages that clearly and accurately describe your content.
- Keep the links on a given page to a reasonable number (fewer than 100).

Primary Eyecare Network (PEN), the Practice Development Division of ABB CONCISE, is teaming with EyeCarePro, the first web site builder solution specifically for the optometric industry. Together, they are offering a free SEO webinar for optometrists.

Presented live on Dec. 13, 2010, *Search Engine Optimization, How to Rank #1 on Google*, analyzes the critical components of optimizing your web site for search engines and translates them into practical, manageable tasks that every practice can apply to its site or use to enhance its yourlens.com web store. \$

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Call PEN at 800-444-9230, option 5, to register for the Dec. 13 webinar. You can find more about SEO and other web-related topics by visiting eyecarepro.net. Choose the Education Center tab for current articles and the Marketing Your Site tab for a schedule of upcoming webinars.