

Net Results
Helping your business succeed online.
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Welcome

Summer's flying by, as it always seems to. I hope you're enjoying nice, sunny weather, wherever you are.

In this issue we're going to talk more about search engine optimization. But this time we're going to focus on what not to do. Take your laptop with you to your deck or the park and enjoy!

Featured Article: Search Engine Optimization No-nos

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is clearly an important piece of the puzzle that is creating and maintaining a successful web site. If your site is not ranking well in Google and other search engines for relevant phrases that your target audience is searching for, you're missing out on a significant number of potential clients.

We've talked here about many of the things you can and should do to improve your search engine rankings. Many people, will do "whatever it takes," however, to rank as highly as possible, even if that means using so-called "black hat" methods of SEO. These are generally unethical techniques used to fool Google et al into thinking a site is something more (bigger, better, more popular) than it really is.

Any site found to be incorporating questionable tactics to get high rankings can and often will be banned by Google, either temporarily (until the site cleans up its act) or

permanently. Believe me, you don't want your site banned by Google! It's like having your store moved from a prime downtown location to some hidden back alley.

So, here is a list of no-nos as far as Google (and quite likely other search engines) are concerned:

- Overloading pages with keywords/phrases. If your site is about trees, you shouldn't have a sentence that uses the word 'tree' a dozen times. Yes, use your keywords as much as is reasonably possible, but if your copy doesn't read naturally – to humans – you're probably overdoing it.
- Hidden text. If you're placing text of one colour on a background of the same or nearly the same colour (e.g., white or very light text on a white background) or using exceptionally small text, chances are you're not doing so for people reading your site, but rather for the search engines. Don't.
- Hidden links. These are tiny, virtually invisible links to other pages or from other sites to yours. They serve no purpose other than to give Google the impression that your site has many incoming links.
- Duplicate content - i.e., having two identical (or very similar) pages. Often this can happen innocently, especially if you're selling a large number of somewhat similar products, each having its own details page. Usually the worst that will happen in that case is that Google will index only one of the pages and ignore the other(s). But don't duplicate pages within your site or on other domains just to increase the content or occurrence of keywords.
- Doorway pages. These are external pages that exist for no other purpose than to direct traffic to your site. Generally they're filled with different keywords and links so that it looks like your site is more popular and relevant than it really is.
- Using software that automatically submits your site or queries about your site's rankings to Google can get you into trouble. This practice can use up their valuable resources, so is frowned upon.

Even if Google or other search engines don't automatically catch your site for cheating, people can manually submit sites that use questionable SEO tactics to be checked into and possibly removed from their indexes. If you're in a highly competitive field, your competitors may be waiting to jump on such an opportunity.

The rule of thumb is this: If it feels like you're cheating, you probably are and will get caught. Maybe not now, but eventually you probably will and if website traffic is important to your business (and it should be), that's not a chance worth taking!

About nrichmedia

nrichmedia creates innovative and unique web sites and other multimedia for ethical and socially responsible businesses and organizations. We also offer green web hosting, web site maintenance, CD-ROM production, and more.

nrichmedia was founded by Nathaniel Richman in 2000. Nathaniel graduated from the Vancouver Film School with a Certificate of Recommendation in Multimedia Studies in 1997 and has been working in the web design and new media industry ever since. He previously received a Bachelor of Mathematics degree (Honours Actuarial Science) from the University of Waterloo and worked in the pension consulting industry.

Nathaniel works with other designers and programmers, according to the needs of the project, to provide the client with the most professionally designed web site and other marketing material as possible.

"As a practitioner of Chinese Medicine, one of the goals of the medicine is to constantly try to incorporate all the individual details, while never losing sight of balancing the big picture. In fact, the inner workings of the body are often referred to as 'a web' due to the dynamic integration of the systems. When I started working with Nathaniel Richman for search engine optimization, I was struck not only by his attention to detail, but also, his extensive knowledge, and more importantly, his ability to see the big picture. His advice and changes to my website, have had a striking impact. Our website rose from rankings in the 100-200th spot, to now top 30, with many situations being in the top 10! I am very pleased with the results of the work that Nathaniel has put in for our website, and his foresight is a valuable asset that is often overlooked. Thank you Nathaniel!"

- Sonia F. Tan, BA, BAH, R.Ac., DTCM, Clinical Director & Registered Acupuncturist, Red Tree Wellness (<http://www.redtreewellness.ca>)

To learn more about nrichmedia's services, view our online portfolio, and read glowing testimonials from many satisfied clients, please visit <http://www.nrichmedia.com>.

Green Web Hosting

nrichmedia is pleased to be offering green web hosting services. Our standard package includes 200MB of disk space (usually more than most small to medium sized businesses require), email and webmail accounts, web statistics, and more.

What makes our web hosting green?

1. Our hosting is shared on powerful, energy efficient servers so the amount of electricity we use is minimized. We maintain our own dedicated environment within these servers and have full control over performance and security.
2. The electricity used by the servers comes from hydropower, which, although not ideal, is one of the more environmentally friendly means of power generation.
3. We've purchased wind power certificates to offset the amount of electricity that we do use. Wind power is, of course, a natural, clean, and abundant energy source with little or no negative impact on the environment.

To sign up for or switch to nrichmedia's green web hosting, please email sales@nrichmedia.com for information on pricing and getting started.

Charitable Causes

nrichmedia donates 5% of proceeds on all projects of \$500 and above to charitable organizations. We are pleased to have supported and continue to support several worthy causes. To see a list of the organizations we support, please visit <http://www.nrichmedia.com/causes.htm>.

The Not-to-be Missed Link: Scholastic's Act Green

This is a fun site aimed at teaching kids how to act green. There's lots of information, resources, and activities for kids, parents, and teachers to learn about becoming more environmentally friendly in our daily lives. In "100 Ways to Act Green," kids can learn how to green themselves, their home, school, and make a green journal. Kids will love the interface, interactivity, games, and more. <http://www.scholastic.com/actgreen/>

Archives

To view previous editions of Net Results, visit <http://www.nrichmedia.com/archives.htm>.

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