



Helloooo... We're Over Here!

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Everyone wants to be at the top of Google - that's why not everyone can be! But there are things you can do to help your position.

This is what is known as Search Engine Optimisation (SEO), or search engine marketing, as it is also called, and some people lose a lot of sleep over it! Search engine placement and SEO may seem like a dark art to the uninitiated - that is why there are so many companies out there offering SEO services. Clearly the bigger firms may be well served by a reputable SEO company (and some of them aren't!), but for you as a small business or sole service provider, their costs are likely to be out of reach.

But don't despair, there are lots of things you can do for yourself. And Waving Moose will always try to design SEO into your website and help you keep it relevant.

At Waving Moose we cannot guarantee the performance of your website and how much business you will get from it. But we will do our best to help you get the most from it. Here are some tips and techniques to bear in mind when thinking about your search engine ranking.

1. How Does It Work?

Search engines, such as Google, work by sending out software programs — called bots — that trawl the web for information relevant to the search that a user types into the search page. Search engines read the contents of websites (extremely quickly!) and judge how relevant they are for a certain search.

2. Search Engine Submission

In order for the bots to be able to find your website, it must be indexed by the search engines first. Google and Yahoo are by far the most significant with about 50% and 25% of the search market respectively. (Waving Moose always submits websites designed by us to both of these search engines for indexing).

3. Be Realistic!

It's important to try to be realistic about securing pole positions on search engines. You may have a lot of competition! Bear in mind too that there's **no such thing as permanent top rankings**. Positioning and traffic fluctuations are perfectly normal. New pages with unique content are added to the Web all the time. Old pages are deleted or updated. How pages and sites link to each other also changes. Furthermore, search engine indexes constantly evolve. It stands to reason therefore, that position will always fluctuate.

We would always advise that you see SEO as an **"organic" process**, which concentrates on building search engine awareness over time - through use of key words, website content, developing links and generating traffic. Typically, it can take between six and nine months to get good listings.

4. Content is King

Searches work by matching the words and phrases people search for with the subject and content of your website. It's easy to see therefore, that **developing the right list of keywords, terms and phrases** to include in your website content is the first and key step in improving your prospects of a good position.

Weaving these into your pages in **normal sentence structure** is the second step. Waving Moose tries to do this automatically if we are drafting your text content. But there is an element of **experimentation** and you should keep your message and website content **under review** and be prepared to modify it from time to time.

However, trying to **manipulate search engines artificially** (eg by stuffing your pages full of certain words and phrases) is bad practice and Waving Moose will not help you do it. For a start, Google and other search engines are getting more and more wise to these techniques – at best they ignore them, at worst they may result in your site being blacklisted. And - more importantly we think - you are obscuring the proper content and message of your website from your visitors (ie potential customers). So even if you get increased traffic, they aren't going to stay long!

5. Keep It Under Review

Perhaps your website does include appropriate words and phrases, but you are still not ranking well. It may be time to think about whether the right ones have been chosen. **The key thing is to know your market.** What do people want? How can that be matched to your product or service. If you were looking for your service, what would you enter into Google? Ask around – friends, family and colleagues may have ideas.

6. Developing Links

Search engines look for web links to your site, so establishing reciprocal links with complementary businesses, or with forums and directories, will push your site higher up the results page. So **try and think of other businesses that you could exchange links with.** One option here is to have a look at what your competitors' links are.

Please bear in mind that **quality link development takes time.** Steer clear of services which offer you *Instant Link Popularity*. Anyone who promises this is spamming search engines; building 'link farms' to artificially inflate link popularity. Results will be short-lived and the sites liable to be removed by search engines.

7. Are You Going to Be Around for Long?

When renewing your **domain name**, consider that Google appreciates and weights the longevity and stability of websites. **A longer registration** can demonstrate this and may help improve your ranking.

8. Good Traffic... So What?

If you do all these things, you may get increased traffic to your website yet still not make 'sales'. The most important part of all of this is to provide a **welcoming and user-friendly experience** for your visitors and **content that is relevant to what they are seeking.** Again, this goes back to having a thorough understanding of what you are trying to portray, your customers, your geography and your market.

9. Paid SEO Services

We always advise that you should **give your website some time to settle down** before you consider paying for further services. But if you do want further specialised help by all means look for one of the many companies out there who offer SEO services. Just bear in mind that *some* may promise the earth, whilst doing very little more than you could do yourself with a little thought and perhaps modifying your website content.

And Finally...

For some further ideas focused on keeping your website effective and helping to generate business - see our briefing - **"So You've Got a Website – Now What?"**

And if you need any more help or advice about getting the most out of your website please do not hesitate to get in touch.