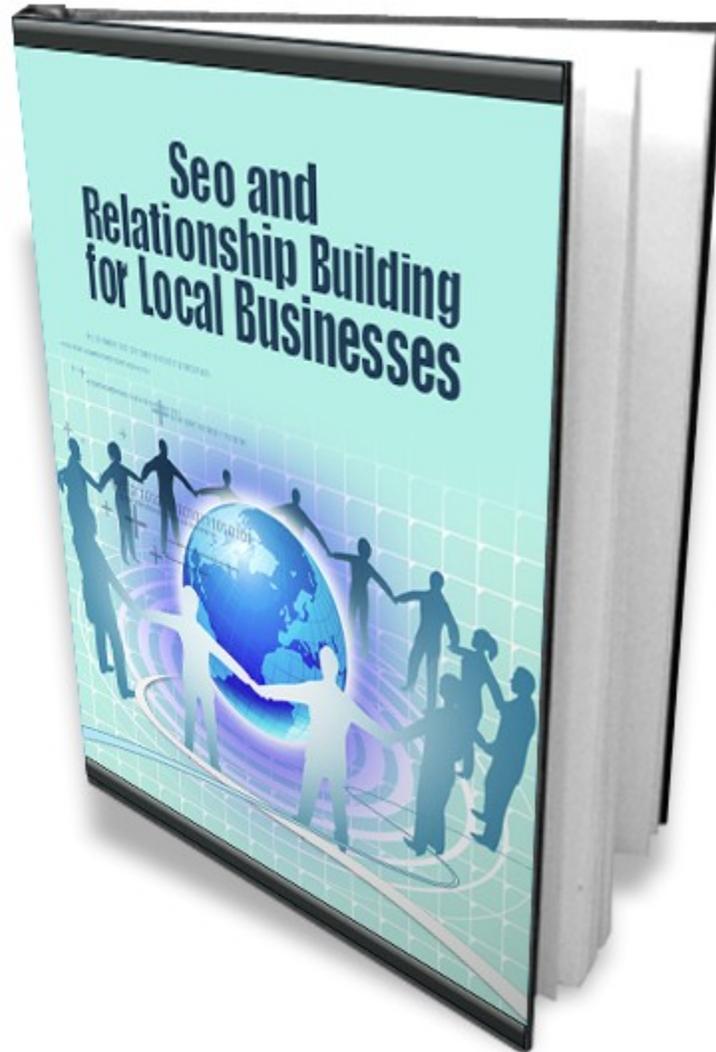


# SEO And Relationship Building For Local Businesses



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## **Introduction**

Whether the operation that you run is large or small, every business needs a web site.

As more and more consumers join the online revolution, it is no longer enough to advertise what you do and the things you have to offer in traditional 'offline' ways. Every one of those consumers is a prospect and potential customer for your business, and it is therefore imperative that you get your message out to as many of them as possible, and that means using the internet.

No matter how much of a technophobe you or your colleagues might be, there is really only one answer nowadays to satisfactorily achieving the degree of market 'reach' you need. You and your business have to be on the internet, but you have to do the job of having your business presented to the internet community in the right way.

Hence, it is important that you learn what that 'right' way is, because not everyone that claims to be a 'web site' expert is the real thing. In addition, there are many factors about the web site that you create (or have created) that will dictate how effective that site is.

What this book is designed to do is to teach you the fundamentals about what a web site is, what it can do and perhaps most importantly, how you can make sure that it achieves the things that it should be capable of achieving for your business.

This is not to say that this book is going to teach you how to design or build a web site – even though doing so is almost ludicrously easy nowadays, I am assuming that you are not planning to build your site yourself.

However, the chances are that after reading this book you will be able to make a very good 'stab' at basic web site creation if necessary, because many of the fundamentals of site creation 'cross over' with what is known as search engine optimization (SEO), which is the main focus of this book.

Let us therefore begin by looking at why you would want – sorry, scratch that, need – a web site for your business, irrespective of whether your company is large or small, brand new or well established.

## **Business web sites have changed and are changing still**

### **It's all about relationships nowadays...**

It is sometimes hard to remember that the internet has only been a reality for both the average man in the street and the normal business owner for the last 20 years or so. Before that, access to the World Wide Web was limited to a very small number of government officials, military personnel and top scientists.

It was always a dream of Englishman [Sir Tim Berners-Lee](#), who is widely credited with inventing the internet by first connecting an HTTP client and server in 1990, that the net should be a resource available to everyone. Now that dream is the reality of everyday life, so much so that for most people in developed countries, their first thought when they need information or answers is to turn to the net.

This is the first crucial fact that you have to understand if you are running a business. Most people who are regular internet users – and their number is growing by the thousands every day – use the internet as their primary source of information. It follows that if you do not have a web presence, a significant proportion of your potential prospects and/or customers are going to be unable to find information about your business.

There are alternative methods of providing information through other media outlets such as TV, radio, newspaper and magazine advertising, entries in directories and the Yellow Pages. However, as far as the current internet generation is concerned, an ever-increasing percentage of the population do not use these resources when they're looking for information – they automatically turn to the internet to find what they need.

So, the first reason that you need a net presence is to provide information to potential prospects and customers about what you do, where you are, how you operate and so on.

However, providing information over the net is exactly what most businesses that already have a web site have been doing since the day that site was first published. However, in the modern business world this is no longer enough, because your potential prospects are looking for a whole lot more from your site nowadays.

Many larger organizations in the West have already realized this, and have developed their sites to provide what people are looking for, but there is still a significant percentage of companies that have an online

representation, but with a website that is doing very little to develop or increase their business.

So, before embarking on the process of creating your first website or updating the one you already have, it is essential to understand the mindset of potential prospects who might use the internet to find information about your business.

I have already established that in the 'old days' (i.e. less than two decades ago!), businesses used their websites to provide information.

For the modern consumer, however, this is not enough, because over the last three or four years, the internet has undergone something of a revolution, a revolution that is known as Web 2.0.

While the Web 2.0 concept is a little vague and difficult to pin down, it is easier to do so if you consider what Web 1.0 was all about, which was providing nothing more than information. In other words, if you look at any big business that is still using their site to provide little more than information and contact details, they are still using a site built on a basis that is already several years out of date.

What the Web 2.0 generation are looking for is interactivity, a way to communicate and build a relationship with the people behind business websites.

This is a natural extension of the fact that most of these people now accept it to be the norm to spend some time every day posting information to their own [blog site](#) and using other social resources like [MySpace](#) and [Facebook](#). They do so in the knowledge that their regular readers will respond by posting comments, recommendations and perhaps even 'guest editing' that blog by adding a new post themselves, and they can communicate with anyone, anywhere in the world using sites like these.

There is a degree of interactivity between the site creators and their readers, a concept taken one significant stage further by micro-blogging sites like [Twitter](#) where people all over the world are able to interact with each other almost immediately.

These are the facts of modern day life that you have to consider when you are designing or modernizing your website. Adding a simple contact details form is not enough nowadays, because people want to be able to interact with your business, and more importantly the people behind it, as quickly as possible.

It is all about building solid, sound relationships with prospects and eventually customers, opening up your business to them so that the

whole thing is entirely transparent and therefore also completely trustworthy.

This should be nothing more than an extension of what you are doing already. No matter what it is you are selling, promoting or doing in your work every day, the people that do business with you tend to be the people with whom you already have a relationship. You will pick up new customers and clients along the way, but even those people will eventually choose to do business with you or not based upon whether they feel comfortable about working with you.

It is a fact that people do business with people, and that they find it far easier to do business with people they like.

So, a deadpan 'this is who we are, this is what we do and you can fill this form in to contact us' type of site no longer cuts the mustard as far as the modern consumer is concerned, because they want so much more from you.

### **Think longer-term business development**

One important aspect of interactivity is having the ability to promote and sell your products directly via the internet. The internet community as a whole is a truly global marketplace, and an increasing number of people are used to doing business online. If you want to expand your horizons beyond your locality or perhaps your own country, you have to give some thought to how you are going to do this.

Nowadays, only the most dyed in the wool Luddite thinks about supplying only local customers, unless the product or service that is being provided does not lend itself to global trade.

However, even in this case, the situation should not be beyond redemption.

All that is needed is a little thought and an acceptance of the fact that, no matter where you are, the internet allows you to communicate with prospects all across the world 24 hours a day without limitation. Irrespective of what are your products, there are people all over the world who would very probably like to buy what you have to offer. So, you have to think of a way of supplying whatever you produce to them.

For many people who run small to medium local businesses that have had no previous experience of doing business on the internet, this is a slightly surreal concept to take on board, but it is nevertheless a fact that you can do business anywhere in the world via the internet.

That being said, it might need a fundamental shift of thinking and approach for this to make any sense as far as your own business is concerned.

As an example, your business may deal in real, tangible products that probably appear to be unsuitable for global trade.

For instance, if your business crafts hand built oak furniture that you currently supply to the end user consumer directly, it is unlikely that you will be able to ship one of your oak table and chair sets from one side of the world to a customer on the other side of the world without spending a fortune in delivery costs. The size and weight of your product would mean that any advantage to be had from buying directly from the manufacturer would be lost to that customer, so why would they do it?

Nevertheless, the fact is that there could be a vast potential market for your oak furniture products on the other side of the world, so you would need to deliver in bulk to reduce the shipping costs attached to each individual item. Hence, you had to consider moving away from the idea of delivering directly to the end user because you are definitely going to need an intermediary to whom you can deliver in bulk.

At the other end of the scale, you might be manufacturing or supplying small, lightweight goods, in which case shipping becomes far less of a problem.

In either situation, the bottom line is, no matter what you supply or manufacture, you have to think outside the normal parameters of your current every day business activities to see how you can push what you do out onto the global stage.

There is a massive world market made up of millions of potential prospects out there, and a significant proportion of those people have access to the internet. It is possible to take your marketing message right into the very heart of their homes, and as long as your website does its job properly, there is absolutely no reason why those people cannot become a customer of your business.

No longer are you limited to dealing with a few hundred thousand people in your local community, because through the power of the internet, you have access to a market of millions.

### **Your site has two tasks to address...**

To conclude this chapter, there are two separate aspects of your website that you have to consider.

Firstly, it has to give people what they want, and it has to be constructed in such a way that it enables you to build a relationship with prospects who have seen your site and are interested in what you have to offer (irrespective of where they are).

Secondly, you must understand from the outset that you can have the best website in the world, which might nevertheless be a complete waste of time without one thing.

Once you have created your interactive, relationship building website, it is absolutely essential to do everything possible to make sure that people find your website because without that, you have no prospect of making sales either.

This is one of the biggest mistakes that companies or individuals who decide to start an online business make. Whether it is a brand new business or an extension of an existing 'bricks and mortar business world' operation, it is absolutely essential that you learn what it is that sends people to a website, because without this knowledge, your online business is dead in the water before it even 'sets sail'.

The stories of would-be online entrepreneurs who came up with what they believed to be a world shattering idea, and spent months on developing that idea and an associated website, only to find that they never sold one product, are legion within the online business community. In almost every example, the primary mistake was that the individual or company concerned focused all of their time, effort and attention on completely the wrong aspects of building a site based business.

While your business does need a website that does what your prospects and customers want it to do, it does not need a *perfect* website (if such a thing exists). Nevertheless, many would-be website owners who are putting their presence online for the first-time expect a perfect website, and are not prepared to publish anything less. They spend weeks or even months tweaking, modifying and altering tiny aspects of the site that most people wouldn't even notice, all the time delaying the day when they can first start earning money.

When they do *eventually* launch their website, they sit back to wait for visitors to start arriving. And they wait. And they continue to wait...

Until eventually, tired of waiting and finally becoming aware that the world was not ready for their brilliant idea, they can the whole thing and that is the last in the world ever sees or hears of it.

The problem with this scenario is that visitors do not simply arrive on your website. It is possible that the odd visitor might turn up every now and then by mistake, but there are never going to be enough of these people to keep your business alive, and the fact that this visitor arrives by mistake indicates that they are not going to do business with you, because they are not targeted.

It is targeted visitors you need, people who are genuine prospects for your product when they arrive on your site, because they are prequalified before they come.

As an example, imagine that you have a website from which you sell green widgets. As part of the promotional efforts, you pay for advertising to be placed on other widget related web pages, or you write articles that you submit to the International Widget Association who publish your articles on their site.

In both of these examples, in order to be presented with your promotional materials, an individual would already be visiting a widget related web site. They are doing so because they have some interest in widgets, and so, if they choose to follow the link to your site from your advert or articles, they are a hot prequalified prospect for your green widgets.

In terms of online marketing, getting your website seen is important. However, it is nowhere near as important as getting your website seen by prequalified prospects, because these are the people who are most likely to become your customers a little further down the line.

So, how do you find targeted prospects of this type?

The first answer is by publishing promotional materials like advertising, articles and so on. This is something we will look at later in this report.

The second way you drive targeted traffic (i.e. visitors) to your web pages is by getting the search engines to find individual pages of your site and present them to people using that search engine to find information like yours.

This is where search engine optimization (SEO) starts to come into the picture, and why it is so important to your business website. Let us therefore begin to consider search engine optimization now.

# **The basics of search engine optimization**

## **It's a results driven game that never stands still...**

The first thing to say about search engine optimization is that it is a many faceted art form or science, one that is constantly changing and shifting.

Consequently, genuine search engine optimization specialists are very much in demand and are usually paid a great deal of money for their time and efforts, because a site that is optimized for the search engines can represent many thousands of dollars extra profit in the bank.

Search engine optimization is all about doing whatever is necessary to get the pages of your website indexed (i.e. added to the pages that the search engines have 'listed') and then ranked (pushed up the 'league table').

As suggested previously, the vast majority of people who are using the net on a daily basis are doing so to seek information looking for answers to problems that remain unsolved. When they do so, although there are many ways that people can search the net for what they seek, the majority still use major search engines like Google, Yahoo and MSN.

In order to search, they type a search word or phrase into a search box on the page and hit the return button.

When that happens, they will be shown a search results page that presents them with a couple of different types of information.

However, the one common feature that ties all of the information on that page together is that every result shown is there for a specific reason. This is because the search engine 'thinks' that the results shown are the most relevant to the search term being used of the many millions of individual web pages they have listed.

For example, this is a Google search for 'weight loss' information:

The screenshot shows a Google search for "weight loss". At the top, there's a search bar with "weight loss" entered and a "Search" button. Below the search bar, there are navigation links for "Web", "News", and "Blogs". The search results are displayed in two columns. On the left, there are sponsored links for "Lose Weight The Easy Way", "Weight Loss Scam Exposed?", and "Jenny Craig Weight Loss". On the right, there are sponsored links for "Weight Loss: Quick & Easy", "1 Rule To Weight Loss™", "Phentremine 37.5 mg HCL", "Weight Loss", and "Trim Fat Non Surgically". A yellow box with the text "<==== Adverts ====>" is placed between the sponsored links. A red box highlights the sponsored links on the left and right. A red arrow points to the organic search results, which are labeled "Natural Search Results".

There are three things of note on this page.

Firstly, because the searcher has used the phrase 'weight loss' to find what they are looking for, every entry on this page that features this exact term is highlighted in bold type.

That is done to ensure that these results stand out, because Google is highlighting the fact that these individual results represent the best match between information provided and search term, as far as they're concerned.

Secondly, at the top left hand corner and all down the right-hand side of the page, you have paid advertising material, with a maximum of three adverts at the top left and eight down the right-hand side. These adverts are placed through the Google AdWords program by companies and individuals who have weight loss related products to sell, with the most expensive adverts being those at the top left hand corner.

There is a reason for these being the most expensive adverts, and that is because they are directly above the 'natural' or 'organic' search results. Natural search results are links to individual web pages on ordinary sites that Google have indexed under the search term being used.

Furthermore, because the company or individual behind these pages has ensured that they are optimized for Google, the search engine has 'decided' that, according to its algorithm, these are the best natural results to show to this particular searcher.

Two additional facts are important here.

Firstly, almost everyone who uses a search engine on a regular basis recognizes that the results on this page at the very top left and on the

right-hand side are paid advertising materials. As a result, they not unnaturally assume that by clicking on these results, they will be presented with a page that is selling them a product or service. Therefore, most people use the natural search results before they will consider looking at an advert, primarily because they are looking for information and not for something to buy.

Secondly, most regular searchers will start by opening the natural result links in positions 1-3 (because those tend to be the ones they see immediately the search results page opens), and then move down the natural results if they do not find what they're looking for in the first three. If this action does not provide the information they're looking for, the majority of searchers will look at some of the adverts, although there is a significant minority who will scroll to the second results page (showing natural results 11-20) to see what is on offer there before finally succumbing to looking at adverts.

To get your webpage on this search results page, you have two options.

The first option is simply to buy advertising, but this can be very expensive, particularly if you want to have your advert featured in the number one spot at the top left-hand corner.

For instance, continuing with the weight loss example, according to the [Google Traffic Estimator](#), every click on your advert featuring the term weight loss is going to cost is somewhere between \$2.32 and \$3.40, and with a potential for in excess of 3000 clicks every day on your advert, this is going to become a very expensive advertising campaign:

Keywords	Search Volume	Estimated Avg. CPC	Estimated Ad Positions	Estimated Clicks / Day	Estimated Cost / Day
weight loss	<input type="text" value=""/>	\$2.32 - \$3.40	1 - 3	3,035 - 3,795	\$7,060 - \$12,910
<b>Search Network Total</b>		<b>\$2.32 - \$3.40</b>	<b>1 - 3</b>	<b>3,035 - 3,795</b>	<b>\$7,060 - \$12,910</b>

The second and far more preferable option is to do whatever is necessary to get your web page ranked in the first three or four natural search results, because if you can achieve this, the traffic that will come to your site from search engines (at no cost) could be phenomenal:

## weight loss



According to the free [Word Tracker keyword research tool](#), there are approximately 20,500 people every day who are searching for weight and diet related information using a search term that contains the phrase 'weight loss'.

If your page was to be featured amongst the top two or three natural search results on the 'weight loss' page, a significant proportion of these people would look at your site. As long as your site did its job when they visited, there is no doubt that this would give a very significant boost to your business.

### **The way the search engines and SEO works...**

In order to decide exactly how they are going to index and then rank websites and the individual pages on those sites, all of the major search engines send out a software program known as a search engine robot (a 'bot'), or 'spider', to see what each of those pages is about.

However, what each of the individual search engines is actually looking for when they send their spider to a website is something of an unknown, with Google in particular being very unwilling to give specific guidelines on how to create a website that they are going to like. Yahoo and MSN are far more transparent, but many SEO experts would suggest that their indexing and ranking system is far more archaic than Google's.

Although these search engine optimization experts are probably the most qualified people to know and understand what Google and the others are looking for, no-one knows for sure. This is further complicated by the fact that Google in particular change their search algorithms on a very regular basis, at least partially because the better SEO experts become far too good at 'second-guessing' what they are doing!

However, the bottom line is, search engine optimization is all about trying to understand what the search engines want when they come to your site, before making sure that you 'feed the spider' exactly what it is looking for!

That's the next thing to look at.

## Two types of search engine optimization

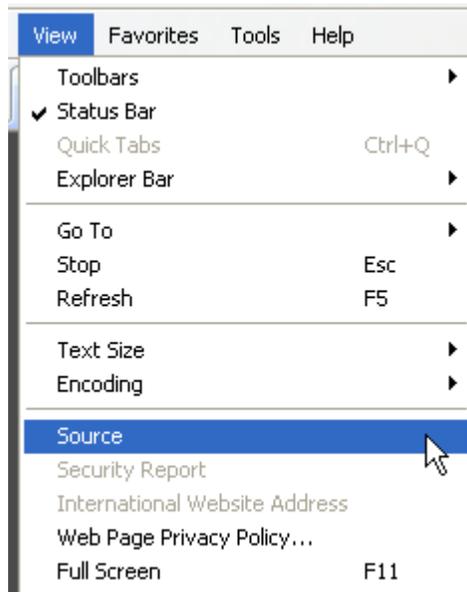
There are two different types of search engine optimization, both of which you need to know about and understand if you want to make sure that your website is as search engine friendly as possible.

Firstly, you have 'on-page' or 'on-site' search engine optimization, and while Google do not pay a great deal of attention to on-page optimization, the other major search engines like Yahoo, MSN and Ask still focus on it, so it is important.

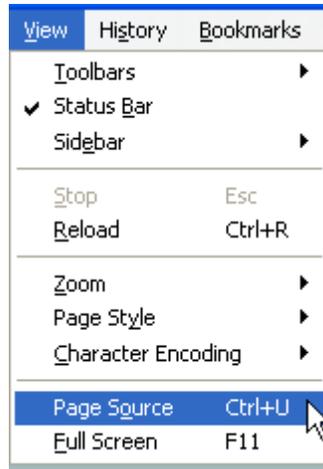
On-page optimization is concerned with making sure that the underlying code used to create the individual pages of your site is as search engine friendly as possible.

If this doesn't make a great deal of sense to you, every web page is written in a code that is converted by your favorite web browser into information and images on the screen, what you would recognize as a web page. Some of the code used to create a webpage is there because it puts information and images on the screen, but a proportion of it is designed to provide background information to the search engine spiders that visit your site.

To get an idea what this underlying code looks like, open any webpage in your favorite browser, and click on the 'View' and the 'Source' link if you're using Internet Explorer:



Or 'View' and then 'Page Source' with the Mozilla Firefox browser:



You're going to see a page of code that looks something like this:

```
<!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0 Strict//EN" "http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/DTD/xhtml1-strict.dtd">

<!-- Sysops: Please do not edit the main template directly; update /temp and synchronise. -->

<html xmlns="http://www.w3.org/1999/xhtml" xml:lang="mul" lang="mul" dir="ltr">
<head>
<title>Wikipedia</title>
<meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset=utf-8" />
<link rel="shortcut icon" href="http://en.wikipedia.org/favicon.ico" />
<link rel="apple-touch-icon" href="http://en.wikipedia.org/apple-touch-icon.png" />
<link rel="copyright" href="http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html" />

<style type="text/css" media="screen, projection">*<![CDATA[*] @import "http://en.wikipedia.org/skins-1.5/mon
<style type="text/css" media="print">
a{color:#000 !important;background:none !important;padding:0 !important}a:link,a:visited{color:#520;background
/
```

On-page optimization is all about making sure that this code is written in such a way that it does everything possible to ensure that the search engines know exactly what the individual pages of your site are all about.

The more effectively you can do this, the more accurately they are going to index and then hopefully rank that page for the correct search term, improving the chances of that page being shown to a searcher who is looking for exactly the kind of information you are providing.

The second type of search engine optimization that you have to be aware of is 'off-site' or 'off-page' optimization, which is concerned with doing things outside your site to ensure that the search engines know what you are doing on it. If this makes even less sense than the idea of playing with the underlying code of your page, it is something that will become clearer later.

However, all you need to understand for now is that Google are really focused on off-site optimization rather than on-site, and that as they control nearly 69% of the global search market, off-site optimization is nowadays extremely important.

# **The things you need to know about on-site SEO**

## **Why on-site SEO has changed over the past few years...**

Not that long ago, search engine optimization was synonymous with on-site SEO because off-site optimization did not really exist.

However, because all the major search engines relied on on-site optimization, it became extremely easy for less scrupulous SEO experts to 'game' the idea of optimization (most people would call it 'cheating', but 'gaming' is the term that is most commonly applied online).

This in turn began to have a disastrous effect on the accuracy of search engine results, which was a situation that the people behind the search engines were becoming increasingly unhappy about.

For example, as we have already seen, the specific term that a search engine user inputs when they are looking for information is known as a key word or keyword phrase in online marketing terms, and it is a match between this keyword phrase and the search term that dictates the results shown.

When you build a web page, you include a short list of keyword terms for which you believe your page should be indexed and ranked, in the underlying code on that page.

However, in the old SEO days, there was no limit on the number of keywords you could include in your list, knowing that the search engine spider would take note of every one. It was possible to include keyword terms that had nothing to do with your webpage, knowing that the search engine would index and rank that page for those terms.

This was an entirely artificial but extremely effective way of boosting the popularity of individual pages. For instance, less honest web masters and SEO experts would create vast keyword lists that included all of the most popular search terms, as a way of ensuring that individual web pages were shown to search engine users for those popular terms, as well as every other keyword phrase included on the list.

For this reason, search engine results became less and less accurate and relevant, which became a massive concern for the people who ran Google, Yahoo and MSN.

It was not that they were particularly concerned that people were getting frustrated or angry at their lack of ability to find the information they wanted, although this is what they claimed! It was more to do with the fact that it was annoying their advertisers, and without those advertisers, they had no business.

After all, these advertisers pay for every click on their ads, and the people clicking were becoming increasingly untargeted, meaning that they were wasting a lot of money showing ads to people who were never going to buy. This did not please advertisers, and that anger was directed at Google et al!

So, the rules of SEO were changed.

Nowadays, you still include a keyword list in the code of your page, but if there are more than 10-20 keyword phrases, the search engine spiders simply ignore them. The search engines are now far more accurate than they were two or three years ago, and as their underlying algorithms become more and more sophisticated, the accuracy is likely to continue to increase, which is good for search engine users.

### **On-site optimization – what needs to be done?**

Because the rules pertaining to search engine optimization are constantly changing, it is difficult to know exactly whether what works today is going to work equally well tomorrow.

For this reason, when you are considering what on-site optimization steps to take, you should stick to the tried and trusted, the things that have always worked and still continue to work.

Trying to follow new fads is not going to work, and as has already been suggested, 'gaming' the system might work for a short period, but on a long-term basis, it is a waste of your time and effort. Stick to optimizing your site in a straightforward, honest way, and you'll not go wrong.

The first rule of on-site optimization that never changes is that you must have a domain name that represents your business tells your prospects what you do. If your company is ABC.LLC and you make widgets, then your ideal domain name would be something like ABCwidgets.com.

This is an elementary step that you must take. Your domain name must relate to your business, and if a suitable domain is available, it should be something that is easy for your prospects and customers to remember.

After that, the next thing to appreciate about on-site optimization is that you should build a site for your human visitors. After all, no matter how superbly well optimized your site is, no spider or 'bot' is ever going to buy one of your products, so trying to target all of your efforts at impressing the search engines is a waste of time.

There is another reason why catering to your human visitors is so important. All of the search engines (and Google in particular) attach a great deal of importance to the value and quality of the pages that you

show to the visitors they send to your site. The higher the quality or value that you offer, the more highly they are going to rank that page.

One aspect of this that the search engines consider is how long people spend on your site when they visit, and how often they 'bounce' (open your page and then close it immediately). The more quality and value you can build into your site for visitors, the better your statistics are likely to be, which should improve your search rankings in return.

With this in mind, the first on-site step is to make sure that certain things appear in the HTML code of your page.

As most on-site optimization concerns HTML, if you are creating or modifying a site in code, you need to be able to do the editing job. It is possible to do this using a basic text editor like Notepad, but it is far easier to use any WYSIWYG ('What you see is what you get') web editor software program, because by doing so, you can do a large proportion of the editing job visually, rather than digging around in the underlying code.

For this purpose, download and install the excellent free [Kompozer software](#) program, primarily because in describing how your page needs to be constructed in order to achieve maximum search engine friendliness, this is the software that am going to use to illustrate.

The first thing that you have to pay attention to is the meta-tags on your page. This is the section of the underlying code that appears at the top of page that tells the search engine spider what that page is all about by including the title, a description and a list of keywords (go back to the previous HTML code screen shot, and you will see these).

One thing that you should avoid doing is using the same title, description and keywords phrases on every page.

Understanding keywords is extremely important, and we will look at them in a little more detail later.

However, suffice to say for now that every page on your site should be focused on and built around a maximum of two keyword phrases, one of which should be an important 'major' keyword phrase, and one a minor phrase. Your title, description and your keyword list should feature those keywords, preferably as near to the beginning as possible.

The format of these meta-tags (in the page header using Kompozer) should look something like this:

```
<html>
<head>
  <title> Keyword Phrase 1 | Keyword Phrase 2</title>
  <meta name="description"
content="No more than two or three sentences, including the keywords on which you are focused.">
  <meta name="keywords"
content="No more than 10-20 keywords and keyword phrases, separated by commas ">
</head>
```

Note that the title is made up of your two keyword phrases divided by a pipe, and that the description is only a couple of sentences long. Also, do not waste your time including more than 10-20 targeted keyword phrases, because if you do, the search 'bot' might not ignore your keyword list – it could ignore your homepage completely, because the length of your list will do nothing other than confuse it.

Next, you need to make sure that any images you upload to your site use what are known as 'alt-tags', which is simply a text description of what the picture shows. The reason that you add these tags to every image on your site is that while the search engine spiders cannot see images themselves, they can read the text description, which gives them another indication of what your page is about.

When you are viewing images on a web page, the image is not really on that page or somehow embedded in it. This will be clear from the underlying HTML, as there is a line of code that calls that image to your page from an external location, generally within the same folder.

The code text line would look something like this:

```

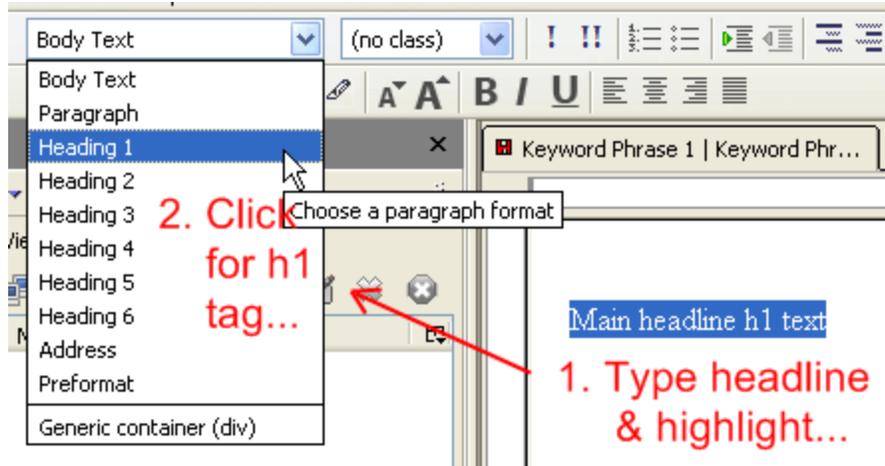
```

The 'img src' on the first line refers to the image source where you have that particular picture or graphic stored elsewhere on your server. However, the all-important alt-tag clearly indicates that this picture relates to weight loss, and although the human image viewer would not be able to see this text, the search engine spider will.

However, do make sure that the alt-tag you use is appropriate to your page, because if not, you once again risk confusing the search spider.

Next, use h1 tags for the main headline of your page.

Again, if this makes no sense, use Kompozer, type what you want for your page headline, highlight the text (1) and then choose the 'Headline 1' paragraph format from the drop-down menu (2) as shown:



Your sub-headline should use an h2 tag, highlight any bullet point list on your page using h3 or h4 and so on. By tagging important phrases in this way, you indicate to the search robots that the tagged text is important and indicative of what your page is all about.

However, do not forget that your page has to look attractive for your human site visitors, and if you try to use too many heading tags, it will start to look a messy, so resist the urge to go crazy.

Also, use `<strong> keywords </strong>` in the body text of your page to highlight your primary keywords, although try to refrain from doing it every time you use your keyword terms, because it might start to look untidy.

That is the essentials of on-site search engine optimization covered as far as page coding is concerned.

Apart from one thing...

### **Content is the key...**

The final thing that is essential for on-site search engine optimization purposes is content, and the more of it you have, the more optimized your site will become.

Most importantly, the content that you feature on the pages of your site has to be keyword focused.

For example, as mentioned when creating the meta-tags, every page of your site should at the very least focus on one primary keyword phrase that is appropriate to your business or the product that you are promoting or selling. If possible, it will also help if you can include one secondary keyword, for a reason that I will explain soon.

However, before doing so, I want to explain why keywords are so important, why you should focus your marketing efforts on keyword

terms and phrases, and how you do so. I can then define the difference between primary and secondary, or major and minor keyword phrases.

As you already know, search engine optimization is all about making sure that your webpage appears as near to the top of the natural search results as possible. To do this, you need to build individual pages of your site around keyword phrases that match the terms that people use to seek information like yours.

However, you also need to pay heed to how much competition there is in any market that is focused on a particular keyword phrase.

Going back to the earlier Word Tracker keyword research tool, we saw that there were 20,500 searches every day for phrases that included 'weight loss'. This might therefore seem like a keyword phrase that you should focus on, until you consider how many other pages would be in direct competition with you if you were to do so:

Results 1 - 10 of about 107,000,000 English pages for "[weight loss](#)".

There are 107 million competing web pages, so 20,500 searches every day is actually a tiny drop in the ocean. In short, with this many pages already published, the competition is already way too tough for you to stand any realistic chance of getting a page based on the phrase 'weight loss' in the first thousand results, never mind the first three!

What you need to do is find weight loss related phrases that people are using to search for information where there is a limited amount of competition. Ideally, in the short term, you are looking for less than 30,000 competing pages, with a medium to longer term view of competing for keyword terms where there are less than 100,000 pages already indexed.

Going back to [Word Tracker](#) once again, you can see that there are 100 keyword phrases listed under the main heading, ranked in descending order of searches per day:

20,583 searches (top 100 only)	
Searches	Keyword
4744	<a href="#">weight loss</a>
1567	<a href="#">fast weight loss</a>
1387	<a href="#">weight loss plans</a>
1081	<a href="#">quick weight loss</a>
872	<a href="#">arbonne weight loss</a>
794	<a href="#">weight loss tips</a>
590	<a href="#">la weight loss</a>
524	<a href="#">weight loss programs</a>
491	<a href="#">weight loss pills</a>
480	<a href="#">dottie's weight loss zone</a>
384	<a href="#">dotties weight loss zone</a>
308	<a href="#">water help to loss weight</a>
297	<a href="#">raw food weight loss</a>
294	<a href="#">does la weight loss really work</a>
271	<a href="#">printable weight loss charts</a>
248	<a href="#">does la weight loss work</a>

In effect, all you need to do is go down this list of keyword terms to check them for popularity using Google. Take each phrase in turn, enclose it in inverted commas (".") to make sure that what you get is a perfect match, before running a test one by one.

For example, 'dottie's weight loss zone' enjoys approximately 480 searches a day, so let's see how many competing Google pages there are for this exact phrase:

Results **1 - 10** of about **12,500 English** pages for "**dottie's [weight loss zone](#)**".

That's a very reasonable result, a search term that we could undoubtedly achieve a reasonable ranking for by making sure that the 'dottie's weight loss zone' page of our site is optimized for that particular phrase.

Another phrase that is a bit more competitive but still acceptable is 'printable weight loss charts':

Results 1 - 10 of about 31,500 English pages for "[printable weight loss charts](#)".

If you go down the list phrase by phrase, you should be able to build a list of keyword phrases where you stand a reasonable chance of a search optimized page built around that keyword phrase being ranked reasonably highly.

How about 'does la weight loss work':

Results 1 - 10 of about 4,200 English pages for "[does la weight loss work](#)".

Excellent! With only 4200 competing pages, this is a phrase where an optimized page built around it should feature near the top of the search rankings pretty quickly.

So, these are primary or major keyword phrases, so now let's look for a few secondary or minor phrases that we can logically combine on the same page with these major keyword phrases.

By scrolling to the bottom of the Word Tracker chart, you can quickly see that there (for example) plenty of 'la weight loss' searches that have far less than 294 searches a day:

40	<a href="#">weight loss stories</a>
40	<a href="#">who started la weight loss</a>
39	<a href="#">quick weight loss diets</a>
39	<a href="#">weight loss patch</a>
38	<a href="#">best weight loss pills</a>
38	<a href="#">what does la weight loss cost</a>
37	<a href="#">acai weight loss</a>

Include one of these phrases with your primary 'la weight loss' keyword phrase, and what you are doing is keeping Google happy. This is because Google judge the quality of your content materials using 'latent semantic indexing', which basically means that they are looking for

more than one similar phrase or term on your page to give a clear indication of what it is all about.

Hence, by including two 'la weight loss' related phrases, you are feeding the Google spider exactly the SEO 'food' it wants, which is always a smart thing to do.

This does not mean that you cannot create individual pages on your site for every low competition keyword search term you find. In fact, the more content pages you have that are keyword focused, the higher the search engine rankings you will achieve from on-site optimization -simply because of the numbers involved.

No matter what your business is, take your keyword list and constantly add new content pages to your site. As you do so, make sure that you fulfill the last necessary step of on-site optimization, which is to make it as easy as possible for both your human visitors and the search spiders to find everything that is on your site.

In order to do this, create a [free site map](#) that can be added to the homepage of your site, and every time you add more content, make sure that your site map is updated. In addition, create an XML site map using the same free resource, add it to a page on your site, and link from the homepage to that XML map. You should also submit it to the major search engines like Google, Yahoo and MSN.

Easy site navigation is extremely important, so you should try to ensure that people (and the search spiders) can reach any internal page of your site in no more than three clicks and get back to the homepage in one.

That's on-site optimization covered. Let's move on to investigate what is involved with off-site optimization.

## **What is off-site search engine optimization?**

While the other search engines still consider on-site optimization to be a very important part of assessing the search rankings, over the past few years, Google have gone in the opposite direction by focusing almost all of their attention on off-site optimization. Apart from having a relevant domain name and featuring plenty of quality content, everything else about on-site optimization is fairly irrelevant as far as Google are concerned.

As far as they're concerned, off-site optimization can be summed up in one word – links. In order to judge how highly rated individual pages of your site are, Google will look at the linking structure of that page. In particular, they are going to study the links that your page has with external websites, although internal links to other pages of your site are also important.

Nevertheless, it is external links that Google bases most of its ranking decisions on, as Google assumes that every link to your site from another page somewhere on the net is a 'vote' for the quality and value of the page to which the link is directed.

As far as Google is concerned, there are three different types of external link, and each type is accorded a different degree of importance.

Firstly, you have one-way outgoing links, which are links from your webpage to an external site. Because in this situation there is no link coming in to you, this does not represent a 'vote' for you (in fact, it is the other way round). There is little outright importance attached to outgoing links.

Next on the list are reciprocal links, which is where you agree to link to someone else's web page and they do the same to yours. In this situation, there is some element of a 'vote' in your favor but not too much, because this is an agreement between two webmasters who are both interested in building their link network. Thus, reciprocal links have limited positive value as far as you're concerned.

In Google's eyes, the best kind of links are one-way incoming links, where an external website links to your webpage, but you do not reciprocate by sending a link back to them. In this scenario, the vote in favor of your site is the strongest possible, and it is therefore on one-way incoming links that Google base their assessment of the quality of your site.

There is, however, one more thing to consider. There are lots of ways of generating one-way incoming links through your own efforts, and while

Google do not have a big problem with many link generation tactics, there are some that they distinctly disapprove of.

For example, they definitely do not like it when people buy one-way incoming links, and if you are found doing so, it could result in your site being dropped from the Google index altogether. Thus, if you are trying to generate one-way incoming links (as you must if you want to maximize traffic to your site), you have to ensure that the link network you are building appears to be as natural as possible.

This could be challenged on several levels.

If for example you have 100 one-way incoming links today, as you have for the last year, but tomorrow you have 10,000, something very strange is going on and you have somehow manipulated your link numbers. This would probably get your site 'dropped' by Google in the following 24-48 hours.

Similarly, if you have lots of one-way incoming links, but no outgoing or reciprocal links, again that is entirely unnatural.

For this reason, you should start your link building efforts by generating a tranche of outgoing links and reciprocal links as well. This is what naturally happens when you first build a new website, so this is the strategy you should follow.

However, when you are adding outgoing links to your site, you do not want your visitors to find those links to be so interesting or exciting that they automatically choose to follow them. For this reason, you should create outgoing links to common resource sites like [Wikipedia](#), news portals such as [Yahoo](#) and [MSN](#), directory sites like [DMOZ](#) and so on.

Next, join a 'link club' site like [LinkMetro](#) and start submitting link requests to other site members. When you do so, many of the members to whom you submit a request will reciprocate and you will start to find invitations from other members landing in your e-mail inbox.

Using a 'link club' is the quickest and easiest way of building a constantly growing reciprocal link network.

### **One-way links and the importance of internal linking structure**

The way that you generate a network of one way incoming links is simple. All you need to do is publish information in some form on external websites that includes a link to a page on your site. This simple act generates the one way incoming link that you are looking for.

However, before diving in to start building your incoming link network, the first thing that you need to do is assess which pages of your site are the most important to your business. In most cases, the homepage of your site is going to be one of the most important, because that is

probably where the most critical information about your business is featured. However, beyond the homepage, what other pages are of significant importance?

Going back to the early part of this report, are you going to sell products or services directly from your site via the internet? If so, then your sales page is extremely important, because if people do not see it, they cannot buy.

How about building a prospect mailing list? If you already have an established offline business, then you appreciate the value of having people on a mailing list, and that applies just as much to the online division of your business. If people subscribe to receive your newsletter, then you can send them a constant stream of product recommendations and suggestions, confident in the knowledge that they will eventually buy something from you as long as what you offer is targeted well enough.

In that case, the page on your site that features the mailing list subscription form is another extremely important page.

The reason that you do this assessment is because before you start to generate an external linking structure, you must make sure that the internal linking structure of your site is the way it should be.

Take as an example a situation where you have three 'most important pages' backed up by 30 or 40 internal article pages. The three top level pages should all be joined together, with the homepage linking to the other two, but the other two (e.g. your sales and mailing list subscription pages) should only link to the homepage, and not to one another. You do this to give anyone who lands on your sales or subscription page as few choices as possible, because what you really want them to do is buy or subscribe.

Below this, all of the individual article pages should link to these three main pages, so that anyone who reads an article has the option of buying, subscribing or visiting the home page. Your articles might be 'grouped' together – for example, you may have five articles about green widgets, six about red widgets and so on. Each article in the group should be linked together as well, and, finally, the homepage should be linked to every internal page via the site map.

You build an internal linking structure of this type because when you generate one way incoming links to your own activities, you should not send all of those links to the same page. Once again, that would run counter to what happens when a link network propagates naturally, so it would represent another red flag to Google.

It is far more effective to point incoming links at different pages of your site, because as long as the structure is as suggested, all of the 'link power' will ultimately end up with the three major pages of your site.

There is another advantage too.

Imagine that you wrote an article focused on the keyword phrase 'dottie's weight loss zone'. It is reasonable to assume that anyone who reads that article would be interested in knowing more about this topic, so it makes far more sense for the link from that article to go to your 'dottie's weight loss zone' page rather than to your home page, for example. This is what Google would naturally expect to happen, and therefore by linking to internal pages on your site, you are once again keeping the 'Big G' *and* your site visitor very happy!

With your internal linking structure in place, you're ready to start generating one-way incoming links.

### **Generating one-way incoming links...**

There is a long list of different ways that you can legitimately create one way incoming links for SEO purposes, and one of the great things about many of these strategies is that they will also bring targeted visitors to your site.

You can use articles published on directory sites to create one-way incoming links. Write each of these articles around one keyword phrase, add a hyperlink to the appropriate page on your site, and then submit them for publication to the leading article directory sites like these:

<http://ezinearticles.com/>

[http://www.articlecity.com/article\\_submission.shtml](http://www.articlecity.com/article_submission.shtml)

<http://www.ideamarketers.com/>

<http://www.articledashboard.com/>

<http://searchwarp.com/>

<http://goarticles.com/index.html>

If you need more sites to submit your articles to, this [free software](#) might help. You can also download [free directory software](#) that enables you to submit your site information to directories (many of which are free as well) as a way of generating additional links.

Create videos, add the URL of the page on your site to which you want to generate a link in the description (this is extremely important, because without this, you will not generate a link) and then submit that video to many of the major video networking sites like YouTube using the free services of [TubeMogul](#).

Put together an online [Press Release](#) about something newsworthy happening within your business (new sales campaigns, exciting new products or something of this nature) and submit it to the major online news agencies like Google News and Yahoo News using the free services of a company like the [Free Press Release Center](#), [i-Newswire](#) or [PRLog](#). As always, make sure that your release includes a hyperlink to your site, because this is how your one-way incoming link is generated.

Search for forums where people who are interested in the products or services which a company offers congregate online. All of these people have already indicated that they are red hot prospects for your business by the very fact that they had joined targeted forum sites, so search Google for "your topic + forums" to see what sites you can find:

Results 1 - 10 of about 243,000 English pages for "[weight loss forums](#)".

Find forums that will allow you to use a signature file, because you can include a hyperlink in this signature file, hence you have another one-way incoming link.

All of these are perfectly valid strategies for generating links to your business site. In the next chapter, we will consider a couple more link generation strategies that tie in with the notion of building a site that offers your visitors inter-reaction and an ability to build a relationship with you.

## **Invite them – they're your friends!**

What you have created so far is a site that has been optimized for the search engines in both an on-site and off-site manner, and what you have done so far should be enough to start pushing some pages of your site up the search rankings. The job is not yet completed however, because there is little to invite your visitors to establish a relationship with you and your business in what you have done up to now.

I mentioned earlier in this report that most net users are now familiar and extremely comfortable with the idea of using blogs to communicate with other net users. You should follow this pattern by adding a blog to the backend of your business site, because doing so has a large number of advantages both in business generation and search engine optimization terms.

Firstly, if you have a blog, you are able to communicate through that blog directly with your prospects and customers as often as you like. Whereas adding extra pages to your 'main site' takes a little work, adding a new posting to your blog every day will take no more than 15 minutes.

The more your prospects, visitors and customers can get to know you, the more comfortable they will become in dealing with you in the future. Consequently, adding a blog in this way is an extremely powerful relationship building tool, but it is way more than that.

The search engines love websites that add a regular stream of fresh, unique content, and the blog is a perfect vehicle for doing this. Adding a blog to your site and keeping that blog regularly updated with interesting information about your business will keep both your visitors and the search engines happy.

Installing this blog should take no more than five or 10 minutes in all.

Firstly, download the free software from [WordPress.org](http://WordPress.org), and then follow the installation instructions from [this page](#) of the site (and if you need any further installation assistance, there is some great free [WordPress training](#) here).

Once the blog is installed, it's simply a question of pointing everyone who comes to your 'main site' towards it as a source of daily news update, product promotions and so on. Send information about the blog to your mailing list members, and while I would not recommend that you send them an e-mail telling them that you have updated every day, you should send them a reminder at least once a week.

Start sending some one-way links back to the main page of your blog from some other promotional materials that you are issuing as well. Make sure that when you write new blog posts, they are keyword focused, because by doing so, you will ensure that the visitors who come to your blog are targeted.

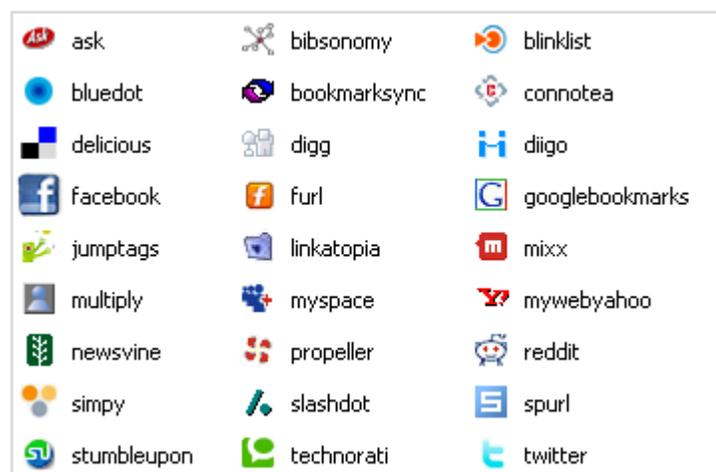
The main point to understand here is that this is your opportunity to inter-react with your visitors and to build a relationship with them.

Don't focus only on business when you create new blog postings. People build a relationship with people that they get to know, so let people have a look inside your life from time to time. If you have an exciting weekend, tell people about it, or if you go to a great concert, that's the kind of thing that people are really interested in.

This is likely to change your visitor's perception of you. Whereas previously they might see you as being a one-dimensional business machine, you now become a three-dimensional, warm-blooded human being, and that makes it far easier for them to want to do business with you.

Every time you add new content to your blog, you want the major search and directory resources to know about it, because that will encourage them to come back to your site on a regular basis, which once again helps your search engine rankings. Use the services of a couple of 'pinging' services like [FeedShark](#) and [Ping-o-Matic](#) to tell the world every time your blog is updated.

Whenever you add new content to your site or to your blog, send details about that content to the major social bookmarking sites using a free service like [OnlyWire](#), which at the time of writing submits information to 27 of the major social sites:



In some cases (i.e. if your story is of a broad enough general interest), this will send targeted visitors to your site, but even if it doesn't, every social submission that is published will generate another one-way incoming link, and you already understand the importance of those in Google SEO terms!

Find other bloggers who are in the same type of business as you using the free version of [Comment Hut](#), and post comments on their blog sites. Not only could this start a conversation and a new friendship with someone in your industry (someone with whom you may be able to co-operate on some kind of joint-venture in the future?), it will also generate another one-way link to your blog or site.

You could even take the relationship building one step further by installing your own [in-house forum \(for free\)](#) to which you could invite your prospects, visitors and list members to contribute. Not only could this build up a lively community that is centered upon your business (relationship building once again), but every new contribution to your forum is fresh new content for your site, almost exclusively added by other people.

Including a forum allows your site to grow naturally, and you should never underestimate the value of regular fresh content as far as pushing you up the search rankings is concerned.

Remember, adding these extra 'modules' to your site is the key, ensuring that building a relationship with your site visitors rapidly becomes an essential integral part of your day-to-day online business activities.

## Conclusion

If you have your own 'real world' business and you have never before been involved in online business, then I hope that after reading this report, you have realized that getting involved in online marketing does not have to be complicated or difficult. Furthermore, the advantages of doing so should be clear if they were not before you started reading.

The internet opens up the world as your market, while also providing a channel through which you can present your credentials and marketing message simply, quickly and often at no cost. Compare this to the effectiveness and cost of promoting your business in almost any other way, and it should quickly be clear that if you have not already done so, you have to start giving serious consideration to marketing your business online as soon as possible.

However, before doing so, you have to ensure that the 'shop window' that you present to the global online community satisfies two requirements.

Firstly, it must do what your human visitors want it to do. It must provide full information about your business as well as the products and services that you can provide, but it must go way beyond that. The key to success in online marketing is being able to establish a relationship with prospects and potential customers as soon as possible, and in order to do that, your site has to have as much interactivity as you can possibly build into it.

Secondly, once you have a site that your visitors and prospects drool over, you must ensure that the search engines know what a good job you are doing and have done, and the only way you can do that is to make sure that your site is super search engine friendly. This is what search engine optimization is all about, because with a combination of SEO and a site that invites visitors to build a relationship with you, it is difficult to see where things could possibly go wrong.

Implementing what you have read of in this report does require some work, and as with all work, the sooner you get started, the sooner you can finish.