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# An Introduction to Search Engine Optimization (SEO)



**Progresso Consulting** LLC  
online business solutions

[www.progressoconsulting.com](http://www.progressoconsulting.com)

- What it is
- How it works
- Why it's important to your firm

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## Search Engine Optimization

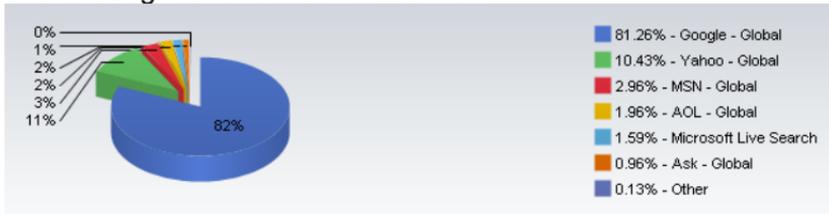
### A Brief History

In 1995, the Internet became a publically available information system. Early users had to know the internet address of the information site they wanted to view. Without it, they were lost.

The first search engines, among them Excite and Yahoo, provided a directory-style index of web sites published to the internet. Later Google developed an alternate search methodology, one which has evolved to what we have today. Google reviews each site using software tools called “robots” to evaluate *Relevancy* to certain key words and assign an *Authority Score* that only Google knows. Unlike directories which provided directories of internet sites, Google results offered an evaluation of a site’s *importance* relative to the user’s search term.

People have found the Google methods and search results more to their liking, and this search engine is now used for about 80% of searches on the internet. Other search engines developed more similar and competing strategies, yet Google maintains a strong lead with favor among users.

### Search Engine Market Share - Global



Source: NetApplications.com, January 2009

## **What is Search Engine Optimization?**

Google is winning the search engine competition. It provides search results that show what it determines to be the most *relevant* and *authoritative* web sites at the top of their search results for the *search term* you use.

Search Engine Optimization, or SEO, is a process of modifying a site to show more of the information that Google and other search engines find important. This has the effect of improving Google's internal Authority Score and the Relevancy it finds for your site. Gradually, this improves your site's position on the search results page for search terms appropriate for your site.

## **Start with the Search Terms**

The words you type into a search engine are called *search terms*. To find what you offer, what words will *your potential customer* type into Google's search box? Think from your customer's perspective, and consider variations. Would your customers type in categories of products, individual products or services, product model numbers, or location?

Optimization is performed based on the search terms you select for targeting. More search terms mean more potential visitors, as well as more effort in SEO across your site. Competition for each search term also affects the amount of SEO effort required.

## **Types of Search Engine Optimization**

### National Search – Targeting a National Marketplace

For companies selling and delivering products nationally.

### Local Search – Targeting a City, Town, County or State

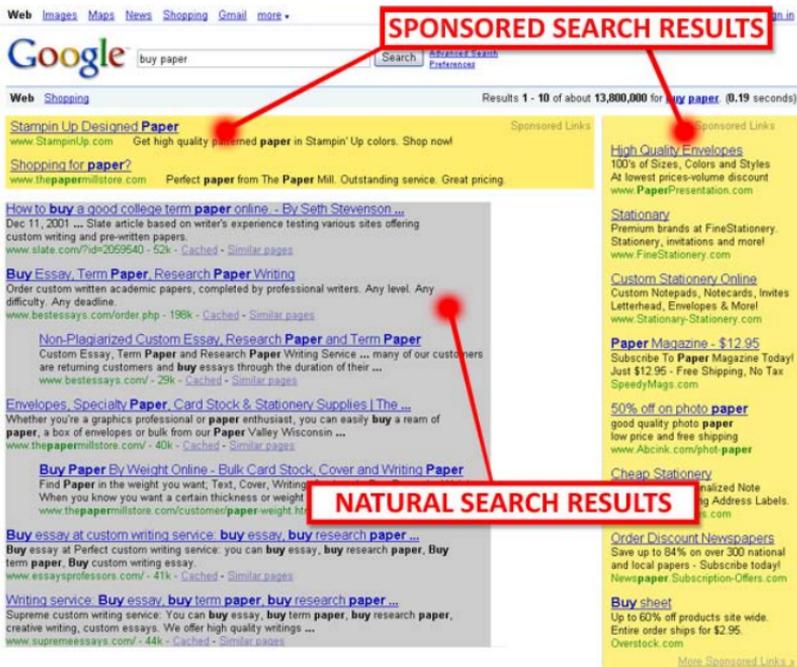
For companies that sell and deliver products locally.

### Country-specific Search – Target International Buyers

in another country using country-specific search engines.

## Natural Search vs. Sponsored Search

When we talk about SEO, we are talking about the natural or organic search results. These are in the main body of the search results page, and these rankings come from the search engines.



The image shows a Google search results page for the query "buy paper". A red box at the top right highlights the "SPONSORED SEARCH RESULTS" section, which includes advertisements from Stampin' Up, PaperMillStore, and PaperPresentation. A second red box at the bottom highlights the "NATURAL SEARCH RESULTS" section, which includes organic search results from State, BestEssays, PaperMillStore, EssaysProfessors, and SupremeEssays. Red lines connect the text labels to their respective sections on the page.

The Sponsored Search results are short ads that incur a cost when a user clicks on the link bringing them to your site. That cost is determined by a bidding process that determines how often the ad is displayed on a page, and where it will be shown on the page – at the top, or how far up on the side of the page. Bid costs depend on the search term, and vary greatly.

## **How Does SEO Work?**

There are hundreds of elements of a web site, in its design, content, tags and source code. These elements are considered by the search engines as they evaluate the site's importance.

For example, the way graphics are constructed can affect the search rankings. The robots that read your website's pages can't read the text imbedded in graphics, so the SEO firm may modify the source code to offset this factor.

Some types of links can add to your site's importance, while others reduce that importance. Outbound links, i.e., links on your site that point to other sites, may be neutral or may drain value from your Authority Score. Inbound links will generally help build your site's Authority Score, yet this varies greatly based on the referring site's Authority Score in your industry.

How long your site has been active vs. those of your competitors will affect rankings. The number and quality of pages has an impact as well. If you have an eCatalog on your site, is it search engine friendly? If not, some search engines can't read the pages, missing opportunities to boost your site in the rankings.

## **Can I Do It Myself?**

Beginners can learn the basics of SEO from the informational sites on the internet, but it takes a great deal of experience, knowledge and talent to perform SEO in a competitive field on the internet. The learning curve is very steep, and it takes months of full-time attention to learn what you need to know.

That's why thousands of companies engage a professional SEO company to improve the rankings of their internet sites.

## **Why SEO is Important to Your Firm**

In years past companies published websites as online brochures. They directed people to see the sites through their advertising or sales calls, to learn about their products and services. Customer interaction *through* the site wasn't critical.

Brochure sites work well if a potential customer already knows your company's name. However, if they're looking for a product by type, brand, or location, they'll be using the search engines to find it. With SEO, these could become *your* new customers.

In current times, interaction through web sites is no longer a novelty. Companies can secure sales leads, sell products and services, get subscribers, as well as offer product information. Webcasts, RSS feeds, white papers, annual reports, and more bring visitors back to your site and keep them engaged. SEO, together with fresh content, can multiply the ways to get leads.

## **The Top Two**

Research has found that most searchers will look at Page One (100%) and perhaps at Page Two (62%) of the search results. When results on Page One or Page Two are not what they expected, most users change the search term and try again.

Each page has just ten positions. That's twenty positions for internet sites in the Top Two pages for the search term used. You will want your business site to appear in the top two pages of the search results. If you're not there, most people won't look further for you. They will become *someone else's* customer.

Selection of SEO search terms must be strategic, with a balance of search popularity and lower competition levels. High volume, high competition search terms can be very expensive.

## **Best Practices**

Doing it right counts. When SEO is done according to the guidelines of the search engines, the industry call this “white hat” (what the good guy wears). Some try to accomplish ranking improvements using sneaky or underhanded means to “game” or manipulate the search engines. These are called “gray-hat” or “black hat” practices. Gray hat or black hat practices may result in penalties by Google that reduced your site’s rankings.

Progresso Consulting LLC performs professional quality SEO work using only “white-hat” practices. We follow the search engines original intent – to rank relevant and authoritative sites highest in their results. We work to make your site more relevant and authoritative for the search terms you’ve targeted.

## **We’re Here to Help Grow Your Business**

Search Engine Optimization is the right tool to bring new and existing customers to your internet site. With over 72% of American households now having internet access and most businesses having internet access, it doesn’t make sense to miss the opportunities that can be brought to your door.

Inside salespeople use the phone to bring in sales. Outside salespeople visit customers face-to-face at their offices. Your internet site is your company’s “face” on the internet. It needs to be visible, and therefore accessible, to searchers. SEO will accomplish this. We will develop a specific strategy for your company and prepare an effective plan that matches your goals.

## **Progresso Consulting LLC**

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**Make an Inquiry with Us for SEO Services – via Call or Fax**

Please Tell Us About Your Firm:

Business Name \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Contact email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

What do you sell? \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been in business? \_\_\_\_\_ years

How long have you had in internet site? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you sell to consumers? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Do you sell to businesses? If so, are there specific industries

that you target with your site? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the average sale for your firm? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

If we may ask, what are the annual sales of your firm? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Tell us what search terms your customers use to find your offers:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What kind of search do you want to pursue using SEO?

\_\_\_ Local \_\_\_ Regional \_\_\_ National \_\_\_ Other Country \_\_\_\_\_