Secrets To Achieving a Top 10 Position

Provided by FirstPlace Software, Inc.

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About the Author

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http://www.webposition.com

To subscribe to the monthly MarketPosition Newsletter, send an e-mail to subscribe@webposition.com

MarketPosition provides the latest tips and techniques related to search engine positioning.

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The information contained in this report is accurate as of April 10, 1999, **to the best of our knowledge**. Remember, search engines can and often do change the way they rank pages. Many statements in this report are based on our own observations or the observations of others at some point in time. **iProspect.com, Inc. disclaims all representations and warranties, express or implied, about the accuracy of the information contained herein.** All trademarks, service marks and trade names contained herein, whether or not registered, are the properties of their respective owners.

Use this information as a base line, but also compare it to what you find to be true today when doing searches and checking your positions.

If you find anything you believe might be inaccurate or could be improved, please e-mail us at:

feedback@iProspect.com

Our goal is to continue to revise this material and integrate your comments and feedback. We want Internet marketers to continuously benefit from this guide.

That said, you should find this report to be very helpful in improving your rankings on the search engines.

Update Note: As of March 2001, the Infoseek search engine has been discontinued by the Disney corporation. Therefore, although some concepts in this book regarding Infoseek may be applied to other engines, you should be aware that Infoseek no longer exists as its own search engine. Infoseek.com redirects to Go.com which pulls its results from Goto.com. A complete revision of this book is currently under development to reflect more recent changes at the search engines. For the latest facts and statistics regarding the search engines, see the WebPosition Gold Page Critic.

What's New in Version 2.1 of This Report?

Much has changed in the industry! In this rapidly changing field, our work is never done. The original report started out at a mere 50 pages, version 2.0 was more than 100 pages. Version 2.1 of the this report has been expanded even further. In the software development industry, this is what might be called a maintenance release of our report. We've addressed a number of issues that were brought to our attention by readers. Specifically, we've:

➢ Corrected any information that was outdated;

➢ Added new information on ranking-related developments such as HotBot's use of Direct Hit technology for popularity-ranked results and Yahoo!'s new seven-day indexing;

➢ Conducted additional interviews with search engine contacts to find out what's new, changed or coming soon;

➢ Corrected search engine addresses that have changed (Lycos), corrected phone numbers where area codes had changed (Excite) and added new e-mail contact information for search engines (Yahoo!);

➢ Added more information on how to submit your site to search engines for review and consideration for their "channel" content areas;

➢ Added new intelligence and inside information on search engine algorithm changes (AltaVista, Excite and HotBot); and

➢ Revised all of the engine-by-engine, step-by-step sections in the second half of the report.

➢ Removed LinkStar (a now obsolete directory) and added Snap.com.

Since so much has changed, we recommend you read through this report in its entirety, even if you have seen a previous version. Since our last printing, Infoseek has been purchased by the Walt Disney Company and relaunched as The Go Network at Go.com. HotBot was purchased by Lycos, AltaVista was purchased by Compaq by way of their purchase of Digital Equipment Corporation. All of the engines have tweaked their algorithms a bit. Don't worry – we've got you covered.

The revision of the search engine-specific section should make it even easier for you to build optimized pages that will be successful for every major search engine. However, much advice that applies to all

engines is found elsewhere in the report, so don't overlook the topical information.

If you have not yet subscribed to the FREE MarketPosition newsletter, you MUST! Of course it's not required, but you'd be crazy not to! The MarketPosition newsletter is essentially a monthly update to this report.

Each month we observe and report changes in search engine ranking algorithms, spam penalties, new techniques that work and old techniques that stopped working. This newsletter information eventually makes it into this report, and you will receive periodic updates. Your top position depends on your being proactive! If you haven't already, take a moment and subscribe to the MarketPosition newsletter:

http://www.webposition.com/newsletter.htm

Or e-mail subscribe@webposition.com

In addition, you can find help to common questions from fellow Web marketers at the MarketPositionTalk.com discussion forums at:

http://www.marketpositiontalk.com

If you have any suggestions or comments you'd like to share with the author, please e-mail them to author@iProspect.com.

Thank you for your continued patronage of our report, now in its third printing. *Secrets to Achieving a TOP 10 Position* is one of the longest running, most respected search engine reports available anywhere. This is due in great part to people like you who submit tips, tricks and inside information. Thank you for your continued support and keep sending us those great techniques!

Sincerely,

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Why Your Web Site's Rank Matters!

There's a pervasive myth among Web site managers that simply submitting your Web site to hundreds of search engines will increase traffic to your site. That's just not true! WebPosition Gold™, by FirstPlace Software offers proof that submitting alone is not enough. When someone queries a search engine for a keyword related to your site's products or services, does your page appear in the top 10 matches – or does your competition's?

If you're not listed within the first two or three pages of results, you lose, no matter how many engines you submitted your site to. There are two barriers to solving this problem. First, you have to know the techniques that will move you into a top 10 position – the very techniques contained in this special report. Once you learn how to achieve a top 10 search position, you have to monitor your progress – a crucial step that takes hours to do right.

A top 10 ranking in a major search engine such as Yahoo!, Lycos or AltaVista often will generate more targeted traffic than an expensive banner advertising campaign. Plus, a good search engine position is free – anyone can do it. Consider this:

- Virtually everyone begins their Web browsing at one of the eight major search engines. Your rank within these search engines determines how many people will find and visit your Web site.

- Major search engines attract more distinct visitors than almost any other Web site. Yahoo! alone boasts 55 million page views a day – and that was back in December 1997!

- Other forms of online advertising such as banner ads cost money. Just a few good positions under a few important keywords can deliver the same or better results – for FREE.

- Being in the Yellow Pages doesn't ensure even one phone call. You need a good listing and a large display ad. In search engines, the higher you rank under important keywords, the more traffic you'll get.

Nearly 90% of traffic to most Web sites comes from search engines: This fact was demonstrated by the *Seventh WWW User Survey* conducted by the Georgia Institute of Technology, October 1997 (paraphrased):

. . .The ways in which people discover Web sites:

1. Via search engines (86.34% Seventh Survey vs. 87.71% Sixth Survey)
2. Links from other Web pages (84.63% Seventh vs. 86.92% Sixth)

This demonstrates a trend from the Fifth Survey with 90.7% reported finding Web pages linked from other Web pages and 83.1% from search engines. People discovered Web sites through printed media (62.47% Seventh vs. 67.95% Sixth), through their friends (56.92% Seventh vs. 56.66% Sixth), TV (30.20% Seventh vs. 35.54% Sixth), "signatures" with Web site addresses at the end of e-mail messages (31.23% Seventh vs. 30.01% Sixth) and through Usenet newsgroups (32.75% Seventh vs. 34.25% Sixth). Usenet newsgroups decreased in their popularity by 12 percentage points from the Fifth Survey (44.4%). The Seventh Survey shows that, like the Sixth Survey, the younger generations will learn about Web sites from their friends – older generations are more likely to be influenced by the printed media.

Note that search engines are the number one way people find Web sites – two years in a row. This study proves something most of you already know – good positioning in the search engines produce big results!

I highly recommend that you review the Georgia Tech report yourself at:

http://www.gvu.gatech.edu/user_surveys/survey-1997-04/graphs/

For those of you using your Web site to actually transact business, the question is: Are people buying anything once they visit these Web sites?

YES! They most certainly are coming with their wallets, and they're not afraid to spend that cash on your site.

Secrets to Achieving a TOP 10 Position details the specific steps you will take to move your Web site into a top position. Best of all, it's not hard! You don't need to be a super-talented Web page designer to do the things to your Web pages that will improve your rankings. Most of it is rudimentary HTML coding, and we provide much of the code for you!

This special report is about teaching you the steps. These specific techniques will move your site from "The Land of the Lost" into "The Land of the Found" – found at the top of search engines' rankings, that is. No single tip can guarantee you a top position. However, by using this information your odds are greatly improved.

You can do this. It's not hard, but it takes a little time. Our reviewers made it through the entire book in an hour or two.

If you give it an hour, you'll build your traffic. When you build your traffic without spending advertising dollars, you'll have unequivocal online success. Read on and learn all you need to know to get your Web site into a top position!

Search Engines Are Advertising That Works

According to a July 1998 study by WebCMO (http://WebCMO.com), guess what the most effective advertising strategy is for Web marketers?

Banner ads?

Print ads?

Spam mail?

Sorry, none of the above! The most effective method of generating Web site traffic is "Search Engine Submissions," followed closely by "Solicited or Opt-In Email".

The following scale demonstrates how each Web marketer rated the over-all effectiveness of the following methods on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most effective.

Search Engine Submissions 3.35

Solicited or Opt-In Email 3.34

Offline Advertising 3.04

Press Release 3.00

Banner Advertising 2.85

Discussion Forums 2.83

Sponsorships 2.61

Newsgroups 2.46

Strategic Linking 2.44

Spam 1.83

Submitting to search engines, by itself, is just NOT effective. That is only the first part of an effective search engine strategy. You must achieve good search positions for anyone to "find" your listing. This is the real secret to producing the most cost-effective advertising available on the Web. This knowledge will separate you from the vast majority of businesses on the Web that do nothing to improve their positions.

Another important highlight of the study demonstrates that Opt-in E-mail is also very effective -- a close second to search engine promotion. If you're looking to expand your business, find a very TARGETED e-mail list or newsletter and negotiate a good rate.

Spam e-mail ranks at the bottom of their effectiveness list. Sending spam can do terrible damage to your reputation and business. Despite all the wonderful claims made by sellers of bulk e-mail software, we still recommend you avoid this method at all cost. Look at targeted, opt-in lists, or collect e-mail addresses on your own site by offering a newsletter or an information package of some kind.

The survey had two parts. Rather than simply rating how to generate traffic, it also rates the most effective methods for generating sales as perceived by the Web marketer. Search engines are close to the top of this chart, but opt-in mailing lists rate a little higher in this category. This is probably because sales associated with mass e-mailing are more easily tracked than sales from search engine traffic unless special software is used.

Search engine promotion offers an advantage over most other advertising because you can get effective results without having to spend hard earned money. Unlike acquiring mailing lists or buying banner ad impressions from other sites, search engine submission and positioning is FREE. The trick to making a big profit is simply knowing the secrets of doing it properly and having the tools to automate some of the work.

For the complete text of the study see:

http://www.webcmo.com/report/opss1/report1.htm

Types of Search Engines

This document assumes you have either purchased WebPosition Gold™ or have at least downloaded the demo. The product is not necessary to implement these tips, but it will certainly help save you a lot of time.

As you come to understand the steps necessary to improve your rankings, you'll quickly learn why WebPosition Gold™ is a critical tool in your success. The Page Critic feature has up to date advice on exactly what to change on a page to make it rank higher. Where this document can only talk about generalities, WebPosition's Page Critic can analyze your page and then give you specific, customized advice on what to add, change, or improve to make it rank higher for your selected keyword and search engine. To try out WebPosition Gold for free or to learn more, see:

http://www.webposition.com

Primary Types of Search Engines and Directories

Key to improving your Web site's rank in the different search engines is an understanding of the basic criteria by which search engines index and then retrieve documents. Before you submit your Web site to each search engine, we want you to have the tools and information to maximize your results.

There are two primary kinds of search services:

1. Search engines: These rely on "software spiders" to index Web sites. You submit your page to a search engine and the spider will index your entire site. Theoretically, these spiders might find your site by accident, but odds are they won't unless you go to them and tell them about your site by filling out their "submit" page. Examples of search engines are AltaVista, Excite, and Lycos.

2. Directories: These rely on submissions from users and Web site owners to populate their indexes. Most directories add your site to their index, but generally they link only to your home page rather than indexing the full text of each page on your site. Examples of directories are Yahoo! and Open Directory.

We will refer to both search engines and directories as "search engines." This report deals with only the eight most important search engines including:

Search Service:	Type of Service:
AltaVista	search engine
Excite	search engine
HotBot	search engine
Infoseek / Go.com	search engine
Lycos	search engine
WebCrawler	search engine
Yahoo!	directory
Snap	directory

These eight search engines are the most popular search services on the Internet. They are where you should spend your time working to achieve top rankings.

What Is a Software Spider (or Robot)?

A "software spider" is an unmanned program operated by a search engine that surfs the Web just like you would. As it visits each Web site, it records (saves to its hard drive) all the words on each site and notes each link to other sites. It then "clicks" on a link, and off it goes to read, index and store another Web site.

The software spider often reads and then indexes the entire text of each Web site it visits into the main database of the search engine it is working for. (Recently many engines such as AltaVista are now only indexing up to a certain number of pages of a site, often about 400, and then stopping. Apparently, this is because the Web has become so large that it's unfeasible to index everything. How many pages the spider will index is not entirely predictable. Therefore, it's a good idea to specifically submit each important page in your site that you want to be indexed, such as those that contain important keywords).

A software spider is like an electronic librarian who cuts out the table of contents of each book in every library in the world, sorts them into a gigantic master index, and then builds an electronic bibliography that stores information on which texts reference which other texts. Some software spiders can index over a million documents a day!

For your marketing purposes, you should know that some search engines have spiders that will visit your Web site. What the spider sees on your site will determine how your site is listed in its index.

Remember, as a software spider visits your site it notes any links on your page to other sites. In any search engine's vast database are recorded all the links between sites. The search engine knows which sites you linked to, and more importantly, which ones linked to you. Many engines will even use the number of links to your site as an indication of popularity, and will then boost your ranking based on that factor.

How the Spider Searches the Pages

Nobody except the search engine developers themselves know exactly what happens after a webmaster submits a page to a search engine. However, since search engines are databases, they must follow general database principles.

Once you submit your page, the search engine will add your URL to a list of sites to be spidered. It can take anywhere from one day to a number of months for a search engine to spider your site. When your URL is spidered by a search engine, it will read all the words on the page and filter out parts it does not want to see.

For example, most engines save space and improve search speed by excluding many common words from its database. These are called "stop" words and include words like "a," "and," "the" and "or." It is not clear exactly which words are excluded from search engine databases. This should not be of great concern, however, since the search engine will automatically, behind the scenes, exclude these same words from the user's search. To convince yourself that there are words that are excluded from the search engines, go to Lycos and search for the word "the." Lycos will find no matches even though there are millions of occurrences of the word "the" throughout the Web.

Each search engine will also filter out other things like META tags, comment tags, or whatever else they don't want to include in their database. Each search engine is different.

One of the biggest potential pitfalls for Webmasters is search engines that do not index the text within frames. Several major engines (including Excite, WebCrawler and HotBot) do not support frames. For these engines, include text in the <NOFRAMES> tag. Another solution is to create pages (without frames) to act as doorways or alternate entrances to your site for the purpose of giving these engines something they can see and index.

After "stop" words are filtered, and any tags not supported by the engine are excluded, EVERYTHING else remaining contains potential keywords that could be used to find your page. However, to actually be found in an engine, you must emphasize the specific keywords and phrases that you want your site to be found under. Your important keywords and keyword phrases must be strategically placed throughout your Web page in order to return your site as one of the top 10 matches.

Search engines determine a site's relevancy by using a complex scoring system that the search engines try to keep secret. This system adds or subtracts points based on things like how many times the keyword appeared on the page, where on the page it appeared, how many total words were found, and other variables. Points can be subtracted if you repeat a keyword too often, don't use enough words on the page, or do any of a dozen other things. The pages that achieve the most points are returned at the top of the search results, the rest are buried at the bottom, never to be found.

All of this may sound complicated. But armed with the right information, it's not hard to rank well on most keywords. Those who make the effort reap big rewards in the form of free traffic to your Web site.

Search Engine Ranking Criteria

Search engines that are populated by spiders or by submissions result in large databases that Web surfers query to find Web sites. When you visit Lycos, Yahoo!, AltaVista or another search engine and type in a keyword, you're actually performing a database query. To determine which document or Web site to return for a particular keyword search, each search engine must have its own method of ranking documents, the Web sites, within its directory. Most use a "probable relevance" scoring method.

Important Note: From time to time, search engines change their scoring systems and stop rewarding certain techniques that gave you an advantage just days before. This report contains the best tips and techniques at time of publication. Some techniques will stop working if a search engine changes its relevancy scoring system, which is bound to happen. Updates will be made to this report as we become aware of changes.

Choose the Right Keywords! (Very Important)

Target the wrong keywords and all your efforts will be in vain. Choose the right keywords and you'll see your traffic skyrocket. Therefore, think long and hard about what keywords people are most likely to use to find you. Make lists of single keywords and then combine them into phrases.

You rarely want to target a single keyword. With billions of words indexed on the Web now, generally one word simply won't cut it. People learn quickly that if they type in "properties," they get listings for real estate from all over the world! While it would be nice if you were positioned well on this extremely broad keyword, a better use of your time is to pair the generic keyword with something more specific. You might get lucky and rank well on just "property" since its in your page too, but if not, at least you'll rank well on "Boston property," which will be far less difficult to achieve a top 10 or top 20 listing for. These more specific keywords will also bring you far more qualified prospects.

Our product, WebPosition Gold™, is designed to monitor your rankings on a broad array of keywords and doorway pages very quickly. However, people still continuously try to monitor their rankings on keywords that people using search engines are not likely to query. For example, I had a well-meaning customer send me a list of his keywords for the "cheap airfares" that his company sold. His list went something like this:

cheap
flights
cheap flights
quote
discounted
airfares

The word "cheap" alone does nothing to target their audience. It has to be paired with other words like "flights" or "airline reservations" to have any meaning. It's the same with "quote" and "discounted" – too broad. They must be paired with one or two other words. Statistically, most people search for two- to three-word phrases to avoid getting back too many unrelated matches. Keep this in mind when you design your pages.

Don't worry about there not being enough top-10 slots where you can achieve a high ranking. True, there are some keywords that are very competitive. If you find that no matter what you do, you can't get in that top-10 spot for that word or phrase, just be creative! There are SO

MANY other keywords and keyword combinations where you can achieve a top-10 ranking! It's really NOT very difficult at all!

If you don't achieve a good ranking on "cheap airfares," keep trying, but also be creative and target "inexpensive airfares" too. See, it's all about thinking like your customer or clientele – and it's really pretty easy to find a keyword combination that you can dominate in the search engines. You'll often find that there are more people searching for these alternate phrases than were searching for the first phrase you had in mind. In marketing, this is called carving out your niche.

If you're Microsoft, you can afford to fight over who has the best "Browser software." But, for the rest of us, we know we can't always fight the big boys. So instead, savvy marketers identify a "niche" (keywords and keyword combinations) that few others are targeting and go after them. I've created pages for web sites where I posted a doorway page that has remained in the Top 10 for six to ten months in a row. Other slots may change more often, but that's why you have WebPosition Gold™ to help you stay on top of your rank under ALL the important keywords and keyword combinations.

If you're Microsoft, you can afford to fight over who has the best "browser software." But, for the rest of us, we know we can't always fight the big boys. So instead, savvy marketers identify a "niche" (keywords and keyword combinations) that few others are targeting and go after them. We've created doorway pages for Web sites that have remained in the top 10 for ten months in a row. Other slots may change more often, but that's why you have WebPosition Gold™ to help you stay on top of your rank under ALL the important keywords and keyword combinations.

Brainstorming for the Right Keywords

We ask clients to write down every imaginable keyword that someone might type into a search engine to find their site. Usually, the client returns a list that is very specific to their product, what they sell or their industry. We have to help them go beyond that.

If you are a wedding planner, what keywords will someone use to find your site? Most clients would tell me something like this:

weddings
wedding planners
wedding planning
bridal consultant

What they forget is that people who are planning weddings may be surfing the Web for a variety of wedding-related things. Sometimes people planning weddings may be conducting keyword searches for

things not directly related to the actual wedding ceremony. For these reasons, we advise clients to consider keywords such as the following as well:

- bachelorette party
- bachelor party

- best man
- banquet halls

- bridal decoration
- bridal registry
- bridesmaid dresses
- honeymoon
- honeymoon vacations
- limos
- mother of the groom
- toasts
- wedding bouquets
- wedding invitations

- boutonnieres
- bridal bouquet
- bridal veils
- engagement rings
- caterers
- disc Jockeys
- bridal shower
- bridal gowns
- flower girl
- limousines
- ring bearer
- wedding cakes
- groomsman
- wedding rings

And the list goes on. We encourage clients to come up with at least 50 keywords before we go about the business of creating a site title and description. For example, you might create a title for one of your pages "Bridesmaid and Best Man's resource area – boutonnieres to bridal bouquets!"

Don't Forget Misspelled Keywhoods – Whoops! Keyworks, Nope, Keywords!

There is a famous marketing folktale about misspelling being used for a marketing advantage involving MCI and AT&T. AT&T wanted to counter MCI's highly successful 1-800-COLLECT campaign and introduced a collect-calling product of its own. Have you ever wondered why AT&T keeps asking the world to dial 1-800-CALL-ATT? The reason is simple. AT&T learned firsthand that people often make obvious spelling mistakes.

AT&T started to advertise its collect-calling service, and then the number was 1-800-OPERATOR. Do you remember that short-lived ad campaign? Well, it turned out that many Americans can't spell and were dialing 1-800-OPERAT**ER** by mistake. Well, wouldn't you know

it that some sharp-eyed employee at MCI noticed an unusually high call volume on an MCI-owned 800 number. Believe it or not, MCI owned 1-800-OPERAT<u>E</u>R! So the folks at MCI redirected that number to point at MCI's 1-800-COLLECT product and raked in the bucks until AT&T figured out what was going on.

The point is to think hard about keywords that people will be looking for you under and decide if they frequently misspell those words. If they do, include these misspelled keywords in your submissions and META tags!

Common-Sense Strategy for Misspelled Keywords

Here's a really good idea that can save you hours of time. While we firmly recommend that you consider optimizing your pages for misspelled keywords, why not take a quick moment and make sure there will be a return on this effort.

Here's what we do. We purchase banner advertising with some of the search engines. For those of you who haven't yet experimented with banner advertising, you may not know that you can purchase specific keywords so that your banner ads are only displayed when someone visiting that search engine searches on that specific keyword. Your banner would display with the results of that search, and conceivably, the search engine user might be enticed to click on your banner ad and visit your site.

If you build a relationship with sales representatives at a search engine, you can ask them how often the misspelling of one of your keywords is searched on, as opposed to the correct spelling.

We were surprised to learn that two misspellings of the keyword "balloons," both "baloons" and "ballons," were very rarely searched on – we thought misspellings would be more common. In fact, the two misspellings combined didn't even accounted for less than 10 percent of the total occurrences of the correct spelling of "balloons" in Yahoo!.

What did this mean to us as a Web site promoters? Even though these misspellings were rare, they are still worth targeting because the competition will be much less intense for a misspelled keywords. You can probably get top rankings on both "baloons" and "ballons" without too much effort. This means that you can guarantee yourself some traffic from the 10 percent who are searching on misspelled words. This may be the easiest traffic you will ever attract!

Here's a list of commonly misspelled words you might wish to consider when deciding if a keyword pertinent to your Web site might be frequently misspelled.

believing	changeable	Fourteen	oversight
bouquet	chosen	Fulfill	parallel
campaign	collateral	Government	payroll
Accelerate	committee	Grateful	percent
accessible	congratulate	Liquid	personnel
accidentally	control	Guaranteeing	phenomenal
accrued	controversy	Harass	policyholder
achievement	courtesy	Hindrance	postmortem
advertise	criticize	Identical	postgraduate
advisory	cynical	Indictment	preponderance
affiliate	deceive	Installment	privacy
benefited	defense	Intelligence	procedure
airport	deferred	Intercede	promissory
alignment	delegate	Issuing	questionnaire
alleged	desirable	Lacquer	unanimous
alphabetize	dilemma	Liaison	worthwhile
analyze	disastrous	Losing	recede
annulment	ecstasy	Maneuver	referring
apiece	efficiency	Merchandise	regrettable
apostrophe	embarrassing	Mortgage	separate
archives	enforceable	Preferable	serviceable
article	everyday	Professor	simultaneous
assessed	exasperated	Negotiate	someday
assignment	excitable	Nickel	spontaneous
attorneys	fascinating	Ninth	stimulus
bankruptcy	lien	Miscellaneous	receive
bureau	mailbox	Notifying	subsidiary
cancellation	mediocre	Occasion	substantial
casualty	fireproof	Occurrence	susceptible
comparative	foreclosure	Offense	tariff
compromise	forfeit	Omission	warehouse
conference	Optimistic	welfare	

Take your time reviewing this list. Find any keyword that might pertain to your Web site and ask a few friends how to spell the word – changes are one will misspell it! Take note of the many close, but not quite right, spellings of each word. Consider incorporating these misspelled words into your promotion and Web page optimization efforts.

A good example of when a Web marketer should consider optimizing commonly misspelled words for Web pages is for a current news story. For instance, recently the presidential scandal was spiraling out of control. How do you spell the infamous intern, Monica's, last name?

A. Lewinski?

B. Lewinsky?

C. Leuinsky?

The correct answer is "B." ☺ Know that when the story broke, many people searched for the spelling that sounded correct – "A" an incorrect spelling.

Location, Location, Location! The Art and Skill of Being Regional

Most people visit a search engine when they are looking for some sort of product or service and conduct a search on a rather broad topic. Someone looking to buy a house in their own town might type the keywords "real estate" into the search engine. When they are returned a list of Web sites starting in Alaska showing all the real estate in the world, over 300,000 sites from Alaska to Wyoming, they quickly see the value of narrowing their query. The next search they conduct will be something like "Virginia Real Estate." This will give them something more manageable.

What this should tell any Web marketer promoting any product of regional significance is to regionalize their site description and keywords where appropriate. A real estate agent client of ours learned that by keeping his site title and description stuffed with "VA" and "Virginia" his site ranked well above other similar sites that didn't pay attention to this technique.

Use LONGER Keywords

In general, choose the longer form of a keyword. The reason is a concept called "word stemming." This often pulls in results that are not an exact match for what was searched for, but may be close or the same thing. When a search engine does use word stemming, it means that searches for word roots will also include the variations of that word. For instance, searches for "consult" would also return

documents that have the words "consulting" and "consultants" unless the user chooses to do an exact search.

What this means to Web marketers is that they can reduce the number of words in their META tags and on their page because search engines that practice word stemming will return their Web site for searches on those other word variations. Therefore, putting the word "consulting" in the META tag will likely come up on searches for both "consult" and "consulting."

This can be important when you are designing your Web site and have to choose which keywords to include. When facing this decision, always choose the longer form of the word.

Keyword Power Combinations

If you conduct a search on the word "software" at almost any search engine, your result will likely be several thousand documents. The ones at the top are there because of an array of factors, and some will be beyond your control (e.g., the search engine awards points for the number of sites linked to a Web site, and they have thousands, you have none!).

You can't be in first place under every keyword, and you have to be realistic about which keywords offer you a reasonable chance at achieving a good ranking. Many people make the mistake of targeting very general keywords and get frustrated when they can't get into the top 10. However, statistically, more people narrow their searches by searching on two or more keywords in combination.

One technique you should consider is to visit different search engines and conduct searches for a variety of your keywords and keyword combinations. Sometimes you will find that certain keywords return a limited set of Web site descriptions, and therefore, you have a better chance of attaining a great ranking for that keyword combo.

Don't waste efforts trying to get your Web site to the top of the list for a keyword like "software" or some other keyword where the competition is so stiff. If the engine is giving Microsoft a boost because of the "popularity" factor, it will not likely lose its first-place ranking under the keyword software to your home-office-based company, "Joey's Software Utilities."

However, if your little company makes a great software product, we strongly urge you to attempt to own the keyword combination "utility software." If you conduct a search on the keyword "software," Yahoo! returns 22,934 site matches. But if you searched for "utility software," Yahoo! returns only 825 site matches. You have at least a fighting chance of getting to the top of the "utility software" result set. You should decide which battles you wish to fight.

The industry vernacular for these low site match keyword combinations is "powercombos." We strongly suggest you visit the important search engines and try a few keyword queries. When you find a power combo, write it down and prepare your META tags, title and description submissions to leverage this little bit of marketing advantage you have uncovered.

It's important that the phrase, or power combo, you pick would likely be thought of by someone else. There's no guaranteed way to determine what people will search for and in what quantity. However, try to determine the most generic phrasing for a particular subject matter that is still somewhat specific. The more sophisticated the search phrase is, the less likely people will choose that combination to search on.

Avoid "Stop" Keywords

Most search engines save resources by skipping over certain words, which are sometimes called "stop" words. These are very common words such as *a*, *the*, *and*, *of*, *that*, *it*, *too*, *Web, home page,* etc. Search engines do this to both speed their searches and to save disk space.

So if your site contains stop words in areas where a spider looks for copy to index, the stop words are ignored, possibly affecting how you're indexed – your site may be slotted in an irrelevant category.

For instance, suppose you want to be indexed as a "Web copywriter." Many search engines will likely skip over the word "Web," reading only "copywriter." So you will be indexed under "copywriter" as opposed to "Web copywriter."

Or, if the prominence of a keyword in your title is crucial for a particular search engine's ranking scheme, having the first word in your title be "the" could damage your ranking.

SOLUTION: If a stop word is part of your site name or title, put it in quotes, or come up with another name or title that doesn't include the stop word. To determine which words are considered stop words for a particular engine, do a search for a list of words and take note of which ones it says were ignored on the results page.

Factors That Greatly Affect Your Relevancy

People visit search engines to find information or Web sites. They enter keywords into the search line of these search engines. Often they enter multiple search strings of several keywords to further refine their searches. Search engines are in the business of sorting Web sites in their databases by the keywords contained in a Web site or keywords used to describe a Web site for submission-based directories.

Which keywords each individual search engine determines your site is relevant to and how often those keyword are queried will determine how often your Web site's description is presented.

How well you organize the important keywords in your Web site to fit with each search engine's ranking criteria will determine your Web site's rank.

Generally, each search engine based on some predefined criteria assigns "points" to Web sites or the submission someone made describing that Web site. And, while all search engines measure a keyword's position on your pages, there are a variety of places where you can include "keyword-rich" copy or hidden HTML tags to achieve better rankings. Right now, we are simply talking about basic keyword placement and order and general rules you should consider when creating site descriptions and titles for your pages.

While the ranking criteria vary among search engines, most grade the placement of keywords on your Web site, the site's title and description based on these factors:

1. Prominence of the keyword

2. Frequency of the keyword

3. Site popularity

4. Weight of the keywords

5. Proximity of keywords

6. Keyword placement

1. Keyword Prominence: How early in a Web site's title or description a keyword appears. For example, did the title of the site start with a particular keyword or was that keyword the fourth or fifth word of the site's title? See the following example.

Infoseek search results for keyword "Pre-Owned Electronics":

Pre-Owned Electronics, Inc - Refurbished and Used Apple Macintosh Systems, The independent source for new, remanufactured and used Apple Macintosh computer systems, parts, peripherals and accessories. We offer a full line of refurbished as well as used…

98%   http://www.preowned.com/   (Size 3.1K)

Note that the queried keyword, "Pre-Owned Electronics," is the first word of the site title and Infoseek returned this site as the first match. Documents that are exactly the same, but with keywords as the second or third word in the title will score lower. Prominence also applies to the words within the body of the document, the headings and other tags.

2. **Keyword Frequency**: How often a keyword appears in a site's title or description. See the following example.

Search for keyword "marketing":

marketing budget improvements for your business from DVC, Inc. Digital Vision Communications is an interactive marketing agency that can help you with your marketing budget. If you need creative or advertising...

http://www.80.com/tips/digitalvisioncommunications

Note that the queried keyword, "marketing," appears three times in the Lycos search results (underlined for emphasis).

You don't want to go overboard with frequency, however, since on some engines if you repeat a word too many times, you'll be penalized for "spamming" or keyword stuffing. In general though, repeat your keyword in the document as many times as possible and three to seven times in your META tags.

3. **Site Popularity**: The number of other Web sites linked to your site. This ranking measurement is sometimes called a site's significance ranking because it is believed that one measure of a site's value is the number of other Web sites that felt your site was sufficiently important to link to. If a lot of other sites link to your site, chances are your site is relatively important – or so a number of other Web site owners thought.

For instance, at least 315,990 Web sites link to the IBM (www.ibm.com) Web site in AltaVista's index (on Jan. 21, 1998). Because of these links, IBM would achieve better ranking in certain search engines with all other factors being equal. This is simply another reason why you want to get other sites to link to yours. However, this is only one factor, and you can certainly achieve high rankings without being linked from thousands of sites. Sometimes if you agree to link to them, they'll do the same for you. In Web marketing, this is called cross-linking or reciprocal linking and is another way to increase traffic to your Web site.

One engine that will let you check the popularity of your site is HotBot.

4. **Keyword Weight**: The number of keywords appearing on a Web page compared to the total number of words appearing on that page. Some search engines consider this when determining the rank of your Web site for a particular keyword search. This ranking criterion cannot be properly illustrated by showing a particular search result from a search engine since keyword weight is not directly evidenced in the search engine's matches. It is measured on the actual Web page that is described by the search engine's listing.

One technique that often works well is to create some smaller pages, generally just a paragraph long, which emphasize a particular keyword. By keeping the overall number of words to a minimum, you will increase the weight of the keyword you are emphasizing.

When designing your site, keep this in mind: Do not provide detailed product or service information on your home page. Instead design a page for each product or service and provide a brief description and a link to the home page. This will allow you to be more specific with your keywords for each product or service page and increase the weight of the keyword.

5. **Keyword Proximity**: The placement of keywords on a Web page in relation to each other or, in some cases, in relation to other words with a similar meaning as the queried keyword. For search engines that grade a keyword match by keyword proximity, the connected phrase "home loans" will outrank a citation that mentions "home mortgage loans" if you are searching only for the phrase "home loans."

6. **Keyword Placement**: Where on your page your keywords are located. For example, in most engines, placing the keywords in the title tag of the page or in the heading tag will give it more relevancy. On some engines, placing keywords in the link text, the part that is underlined on the screen in a browser, can add more relevancy to those words.

Possible Places to Put Keywords

To break this concept down just a bit further, let's look at what a search engine can measure on your Web site. Below is a list of places where you can include keywords to affect your rank in search engines. The point here is for you to consider the many places that a keyword can be included to affect your site's score in a search engine's ranking algorithm. Later in this report, we will explain in detail, the effect that placement has on the different search engines.

Consider the following list of possibilities. The point of this exercise is for you to understand the scope of variables that you have at your disposal to influence the different search engines – or more importantly, what a site listed ahead of yours in a particular search engine might have done to outrank you. Consider the following options:

- Keywords in the <TITLE> tag(s) (And, believe it or not, sometimes you gain an advantage by including more than one <TITLE> tag on a single page!)

- Keywords in the <META NAME="DESCRIPTION"> tag

- Keywords in the <META NAME=" KEYWORD"> tag

- Keywords in <H1> or other headline tags

- Keywords in the <A HREF="http://yourcompany.com/otherpage.htm"></A> link tags

- Keywords in the body copy

- Keywords in ALT tags – Web designers use this tag to describe the contents of a picture that hasn't finished loading or to describe a picture that you would be looking at if you had not opted to turn the graphics off on your Web browser. A recent study showed that a surprising number of people, perhaps as high as 25%, still browse the Web with the graphics off because of slow connections or slow computers!

- Keywords in <!-- > comment tags

- Keywords contained in <INPUT TYPE="HIDDEN" NAME="HIDDEN" VALUE="include list of keywords here"> hidden type tag.

- Keywords contained in the URL or site address, e.g., http://www.keyword.com/keywordkeyword.htm

Factors That Do NOT Affect Your Rank in Search Engines

- The size or content of your graphics.

- Your choice of colors (however, some engines will penalize you for hiding words on a page by using the same color of text as the background).

- Your Web site's overall layout or design. This will only matter insofar as keyword prominence may be affected if a graphic appears before the body copy on your site. Most Web site marketers espouse the use of text before graphics as some search engines assign weight to the first 25 words on a page.

- Words that are graphics, e.g., a gif or jpeg file that spells out a word or words. Search only see the file name of the graphic. It can't hurt to use a file name that is also a keyword you want to emphasize.

The macro point is that there are only so many places where keywords can be included within a Web site. Where, how often and how early these keywords are placed will determine your ranking. Remember these variables when you are analyzing other Web sites that have ranked higher than yours. If you look at it like a puzzle, each player has a number of pieces and the order and distribution of them determines the winner – not some magic bullet or immeasurable force.

Example of Keyword Placement Affecting Rank

To know what kinds of keyword placement or other keyword factors can affect a Web site's ranking is to know how to shuffle the elements that make up your Web site so as to outrank any other site on the Web.

Consider this final series of examples. Which of the following word paintings (representing hypothetical Web sites) would rank higher in a hypothetical search engine for a search on the keyword VanGogh? (HTML is omitted or included as necessary to improve the clarity of the illustration):

Web site #1:

word word, word, word, word, word VanGogh, word, word word, word word, word, word, word, word, word VanGogh, word word, word, word, word, word word word, word, word, word, word word, word, word, word VanGogh word word, word, word, word, word.

Web site #2:

word word, word, word, VanGogh word, word, word, word word, word word, word, word, word, VanGogh word, word, word word, word, word, word, VanGogh word word word, word, word, word, word word, word, word, word word word, word, word, word, word.

Answer: Probably Web site #2 as the occurrences of "VanGogh" are more prominent – they occur earlier or closer to the beginning of document.

Now, consider another more complicated situation, also two Web sites that might be returned for a search on the keyword "VanGogh":

Web site #3:

<TITLE>VanGogh's life and early work</TITLE>

word word, word, word, word, word VanGogh, word, word word, word word, word, word, word, VanGogh word, word, word word, word, word, word, word word word, word, word, word, word word, word, word, word VanGogh word word, word, word, word, word

Web site #4:

<TITLE>VanGogh</TITLE>

word word, word, word, word, word VanGogh, word, word word, word word, word, word, word, VanGogh

Answer: There is no definitive answer because each search engine uses a slightly different ranking system, but we believe that Web site #4 would win more often. "How can that be?!" you might ask in shock and amazement, because "Web site #3 has four occurrences of the

keyword "VanGogh" and the first three have an equal prominence – they are the same distance from the beginning of the document!" It was the keyword weight (the number of times that the keyword "VanGogh" appears on the page as a percentage of the total) that could help Web site #4 outrank #3.

The point is that while not all situations are as clear as the example presented, most ranking problems can be diagnosed by evaluating the same keyword placement variables. Once you understand how to evaluate the variables, you can build Web pages that achieve top rankings.

Caution: Simply because you determine how to and then achieve a high ranking for a particular keyword, does not mean that you will maintain this rank consistently. Every day, thousands of new Web sites are being built and registered in search engines. Search engines continually refine their search algorithms, and sometimes they affect a fundamental change in methodology in pursuit of more accurate searches for visitors. WebCrawler recently scrapped its entire ranking algorithm and replaced it with Excite's software and search algorithm. Many sites that were ranked well in WebCrawler suddenly needed redesigned pages to achieve similar rankings under this new system.

Nonetheless, your best bet for achieving high rankings is to optimize your pages in the ways described in this guide. Now it's time to learn the techniques, implement them on your Web pages, and use WebPosition Gold™ to measure your search positions.

How to Create Effective Site Titles and Descriptions

Keep one eye on the prominence and frequency of your keywords in the title and description of your Web site and another eye on the weight of these keywords as a percentage of the total number of words that make up your first page. You'll need to keep your third eye on the appeal of the statements you make in your description of the Web site. You have more than two eyes, don't you? All good Web marketing folks need lots of eyes.

The following title and description may get you a high ranking for a keyword search on the word "mortgage":

!AAA Mortgage banking, the Mortgage money lenders - Mortgage, lenders, money, mortgages, mortgage money, mortgage loans, home equity loans, mortgage money,

What it says, however, is unappealing. Instead, look at another site description that would also rank high, and see which site you would be more likely to visit:

Mortgages Applications Approved Overnight!! - Mortgages and mortgage financing techniques that the larger banks just can't offer. Learn the 8 important things to include on your application so that your mortgage can be approved in 24 hours, even if you have poor credit.

The listing above has the word "mortgage" as the first word of the title, the first word of the description and repeats the word "mortgage" 4 times. The difference is that this description is compelling, solves a problem and offers "8 important things" or pieces of information that could be valuable to consumers visiting the site.

Direct response companies, those firms that make infomercials and run classified ads in papers across the country, have studied and mastered the art of writing headlines. What they learned is that headlines are most effective when they accomplish four things:

1. Solve a problem
2. Solve that problem quickly
3. Solve that problem for what appears to be a small or reasonable amount of money
4. Make the reader curious to learn more

With that in mind, the following headline is acceptable, but not as effective as it could be:

"I can help you to get out of debt and get a good credit rating – I've done it for others; I can do it for you!"

A better approach is to use a headline that will draw more inquiries:

"Correct your bad credit in under a week for less than $49!"

The second example solves a problem, does so quickly and shows how much money is involved. People relate to this appeal because it has a fundamental basis. Remember one of the many adages about goal setting, "A goal without a deadline is a wish!" Or, how about what they teach you in business school about proposal writing, "Never offer a plan that does not include both time and money."

The direct response model is effective because it addresses these things, especially time and money. As you write your page description and title, think about this. Then, ask yourself before you submit them to the search engines:

- Is my headline compelling?

- Is it interesting?

- Will it make someone curious to learn more?

- Would I read it and want to visit the site?

- Does it include time and money?

- Does it solve a problem?

- Does it suggest that it solves that problem quickly?

- Does it show a price? (Only emphasize the price if yours is very attractive)

Be careful, you don't want to offend anyone's intelligence – and many direct marketers write headlines that underestimate readers. Read it yourself and make a determination if you would find the title interesting – if you don't, you can be sure that others won't.

This direct response model does not apply universally in its purest form. Many Web sites do not sell things directly and are informational in nature or support what ad execs would call image advertising. However, do not overlook this fundamental truth:

Being first in the search engines is great.
Being first **and compelling** is better!

Your listing in the search engine should be compelling. If the description of the site directly below yours is more compelling, you lose – a prospect will pass over your site.

The Summary report in WebPosition Gold™ shows each position along with your page's summary description. Many people only concern themselves with their position number. Remember, that is only half the battle!

Writing Killer Page Titles

The <TITLE> tag of your Web site is arguably the most important HTML tag or element of your Web site. All the search engines consider the keywords in this tag and give those keywords a lot of importance in their ranking systems. Many search engines use this <TITLE> tag as the title of your site returned in their search results. This means that your HTML tag must not only work to your advantage for keyword scoring, it must also be compelling.

There are two elements to every Web site listing in the search engines:

- the site title, which will be blue and an activated link to the site and

- the site description.

Of course both must be compelling, but the <TITLE> tag has a special relevance because so many search engines use the title exactly as it appears on your page. Some search engines will use the site description that you give in the META tags, but others will not. For this reason, the <TITLE> of the site is more important than the site description.

Here are the important principles to remember when writing site titles:

A. Longer <TITLE>s are more effective because more words allow you to build a more compelling reason to visit a Web site.

B. People don't read text, they recognize words.

Point A – that longer <TITLE>s work better – is true because it takes a certain number of words to persuade someone to take action. Remember, in a direct response approach it's difficult to offer time, money and value in just two words. People scan headlines in brochures and magazines often, even when they don't read all the information. Since the title is usually a hyperlink, it is a different color, and it is generally bold and easy to read. When it's longer, there are more words with which to hook a reader. If something catches the readers' eye as they scroll down a list of site titles, they will hopefully read the site description. If you've done your work, they will be hooked.

Research has also shown that Point B is true. People don't read individual letters after about the time they turn 12 years old – they recognize words. Educators know that people glance at words and recognize the words by the shape they see defined by the tops of the words. If you don't believe it, take a sentence in any newspaper or book and cover the bottom half of the words. You can still read the words with relative ease. Now, cover the top of a different sentence.

You'll find that the words are harder to read because there is not much difference in the shape or line of the bottom of the words.

You'll see that you recognize words by their tops, by the differences in the height of the different letters. You might think to yourself, "Interesting, but how does this apply to me and my marketing efforts?"

If people recognize words by looking at the tops of the words, and that this is accomplished because the tops of words vary in height and appearance, then sentences that start with just one capital letter and then lowercase letters will be easier to recognize and will get read first. Every little advantage helps you!

WORDS IN ALL CAPS ARE HARD TO READ! PEOPLE DON'T LIKE TO READ THEM AND DON'T READ THEM AS EASILY. RECOGNIZING THE WORDS IN THE SENTENCES IS TEDIOUS, AND THESE LISTINGS ARE FREQUENTLY OVERLOOKED.

To further illustrate the "tops of words" principle, look at how difficult it is to read this sentence:

SeNtEnCeS ThAT VaRy CaPs AnD LoWErCaSe LeTtErS ArE mAdDEnInG AnD EvEn HarDeR To ReAd.

See what a difference the tops of words can make? For this reason, construct your <TITLE> tags and site title submissions with one capital letter to start the tag, then use lower case letters for the rest of the site title. This technique is just one more advantage that you can realize over your Web site's competitors in search results.

Problems With Using Frames

While frames make Web site design and navigation a bit easier, they wreak havoc on your Web site's ranking in the search engines for two reasons:

1. Half of the search engines cannot read the content contained in frames.

2. Frames increase the file size and the number of total words that make up the Web site, and thereby can decrease keyword weight.

Non-frames-capable search engines view the Web site just as if you were viewing your site with an outdated browser. This is evidenced by the large number of search engines that return listings like this:

Used-PCs.com

is your webstore for Used PCs and PC parts. This web page uses frames;

You'll need Netscape or IE 2.0 or better to view them.

98%   http://www.used-pcs.com/   (Size 1.3K)

What happened here?! This is how this terrific company that sells used Pentiums at reasonable prices and operates a great Web site is listed in a particular search engine. Why? The search engine's spider couldn't read frames. Therefore, it only read the contents of the <NOFRAMES> tag. This information is returned to browsers that are not frames-capable instead of just a jumbled page. Unfortunately, the text in the <NOFRAMES> tag is often instructions to the reader that they need a frames-capable browser to view the site properly. Note: This company has corrected their site and designed a new site that does not employ frames. Check out the new site. They always have some great bargains there!

So, how do you overcome this problem? First, if at all possible, do not design your Web site with frames. In our opinion, only very large, complex sites with many menu options and levels truly need frames.

If you insist on using frames, take measures to ensure that the major search engines' spiders can index your page. You can accomplish this by carefully using the <NOFRAMES> tag. Also, don't forget effective site titles and META tags. Just because you're using frames doesn't mean you should leave out the META tags.

It's really quite simple. You must create an alternate Web page within the <NOFRAMES> tag so that search engines have something to

index. Compose a complete HTML Web page between the <NOFRAMES> tag and its end tag </NOFRAMES>. Make sure that you include the <NOFRAMES> tag immediately below the very first frameset tag, because, as always, you want the keyword rich text to appear as close to the top of the page as possible like so:

```
<FRAMESET COLS="125,*" border="0">
<NOFRAMES>
<BODY>
```

```
<H1>I'll start the content in my NOFRAMES tag with a header tag that I'll fill with keywords</H1>
```

```
<P>In the copy you can include all the text and HTML that would otherwise make up your Web site. Here's a link to another page, maybe one that would make up another frame:</P>
```

```
<A HREF="http://www.yourcompany.com/otherpage.htm">Click to link to another page</A>
<P> And here's some more text for the search engines to index </P>
</BODY>
```

```
</NOFRAMES>
```

```
<FRAME SRC="html/lftmenu.htm" NAME="frame517420" MARGINWIDTH=3 SCROLLING=NO NORESIZE>
```

```
<FRAME SRC="html/main.html" NAME="main" SCROLLING=YES>
```

```
</FRAMESET>
```

The preferred method is to include all the information from the other framed pages on this new, separate page contained in the <NOFRAMES> tag. When you design this new Web page within the <NOFRAMES> tag, make sure you include links to other pages in your site so that the search engine can spider to those pages and index them as well.

Make sure <NOFRAMES> follows the <FRAMESET> tag. Moving it up higher in the page such as in the <HEAD> section could make your wording more prominent to the search engine but would be incompatible with some browsers.

Since the extra tags to set up frames may dilute the density of keywords versus other words on the page, you should definitely consider creating doorway pages. These pages would not use frames at all, but would serve as pointers to your main site that uses frames. This solution can provide the best of both worlds.

How to Combat the "Ol' Switcheroo" Technique

If you haven't achieved top rankings in search engines, we strongly suggest looking at the Web sites that did achieve one of those rankings to try and understand why they rated so well. There is one catch you need to be aware of:

The site you are viewing may not be the site that achieved that top ranking.

How can this be? Simply put, it's called the "ol' switcheroo." A clever marketer creates a Web page, usually all text with carefully constructed META tags, comment tags and body copy, and submits that page to a search engine. If he's done a good job, voila, number one ranking. Now, the site that achieved such a high ranking is probably not very attractive – often, depending on the search engine, it contains just one word on the actual page, or one paragraph stuffed with keywords, repeated two or three times. Since it is so unattractive, the person who just achieved that ranking will switch out that one Web page and substitute their real site complete with graphics and the other trappings of good Web site design.

I do NOT recommend this technique. First, it is dishonest since the page a user searches for should be the page they get. Second, you'll get burned when the search engine periodically without notice automatically re-indexes your site. When this happens, you'll immediately and without warning lose your ranking.

One of the first clues that this tactic is being used is that the site title and description displayed in the search summary results are not found anywhere on the actual Web site.

Our point here is this: Before you begin to try and learn from the people who have Web sites in the top positions in a search engine, make sure the site you are looking at is the actual Web site that garnered that top ranking. If you suspect that a highly ranked site is employing the "ol' switcheroo" tactic, you can resubmit it to the search engine. When it get re-indexed, it will likely lose its ranking. This can help you learn from sites which honestly deserve their top position.

There is just one occasion when re-indexing a site that shouldn't be at the top of a list won't work. Some really cunning Web site managers use a CGI script to automatically detect a particular search engine's spider and then dynamically serve a Web site front page that is different from the one that the rest of the world sees. This page will guarantee them that top rank even if it is an extremely ugly nonsense

page. There is almost no certain way to tell if someone is using this technique. However, there are the same hints as before (e.g., the words that make up the site description and title are not found on the actual page, and re-indexing the site doesn't cause a new headline and site description to be generated by the search engine). I don't believe this is a very commonly used technique *yet*, since it's difficult and time-consuming to implement.

Make sure you are competing and positioning against a site that is in fact, the actual site that was indexed. If not, you can report your suspicion that they are using a CGI script to serve up a different page to search engines. If investigated, the site may be removed from the search engine database for displaying a page that doesn't match what they submitted.

As far as the legalities of submitting a page other than your own, most of the search engines themselves ask you to submit or suggest a favorite page from any site, not just your own. If the page has not changed since it was last indexed, their ranking should not change or be affected by the resubmission.

How to Avoid Trouble With the Engines

More and more, search engines are cracking down on the use of techniques they consider inappropriate for gaining top rankings in their indexes. No doubt many techniques in this special report are now or will be targeted sooner or later. Interestingly, CNET Central, the computer network and first Web site supported with its own television show, just completed an article that details which search engines returned the most relevant search results.

Infoseek used to be well known as the Web site marketer's favorite search engine because a page could be indexed in minutes – though they now take up to two weeks. In the past, this instant indexing meant that anyone with a good understanding of search engine optimization techniques could quickly move their pages into top positions on Infoseek. As a result, most pages at the top of Infoseek's search results are there because someone like you or me figured out a way to get those pages there.

CNET recruited a team of evaluators to conduct a series of keyword searches and then rank each engine by how well the search results matched the intent of their queries. Infoseek placed second.

Nonetheless, search engines have declared a silent war against those of us working on their behalf (well, OK, on behalf of our clients really – but they clearly benefit!) to ensure that good Web sites make it into top positions. Those indexes that are most difficult to master seem to return most irrelevant documents (Excite and the now defunct OpenText search engine ranked second to last and last, respectively).

Because the search engines are working to penalize the small minority of spammers who inappropriately submit dozens of pages and present off-topic material, legitimate must be careful that we don't get clipped in one of these stings.

Penalties can be draconian and can include having your domain name, your IP address and even pages registered under your Internic handle banned from a particular search engine. In extreme cases, we've heard of search engines checking domain registrations with Internic for owner's names and addresses. With this information they can prevent known spammers from registering new domains and getting back into their index. We received an e-mail from someone recently claiming that AltaVista was blocking submissions of all of his URLs, even new ones he registered. He suspected that AltaVista had captured his Nic handle information and was blocking any new URLs he registered under it, though we could not confirm this practice. You do not want to suffer such a fate. There is no reason you should if you observe these guidelines:

1. Never use keywords in your META tags that do not apply to your site's content.

   Tip: Let's say you have a travel service business. The single keyword "travel" will probably be very hard to be positioned well on. To attract the visitors you want, you may want to create good content related to your business in order to attract the right type of visitors. For example, if you sell vacation cruises to the Caribbean, make a page all about "Parasailing in the Caribbean." Give them all the information they'd want to know about the sport, the pros and cons, then show them how to get there on one of your vacation plans! However, good content is the KEY. Your page must really get the prospect excited about going parasailing before they're going to start thinking seriously about buying a ticket.

2. Avoid repeating the same keyword dozens of times in a row on your page or in your META tags. Increasingly, search engines are penalizing and even banning Web sites for employing this technique. List a keyword one to seven times, no more. Any more than that and you're entering the "danger zone."

3. Do not create too many doorway pages. It's good to create multiple doorway pages that each target different sets of keywords or topics related to your site, but DO NOT BE EXCESSIVE! Search engines now watch for multiple submissions that appear the same or very similar. Try a couple of variations, submit them, then wait and see how you rank.

   Tip: It's important to review your Web site and check your rankings for many keywords that appear in the text that makes up the different pages of your Web site. Often you'll find that your Web site did not rank well for one important keyword, but it may rank very well on some other keyword or phrase found on the page!

   If you don't rank well anywhere, read "The Golden Rule" (see page 56), redesign your page and resubmit. Search engines don't really care if you resubmit a page after making changes. In fact, they encourage it.

   The easiest way to get in trouble is to have three, four or more of your pages all appear together in the matches for a single keyword search. One of your competitors will likely

report you. This could get you banned from that search engine.

4. Avoid submitting too many pages at once. If you have 100 pages you need indexed, first review the rules of the particular search engine to make certain the search engine will index this number. I suggest you play it safe and break up your submissions. Submit half one day and half the next avoiding any undocumented limits a search engine may have whereby they simply ignore your pages after a certain number of submissions. Also be wary of automated site submission tools that submit too many pages simultaneously.

5. Avoid submitting the same page twice on the same day. Generally search engines will simply ignore a second submission. You can, however, rename the page and resubmit it, but again, don't abuse the system. Keep page variations to a minimum, follow up, and if you don't rank well for your keywords, then redesign the page and submit it again. Consider it doorway page recycling.

6. Following up by checking your rank for many keywords in 10 search engines sounds like a lot of work. It is. Some people tell us they spend 30 hours a week checking their rank for their important keywords. That's why we designed WebPosition Gold™. It does all the grunt work for you by doing the searches in parallel and then putting together all the results in neat, concise reports

7. After you've been in business awhile, you'll learn that to succeed, you need a competitive advantage. Use technology and knowledge to do more in less time. This is how the smaller or newer companies can often compete against the big boys. However, don't sacrifice your ethics to achieve your goals. Using Princess Diana's name on your Web site to bring traffic is patently offensive. It's deception in every application whether the keyword concerns a sensitive current event or simply a high-interest keyword. Most importantly, it won't translate into revenue, only aggravated visitors. And even if you make a buck or two, it will be on your conscience. Making money on the Web is not that hard. WebPosition Gold™ and this report make it even easier. Now go make lots of money and report back and tell us how you did it!

Maximize Your Visibility With Doorway Pages!

With the exception of Yahoo! you can submit more than one URL to a search engine. A doorway page is simply a page that has been created for the sole purpose of ranking higher in search engines for a particular keyword or set of keywords. These pages act as "doorways" to the real content of your site, without having to redesign or remove the content of your site.

You can create doorway pages to take advantage of a search engine's criteria for a specific keyword or keyword combination. Let's say you want to rank well on AltaVista for the keyword combination "Utility Software" and for your company name of "ABC Software, Inc." Build one doorway page for your company site specific to AltaVista, and another customized for achieving the best ranking for "Utility Software" at AltaVista. It's simple – two doorway pages as follows:

http://www.abc-software.com/abc-software-av.htm (company doorway page for AltaVista)

http://www.abc-software.com/utility-software-av.htm (AltaVista-specific "Utility Software" customized)

Then, customize the META tags, body copy and everything else on the doorway pages to try and gain an advantage for that particular keyword in AltaVista. You will emphasize primarily that keyword on that page. In your sentences, try to fit it around other keywords you want to target as well, but keep the primary emphasis of the page on a single topic. You will then want to add a link on that doorway page to the home page on your site.

Doorway pages help you solve the most troubling Web marketing dilemma:

The techniques that will get you a high ranking in one search engine can get you penalized or even removed from the index of another search engine. It is impossible to design a single page that will rank well for all of your chosen keywords in all engines.

Since there are so many sites indexed by Web search engines, the content of your page must be very focused to rank well in today's overflowing search engines.

Most companies want their Web sites found under several keywords that their prospects are likely querying in search engines. For this reason, you'll want to create separate pages that emphasize each of those keywords. Look at an example of a Web site that would like to rank well for searches on keywords related to horses. This company would like its site to rank well under three keywords in particular:

1. horse

2. performance horse

3. equine

The following Web page naming convention illustrates how you might name the individual doorway pages optimized to achieve a high ranking for each keyword:

http://www.horsesite.com/horse-av.htm (optimized for the keyword "horse" for AltaVista)

http://www.horsesite.com/performance-horse-av.htm (optimized for the keyword "performance horse" for AltaVista)

http://www.horsesite.com/equine-av.htm (optimized for the keyword "equine" for AltaVista)

Remember you can create dozens of these doorway pages, each optimized to rank well for a different keyword in a different engine. Typically, when targeting five keywords, across eight search engines, you end up with 40 pages pointing to your home page or other section on your site. Don't worry, this is not unusual. If you are cautious and heed the warnings below, you won't have any problems.

WARNING #1: Some search engines will consider the act of creating dozens of nearly identical pages as "spamming" their index and could remove your pages altogether. This is most dangerous when you either inadvertently (or intentionally) cause dozens of your site's pages to rank well for one keyword search. The poor search engine user is returned 30 matches, all of them going to one of your doorway pages and looking identical or very similar! If your competitor sees this, you can bet they'll inform the search engine in hopes of getting your Web site permanently expelled from the search engine.

This result also devalues the search engine. Nobody wants to scroll through dozens of dupliate sites to locate the information they need. And, unless you run the CNN Web site or some other huge content-based site, chances are you don't have something to please everyone yet.

You can avoid potential problems by creating "doorway pages" with different content that describes your product or services briefly and then linked to different pages within your Web site. If the content that these doorway pages link to involves different topical information or products, and you don't create more than a couple pages for each keyword, no one is likely to complain. Make the content of each doorway page vary, and you won't be breaking any rules.

WARNING #2: Some search engine "experts" have long advised that you simply create copies of your index page (and make changes to a page to emphasize different keywords), and then name them

index1.htm, index2.htm, index3.htm, etc. Doing this only asks for trouble since anyone seeing index10.htm is going to know immediately that you've got at least nine other copies of your home page out there. If one of your competitors complains to a search engine, you then run the risk of getting dropped from the index. The search engine could easily red flag pages that are named this way in order to spot potential troublemakers.

Tip: Some techniques work better than others, depending on the engine. Sometimes, a shorter, more concise page will rank higher on AltaVista than a longer one. You could create alternate shorter pages and name them accordingly:

http://www.theraquine.com/horse-short.htm

http://www.theraquine.com/performance-horse-short.htm

http://www.theraquine/equine-short.htm

Experiment with different pages and page names to describe these experiments, but be careful and do NOT go overboard.

Further Warning About Naming Pages

After several tests, we believe that Infoseek may have implemented a penalty to combat potential spam for pages that contain the name "index" after the root domain. For instance:

http://www.partyservice.com/index-is-balloons.htm

http://www.partyservice.com/index-is-singingtelegram.htm

http://www.partyservice.com/index-is-magician.htm

In this example, the "is" stood for pages submitted to Infoseek and the next word was the keyword for which the pages were optimized.

After being in the index for two weeks, several pages that we created using this naming convention were dropped even though they contained nothing that would otherwise red flag them as being unacceptable. Based on other feedback from users of WebPosition Gold™, we believe that Infoseek searched their database for pages that would likely qualify as spam as determined by repeated occurrences of the word "index," as the first part of the page name.

To double-check this discovery, we submitted different pages on another containing the word "indw." In this case, two of the three pages were immediately ignored and not added to the database at all. However, we did manage to get two pages with "index" as the prefix accepted into the database after several tries. Go figure.

It would seem that the unwritten rule is not entirely consistent, or perhaps Infoseek was just losing pages at random recently. If that's the case, use WebPosition Gold™ to make sure all your pages are actually

being added to the index and STAYING there! To be on the safe side, we suggest you avoid naming multiple pages with "index" as the prefix.

This penalty is probably in response to unethical marketers who create dozens of duplicate pages targeting one or two keywords. Some of these spammers are trying to get their pages to occupy all of the first 20 to 30 matches returned for a particular keyword search. This would almost ensure that someone searching for that keyword would visit one of their sites (or doorway pages to their one main site). However, this infuriates searchers as well as competing Web site owners.

We recommend naming your pages after the keyword you are targeting, such as "balloons.htm." If you create a page designed for a specific engine, you might designate it "balloons-av.htm" for AltaVista. However, avoid numbering pages such as "balloons1.htm" and "balloons2.htm." Even if the information on each page is unique, you might draw attention to yourself by numbering pages. It is better to choose safer file names for Web pages created for the different engines. If you have any additional experiences related to this subject, please drop us a line.

The Power of Natural-Sounding Paragraphs

Search engines continually create more sophisticated ways of grading pages based on their content and often ignore pages that try to list the same keyword over and over. Occasionally this technique will still work. However, the technique of listing keywords is prone to abuse, so engines are turning to judging the *content* of the page, rather than what keywords you list in your META tags or elsewhere on your Web site.

Pages that naturally integrate keywords into the content of the page often rank better in some search engines. These search engines are probably employing a system where keywords are given less weight or ignored if the keyword is found within so many characters or words of that same keyword. Repeating the keyword, but keeping it spaced apart may work better on these engines.

So, what does this mean? One sucessfule technique is to create a page that includes a normal sounding paragraph, in regular sentence, but go out of your way to repeat certain keywords. Unfortunately, the page might not have the most professional writing style and may sound a bit awkward, but if you're having trouble getting recognized by the engines, this technique often works when others fail. Don't make your home page sound silly by repeating the keywords over and over. You can, however, create doorway pages that lead people into a very professional-looking home page. You must remember that once you attract the visitor, you have to grab the prospect's attention and inspire

confidence in your products or services before the prospect will buy anything.

Another technique that often works well is to do the same thing, but keep the page very small, to perhaps a few sentences followed by a link to your main page. It is important to try a variety of techniques since cannot always anticipate the search engines' next move.

To suceed, you have to be more clever than simply repeating keywords. As described earlier, most search engines penalize you after you've repeated a keyword more than seven times on a given page. Others now penalize if a keyword is repeated more than three times.

Some search engines are now implementing sophisticated code to try to detect flagrant attempts to influence their index. It is believed they now check not only for word repetition but also for sentence construction.

This technology will not affect you if you do not repeat keywords separated by commas, but rather write normal sounding sentences that include your keywords, scattered carefully throughout.

"Click Here" Is Important

Don't forget to tell visitors on your doorway page to "click here" to enter the site or to learn more. All the research on banner advertising extols the virtue of asking the visitor to take the specific action and to "click here." Don't question this wisdom, just use it. Make the phrase "click here" a part of your marketing practices.

Never Create Doorway Pages for Directories Like Yahoo!

STOP! Don't do it. Do not attempt to submit additional pages to submission-populated directories – they will be rejected, and your main page may be penalized. Your rank in these directories will be determined more by how you word your submission describing your site than by the words that make up your main page. However, Yahoo!, in particular, will visit your site and ensure that your content is consistent with your submission.

Submitting All the Pages That Make Up Your Site

Once you've created your doorway pages, take the time to submit each one individually to the search engines. For the rest of your site, you can submit just one page that links to all the others, directly or indirectly. Search engines that "spider" Web sites should index all the pages that make up your site. "Should" is the important word in that last sentence. We've found that sometimes it takes quite a long time for a search engine's spider to return to complete the task of indexing the pages beyond the specific page you submit. Sometimes they never complete the indexing of the whole site. Note that Infoseek indexes only the pages you specifically submit and rarely spiders to another page.

WebPosition Gold™ includes links in its reports to the submit pages of each engine and includes a search engine submitter for the major engines. Links to the major engines are also listed in the Search Engine by Search Engine Analysis section.

There are also a number of good submission services and products out there that you might use to save time. However, for the best results be sure that the doorway pages are submitted individually in some fashion.

Some Additional Submission Tips

Submission has become more and more complicated. Many engines are employing new rules, limits, and preferences not only for how your page should look, but how you should submit the page. Pay careful attention to these new submission guidelines given on the submit page of each search engine.

Something they may not tell you though, is that submitting your important internal pages directly to the engine may actually hurt your chances of ranking high on the search engine, at least on Alta Vista!

If you've been to Alta Vista lately, you may have noticed that they now request you submit only your home page, and they will then spider the rest of your site by following the links from that page to your other pages. Unfortunately for larger sites, they will only spider about 400 pages on a single site before stopping, and will only go down about 3 levels at the most.

Alta Vista seems to be placing greater weight on pages that they spidered, rather than those that you submitted directly. Therefore, if you're in a competitive keyword area, a smarter strategy may be to create a page with links to your other pages, and simply submit the main page and let Alta Vista find the rest. The disadvantage is you may have to wait for weeks before Alta Vista gets around to indexing those other pages, and there's a chance they may never get around to it. If you have the patience though, this technique may give you a competitive edge over other well-designed pages.

At a minimum, avoid submitting more than a few pages on the same day. Submitting too many at once can cause them all to be rejected. The exact number they allow is somewhat ambiguous. Submitting one per day is the safest, but you may be able to get away with as many as five or ten.

Other engines may start favoring indirect submissions in the same manner, but keep in mind that some, like Infoseek will never spider your other pages. You must manually submit each and every page you want to appear in their index. However, do not submit more than 50 pages per day to Infoseek.

How to Measure Your Web Site's Popularity

Since some search engines will judge your Web site by the number of other Web sites that link to it, how do you determine who has linked to your Web site?

Some search engines track which Web sites in their directories have links to outside Web sites. This information is noted in their databases and some of the search engines allow you to query this information. The method varies by search engine, but the value of this information cannot be underestimated.

A recent study determined that the second most significant way that people find and use Web sites is by following a link on another Web site. Soliciting links from other Web sites and then tracking how many actually establish those links is important for effective Web site marketing.

Here are instructions for checking who linked to your Web site for the search engines which support this feature:

AltaVista: Type "link:" followed by your URL into the search screen as follows:

link: www.yourcompany.com

Your results will include more sites if you do not include the "www" in your site URL. This is because the search engine only identifies matches if the entire text of the URL that you specify is found. As an example, consider a site which has a link to an e-mail address containing your domain name:

address@yourcompany.com

A search for "link:yourcompany.com" will return the above site, because the search engine finds the text "yourcompany.com" in the link. However, if you searched for "link:www.yourcompany.com" the above site would not be found, since AltaVista would not find the entire text you specified.

HotBot: Type "linkdomain:" followed by your URL into the search screen as follows:

linkdomain:www.yourcompany.com

Another method is to type your entire URL into the search screen and select "links to the URL" in the "Look for" pull-down menu to the left of the search box. Note that this method will not work unless you include the "http//" at the beginning of your URL.

Go.com: Type "link:" followed by your URL into the search screen as follows:

link: http://www.yourcompany.com

Because the specific language required by the search engines is constantly changing, it is a good idea to get in the habit of regularly checking the "help" screens of each search engine. They will provide updates about the most current methods to check your popularity as well as other search features they offer.

Creating a Winning Strategy

If you're serious about improving your Web site's visibility and thereby increasing your site traffic, you must have a plan of action. Improving your positions is not instantaneous. Instead, it's an ongoing PROCESS. WebPosition Gold™ makes this process much easier, therefore, it is invaluable to improving your site's positions and ultimately increasing your traffic.

This section assumes you have a copy of WebPosition Gold™ which can be downloaded at:

http://www.webposition.com

However, even if you don't have WebPosition Gold™, these steps still apply!

Here's an outline of the general strategy we recommend:

1. Check your site's visibility as it stands today. If your Web site has already been submitted to the search engines, you'll want to find out how well you rank right now for keywords and phrases people might use to find you. In WebPosition Gold™, you do this by creating a "Mission." You will then have a baseline to monitor your progress over time. Otherwise, you'll need to do the searches by hand on each of the major engines.

2. Understand why all your pages are not ranking as well as they could. Study the Mission Results or search engine results. Understand how to use the reports which WebPosition Gold™ generates.

    There's no way to make a single page rank well with every search engine for every keyword or phrase someone might use. However, you can work to make at least one page in your Web site rank near the top for each engine. Ideally, you'll want one of your pages to be positioned well for each of your primary keywords. This may take some thought on how to set up your pages to achieve the desired results. Study this report for the techniques to improve your positions over the pages that currently appear in the top 10.

3. Try to identify and correct problem areas:
    A) Are you at least indexed on each engine? Make sure your page design has been optimized for keyword searches, then resubmit. If you submitted recently, make sure you've allowed enough time for the engine to add you to their

database. You'll need to go to the engine's submit area to find out what their current lag time is for indexing new sites.

B) Are you at least in the top 30 positions for your primary keywords? If not, redesign some of your pages (or create new ones), and resubmit. Study this report and subscribe to our FREE MarketPosition Newsletter for ongoing tips.

4. Keep records of everything! You may find your rankings suddenly move up or down dramatically. When this happens, you'll need to understand WHY. We recommend you keep careful notes on when you submitted or resubmitted to each engine and what pages you submitted. You may even wish to create subdirectories with different copies of your Web site at various stages. That way, if you move down in rank after submitting Revision B, you can go back and study what made Revision A better. This requires some planning to be effective. Take advantage of WebPosition Gold™'s Mission archive feature so you can monitor your progress at each step.

5. Follow up! This is the key to achieving good rankings. There's no 100% effective page design or strategy. Each search engine is different and continually changes and adds new pages to its index. These will affect your positions over time and sometimes very quickly. You need to continually monitor and adjust your site.

Tip: If you're not in the top 30 now, you'll probably want to change WebPosition Gold™'s "Reporter" settings on "Options" Tab, under the default setting "Matches to Scan" to a number higher than 30 (like 50 or 100 maybe). If you scan more matches to find your listing, you'll be able to track your progress better on whether your changes and submissions are moving you up or down the list. Beware that searches will take longer the more records you scan, so consider using the WebPosition Gold™ Scheduler if needed.

Is it all really worth it?

Yes! Even minor changes in page design combined with follow-up work can have significant effects on your traffic. There's also no other more cost-effective way to increase traffic to your site. Even better, this traffic tends to be of a high quality since it found you by specifically searching for your product or service. If you're indexed on the keywords that properly describe your products or services, you should see sales increase noticeably. This assumes the content of your site is effective once they get there.

Real-life example: We're familiar with a company that offered various types of software products. They did some traditional advertising and submitted to the search engines. Web site traffic was slow, and Internet sales accounted for only 7 percent of their business. After following the tips outlined here and resubmitting, the site's traffic tripled over a couple of months! Even more astonishing was sales via the Internet increased nearly 500% (to 34% of total company sales!) with zero cost in new advertising dollars! This was all done done before WebPosition Gold™ was even invented. Therefore the company was forced to just hope they were ranked well, since monitoring everything by hand was not practical. In the majority of cases, they were not ranked very well at all! Therefore, they were still missing out on the vast majority of their untapped potential.

That company was FirstPlace Software.

Now, with the release of WebPosition Gold™, improving your search rankings is no longer an art, but a science and completely manageable. Not every site will do well on the Internet. Only the ones that work *smart* by taking advantage of the right tools and strategies will be successful.

Ten Steps to Creating Top-Ranking Pages

So many people requested this section that we feel obligated to include it. However, even though this section will give you a quick overview of the process of creating better ranking pages, it's no substitute for reading the entire report and gaining all of its insights.

Still, here are the generic steps to undertake in optimizing pages for search engine submission. Not all of these steps should be used in optimizing pages for all search engines. This is because each search engine ranks Web pages by different criteria. Refer to the "engine by engine analysis" in the second half of this guide and the other discussion topics for further details.

Here are the steps in order of importance:

Step 1: <u>Create Doorway Pages</u>. Create short, focused summary pages about a particular topic that emphasizes a keyword, phrase or select group of keywords. Give each file a unique name and avoid numbering your pages like index1.htm, index2.htm, index3.htm, etc.

A sample naming convention might be:

http://www.yourcompany.com/singing-telegram.htm (page optimized for "singing telegram")
http://www.yourcompany.com/magician.htm (page optimized for "magician")
http://www.yourcompany.com/clowns.htm (page optimized for "clowns")

You will probably want to create some variations of these pages to target the preferences of specific search engines. However, avoid submitting more than two to three pages to the same engine that very similar and discuss the same topic. Instead, submit a couple of your best designs based on the tips in this report and your own observations, and then follow up. If you didn't score as well as you would have liked on each keyword, try some other designs and submit them again reusing the same page name.

Step 2: <u>Begin Optimizing the Pages With the <TITLE> tag</u>. The <TITLE> tag is arguably the most important piece of HTML code you will write to gain a top ranking. Make sure this tag immediately follows the <HEAD> tag and is not placed after other META tags. As we discuss later, some HTML editors place <TITLE> tags arbitrarily within the head tag. It is important that the <TITLE> is placed immediately after the <HEAD> tag in your HTML code:

<TITLE>Increase Traffic with iProspect.com!</TITLE>

You should repeat this and all following steps for each different doorway page so each page targets a different engine and keyword.

Some page designs will often work well on multiple engines, but rarely on all of them.

Extra trick: Some search engines rank pages higher when the pages include multiple <TITLE> tags as follows:

<TITLE>Increase Traffic with iProspect.com!</TITLE>
<TITLE>Increase Traffic with iProspect.com!</TITLE>
<TITLE>Increase Traffic with iProspect.com!</TITLE>

Step 3: <u>Add META tags</u>. There are two META tags that you should concern yourself with: the META description and the META keyword tag. The stated goal of these tags is to provide the search engine's spiders with a description of your site and the keywords that you think are relevant to the content of your site. Without these tags, search engines will randomly select 25 words from the body copy of your Web site and use it to describe the content of your site. Often, search engines select irrelevant words, and then nobody visits your site. Here is how you use these META tags:

<META NAME="DESCRIPTION" CONTENT="This is my site description that I would like the search engine to use.">

<META NAME="KEYWORDS" CONTENT="keyword1, keyword2, keyword3, keyword4">

Step 4: <u>Add keywords to a comment tag</u>. A comment tag describes something within your HTML code that is not viewed by people visiting your Web site. Typically it describes the function of a section of code or the name of the site's designer. For your marketing purposes it can include important keywords:

<!-- Here is a sentence that includes a lot of my keywords. I place this keyword-rich sentence in the header of the HTML document because it is always important to include keywords high on the page -->

Step 5: <u>Add keywords in a header tag</u>. Keywords in the <H1> through <H6> tags are assigned more relevancy points by many of the search engines. For this reason, at the very top of my page, often as the first text appearing on the page, it is wise to include a sentence or list of keywords between the header tags. Remember that the larger the number, the smaller the size of the font:

<H2>Keywords are important here, and this is a keyword-rich sentence that you may notice started with a "keyword" and includes another keyword and another keyword.</H2>

Step 6: <u>Add a <NO FRAMES> tag for sites with frames</u>. If your page uses frames, you should use the <NO FRAMES> tag to include links to your other pages and a sentence or two describing your Web site.

This is because many search engines can't index Web sites which use frames:

<NO FRAMES>Keyword-rich text describing my site is important here and again my first word was a keyword</NO FRAMES>

Step 7: <u>Make the first 25 words on the page keyword rich</u>. Since some search engines use the first 25 words of copy on your page as the site's description in their index and to determine which keywords to rank your site under, carefully construct the beginning of your paragraphs. Below we use the <FONT SIZE> tag just so you recognize that we are talking about viewable copy:

<FONT SIZE="+1">Keyword1, Keyword2, and Keyword3, are important keywords to this Web site so make sure that Keyword1 and Keyword2 and even Keyword 3 appear several times in the first 25 words on your Web page.</FONT>

Step 8: <u>Make hyperlinks to your other pages flush with keywords</u>. Several search engines assign extra relevance to keywords found in hyperlinks. Since it is likely that your home page will include links to other sections of your site, take time to include keywords in these:

<A HREF="http://www.yourcompany.com/clients.htm">Keyword1 and keyword2 will provide information about our clients</A>

Step 9: <u>Add keywords to your ALT tags</u>. ALT tags describe graphics that haven't completely loaded or that won't be seen if the visitor to your site is browsing the Web with their graphics turned off. Some search engines will consider keywords found in ALT tags for your site's relevancy toward a ranking under that keyword, or they will use the text contained in the ALT tag to describe your site in their index. Either way, it's important to fill up these tags with keyword-rich text as follows:

<IMG SRC="picture.gif" ALT="Keyword1, keyword2, keyword3, and anything else you would like to say about your keywords.">

If you don't have graphics on your page, you can still benefit from this technique. You can employ the "single pixel gif" technique by creating a gif file that is simply one pixel – hardly visible. Open your favorite graphic editor and create an image that consists of just a single dot (one pixel) the same color as your background (you can even define it as a transparent gif if you want to be extra stealthy). Insert that tiny graphic into your page, preferably near the top for the best effect:

<IMG SRC="tinyimage.gif" HEIGHT=1 WIDTH=1 BORDER=0 ALT="keyword1 keyword2 keyword3 keyword1">

This allows you to include important keywords near the top of your page even if you don't have any graphics on your main page.

Step 10: Calculate and then optimize your page's **keyword frequency** (total occurrences) and **keyword weight** (percentage of the total words that make up the page). Since the search engines will consider these when determining your site's relevance toward particular keyword searches, you should control these variables. Simply copy the viewable text into your word processor or text editor and perform a "word count." Write this number down in a safe place and then select the "replace" feature from the "edit" menu (in most word processors). Replace the particular keyword you are looking to count, with itself. The word processor will then search and replace your keyword with itself and then tell you how many replacements were performed. Take this number, and divide it by the total number of words. If you have 100 total words and three of them were one particular keyword, you have a keyword weight of 3 percent. Work to keep your keyword weight between 3 and 8 percent, though some engines respond better to higher keyword weight. Remember to review the pages that ranked in the top 10 for your keyword searches and determine the keyword weight they employed.

These are the basic steps for optimizing your Web pages for search engines. This is, of course, a very oversimplified example. When you actually optimize your pages, you will be optimizing your pages based on each search engine's ranking criteria. This means you will not use all of these steps for each engine, and some search engines will require extra, advanced steps not described here.

Once you have optimized your pages, you will submit each set to their respective search engines. Remember, don't submit all the pages to all the search engines. What you will have done to gain a top ranking in HotBot could actually hurt you in AltaVista and so on.

After all of the pages are optimized, use WebPosition Gold™ every day to check your rankings and make sure that each search engine added your pages. WebPosition Gold™ is the only tool that can effectively monitor your rankings in the 10 major search engines – the only ones that really matter – and then give you the detailed information necessary to improve those positions.

After you submit the pages, it's up to you and WebPosition Gold™ to check your rankings and tweak your page designs to get your pages into those top positions. Without WebPosition Gold™, it will be much harder.

GOLDEN RULE of Search Engine Marketing

"To Achieve a Top Position in a Particular Search Engine, Analyze What Other High-Ranking Web Pages Have Done!"

If there is one rule that should be referred back to as the refrain in search engine positioning, it is this:

The best way to move up the search result list is to learn what kinds of things affect your rankings and then **analyze the pages of those that ranked higher than yours** for real clues on how you can achieve a higher ranking.

Search engines change their ranking algorithms from time to time. A page in your Web site that earned a top ranking last week might drop in the rankings a few months later. Then, left untouched, that same page could climb right back into its old search position awhile later, although this is unlikely to happen by chance.

The trick to always being on top is to learn the variables that can be influenced and analyze the contents of the top Web sites to see what they're doing better than you. Refer to the detailed report in WebPosition Gold™ for an easy reference.

Literally, click on their listings, visit their site and select "view" from the pull-down menu in Netscape and then the "Document Source" selection on that menu. You can do the same in Microsoft Explorer. This allows you to view the actual HTML code that makes up their page.

Ask yourself, "Is a particular keyword more prominent in their title tag than in mine?" and "is a particular keyword more prominent?" You should also consider whether it is repeated more often in their description META tag or in the actual copy that makes up their page than on my Web site.

Perhaps they are using the keyword in the heading tags, or maybe keywords appear in hyperlinks to other internal pages or some other way that you had not considered or are not using. This is the proven way to isolate the variables and climb ahead of other sites in search engines.

Specific Techniques to Increase "Relevancy"

Now that you understand the variables you control for keyword placement within your Web pages, here are techniques and applications where you must apply those keywords. Each will help you gain a footing and climb toward the top of the rankings in the search engines. Each technique is presented independently and will not work for every search engine. After this overview of techniques, you will need to read the search engine by search engine descriptions to learn which techniques work for which engines.

META Tags and How to Use Them

META tags are the information that you place in the <HEAD> section of your Web site which does not display in the browser window. META tags allow the developer to communicate certain information to the search engines, other automated services and other Web developers about their site.

Think of the META tag as food for a search engine's spiders. META tags let you tell a search engine's spider:

1. The name of your site,

2. A description of your site that you would like the search engine to use and

3. The keywords that you would like your site to be found under.

META tags provide Web site developers with control over how your site is listed in a spider-based search engine. If you don't include them in your document, the spider will likely take the first 25 words on your

Web site and include them as the name and description of the site. Have you ever seen a Web site listed in a search engine as follows?

[COMPANY] [INFORMATION] [PRODUCTS] [SERVICES] [OVERVIEW]
Hi, and thanks for taking the time to visit our company page. We hope you'll find...
http://www.gizmonicselectric.com/ - size 22K - 22 Sept 96

You guessed it, this was the navigation bar that the site developer included at the top of the page. The search engine's spider grabbed the first text it found and hoped it described the page. Most important, nothing about this listing is compelling. You have no idea what the company does or why you should visit the page.

META tags are easy to build. Just follow the format below and replace our title, description and keywords with your own. Here is an example of META tags:

<HTML>
<HEAD>
<TITLE>increase traffic with iProspect.com </TITLE>

<M ETA NAME="Keywords" CONTENT="increase traffic, increase Web site traffic, search position, report position, report search ranking, rank, search ranking, monitor search positions, web site promotion, internet promotion, optimize search positions, improve traffic">

<META NAME="Description" CONTENT="INCREASE Web site TRAFFIC. iProspect.com is the premier Web marketing e-agency – want traffic?">

<!-- This is a comments tag, you can put keywords here, too-->

</HEAD>

Clearly the site above wants to place well for both the product name, "Increase Traffic," and the name of the company, "iProspect.com, Inc."

The <HEAD> Tag

Start your META tag section with a <HEAD> tag and end with a </HEAD> by adding the front leaning slash. All of your META tags should be contained within these two tags.

The <TITLE> Tag – The Most Important HTML Tag on Your Web site

The <TITLE> tag displays the name of the site that will appear in the top of the browser. This is the most important HTML tag on your Web site!

<TITLE> is the title tag and must be ended with a </TITLE> tag.

Many people visiting your Web site never notice this text that appears in the top blue border of their browser, but most search engines assign the most significance to text contained in the <TITLE> tag. Between these two title tags, identify your site but try to make it sound interesting and worth visiting, while at the same time, trying to get as many of your keywords into it as possible. Always put your <TITLE> tag right after the <HEAD> tag.

Important: Most of the large search engines will use as their title for your site in the search results the contents of your <TITLE> tag exactly as you composed it:

The <META NAME="DESCRIPTION"> Tag

This tag allows you to write a description of your Web site that some search engines will use instead of what they would otherwise randomly select from the copy on your pages. Not all search engines recognize or read this HTML tag. Here's how you use it:

<META NAME="Description" CONTENT="Description of your site.">

Start your description META tag like the above followed by not more than 25 words in general that are a compelling and interesting description of your site.

The <META NAME="KEYWORDS"> Tag

This tag lets you suggest keywords to the search engines that you would like your Web site to be returned for. Again, not all the search engines will use this tag and some won't even consider keywords included in this tag in their scoring of your Web site. Here's how you use this tag:

<META NAME="Keywords" CONTENT="Keyword1, Keyword2, Keyword3">

List all the keywords you can think of that you would like your site to come up under within the length limits for each engine.

The <!-- Comment Tag -->

A comment or remark tag is typically used to record comments about your Web site or HTML code that you don't want viewed on the actual page. This tag can be filled with relevant keyword content by adding the tag <! and all the keywords you think of. Again, not all the search engines will use this tag, and some won't even consider keywords included in it for scoring of your Web site, but some do. Here's how you use this tag:

<!-- Here are some comments that visitors to your Web site won't be able to see in their browser because the words are included in this non-printing tag -->

Technically, comment tags are not considered part of the META tag family of HTML code except that for Web site marketing purposes you can include these comments between the <HEAD> and </HEAD> tags where the META tags go. But you can also include comment tags throughout your Web site. I use comment tags to mark sections of copy that I want to remember to delete. I use the comment tag to hide sections of copy that I might want to put back later. I also use comment tags at the top, middle and bottom of Web pages for keyword placement to help increase my keyword weight as necessary.

Which search engines recognize each of these tags is discussed in the "Engine by Engine Analysis" section of this report.

Using the <ALT> Tag for Keywords

The <ALT> tag is an HTML tag used to describe a graphic on your Web page. Often this tag is used simply to describe the graphic a visitor will see when the page finishes loading. Sometimes, this tag is used to describe a photo or graphic that the user will never see. For instance, if the person visiting the site is browsing the Web in the "graphics off" mode, they will see the text you place in the <ALT> tag instead of the graphic. People do this when they have slow connections and they don't want to be slowed down by slow-loading images.

The <ALT> tag can be filled with keywords and some search engines will read and assign points to keywords contained in this tag. Again, consult the search engine by search engine breakdown in the second half of this report. Here is how the <ALT> tag is commonly used:

<IMG SRC="manonscooter.gif" ALT ="This is the picture of a man on a scooter">

And here is how the ALT tag might be used to yield a keyword advantage:

<IMG SRC="manonscooter.gif" ALT ="keyword1, keyword2, keyword3, keyword4, keyword4, keyword5">

Using the <H1> Through <H6> Heading Tags

Headings are the larger print or subtitles on a page. The smaller then number in the heading tag, the larger the font size. For example, <H1> is larger than <H3>. Some search engines score keywords and text found in heading tags better than other text on your pages. This makes perfect sense since text found in headings usually identifies a particular theme or section of content. Most marketing brochures and even books have chapter and section headings that talk about something significant to come.

As many reading this report know, for the HTML heading tag, the higher the number, the smaller the font size. Why not mark particularly important phrases and keywords within your body copy with a headline tag? With just a little bit of experimenting you can usually make it look presentable and not that noticeable. This way, some search engines will give extra weight to those words or phrases.

Therefore, repeat your most important keywords in the heading tags just as you should do with the <TITLE> tag for the page. Example of a page with heading tags:

```
<HTML>
<HEAD>
<TITLE>Widgets and More!</TITLE>
<META name="description" content="Widgets by Jerry's Widget
Emporium are the best widgets money can buy.">
<META name="keywords" content="blue widgets, green widgets, red
widgets, Jerry's Widget Emporium">
</HEAD>
<BODY>
<H1>Widgets Explained:</H1>
<P>Widgets by Jerry's Widget Emporium are the best widgets money
can buy.</P>
</BODY>
</HTML>
```

The above example assumes "widget" is my most important keyword, which is why I used it the heading tag as well as the title and the body. Use multiple heading tags throughout your page if you like, but always try to fill them with the keywords you are trying to emphasize. If you're using Microsoft FrontPage or another WYSIWYG editor, it should allow you to select a heading "style" or some other way to visually create the equivalent to an HTML heading tag.

TIP#1: If you're building a doorway page, always keep the page content focused to a single theme and a limited number of keywords so

you don't dilute the effectiveness of the page. Avoid the temptation to write about things unrelated to "widgets" or your primary keywords.

TIP#2: Use your keyword at the BEGINNING of the title tag, the heading and first paragraph. When you're having a tough time getting your page scored higher for your keyword, having the keyword in the first position rather than as the second or third word can make all the difference.

TIP#3: Notice that we purposely used the plural form of the word "widget" to double our visibility. Always add an "s" to your keyword whenever possible.

Include Keywords in Links

The above "widget" example could be improved by taking advantage of another scoring technique favored by some engines. The text within a link is sometimes weighed more heavily than words found in the regular body text.

Here's our "widget" example revised to reflect this new technique:

```
<HTML>
<HEAD>
<TITLE>Widgets and More!</TITLE>
<META name="description" content="Widgets by Jerry's Widget
Emporium are the best widgets money can buy.">
<META name="keywords" content="blue widgets, green widgets ,red
widgets, Jerry's Widget Emporium">
</HEAD>
<BODY>
<H1>Widgets Explained:</H1>
<P>Widgets by Jerry's Widget Emporium are the best widgets money
can buy.</P>
```

To learn about our widgets, choose one of the following:

```
<A HREF="blue-widgets.htm">Blue Widgets</A> <BR>
<A HREF="red-widgets.htm">Red Widgets</A> <BR>
<A HREF="green-widgets.htm">Green Widgets</A> <BR>

</BODY>
</HTML>
```

The above example again emphasizes the keyword "widget" and also includes other phrases people might search on such as "blue widget." Most people search on two or more words to narrow the scope of their search, so always include related keywords together whenever possible.

The visible text of the links is where you primarily want to include your keywords. It's also a good idea to create your page names based on your best keywords. That way you score a few more keyword points for the occasional search engine that indexes the page name portion of the link tag as well.

Using Multiple <TITLE> Tags

Some search engines will give an advantage to Web sites that included multiple <TITLE> tags. It seems strange and goes against the rules of HTML coding, but perhaps search engines just don't know that there should only be one <TITLE> tag and therefore assigns it more points.

We have already told you that many search engines assign the most points to keywords contained within the <TITLE> tag – it only seems natural that if you included a few extra, you might score even higher. Here's how you would apply this technique:

<TITLE>Used Pentium Computers, used-pcs.com</TITLE>
<TITLE>Used PC Computers at used-pcs.com</TITLE>
<TITLE>Used PCs at used-pcs.com</TITLE>

Here we used three title tags. In some engines this will increase your relevance score. Sometimes a very long <TITLE> tag that you cram full of keywords will work too but won't look as pretty.

You won't be able to use this technique unless you use an HTML editor that lets you edit the HTML code directly such as HomeSite (www.allaire.com). Many visual editing tools create the title tag for you, but will only generate one tag.

Multiple Domains Yield a Bonus

For many engines, including Excite, HotBot, and AltaVista, you will find it easier to get high rankings on your home page over secondary pages. Therefore, you'll score extra relevancy points not only by having domains that include keywords in the name, but by optimizing a different set of keywords for each domain's home page. If you've exhausted all the tricks for your keyword and are still having trouble ranking well, purchase another domain name that will point to a home page with different keyword content!

The Single Pixel Gif Trick

We learned this technique a long time ago but for a different application. Web designers have long used this trick to position text more accurately in Web pages. Now it seems this technique can do double duty by providing a canvas on which Web site promoters can paint their keywords.

We've mentioned before that some engines will index words found in the ALT tag, the tag that describes a graphic image. For this reason, it's a good idea to stuff as many keywords as you can into these tags.

One problem with this technique is that people who browse with their graphics turned off will see only these lists of keywords where a graphic might otherwise be seen. Studies have shown that there are still a good number of people with slower connections who browse the Web in "graphics off" mode. If you stuffed dozens of keywords into this tag, your Web page will look awful to these folks. For this reason, exercise prudence when you fill up the ALT tag with keywords so that your page doesn't look like a hideous gallery of keywords to these folks.

Using single pixel gifs allows you to have your ALT tag cake and eat it too. Use the ALT tag normally (a short description of the graphic only) for the primary graphics on your Web site. Then, open your favorite graphic editor and create an image that consists of just a single dot (one pixel) the same color as your background (you can even define it as a transparent gif if you want to be extra stealthy). Insert that tiny graphic into your page, preferably near the top for the best effect.

Example:

<IMG SRC="tinyimage.gif" HEIGHT=1 WIDTH=1 BORDER=0 ALT="keyword1 keyword2 keyword3 keyword1">

Pretty simple, isn't it? This is just another technique to add keywords invisible to those viewing the Web site but still visible and valuable for search engine positioning.

Note: If you're worried about the search engines picking up on this technique, you might drop the use of the HEIGHT and WIDTH tags. This would make it almost impossible for a search engine to view the above as anything other than another graphic on your page.

Hiding Keywords or Using Invisible Keywords on Your Pages

Have you ever seen a Web site that has hundreds of keywords repeated at the bottom of the page? Sometimes these words are the same color as the background so you only notice them if you highlight a section of the page and they show up as reversed white on black text. This is an attempt by that Web site owner to rank well in the different search engines for the keywords listed there.

Search engines used to be fooled by this technique. Some Web site promotion "experts" still recommend using this technique while others believe that it will do little good.

The latest work-around suggests that instead of using a font color that is identical to the background, pick one that is just <u>very similar</u> and hard to see as follows:

<BG COLOR=808080> <FONT COLOR="778899">

The background color above is plain ol' gray. The text color selected is "lightslategray." The color is numerically different, yet very similar and difficult or impossible to see (you can choose colors that are even more difficult to detect if you wish). Notice also that the hex code that identifies the "lightslategray" color seems numerically very close to the background color. In time, I expect search engines will recognize colors that are this close numerically. When they do, they will probably recognize it as an attempt to hide text and penalized sites accordingly.

Exercise caution when using this technique. Many search engines dislike it since it can be abused. Also, NEVER, NEVER enter keywords on your page that have nothing to do with your site's content, or are not used elsewhere on the page already. To do so diminishes the value of the search engine service since doing a search could display pages that don't apply to that search! If you do this, then you deserve to get banned from the search engine.

Additional Web Marketing Topics

How to Block Spiders From Visiting and Indexing Your Site

There are reasons you might not want your Web site to be indexed by search engines. More likely, there are simply certain pages that you don't want indexed by the major search engines. For instance, maybe you constructed an elaborate direct marketing site that requires the visitor to enter through your main page and then proceed through a highly structured series of links that lead them to a buying decision. The internal pages would only confuse visitors who entered through those pages and they would be less likely to buy a product or service.

Whatever your reason, there is a standard that you can implement that will keep *most* of the major search engine spiders from indexing your Web site.

Here's how to block the spiders. Create a file called "robots.txt" that includes the following code:

user-agent: *

Disallow: /*

The first line specifies the agents, browsers or spiders that should read this file and adhere to the instructions in the following lines of code. The second line stipulates which files or directories the spider or browser should <u>not</u> read or index. The example above uses the "/*" which means the agent should not read or index anything as the asterisks denotes "everything." The robots.txt file must be placed in the root directory of your Web site. What this means is that if you are hosting your Web site using one of the free services and your domain looks something like this:

http://members.aol.com/Joesmith/home.htm

you cannot use the robots.txt file to keep out the spiders, since you don't have a primary domain name. The primary domain name is aol.com – and America Online will probably not allow you to block all the search engines spiders from indexing their site and the Web sites of the 11 million other subscribers.

This robots.txt file could look like this if there were specific directories and files that you wish the search engines not to index:

- user-agent: *
- Disallow: /clients/
- Disallow: /products/

- Disallow: /pressrelations/
- Disallow: /surveys/survey.htm

In the above example the robots.txt file asks the search engines spider to omit the following directories:

http://www.yourcompany.com/clients/

http://www.yourcompany.com/products/

http://www.yourcompany.com/pressrelations/

And the following specific page:

http://www.yourcompany.com/survey/survey.htm

If you are one of the millions of people hosting a Web site on America Online's server or one of the other free or subdirectory Web site services and you can't place a robots.txt file in their root directory, you can use a META tag that talks to some of the spiders:

<META NAME="ROBOTS" CONTENT="NOINDEX">

You will need this META tag on every page in your Web site that you don't want indexed. If your Web site has 30 or 40 pages (or more), this will take a lot of time. Here's another reason to buy a good HTML editor like Luckman's WebEdit or Allaire's HomeSite. These programs (and others, I'm sure) allow you to do a global search and replace and add an HTML tag to every Web page that you open in the program. As with all META tags, this META tag goes at the top of your HTML document between the <HEAD> and </HEAD> tags.

Referrer Logs

Referrer logs provide the most important information you can get for marketing your Web site.

These logs record a variety of important information about visitors to your Web site. The most important to Web site marketers is information on which search engines were used to find your Web site and which keywords they searched on to find your site. The referrer log also tells you the address of the Web site (other than a search engine) the visitor came *from*. In all likelihood, the site listed in the referrer log has a link to your Web site on one of the pages indicated in the log. This can give you an idea which links from which kinds of sites are working.

Most Web servers can provide referrer logs, but you may have to ask your Web hosting provider to set this up for you. If they won't, or if they claim they can't, change hosting providers immediately. This information is too valuable to do without.

The referrer log includes information about the type of browser the visitor was using and whether or not they downloaded the whole page or only a part of it (which would suggest that it took too long and they moved on).

Information contained in the referrer log can shed light on how people are searching and finding your Web site. For instance, we were under the mistaken impression that very few people on the Web searched with multiple keywords. We believed that the vast majority of people surfing the Web searched on one keyword at a time and choose a Web site to visit from those results. To our surprise, after reviewing referrer logs we discovered that most people visiting one of our client's sites were searching on multiple words

Referrer log data are often retrieved by logging onto the Web hosting provider's server with an FTP client like WS_FTP_95. The log file is usually stored in a file on the hosting provider's server and can be quickly downloaded as a text file to your local hard drive.

There are myriad log analysis programs on the market that will take the volumes of data contained in the log and help you to easily understand it graphically. However, if you don't have such a tool, you can simply open the log file within a text editor or in Microsoft Word (or other word processor). The log file contains strings of data that at first glance look rather difficult to understand, but if you look closely, there are only about eight entries and they are easy to interpret.

When referrer log information is captured, here's an example of what you will see:

198.178.25.131 - - [07/Jan/1998:14:09:45 -0800] "GET /onepixel.gif HTTP/1.0" 200 43 "http://www.preowned.com/" "Mozilla/2.0 (compatible; MSIE 3.0; Windows 95)"

Here is what each part of this log file means. Some referrer logs will contain a few more pieces of information, some a few less. These are what I consider the most important entries:

Referrer Log Entry	Meaning
198.178.25.131	The remote host name: the IP address that identifies the location of the visitor's Internet Service Provider.
[07/Jan/1998:14:09:45 -0800]	The date and time of the request or access of the Web site.
"GET /onepixel.gif -	The actual request – the name of the first file downloaded by the browser. A search engine's spider will almost always request the "robots.txt" file. You can review the section on robots and spider blocking to learn more about search spider's activities.
200	The status code of the request. (Status code "200" means a completed request).
43	The number of bytes that were transferred to the browser. In this case, the first graphic downloaded was 43 bytes.
http://www.preowned.com/	The referrer site, or the previous URL that the visitor came from. This is gold to Web marketers. This tells you which search engine or other Web site sent you this traffic. When this entry contains a search engine name, it will also include the keywords that were searched for. See an example of this below.
"Mozilla/2.0 (compatible; MSIE 3.0; Windows 95)"	The user agent or browser information – in this case the visitor was using Internet Explorer v3.0. Keep an eye on this entry as it will tell you if visitors to your Web site are using current technology. If, for instance, you learn that a large percentage of your visitors are using older browsers you should make sure that you aren't

	using frames or tables as some older browsers don't support them.

See, this log is not so hard to read. Now, look at this next log entry:

208.207.98.111 - - [08/Jan/1998:18:19:11 -0800] "GET /home.html HTTP/1.0" 200 4723 "http://www.altavista.digital.com/cgi-bin/query? pg=aq&text=yes&d0=1%2fjan %2f98&q=ballroom+dance%2a +OR+ballroom dancing%2a&stq=30" "Mozilla/2.0 (compatible; MSIE 3.0; SK; Windows 95)"

Note that the referring Web site is the AltaVista search engine. Pay special attention to this section:

%2f98&q=ballroom+dance%2a +OR+ballroom dancing%2a&stq=30"

When you remove the code between the percentage signs you are left with what the visitor queried in the AltaVista search engine:

ballroom+dance OR ballroom dancing

A fast and easy way to search through a large log file for keywords that were searched on in search engines is to use the "find" command in your text editor or word processor and search the document for "cgi" as a keyword. Most of these will be search engines. You can also search on the individual search engine names, like using the "find" command.

We don't yet recommend a particular log file analysis software program, but you can go to any major search engine and search for the keywords "referrer log software" and see what you get. Hopefully, they are using this book too and have optimized their pages to rank well for such a search.

Warning to Microsoft FrontPage and other WYSIWYG Editor Users

As you would expect, Microsoft is hard at work trying to dominate another Internet software product category – Web site creation tools. If you don't own Microsoft FrontPage now, chances are you are considering it for your next Web site project.

We discovered a critical shortcoming in Microsoft FrontPage that Web site marketers must address. It may apply even if you use one of the other visual or WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) editing tools, so pay close attention!

Your <TITLE> tag plays a crucial role in determining your rank in many of the spider-driven search engines. Normally, when writing HTML, the <TITLE> tag is placed immediately after the <HEAD> tag and is followed by assorted <META> tags.

However, if you use Microsoft FrontPage or another visual editing tool, the software writes the HTML and handles all those tedious tags for you. Unfortunately, FrontPage 97 and even FrontPage 98 insert the <TITLE> tag AFTER the <META> tags like this:

```
<html>
<head>
<META http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset=iso-8859-1">
<META name="GENERATOR" content="Microsoft FrontPage 3.0">
<META name="Microsoft Theme" content="global 101, default">
<META name="Microsoft Border" content="tl, default">
<title>My test title</title>
</head>
</html>
```

Although this is technically correct and won't interfere with someone viewing your Web site, it gains you no points with the search engines and could hurt your Web site's ranking. We have been advised that some search engines expect the <TITLE> tag to immediately follow the <HEAD> tag. If it doesn't, the search engine may determine that your Web site doesn't have a <TITLE> tag and this would hurt your ranking considerably.

Additionally, as a general rule of thumb, you want your keywords to appear as close to the top of your page as possible. The standard <META> tag is not supported by at least half of the major search engines, but the <TITLE> tag is almost universally recognized. For

this reason, having four lines of META tags proceed your title tag can make it easy for your competitors to outrank you.

FrontPage 98 allows you to modify the HTML code simply by clicking on the HTML tab at the bottom of the screen. To correct the problem in the above example, you would simply move the <TITLE> line up as follows:

```
<html>
<head>
<title>My test title</title>
<META http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset=iso-8859-1">
<META name="GENERATOR" content="Microsoft FrontPage 3.0">
<META name="Microsoft Theme" content="global 101, default">
<META name="Microsoft Border" content="tl, default">
<title>My test title</title>
</head>
</html>
```

If you have an editor that does not allow you to edit HTML directly, you should consider getting an HTML editor such as HomeSite or Luckman Interactive's WebEdit:

http://www.allaire.com   (HomeSite)
http://www.luckman.com (WebEdit)

WebPosition Gold™ Tips

The WebPosition Gold™ help file and the Page Critic portion of the program provides a wealth of information and instructions on dealing with the search engines.   The advantage to to the Page Critic over a book is that its knowledge base and advice are normally more up to date. The advice is also custom-tailored toward *your* page since it will analyze it before offering tips to improve your rankings.

If you don't have WebPosition Gold™ now, be sure to download a demo at:

http://www.webposition.com.

Engine by Engine Analysis

Understanding Quick Reference Tables

One effective technique for achieving high rankings is to design doorway pages that emphasize specific keywords. You can improve your chances of achieving a top 10 ranking on an engine even further if you customize those doorway pages to the specific engine you wish to submit to. That being the case, we've provided an analysis of the major search engines (the same engines included in WebPosition Gold™).

Please do not read *only* the Engine by Engine Analysis. There are valuable tips in the previous sections that apply to nearly all engines. Those sections will also allow you to better understand the information contained in this section.

Each search engine listing includes a quick reference table. This table is intended to provide at-a-glance information about the particular search engine's relevancy scoring criteria and other related information. It primarily includes information that varies by engine. There are many factors that apply to most engines that are described in previous chapters.

It is important to note that different search engines change their relevancy scoring criteria from time to time, and as a result, this information may need to be updated frequently. For that reason, we mail updates and advisories to purchasers of this report to keep you informed of changes. If you have illegally photocopied or shared this report by giving someone the password to the online version, you have violated copyright law.

Quick Reference Tables Explained

1. URL to the engine – The Web site address for the search engine.

2. Must submit EACH page? – Many search engines spider much of your site, but you may submit pages individually to ensure they get indexed, since the spiders generally only explore so many levels of your site before stopping. Others, such as Infoseek, only index the pages you submit.

3. How long to index my page? – How long it will take you to get added to each search engine.

4. Recognizes and supports META tags? – Whether the search engine pays any attention to META tags. If the answer is YES, then make sure that you include META tags on a doorway page that is specific to this search engine. If NO, you need not waste your time preparing META tags for this engine.

5. Are searches case sensitive? – Whether the search engine notices if keywords have been capitalized or not. In other words, if the engine is case sensitive, a default search for "bank" would yield a different list of sites than a search for "Bank." If the search engine is case sensitive, include capitalized AND lowercase versions of important keywords in your submission or META tags.

6. Does a "spider" index the site? – Whether the search engine sends a spider to explore your web site.

7. Uses data entered on submission form only? – Whether the search engine uses the data you fill out on the submission form to determine your Web site's rank rather than "spidering" the site and indexing the actual contents. You can assume that if the engine uses submission form data that it doesn't spider the content of your site. However, a real person may look at your site to make sure it matches the description you typed in.

8. Is page popularity a factor? – Whether the search engine uses some measurement of how many other Web sites are linked to you as part of its relevance scoring criteria.

9. Alphabetical ranking used? – Whether the search engine uses any alphabetical or ASCII hierarchy measurement to determine your site's relevancy score.

10. Keyword "weight" plays a role? – Whether the search engine visits your Web site and measures the number of keywords as compared to the total number of words on the page as part of its relevancy scoring criteria.

11. Title tag considered for relevancy? – Whether the search engine considers the title tag as part of its relevancy scoring criteria.

12. Prominence of keywords in title tag important? – Whether the search engine considers the prominence of keywords in the title tag as part of its relevancy scoring criteria.

13. Frequency of keywords in title tag important? – Whether the search engine considers the frequency of keywords in the title tag as part of its relevancy scoring criteria.

14. Comment tags considered for relevancy? – Whether the search engine considers the comment tag (the tag that looks like this: <!--) as part of its relevancy scoring criteria.

15. Max. length of title accepted – This line tells you how many words or characters this search engine will accept in the title tag. It's best to not exceed this number.

16. Max. length of keyword META tag – How many words or characters this search engine will accept in the keyword META tag.

17. Max. length of description field you can submit – How many words or characters this search engine will accept in the description field of their submission form, if they have a submission form.

18. How to check to see if you're listed – How to see if the search engine has a record of your Web site in its database.

19. How to check your link popularity – When supported, this is how you would check each engine for the number of other URLs or pages that show links to your Web site. Not all search engines support this feature.

20. E-mail support – An e-mail address for communications concerning your ranking in a particular search engine or directory. Don't expect all search engines to reply to your questions, or at least to reply promptly. Many are very busy and appear to make it a policy to ignore most e-mail. At times, you may get a response though, so it's worth a shot.

21. Total documents indexed – The total number of Web sites or other Web documents that the search engines represents as included in their index.

22. Total page views – Total number of times a search engine's main search page was accessed and used. This number does not necessarily suggest the number of people who conducted actual keyword searches. It is an important number as it gives you some indication of how many people are using the search engine. When this information was not available, we attempted to substitute another metric that offers insight into the search engine's or directory's relative value to Web site marketers.

23. Add/Remove URL – The location within the search engine where you submit your URL for indexing or where you

submit your site title and description. Some engines dynamically generate or serve this page so the actual URL to that page cannot be listed. In those cases, we identify the location of the button or link to this page.

YAHOO!

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Fax: (408) 731-3301

User Support Telephone: (408) 731-3333

Extension #1: For information on submitting a new URL

Extension #2: For information on making changes to an existing listing in Yahoo!

Extension #3: For information about Yahoo! search results

URL to the engine	http://www.yahoo.com
Must submit EACH page?	JUST ONE
How long to index my page?	2 to 8 weeks (or $199 for a review within 7 days)
Recognizes and supports META tags?	NO
Are searches case sensitive?	NO
Does a "spider" index the site?	NO
Uses data entered on submission form only?	YES
Is page popularity a factor?	NO
Alphabetical ranking used?	YES (only within Yahoo! Categories)
Keyword "weight" plays a role?	NO, frequency and prominence only
Title tag considered for relevancy?	YES, but only for the title you enter on their submission form.
Prominence of keywords in title tag important?	YES, but only for the title you enter on their submission form.
Frequency of keywords in title tag important?	YES, but only for the title you enter on their submission form.
Comment tags considered for relevancy?	NO
Max. length of title accepted	40 characters (unless company name is longer)
Max. length of keyword META tag	N/A
Max. length of description field you can submit	200 characters – no more than 25 words total
How to check to see if you're listed	Type in full URL: http://www.yourcompany.com or your site title as you submitted it. If you are a business, you are listed by your business name – Yahoo! will accommodate bona fide long business names as best as possible.

How to check your link popularity	Yahoo! has no spider, so no links are tracked.
E-mail support	Go to: http://www.Yahoo.com/info Many addresses are available. Visit this link to find appropriate e-mail address. The most important is: url-support@Yahoo-inc.com
Total documents indexed	730,000 total sites in their directory. Searches for sites or keywords not found in Yahoo!, automatically sent to the Inktomi search engine (which also power HotBot, among others).
Total page views	167 million page views per day in December 1998 (source: Fourth Quarter and 1998 Fiscal, Yahoo! press release).
Add/Remove URL	Select the appropriate Yahoo! category and then select the "Add URL" button on the top of that page. OR: Pay $199 for a guaranteed seven-day review of your site (if you accept credit card transactions on your site only!), though Yahoo! does not promise your site will be added to their index. For paid submissions to Yahoo!, visit this link: http://www.Yahoo.com/info/suggest/busexpress.html

Yahoo! is the most important search service on the Web. Just look at the number of page views a day, more than five times the nearest competitor! Yahoo! was the first, and like Coke Classic, is the leader and still champion. Get your site listed in Yahoo! first, and do everything else second. Any questions?

Our guide is the ONLY guide on the market that features an interview with an actual Yahoo! executive who told us the specifics on what Yahoo! looks for in adding new Web sites. No other guide includes the following interview. Please read it carefully – it's golden.

I had the distinct pleasure of interviewing a Yahoo! "Surfing Manager" for my research on getting listed in Yahoo!. We'll call her "Rose" as she asked me not to list her real name for fear that she'd get thousands of calls. Much of this instruction comes as a direct result of that interview. It was quite an honor to have a Yahoo! senior staffer (she's been with Yahoo! for four years – almost since day one), share this rather sensitive information. I am very honored to have such a great source at such an important search service.

Yahoo! Listing Support: (408) 731-3333. This is a very interesting service. In the past, when you dialed this number you used to reach any of six staffers who answer this line who would answer specific questions – now you get an informational voice-mail message only. At the end of the messages, you will hear recorded instructions on how to

leave a message concerning any problem you have had getting listed with Yahoo!'s main page only. This is a great service for anyone struggling to get a site listed in Yahoo!. Considering that by some accounts Yahoo! adds only one in ten of the submissions to its index, this number can be valuable in finding out why you are encountering problems, or can help in getting information on how you can get your listing included in Yahoo!'s directory.

"Rose" at Yahoo! suggested waiting a couple of weeks before contacting anyone at this number and to search on your submitted title and URL to confirm that you've not been listed yet before calling this number.

Yahoo!'s relevance scoring is based on a very complex and proprietary algorithm (like all the search services) and they, of course, do not wish to reveal it. It does seem to be based on the submission's category first, then title, then description, and then (**hint)** your Web site URL, depending on the search. Knowing that Yahoo! considers your site's URL as part of its relevancy scoring system is new information, and not confirmed, though we have good reason to believe it is accurate.

WARNING #1: Yahoo! is one of the three search services reviewed in this book that do not allow you to submit multiple doorway pages! This is because Yahoo! is a directory, not really a true search engine, and no spider will visit your site. Yahoo! is populated entirely by user submissions – each one reviewed by a professional editor. Do not attempt to use a multiple URL strategy to gain an advantage in Yahoo!. It won't help you.

Yahoo! is not technically a search "engine;" it is a search "directory." Every submission to Yahoo! is reviewed by a human being. A real person visits your site and determines how it should be indexed. Yahoo! does not use spiders to index your site. Therefore, META tags are not necessary on your Yahoo! doorway page, nor will they help you. The result of this policy is a smaller, but "cleaner" index of Web sites and businesses on the Net.

WARNING #2: Do not play games with Yahoo!. While my informant at Yahoo! tells me that while they won't necessarily reject a submission wholesale if it appears to be gaming their system, but they might decide not to get to it right away. And since some site managers believe that Yahoo! accounts for most of their site traffic – well, draw your own conclusions. You cannot afford to be denied a listing in Yahoo!.

Instructions for Getting Indexed With Yahoo!

First – Check to see if you're already listed in Yahoo!

Go to http://www.Yahoo.com and search for your domain name. Simply type your domain into this search screen:

http://www.yourcompany.com

Then, search for categories that you would list yourself under and review the categories for your site. If you are confident that you're not already listed by Yahoo!, proceed to step 1.

How to pay $199 for guaranteed seven-day review and possible listing of your Web site in Yahoo!:

In February 1999, Yahoo! announced a new fee-for-review service that would allow site owners to submit their site to Yahoo! with a promised seven-day review. NOTE: Paying this $199 does NOT guarantee that your site will be added to Yahoo! – it only guarantees that one of their editors will review it and give you a decision on whether or not they will add it to Yahoo!. If they turn you down, they offer an explanation as to why you were turned down, and you are allowed to resubmit under the same program without paying an additional fee within seven. It's not a perfect system, but for those of you who have waited eight to ten weeks after submitting only to discover that your submission was ignored, it may well be worth the money. To use this service, go to this link:

http://www.Yahoo.com/info/suggest/busexpress.html

NOTE: This service is only available to e-commerce-enabled Web sites for businesses based in the United States! Here's how Yahoo! defines it:

"'Online transactions' means that a customer enters their credit card number on the site in a secure or standard online environment for the purpose of purchasing goods or services from the site, and the credit card number is authorized for payment by the site. For purposes of this Agreement, the following will **not** *(emphasis added)* be considered "online transactions": (1) if any part of the transaction other than a general confirmation of the customer order occurs via e-mail, fax, or phone, (2) affiliates or associates programs, multi-level marketing programs and similar promotional arrangements where the purchase occurs on a third party site, and (3) if the only transaction is a process where customer accesses the site via a verification system (e.g.: an adult verification system) where the customer credit card number is entered on a different site."

Step-By-Step Instructions for getting listed in Yahoo! without paying:

Step 1: Make sure your Web site looks good.

Yahoo! category editors have no obligation to list your Web site. They include a lot of disclaimer language on their submission pages telling you they reserve the right not to list your site – believe them! Do not submit your site to Yahoo! until it is ready – do not submit any site

that has an "under-construction" graphic on it and nothing else. It will porbably not get indexed.

Step 2: Submit to Yahoo! manually. Do not use submitting software, submitting service or any other automated tool.

Sure, some may work and get you listed, but Yahoo! is so important that you will want to take the time and do it by hand. Besides, some submission services and tools won't put you in the right category, as Yahoo! categories change constantly.

Submissions from the submitting software tools and even the submitting services are often gibberish. We much prefer it if you do your submissions manually. That way you can read our rules and do it properly – it makes our job easier.

– "Rose," Surfing Manager at Yahoo!

Step 3. Choose two categories where you would like your Web site listed.

To do this, you should make a list of your top three keywords and search on them. Yahoo! will only allow you to be listed in two categories. You should make an effort to pick the best ones. Yahoo! returns categories first, and then categories with a few major sites in them next. After doing a search on the keywords or keyword combinations that you expect your customers to search on, decide if they will spot a category and click on it first, or if they will scroll down and look for a site that is listed in a category below.

You will likely be put in the category with other Web sites or businesses like yours. For instance, though you might really want to be in the 'teachers category' because you sell to teachers, you will end up in a the text books category if that's what you make.

– "Rose," Surfing Manager at Yahoo!

For instance, if you think one of your keywords will be "real estate" because maybe you're a real estate broker in Virginia, you'll quickly see that Yahoo! returns thousands of categories – 3,699 categories, in fact. None on the first page are even close to something that someone looking for real estate in Virginia would select. You might surmise that the person conducting this search would try their search again using "Virginia Real Estate." For this search, the first category returned is:

Regional: U.S. States: Virginia: Real Estate

Following this link brings you to an alphabetical list of real estate agents, services, etc. for Virginia. Further down, another category:

Regional: U.S. States: Virginia: Cities: Alexandria: Real Estate

is an even better category for the real estate agent specializing in that big city. For my client, Roger Derflinger, an established Virginia real estate agent, we chose this category. The Yahoo! editors might still move our site to another category that might more aptly deserve this listing. We then conducted a similar search, "Northern Virginia Realtors," and this was the first category returned:

Top: Business and Economy: Companies: Real Estate: Regional: U.S. States: Virginia: Complete Listing

We added his site here, too. Wealways try to find a category that matches a client's business or service, and also a category that appears closer to the top in a series of search results.

Step 4: Select the category and then look for the "Add URL" button from the top of this section's page.

You will be presented with a series of questions about your site, specifically the site's URL, what you would like the site to be titled and a site description. You will also be asked to suggest another category where your Web site should be listed. Input your second choice in that field.

Step 5: Carefully construct a site title making sure to include important keywords near the beginning of the title, preferably as the first word or two.

As a Yahoo! category editor, I will do everything I can to find the legitimate name of the business. We prefer it if you go by the name you gave your business as a site title."

> – "Rose," Surfing Manager at Yahoo!

This site title should not exceed 40 characters. Yahoo! ranks sites alphabetically, so try to choose a site title that is alphabetically superior. Don't be overt and name the site "A+ techniques to selling paint" or something that obvious – you will get caught, and Yahoo! will likely add you with your actual business name. See the discussion below about the ASCII hierarchy and which letters and symbols rank higher than others.

If you're a commercial site, you won't get added [by using a title that describes the site content and not the company name]. Don't use marketing lingo like, 'We're the best.' If I have a choice between a site title like, 'a really good book' or 'The Cambridge Paperback Encyclopedia,' I will spend more time on the one using the correct title.

> – "Rose," Surfing Manager at Yahoo!

You may wish to consider alphabetical superiority if you have control over your company name – naming your company "A d.b.a. (doing business as) company name" for the purposes of your Web site to be

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first in a category can result in a tremendous volume of traffic. This is no different than what people have been doing in the phone book for years:

AAACME Vacuum Cleaner Repair
AAA Auto Service.

There's value in being first, but only you can determine if this would be ethical or appropriate given the type of business or organization you lead. If you are about to build a Web site to sell a product, and you haven't really established a company or product name yet, consider a name that is alphabetically advantageous. If you are "Zebra Systems" and well-known in the marketplace as such, you're out of luck. Renaming your company or product for the purposes of your Web site will mean that people who know your company and are simply trying to check for your business hours won't find you.

Step 6: Carefully construct a site description, repeating one or two of the important keywords in the first couple of words that make up your site description. This field can be only 200 characters, including spaces, or 25 words. Use the description wisely to make it keyword rich. Try to avoid any stop words, like "the" or "and" and so on. I hate to waste keywords when I don't have to.

If [using keywords early in your site description] is done appropriately and it <u>really</u> describes the Web site, it will go through. Otherwise we'll change it – but you can try it!

> – "Rose," Surfing Manager at Yahoo!

Step 7: If you don't get listed after two weeks, try improving your site and submitting it again. Or, call Yahoo!'s listing service line at (408) 731-3333 and leave a message asking why you weren't listed.

Yahoo! Notes:

Yahoo! indexes <u>characters</u>, not just whole words

Yahoo!, like most engines, indexes words, phrases AND characters. This means if you're searching for "travel," you will also find "travel<u>ing</u>" and "travel<u>s</u>."

Examine your keywords and try to use the longest variation of your important keywords. In our "travel" keyword example, the word "travel" is also present in the words "<u>travels</u>" and "<u>traveling</u>." With Yahoo!, by using the word "traveling" you are assured hits when people search on "travel" OR "traveling." You are, in effect, including two keywords for the price of one!

How to Change Your Yahoo Listing

Here is a technique that may speed to process of persuading Yahoo! to add your site or change your existing listing.

First, request your change using their online form:

http://add.yahoo.com/fast/change

and then call Yahoo!'s advertising phone number:

408-731-3300

Press Option 2 for Other
Press Option 3 for Yahoo Online
Press Option 2 for Web site listings
(Note: they could change the "menu" at any time)

Leave a message with your URL, date you filled out the change form, and any other information they ask for.

Try this technique if nothing happens after four to five business days from your on-line submission. At least in one instance that we know of the change was made within four days of the call -- very fast by Yahoo standards.

Yahoo's automated attendant greeting also instructs you to leave a message about "other problems." If you've had no success getting your site ADDED to their index, then submit again and leave a voice message. This might just do the trick.

In regards to changing your existing listing, you'll likely have better luck if it's perceived as something more serious instead of simply requesting that your description or site title be re-worded for the sake of improving your ranking (which they could care less about).

You might want to combine your request to update your description with a more serious reason for the change if you can find one. This could help improve the odds that they'll act on your request. For

example, if you've created a new domain name for your site, request that the description be updated, and the new domain name be used as indicated in the change request form you filled out. Other credible reasons you could offer would be a change in your company name, a change in the emphasis of your business, thereby requiring a new description, or a typo that needs to be corrected.

Learning to Alphabetize – The ASCII Hierarchy

A search engine is a database, and databases have rules. Have you ever noticed that when you rename a file to start with an "!" it moves to the top of your file list in Windows 98? The same holds true for some search engines, certainly Yahoo!, which ranks alphabetically as well as by myriad other criteria.

The ASCII hierarchy dictates which symbol, yes, "symbol," will lead the pack. The highest ranking symbol is a space. This invisible symbol ranks highest in the hierarchy of the ASCII alphabet.

Here is your new alphabet. Learn it well.

The ASCII Hierarchy:

1. space	13. ,	25. B	37. N	49. Z	61. f	73. r
2. !	14. -	26. C	38. O	50. [	62. g	74. s
3. "	15. .	27. D	39. P	51. \	63. h	75. t
4. #	16. /	28. E	40. Q	52.]	64. i	76. u
5. $	17. :	29. F	41. R	53. ^	65. j	77. v
6. %	18. ;	30. G	42. S	54. _	66. k	78. w
7. &	19. <	31. H	43. T	55. '	67. l	79. x
8. '	20. =	32. I	44. U	56. a	68. m	80. y
9. (	21. >	33. J	45. V	57. b	69. n	81. z
10.)	22. ?	34. K	46. W	58. c	70. o	82. {
11. *	23. @	35. L	47. X	59. d	71. p	83.	
12. +	24. A	36. M	48. Y	60. e	72. q	84. }

Above are the symbols and letters in their ASCII rank. There are of course more characters in the ASCII character set. However, the above are the ones you'd be more likely to use and are in ranked order. While we're certain you can read the chart above, let us point out several connections which may not be obvious at first.

Capital letters rank higher than non-capitalized letters. "MORTGAGE" will rank higher than its lowercase equivalent, "mortgage." Yahoo! specifically asks you not to use text in all caps in your site description, but you can at least capitalize the first letter.

Where appropriate, replacing letters with certain symbols puts you at the head of a list. It may be inappropriate or blatantly offensive to a search engine's rules to randomly include an exclamation mark ahead of your company name, or worse, doing the phone book trick and adding "AAA" to your site name (especially if that's not what you go by on your Web site). But what if your product or site really is named "@DVANTAGE!" or something similar? You're ahead of any competitor named simply "advantage." What if your Web site is all about $ales $ucess?

So long as the name appears to be used in trade [throughout the Web site] with the ASCII character, we shouldn't have a problem with it.

– "Rose," Surfing Manager at Yahoo!

Remember that Yahoo! does not rank your site by keyword weight on the page itself, popularity of your page (number of other sites linked to you), or by anything other than the quality and content of your submission to Yahoo!. Keep in mind that while using a symbol may improve your ranking within a category, it will also hurt your chances of having people find you based on a keyword search. People are much more likely to search for "sales success" than for "$ales $ucess."

Alphabetically – sometimes:

Yahoo! <u>does</u> rank sites alphabetically within categories – this we know for certain. What you may not know is that when Yahoo! returns matches for keyword searches, after the categories are returned, Yahoo! returns Web sites within each category, and only the sites within those categories that are most relevant to the keyword search. This means that Yahoo! looks at the prominence and frequency of keywords in the site title, description and URL.

You'll notice that there is no alphabetical advantage in sites returned in response to a keyword query that appear within a category. Yahoo! only gives an advantage to sites within the selected category when the person visits that category, not when search results are listed in response to the keyword search.

WARNING! Yahoo! has corrected sites that use overt ASCII hierarchy tricks such as leading with an exclamation point or other non-alpha character. If you do this, you risk a delay in your site being listed, and it will most certainly be corrected by the category editor. If your site is legitimately named something that starts with a symbol, such as "$ales $uccess," and when the Yahoo! staff member visits

your site they find that usage throughout, you may be allowed to use this approach and gain an advantage.

You should consider renaming your site if your company or products are alphabetically challenged as in the case of a sheet music dealer named "Xylophones Sheet Music." Consider renaming the page "$1 Xylophone Sheet Music." Don't use the classic Yellow Pages trick of prefacing your page name with "AAA." Yahoo! staff will see right through that and adjust your feeble attempt to spam its directory.

SPECIAL NOTICE: Some Web sites that contain timely news or information can sometimes get indexed very quickly – if you ask for it! For instance, Yahoo! has a "very specialized movie surfer" who specializes in getting movie sites listed as quickly as necessary for release dates. If you are promoting an event or some product with an expiration date and you must get your site listed quickly, you should consider contacting Yahoo! and seeing if they will help. The Yahoo! staff is awesome (especially "Rose") and are very committed to making Yahoo! a terrific product. They will help you if they can.

Case Study on Improving Your Yahoo! Ranking:

Search for keyword: "Mortgages"

Yahoo! Site Matches   (1 - 3 of 2165)

Yahoo! Search Engine August 2nd, 1997 (Bolded italics denotes a Yahoo! category)

Business and Economy: Companies: Financial Services: Financing: Real Estate

BayBank Mortgages - mortgage information, daily rates, calculators, and online
applications.

Home Mortgages of the Palm Beaches Ltd. - lender originating loans throughout Florida.

Business and Economy: Companies: Real Estate: Regional: U.S. States: Colorado

First City Financial Mortgages - low rate residential mortgages for purchase or
refinance. Offices in Boulder, Colorado Springs, Denver, Evergreen, Fort Collins, Greeley
and Loveland.

This example* elegantly demonstrates prominence and frequency ranking relevance. The first entry has the keyword twice as the second word of the site title and as the first word of the Web site description.

The second entry has the keyword as the second word of the title, but no additional points scored for frequency as the keyword does not appear in the description.

* Note pertaining only to this "mortgage" example: Yahoo! has modified its search algorithm (since August 1997) and how it determines relevancy. However, these search results illustrate the general concepts of keyword prominence and frequency rules neatly so we kept this older example in this report to help you better understand these concepts. The other rules and tips in this section on Yahoo! still apply.

ALTAVISTA

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It is virtually impossible to reach a live person at AltaVista. Every extension we dial off the voice-mail greeting landed us in voice-mail hell. Remarkably, when you choose selection option #1, which claims to send you to "technical support," you are transferred to a voice-mail message that instructs you to use the "feedback" button from the AltaVista Web site if you are calling about your Web site's listing. Unbelievable!

URL to the engine	http://www.altavista.com
Must submit EACH page?	OPTIONAL
How long to index my page?	1-3 days, usually 1 day
Recognizes and supports META tags?	YES
Are searches case sensitive?	YES**
Does a "spider" index the site?	YES
Uses data entered on submission form only?	NO
Is page popularity a factor?	YES
Alphabetical ranking used?	NO
Keyword "weight" plays a role?	YES
Title tag considered for relevancy?	YES (place keyword in second or third position, not the first position, for best results)
Prominence of keywords in title tag important?	YES
Frequency of keywords in title tag important?	YES
Comment tags considered for relevancy?	NO
Max. length of title accepted	1,024 chracters
Max. length of keyword META tag	UNKNOWN
Max. length of description field you can submit	N/A
How to check your link popularity	link: http://www.yourcompany.com
How to check to see if you're listed	Type: +url: company.com (the "+url" must be lowercase)
E-mail support	avsub@altavista.digital.com or search-support@altavista.com.
Total documents indexed	100 million
Total page views	20 million searches a day (press release quoted several million page views – it was unclear if that was "per

	day," however it is more likely this number was for the month of October 1997)
Add/Remove URL	http://www.altavista.com/av/content/addurl.htm

** A search for "financial analyst" will return a different set of matches than if they conduct a search for "Financial Analyst." Therefore it's important to include keywords with both uppercase and lowercase first letters where appropriate. Are your prospects more likely to search on "Total Quality" or "total quality?" If you're not sure, include both in your keyword META tag. Recent surveys show that 80-90 percent of people are searching for keywords in lowercase.

Flash Update! AltaVista is now auctioning #1 and #2 rankings for keyword queries in their search engine. For more information, contact DoubleClick at www.doubleclick.com.

We managed to interview one of AltaVista's software engineers who shared some information about the index with me. He asked that I not use his name, but he did offer some insight into AltaVista's ranking algorithm. For instance, he shared that unique words will "get you a higher ranking," and the keyword and description META tags should include some of these unique, specific keywords for better relevancy scores. He also suggested that you target these unique keywords so that your site doesn't fall into a huge general category. All good advice, and some of it we covered in our earlier discussion on "power-combos."

Here's the rest of the story from our own experience and observations:

AltaVista has in incredibly large database of Web sites, such that searches often return hundreds of thousands of Web site matches. AltaVista's spider goes down about three pages into your site. This is important to remember if you have different topical pages that won't be found within three clicks of the main page. You will have to index them separately.

You cannot tell AltaVista how to index your site, it is all done via their spider, but you can go to their site and give the spider a nudge by submitting specific pages. That way, AltaVista's spider knows to visit that page and index it. Once you have done that, it's all up to your META tags and your page's content!

AltaVista's spider may revisit your site each month after its initial visit.

AltaVista ranking algorithms reward keywords in the <TITLE> tag. If a keyword is not in a title tag, it will likely not appear anywhere near the top of the search results! AltaVista also rewards keywords near one another, and keywords near the beginning of a page (read: top of the page). Your best chance of achieving a high ranking in AltaVista is if

someone performs a keyword query using multiple keywords, several of which appear in your title and keyword tag.

To stress this again, keywords in the <TITLE> tag are very important for AltaVista.

Here are some suggested steps:

Step 1: Create longer doorway pages for optimizing as AltaVista still seems to favor pages with up to 900 words on the page. AltaVista doesn't appear to value keywords in the URLs, but I would suggest including keywords in the URLs of these doorway pages, nonetheless. It will only be a matter of time before all search engines will consider keywords in URLs, in my humble opinion, and there's certainly no harm. AltaVista recently posted a news release on its site about going after Web sites for spam, claiming that it receives 20,000 submissions a day, half are spam, or at least attempts to improve rankings. AltaVista has implemented serious anti-spam technology and reviews pages, so be careful about making too many doorway pages and how many keywords you pursue.

Step 2: Make sure you include a META description tag and put your important keywords early in that tag.

Step 3: Put keywords in a link to your main site. For example:

<A HREF="http://www.primarydomain.com">follow me to information about keyword1, keyword2, keyword3 – our new site!</A>

or some such link that directs to the page that you want visitors to find.

Step 4: Consider submitting only one page per day or at least a small number per day. Part of AltaVista's new anti-spam initiative appears to be rejecting multiple URL submissions in a short period of time. You might get away with several submissions a day, but why set off the spam alarm in a way that will put your site on a "spam review" list? If you submit a single page that links to all your doorway pages, then AltaVista should spider to each of those links and index them for you, although it may not index them as quickly as the page you submitted.

Additional Tips and Tactics for AltaVista

1. AltaVista does, we believe, index keywords you place in the ALT tags on your images. Remember, ALT tags provide text for people to read describing a graphic as they wait for it to load. For example, "You are about to see a picture of the fastest drill press in the world!" And they provide a description of the picture to people who are surfing the Web with their graphics turned "off" so that they don't have to wait for large files to load.

2. Remember to watch your title and description tags to make sure you use your most important keywords early – but not too early. We've found that AltaVista likes pages that use the targeted keyword as the second or third word in the title, but not the first. Make sure the copy near the top of the visible page is rich with your important keywords as this has a bearing on AltaVista's relevancy scoring system. Don't try to target too many different keywords on a single page, or you'll dilute the effectiveness.

3. Because AltaVista indexes pages so quickly (usually in one or two days), you can experiment with your keyword placement and resubmit to measure change in your ranking. For this reason, using different doorway pages that feature different keywords can be really effective. Pick the keyword that you want to feature on a particular doorway page, tweak your title, META tags and first few paragraphs on the page, submit, measure, adjust, submit, tweak, submit and climb the list!

4. Pages with upward of 900 total words of copy have proven successful on AltaVista. How many total words are on your Web site's viewable page? Can you increase the number of total words, or, build a doorway page with more words on that page?

5. Use at least one keyword in a <H1> headline at the top of the page.

6. Pay attention to "stop words" and make sure they don't appear frequently in any place where a keyword might be considered for relevancy – hint, hint: in the <TITLE>.

7. AltaVista doesn't seem to use "exact matching," meaning that if your page is optimized very well for one particular word that might be part of a larger keyword phrase, you can achieve a top ranking on that phrase as well as many others. For example, if you have a top ranking on the keyword "y2k," you will have an easier time achieving a top ranking phrases that include that word such as "y2k assessment" and "y2k development service."

EXCITE

Excite, Inc.
555 Broadway
Redwood City, CA 94063
(650) 568-6000
Fax: (650) 568-6030

URL to the engine	http://www.excite.com
Must submit EACH page?	Excite will only index your root domain page, e.g., your index.htm page. They claim that sometimes they will send a second spider to your Web site to index additional internal pages. We suggest submitting a few internal pages each day in hopes of attracting their second spider.
How long to index my page?	About two weeks
Recognizes and supports META tags?	YES (they now claim to support the META description tag and will use text you include there as your site description)
Are searches case sensitive?	NO
Does a "spider" index the site?	YES (but only the main page index.htm page -- a separate spider *may* come back to spider internal pages).
Uses data entered on submission form only?	NO
Is page popularity a factor?	YES
Alphabetical ranking used?	NO
Keyword "weight" plays a role?	YES
Title tag considered for relevancy?	YES (multiple title tags technique has been effective)
Prominence of keywords in title tag important?	YES
Frequency of keywords in title tag important?	NO
Comment tag considered for relevancy?	YES
Max. length of title accepted	UNKNOWN
Max. length of keyword META tag	UNKNOWN
Max. length of description field you can submit	N/A
How to check to see if you're listed	Type the full URL: http://www.company.com
How to check your link popularity	link: company.com
E-mail support	comments@excite.com
Total documents indexed	140,000 in the Excite channels 60 million total in search engine
Total page views	58 million page views per month as of April 1999.
Add URL	http://www.excite.com/info/add_url

Excite has very grown rapidly. This means a top ranking in Excite will generate significant traffic to your Web site. More importantly, Excite is the default search engine for Netscape's NetCenter and for AOL's

NetFind search engine, and though WebCrawler maintains a smaller and separate database of Web sites, it uses the Excite ranking algorithm. This means, for the most part, that a top ranking in Excite means a top ranking in four other large and important search engines. Read on.

Excite's stated goal is to provide easy-to-access, relevant information to searchers. If you search for the keyword "NY Times," chances are you are looking for the NY Times' Web site, not one of the dozens of sites that quoted something from the paper that day. For that reason, Excite pre-lists sites that it hopes will be most relevant to your searches in a special colored section, before returning matches from its index based on its ranking algorithm. Human editors choose these pre-selected search matches.

Our first question about these results was: "How can we get a Web site to be one of these first returned sites in this special colored section?" The answer from Excite was, "You can't ask to be listed in this first section." Excite reserves these slots for sites that it feels are naturals or obvious Web sites for these keyword searches. Not all keywords will have a special section with Excite-selected sites, but some will.

We recently called the folks at Excite to discuss a listing problem and had the good fortune to speak with one of their network support people. Here's what I learned from this recent discussion:

1. Excite only spiders your default page. In other words, the main home page of your site, usually the index.htm page is the only page that will be spidered by Excite.

2. In some cases Excite will send a second spider back to your Web site to spider the internal pages of the Web site. The Excite contact would not reveal to me what caused a second spider visit, though we expect is has something to do with the freshness of a Web site (how often the page is changed).

Here's what this discussion meant to me: Only one page of your Web site will likely achieve high rankings on Excite – your index.htm or default page. If you build doorway pages to achieve top rankings in Excite, you should register a separate domain name for those doorway pages since a page contained within a folder is unlikely to be considered by Excite. In other words, if your doorway page is contained in a folder off your root domain or even in the root directory of the primary domain such as:

http://www.primarydomain.com/doorwaypage.htm

http://www.primarydomain.com/folder/doorwaypage.htm

the page is unlikely to be considered by Excite since it favors only the default pages. New domain names can be registered with Network

Solutions for $70 each. Considering that each domain can hold a doorway page that could attain top 10 rankings on several keywords, the payoff should easily cover the cost of the additional domain.

Another technique is to use a new domain – a separate but similar URL – for major internal sections of your Web site. For instance, let's say you've build a Web site to sell your special brand of widgets. Let's pretend that you sell four primary types of these widgets:

steel widgets, cardboard widgets, pine widgets , plaster widgets

Imagine that the main page of your Web site discusses your company background and then offers links to separate pages that each describe one of your primary lines of these widgets. You could build your site as follows:

Main home page URL: www.widget.com

Sub page that discusses steel widgets: www.steel-widget.com

Sub page that discusses cardboard widgets: www.cardboard-widget.com

Sub page that discusses pine widgets: www.pine-widget.com

Sub page that discusses plaster widgets: www.plaster-widget.com

Each sub page would have a default page or an index.htm page, though they would appear to be part and parcel of the same Web site. However, each of these new domains has a chance to achieve its own ranking in Excite. The ancillary benefit is that you can promote each of the unique URLs individually in all the search engines. In this example, you could build top10 rankings for each of five separate domain names. Nobody would have to know that the page hosted on steel-widget.com was not originally designed to be the "home page." For all anyone knows, this could be a steel widget making company that also makes pine, plaster and cardboard widgets.

Here are some suggested steps:

Step 1: Create doorway pages and host them on separate URLs that you register for this purpose. Remember using names like "index1.htm, index2.htm" is asking for trouble.

Step 2: Consider employing the multiple title technique. Excite seems to favor Web sites that include two to three exact copies of their title tag in the head of the document.

Step 3: Excite truncates long title tags to just six words. You'll want to ensure that the keywords you're targeting appear in the first six words of your site's title tag.

Step 4: Excite does not consider the META keyword tag in determining a site's relevance rating. We suggest you do not include keyword META tags on your pages for Excite.

Step 5: Use comment tags effectively. Excite's spider applies an algorithm that attempts to discern a Web site's general theme by considering words that appear often in close proximity to each other. The way we used to suggest that you influence Excite was to compose a long sentence, about 15 words with little or no punctuation – a sentence that you want Excite to use as your site description – and repeat the sentence several times in the "<!--" comment tags. It appears that these repeated phrases must be included in your site's copy in order to work well.

Step 6: Add <NOFRAMES> tags to all framed pages. We've recently discovered that Excite indexes and uses site contents included in the <NOFRAMES> tag to determine:

- a site description

- relevancy scores

- keywords to index your site under

We suggest you construct doorway pages, some with frames, some without. On those using frames include the <NO FRAMES> tag. Within your <NOFRAMES> tag, you can have another <HEAD>, <TITLE> and <!--COMMENTS> tag, so use them for more keywords as follows:

<noframes>

<!--Beginning of Web site for non-frames browsers only.>

<HTML>

<HEAD>

  <TITLE>Increase Your Web Site's Traffic, URL Submissions</TITLE>

  <!-- Increase a Web site's rank in search engines and increase traffic and increase rank

      Increase a Web site's rank in search engines and increase traffic and increase rank>

    <META NAME="Description" CONTENT="keyword sentence">

  <META NAME="Keywords" CONTENT="keyword sentence">

</HEAD>

Increase a Web site's rank in search engines and increase traffic and increase rank

Increase a Web site's rank in search engines and increase traffic and increase rank

</noframes>

Step 7: Add keywords to your URL.

Excite indexes and uses for relevance keywords found in the URL. There is some value in a domain name that is made up of one or two keywords. If this is not possible, consider registering additional domain names that include keywords before the primary domain name:

Original domain name: http://www.primarydomain.com

Additional domain name: http://www.keyword-primarydomain.com

Step 8: Increase the frequency of one of the keywords that makes up your keyword phrase:

Excite appears to favor pages that include more occurrences of one of the keywords in a keyword phrase. Try to organize your page such that one of the keywords that make up a phrase is repeated a few more times than the other. For instance, if you're targeting "year 2000 crisis," make sure that the words "year 2000" occur more often than the other word, "crisis."

Step 9: Popularity counts for Excite relevancy. Try to solicit links from other Web sites. Set a goal for yourself of 10 a month or 10 a week if you can.

Need More Power? Remember the following:

1. Work for some uncommon descriptive words.

2. Include a headline (<H1> through <H6> tags) at or near the top of your Web page that includes your targeted keywords.

3. Clients have claimed that their sites have disappeared from the Excite database without warning and apparently without cause. If this happens to you (and you will know if it does since you will be tracking Excite with WebPosition Gold™), simply resubmit your site.

4. Pay special attention to your title tags, make them keyword rich, without close repetition.

5. Submit your site to Excite's reviewer team for consideration. Visit this link and fill out the form:

6. http://www.excite.com/comments

Your site might qualify for being top-listed as a "natural" match for certain keywords.

WARNING! Excite is constantly tweaking and changing its scoring system. While the suggestions in this section are your best chance of improving your ranking, they are not foolproof. The good news is that you have WebPosition Gold™ to monitor your rank in Excite, a power tool that not everyone has. Reread the sections of this report when you encounter difficulty. You'll be amazed what you learn when you reread important sections of this guide!

What to Do If Your Pages Disappear

Apparently, Excite's spider will cycle through recently submitted sites or existing sites in its database every couple of weeks.. It prefers to start with the home page, and follow links from there. Once it finds 25 pages, it adds them to its index, but then drops all the rest of the pages for that Web site!

Which pages it chooses to keep is somewhat random. Often your important doorway pages will get dropped, and your unimportant pages stay. One solution is to add the following tag to your less important pages that don't need to be indexed:

<meta name="robots" content="noindex">

This tag is placed in the HEAD section at the top of the page with other meta tags. It tells all search engines that honor the tag (including Excite) not to index this page.

Therefore, if you tell it to exclude all pages except your most important 24 doorway pages, and your home page, then those pages should stay indexed. That's because all other pages can't be re-indexed because of the noindex tag. The best thing to do is to add either visible or hidden links to your doorway pages directory from your home page to insure Excite's spider can find them easily.

The disadvantage to the "noindex" technique is that it limits you to just 25 pages on many other engines that read the noindex tag. Most engines normally support more than 25 pages. Ideally, you should create a separate Web site domain for Excite using the "noindex" tags on all but 25 pages, and another domain that allows engines to spider the whole site. You could experiment with creating a separate sub-directory of pages for Excite on your existing domain, but Excite generally doesn't like to rank pages in sub-directories as well as those in the root directory.

Using Robots.txt to exclude pages:

As just mentioned, you may want to exclude non-optimized pages from being indexed by Excite, since Excite will often index only 25 pages. This can improve your odds of your "best" doorway pages

staying indexed, rather than being bumped from the list in favor of some less important page. I offered the "noindex" tag as one possible solution, but that has the side-affect of telling all engines to not index that page.

Rather than the noindex tag, you might consider using the robots.txt which offers more flexibility.

Basically, you just create a text file with Window's NotePad or any other editor that can save ASCII txt files.

Use the following syntax:

User-agent: {SpiderNameHere}

Disallow: {FilenameHere}

For example, to tell Excite's spider, called ArchitextSpider, to not index files called orderform.html and junk.html, create a robots.txt file as follows:

User-agent: ArchitextSpider

Disallow: orderform.html

Disallow: junk.html

You would then upload this robots.txt file to the root directory of your Web site.   Although this is a voluntary protocol, most major search engines will honor it.

You can add more lines to exclude pages from other engines by specifying the User-Agent parameter again in the same file, followed by more Disallow lines. Each disallow statement will be applied to the last User-Agent that was specified. If you want to exclude an entire directory, use this syntax:

User-agent: ArchitextSpider

Disallow: /mydirectory/

Other options are to exclude the page from all spiders with:

User-agent: *

Or to disallow all pages on your Web site for the specified spider use:

Disallow: /*

Make sure you use the proper syntax. If you misspell something, it's not going to work.

Here are the User-Agent names of some of the more popular search engine spiders:

Search Engine:	Robot User-Agent:
Alta Vista	Scooter
Infoseek	InfoSeek Sidewinder
Excite	ArchitextSpider
Lycos	Lycos_Spider_(T-Rex)
Northern Light	Gulliver

The Importance of Keywords in Link Text

Excite changed their ranking algorithm in January 1999. It appears the <TITLE> tag now has significantly less influence than before. However, pages using keywords in the link text areas many times rank substantially higher. In fact, we did searches and keyword counts that showed a definite progression of top ranking pages generally having more keyword repetitions in the links.

Some of these pages had 20 or more links with keywords in them! Our suggestion is to look at a couple of the top ranking pages for your keyword and make sure you use the keyword more often in the link text area. This has produced dramatically improved rankings for many people.

For those new to HTML, the link text we are referring to is that highlighted text which hyperlinks to another page when clicked on. Generally this text is underlined in blue by default.

An example of link text with the keyword "Green Widgets" highlighted:

Green Widgets

You could further increase emphasis by naming the page you're linking to "green-widgets.htm." Naming all your pages after the keywords you're emphasizing is important.

HOTBOT

Wired Ventures
660 Third St.
San Francisco, CA 94107
(415) 276-8400
Fax: (415) 276-8499

URL to the engine	http://www.hotbot.com
Must submit EACH page?	Not necessary; spider finds pages.
How long to index my page?	Within two days now!
Recognizes and supports META tags?	YES
Are searches case sensitive?	NO – only when relevant, e.g., neXt computers
Does a "spider" index the site?	YES
Uses data entered on submission form only?	NO
Is page popularity a factor?	NO - although they certainly have this technology and could implement it at any time
Alphabetical ranking used?	NO
Keyword "weight" plays a role?	YES
Title tag considered for relevancy?	YES
Prominence of keywords in title tag important?	YES
Frequency of keywords in title tag important?	YES
Comment Tags considered for relevancy?	YES
Max. length of title accepted	UNKNOWN
Max. length of keyword META Tag	UNKNOWN
Max. length of description field you can submit	N/A
How to check to see if you're listed	Select "Advanced Search" from just below the main search screen. On the "Advanced Search" page, there's a search box halfway down the page titled, "Location / Domain" Click on "domain" and enter your domain in the blank. www.yourcompany.com HotBot will return all pages listed for that domain in the HotBot index.
How to check your link popularity	Drop-down menu on main search screen, "links to this URL." Type in full URL as follows: http://www.yourcompany.com
E-mail support	support@hotbot.com
Total documents indexed	110 million pages indexed
Total page views	HotBot does not disclose this figure. They do acknowledge 5 million unique people a month use

	HotBot.
Add/Remove URL	http://www.hotbot.com/addurl.html

New Technology at HotBot – Direct Hit

HotBot added a new service known as Direct Hit. Direct Hit is a company located in Wellesley, MA, whose software, Direct Hit provides highly relevant matches to search queries by measuring site popularity and user behavior after queries. When you compose a query in HotBot and then visit a site that was returned in the top matches, the Direct Hit software takes note of which Web site you visited and even how long you stayed! After some number of people have executed the same search and visited different Web sites, Direct Hit builds a database of sites that people seemed to visit most frequently after that keyword query. We have not yet interviewed Direct Hit and have no information on how long a Web site remains in their "popular list" or how hard it might be to unseat a Direct Hit-ranked site. Not all HotBot search engine queries return Direct Hit-ranked results in the top 10

spots – yet. It appears that Direct Hit requires a certain amount of data before they can return popularity ranked results. If you are uncertain whether or not a keyword query returns Direct Hit-ranked matches, scroll to the bottom of the first page of the search results and look for this symbol:

If you see it at the bottom of the page, this keyword query was answered using the Direct Hit database. This new technology makes a top ranking in HotBot even more crucial. We would hazard a guess that no page can become popular by Direct Hit's standards if it isn't a top 10 to top 30 ranked page first. After all, we know that most people do not scroll down past the first 10 to 30 matches after they execute a search. Therefore, it is unlikely that even the best Web site located in position number 98 will ever attract enough visitors to be seen by Direct Hit's system.

Direct Hit is not a fad. This company's business plan was the winner of the 1998 MIT $50K Best New Technology Competition, and the company is funded by Draper Fisher Jurvetson and Mosaic Venture Partners. They're here to stay so, get used to this system. It could even be adopted by other search engines, so now is the time to start achieving top 10 rankings

From the Horses Mouth

We had the pleasure of interviewing a senior director at HotBot, and he was kind enough to volunteer a great deal of valuable information. He has asked us not to use his name and we will honor his wishes and simply share his insights.

HotBot has quickly become a serious contender and more and more important to Web site marketers. HotBot won an upset victory in the recent CNET search engine rankings. We use the phrase "upset" because who would have guessed that a search engine once considered a fringe engine would have beaten out AltaVista and Infoseek? HotBot's recent addition of 24 to 48 hour indexing, increasing their database size to 110 million documents, and terrific press coverage makes them a force on the Web.

HotBot is the search engine designed and run by those darlings of the Internet, *Wired* magazine. HotBot has many interesting features, but the most important, as far as you're concerned, is that it allows you to report low rankings! Even better, if a site is ranked above your site that doesn't belong there, HotBot encourages you to report what it calls "obviously silly rankings" to feedback@hotbot.com. Did someone stuff their keyword and description META tags with off-topic keywords just to get listed under a keyword that is very relevant to you? No worries, report them and they're gone!

Our contact told us of HotBot's target niche in the search engine market, namely to be a superior search tool by having the largest database and the largest amount of data indexed about each site. Specifically HotBot indexes all sorts of information about what's on your site and allows users to perform restricted searches by:

- URL
- media type
- pages that have acrobat
- audio files
- Shockwave
- even an obscure file type
- searches within date ranges

Our contact at HotBot suggested that to achieve a high ranking, look to see if the keyword you are trying to optimize your page for appears in the page title, how frequently it appears in the document and how close to the top of the document it appears.

We asked him to confirm the rumor that HotBot no longer considers keywords in the title tag for relevancy. He refuted this and offered that HotBot will consider keywords in the headline tag, but if they are not included, it will not mean the site won't be returned for a keyword query. He also suggested that since HotBot allows you to search the Web by Web site title, you should be especially concerned about keyword placement in this tag.

He went on to inform us that HotBot is not header tag <H1> through <H6> sensitive, but HotBot weights keywords near the top of your page, and headers are often located there.

According to this source HotBot does not look at keywords in ALT tags nor keywords contained in hidden form tags. HotBot does consider keywords in comment tags, and a good keyword weight scores a page higher in their index.

When we asked him why it seemed that short pages with some graphics and very few words on the page seemed to score higher, he wouldn't provide an exact reason, but he thought it would likely be due to HotBot's keyword weight ranking.

HotBot penalizes a variety of spam techniques including: stuffing of keywords in text, same color text on same color background and stuffing keywords in the title tag (when they're repeated next to one another). Pages that trigger these spam penalties will be assigned zero weightings in the HotBot index – those spammed words will not count toward HotBot's relevancy assessment. HotBot will only count a keyword once, if it finds the keyword repeated.

HotBot's ranking algorithm is attuned to unnatural word patterns. Our contact said that HotBot uses in-house garmmer-checking software. He offered the following examples of unnatural repeated keyword word patterns that are most common:

"Computer hard drive, Computer hard drive"

"computer disk, computer modem, computer disk, computer, computer modem"

When I asked if people using one doorway page per keyword would set off spam detection, I was told that such a moderate approach would not be penalized. However, when a site is detected as submitting dozens of duplicate pages for the same keyword these pages will not be listed – HotBot will list just one page and on occasion, present the others as alternative pages.

HotBot has no lifetime ban for index spamming at this time.

Our Own Experience and Observations

WARNING! HotBot changes its relevancy scoring criteria often, a fact that is maddening to those of us trying to achieve a high ranking. However, the good news is that HotBot does this in response to user input and surveys, which usually result in better overall results to queries that can only help you if you run a good site.

HotBot will index your entire site. Just submit your main URL.

Step 1: Build a series of doorway pages for HotBot.

HotBot seems to rank shorter pages with less copy higher than longer pages. Multiple doorway pages will be effective so long as you limit each doorway page to two or three keywords – achieving a good keyword weight for multiple keywords can be tricky. It's best to use several doorway pages. The keyword weight ranking will bite you if you get greedy and chase 5 or 10 keywords per doorway page.

Step 2: Include a gif or jpg graphic on your doorway pages.

Perhaps make the graphic an arrow and a graphic word next to it that states, "continue." Activate the graphic as a hypertext link that sends people to your main site. The purpose of this is to reduce total copy on these pages and score strong keyword weight ratings.

Step 3: Create keyword and description META tags and lead with your most important keyword.

HotBot also rewards uncommon words (i.e. words not found as often on the Internet as a whole). Do not repeat keywords in your META tags, it does not help you.

Step 4: Alter your use of capitalization of important keywords for an extra boost.

Step 5: Increase your keyword frequency.

Measure your total number of keywords in the body as compared to the pages ranked ahead of you. HotBot rewards keyword frequency as well as keyword weight. In general, HotBot ranks slightly shorter pages with higher keyword weight higher than similar but longer pages.

Step 6: Register a new domain name that includes your most important keyword.

Lately, we've noticed that HotBot cares a lot about keywords in the URL. As we've suggested in other sections of this report, consider investing the $70 to register an iteration of your domain name such as www.keyword-domain.com.

Step 7: Add a single pixel gif with an ALT tag.

If you need to add more keywords consider the "single pixel gif" trick, as HotBot does index and score keywords found in ALT tags.

Need more power? Consider the following tips:

1. Focus on keywords and keyword phrases included as activated links to other internal pages and less on keywords in the title tag. Add your targeted keyword in the link text on the viewable page.

2. HotBot favors Web pages with keywords at the top of the page AND at the bottom of the page. Work toward a keyword theme in your pages.

3. Include the plural form of your keywords since HotBot will not automatically return pages for keyword synonyms.

4. In consideration of Direct Hit's technology, do what you can to query your own Web page, and then visit it often and encourage others in your company or circle of friends to do the same. It may, over time, influence the Direct Hit algorithm.

How Your Domain Name Can Influence Your Score

Obtaining a domain name with your keyword in it can significantly improve your score in HotBot. For example, if you have a domain of:

http://www.mycompany.com

you should strongly consider purchasing additional domains that include your most important keywords within the domain name. If you sold widgets, pages on the following domain should score higher in HotBot, with all other things being equal:

www.widgets.com

For multi-word phrases, be sure to separate them with dashes as follows:

www.blue-widgets.com

Including the keyword in a sub-directory name or page name can also help, although not to the same extent as the domain name. Consider purchasing secondary domain names for this purpose if you've been unsuccessful in ranking well in HotBot for your keywords. Other engines now appear to add additional weight to domain names with keywords in them, so this may help you elsewhere as well.

LYCOS

Lycos
400-2 Totten Pond Rd.
Waltham, MA 02154
(781) 370-2700
Fax: (781) 370-2600
webmaster@lycos.com

URL to the engine	http://www.lycos.com
Must submit EACH page?	OPTIONAL
How long to index my page?	2 – 4 weeks (but may take longer)
Recognizes and supports META tags?	NO
Are searches case sensitive?	NO
Does a "spider" index the site?	YES
Uses data entered on submission form only?	NO
Is page popularity a factor?	YES
Alphabetical ranking used?	NO
Keyword "weight" plays a role?	YES (first 270 characters or so)
Title tag considered for relevancy?	YES
Prominence of keywords in title tag important?	YES
Frequency of keywords in title tag important?	YES
Comment tags considered for relevancy?	NO
Max. length of title accepted	UNKNOWN
Max. length of keyword META tag	N/A
Max. length of description field you can submit	N/A
How to check to see if you're listed	http://www.lycos.com/addasite.html
Checking your link popularity	Lycos charges for this service*
E-mail support	webmaster@lycos.com
Total documents indexed	100 million pages indexed – growing quickly!
Total page views	10 million users a day, ranked by PC Meter
Add URL	http://www.hotbot.com/addurl.html

*The Lycos advertising department offers a special service called LinkAlert that includes a detailed report listing all sites linked to yours.

From the Horses Mouth

New interview: We just completed a brief interview with a Lycos contact. We were interested in why it took Lycos so long to add a newly submitted Web site to their database. We experienced a six-month lag last year from submission of a new URL until its

appearance in the Lycos database! We had counseled clients and subscribers to this report to simply forget about submitting to Lycos due to this indefensible lag time – but all this appears ready to change. We asked our contact how frequently Lycos spiders pages and adds them to their index. He became a bit defensive and responded with a canned retort about technical difficulty that caused Lycos not to be able to add pages to their main index as quickly as they should. He explained that Lycos is always spidering and these pages are added to an offline database that is merged with the active search engine database every so often. He claimed that Lycos was implementing new technology that would allow newly submitted sites to be added to the Lycos active search engine database in two to three days and that this was expected to be ready by May 1, 1999. It appears that the new technology he was referrring to was Lycos' adoption of the Open Directory (dmoz.org).

On another occasion we were granted a much longer interview with a more senior search engine manager at Lycos. As with all the search engines, he asked that we not share his name for fear of being flooded with e-mails and phone calls. My Lycos contact shared more valuable information than any other search engine contact with the possible exception of HotBot. If my Lycos contact is reading this (and it's likely that he is), thank you!

Lycos cares that your HTML has been run through an HTML validator. It's not so much that the engine cares that you're writing clean code, its just that poorly written HTML code could cause your site not to be indexed at all.

Clean HTML is very important – verify the site.

– Our Lycos contact

When I asked this contact about what would help a page to achieve a top ranking, I was told some very interesting things that he claims could be carefully discussed because they were part of "last year's ranking algorithm." He then added that this year's algorithm is not all that different as there are only so many things that can be done to score a page's relevancy. This information is GOLDEN. Read these next few paragraphs carefully. Some of these may apply to other search engines, so take the time to understand this search engine thinking.

My contact asked me to consider what would make a paper or essay appear relevant to a keyword. He suggested that "the topic would show up in the title, the first paragraph and probably would show up in the last paragraph, too."

Wow! Did you hear that? Keywords in the last paragraph will help your relevancy score. This was new information to us.

He continued and explained how many keywords in the document would count to a page's relevance. He suggested that you, "write the document in a way that an English teacher would – very hierarchical." We interpret that to mean that each paragraph should have a header tag with keywords and that keywords appear near the tops of each paragraph.

Lycos has a variety of counter-measures for spammers. When Lycos detects double word occurrences, it will assign negative accelerators or "downward relevancy accelerators." If its spider saw, "girl, girl, girl" repeated three times, Lycos might devalue the page even further.

The penalty is for duplicate keywords that are next to each other, not for repeated words spread throughout the document. Also, whenever Lycos finds too many duplicate URLs they pull them from their database.

Our Own Experience and Observations

Lycos will not accept ANY punctuation. If your URL contains any non-alpha symbols such as $, ?, =, trouble will arise. Therefore, avoid special symbols in your page names, although a dash ("-") or underscore ("_") should be OK.

WARNING: If your entire site is secure, meaning the URL for the site includes an "https" instead of the standard "http," Lycos will not index your pages.

Follow these steps to achieve your top rankings in Lycos:

Step 1: Build a series of doorway pages.

Do not bother with a META keyword tag as Lycos no longer considers them.

Step 2: Carefully construct your title tag with your most important keyword first.

Step 3: Add headline tags that include your targeted keywords.

Repeat your important keyword once in a heading tag <H1>. Experiment with keyword seeding in heading tags (e.g., <H1>My Heading Here</H1> and <H2> My sub heading here </H2>).

Step 4: Repeat the keyword again in the first 270 characters on your Web site.

Lycos will use this text as the site's description. These first 270 characters on your Web site include the text in the headline tag. You want heading tag keywords before body keywords. Also put the heading (<H1>) tag before any ALT tags. What this means is that if you have an image with an ALT tag before your header tag, you're losing points. More important, make sure text in the ALT tag is part of

the first 270 characters and will become part of Lycos' site description!

Step 5: <u>Add synonyms of your most important keywords</u>.

Lycos considers synonyms of your keywords. Review the words on the viewable area of your page and in your site title. Also, make sure you have synonyms of your keywords in your sentences and in heading tags specifically.

Step 6: <u>Increase your page's popularity score by soliciting links</u>.

Lycos considers your page's popularity (the number of other Web sites that have established links to your site), so attempt to solicit links from others to help your relevancy.

Step 7: <u>Keep your doorway pages short for Lycos</u>.

There is merit in shorter doorway pages in Lycos. Try some one-paragraph pages as well as some with several paragraphs, and remember to build pages that discuss a theme and are built in the same hierarchical way that you might compose a high school essay.

Step 8: <u>Add keywords to the first few words of your last paragraph</u>.

Lycos looks for keywords near the top and near the end of your documents. Make sure that your important keywords appear in the first line of the last paragraph of your page. You might try including that keyword again in the last sentence.

Need more power?

1. Try using the multiple <TITLE> tag technique in Lycos.

2. Lycos recognized plurals as synonyms – this means you can include your targeted keyword's plural form as synonyms.

3. More and more search engines are giving Web sites that they've reviewed a bump-up in rankings. While Lycos does not claim to have a formal editorial review contact, we suggest that you submit your suggestion that they review your site using the form on this page:

4. http://echomail.lycos.com/feedback.htm

5. Lycos favors newly submitted pages. Resubmit your pages to Lycos once a week for a potential bump-up in ranking.

6. Lycos favors pages that place the keywords near the top of the page in the first 25 words of the Web page.

WEBCRAWLER

See the section on Excite! WebCrawler has been purchased by Excite!

URL to the engine	http://www.webcrawler.com
How to check your link popularity	Unknown
E-mail support	See Excite
Add/Remove URL	http://www.webcrawler.com/Help/GetListed/Addurls.html

WebCrawler is now owned by Excite. Danny Sullivan's Search Engine Watch newsletter reported on Jan. 9, 1998, that not only was WebCrawler purchased by Excite, but that now WebCrawler's search algorithm has been replaced by Excite's.

What this means is that you must create pages as you did for Excite to rank well on WebCrawler. Or, simply rename the doorway pages you created for Excite and submit them to WebCrawler.

For this reason, much of the chart above was omitted so that you can instead refer to the Excite chart. The interface for WebCrawler, however, is still very different than Excite, keeping some search functionality different between the two engines.

SNAP

Snap.com
Snap, LLC
One Beach Street
San Francisco, CA 94133
Phone: (415) 875-7900
Fax: (415) 392-9088

Snap Quick Reference Chart:

URL to the Engine	http://www.snap.com or http://speed.snap.com (version for those with 128Kps or better connections)
Must submit EACH page?	JUST ONE
How long to index my page?	2 to 8 weeks
Recognizes and supports META Tags?	NO
Are searches case sensitive?	NO
Does a "spider" index the site?	NO
Uses data entered on submission form only?	YES
Is page popularity a factor?	NO
Alphabetical ranking used?	YES
Keyword "weight" plays a role?	NO, frequency and prominence only
Title tag considered for relevancy?	YES, but only for the title you enter on their submission form.
Prominence of keywords in title tag important?	YES, but only for the title you enter on their submission form.
Frequency of keywords in title tag important?	Yes, but only for the title you enter on their submission form.
Comment tags considered for relevancy?	NO
Max. length of title accepted	40 characters (unless company name is longer)
Max. length of keyword META tag	N/A
Max. length of description field you can submit	15 words
How to check to see if you're listed	Type in full URL: http://www.yourcompany.com or site title as you submitted it or use the WebPosition Gold URL verification feature.
How to check your link popularity	Snap has no spider so no links are tracked.
E-mail support	Go to: http://www.snap.com/main/help/support/0,120,h

	ome-0,00.html
Total documents indexed	Unknown at this time (Inktomi supplements search results and claims 110 Million documents, but Snap directory will be significantly smaller).
Total page views	Unknown at this time. However, Snap is thought to be one among the top 10 to 15 highest traffic search engines/directories.
Add/Remove URL	Select appropriate Snap category at www.snap.com and then select the "Submit your Web site to the Snap directory team" link on the bottom left of the page.

Snap.com (hereafter referred to just as "Snap") can be classified as a "search-directory" - similar in some ways to Yahoo!, but with a few important differences. The trend toward human edited directories continues and like Yahoo!, Snap supplements its directory listings with the Inktomi database, the same database used by HotBot and others.

Although Snap sometimes searches the same database as HotBot (Inktomi), this does not mean that your Web site will have the same rankings as it does in HotBot. First, Snap returns matches to many keyword queries from its own human edited directory and only returns Inktomi matches when the keyword or phrase queried does not have an immediate match in its directory (Inktomi matches are typically served when the phrase queried is for three or more words like, "how to find Arlington" or "information about John F. Kennedy Jr."). Also, in HotBot, the first 10 matches to many popular keyword queries are served by DirectHit (www.directhit.com), a relevancy system that measures which Web sites people visit after performing a query and lists those first. Snap does not use the DirectHit software so in cases where the first 10 matches in HotBot are served by DirectHit, matches 11 through 20 and beyond will match Snap search results that are served by Inktomi.

What this means for your search engine positioning efforts is that you must first determine whether a query in Snap for your targeted keyword or phrase will result in Snap category matches or Inktomi matches. If the search matches to a keyword query are Snap categories and sites within those categories, you'll need to submit your site to Snap's directory in order to be found near the top. Where search matches are served by Inktomi, the techniques necessary to achieve a top ranking in HotBot apply.

Step 1: Query each of your important keyword phrases in Snap and note whether the search results are from the Snap directory or from Inktomi. If the search results were supplied by Inktomi this will be indicated at the top and bottom of the search results by the display of

the Inktomi logo and the words, "powered by Inktomi." If the search results are from the Snap directory, you'll notice that each Web site is listed under a category heading and the Snap logo will be displayed the top and bottom of the page.

Step 2: If the keyword phrase you are targetting generates search results from Snap's directory listings, you'll want to determine which categories are listed most often on the first page of results for your keyword searches, and whether or not your site would be an appropriate candidate for one of those categories. If so, pick the category that appears closest to the top on the largest number of your chosen keyword searches.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Snap allows you to submit your site to only one category. For this reason, you'll want to query all of your primary keywords and choose one category that is presented for as many of these queries as possible.

For more information, visit this link to learn how to submit your site to Snap (FYI, you can find this link at the bottom of every page titled "List Your Site"):

http://www.snap.com/main/help/item/0,11,home-8450,00.html?st.sn.ft.0.surl

And this link for answers to frequently asked questions about submissions:

http://www.snap.com/main/help/item/0,11,-9551,00.html

Step 3: Once you've determined in which category you'd like your site to be listed go to that category, scroll down to the bottom of the page and select, "Submit your Web site to the Snap directory team." at the bottom of the page (usually right justified and in very small print).

NOTE: If you select "List Your Site" which is at the very bottom of the page, it takes you to an FAQ on how to get listed and not to the submission form. This can be very confusing so make sure you're clicking on the correct link.

The submission page is self-explanitory, but worth noting is that you are allowed only 10 to 15 words to describe your site (even Yahoo! allows 25 words and we thought they were stingy!). Do your best to phrase this description so that your targeted keyword is the first word of the description. Try to make your description clear, concise and a complete and natural sounding sentence. This will make it less likely that Snap will edit your submission.

When the user browses Web sites by category, they will be listed in alphabetical order by the Site Title. Therefore, just like the Yellow

Pages, it pays to have a Site Title that begins with a number, or the letter "A." Your actual home page should include the same words in the title. Also, you can't be fraudulent in your attempt to rank high alphabetically. A human will review your submission and if they feel you've called your site AAA Jerry's Auto Sales when your business is actually named Jerry's Auto Sales, they're likely to edit or potentially reject your submission.

NOTE: Anytime a human editor is involved, there is a high probability that your submission will be edited, shortened, or your keywords omitted. Your best chance is to submit a clear, thoughtful description sentence that does not include any hyperbole, questionable claims about your product or service or other marketing hype. Remember, your product is not the best, fastest and most ingenious widget ever invested, it is simply a product that performs a particular function and offers specific features -- at least that is all it will ever be to a directory editor.

Step 4: Wait. Snap proudly announces that "there is no notification that an entry has been listed or rejected." You may use WebPosition Gold's Reporter to keep tabs on when your listing shows up.

Step 5: For your keywords which result in Inktomi matches instead of Snap directory results, you will need to apply to techniques recommended by the WebPosition Page Critic for HotBot.

Want more power?

WARNING: Use this technique only AFTER you've successfuly submitted your "home page" or "default" page to Snap and you know that it was accepted and now appears in the Snap directory.

Snap included an interesting note on the FAQ page:

"...Sites should generally consist of more than one page, and a site's front page is preferred over individual pages. However, if an individual page contains enough unique or valuable material, Snap.com may include it."

What this says to us is that if your Web site has an internal page that covers a particular unique topic and perhaps does so in depth, if you submit it to another Snap category it may be accepted. For example, if you operate a site that sells hot sauce but one of your internal pages offers a number of recipes for dishes flavored with hot sauce, that internal page may be considered unique and qualify to be listed in another Snap category. If this internal page were accepted by Snap, your Web site would have two listings and twice as many chances to be found. In fact, if the 15 word description you supply with this submission used an entirely different set of keywords, you could achieve an entirely different set of top rankings than your home page and attract even more visitors.

Our recommendations to improve your odds of Snap accepting multiple pages from your Web site:

1. Put pages from the other "section" of your Web site in a different sub-directory. This will lend more credibility to the idea that the page submitted contains material different than the rest of your site. It could also imply it's an entirely different site altogether.

2. Consider waiting awhile between submissions. This increases your chances that another editor will end up reviewing your second submission and could be unaware of your first submission, particularly if you submit using a different e-mail address.

3. For the best odds of a second submission being accepted, purchase a different domain name and place different content on that domain than your first domain. This can be useful for promoting to other directories besides just Snap (such as Yahoo). You should use a different e-mail address and Web site title on each domain name so the two submissions will look more like separate entities.

Note: We're not advocating you create a duplicate of your site on the two domains! We're saying create a second domain that focuses on a different aspect of your business.

NOTE: Snap returns 20 matches per result page, therefore a top-20 ranking in Snap may be as valuable as a top-10 ranking in many other search engines.