

## Generation 1 search engines – keywords rule!

In the old days of the internet, before Google ruled the world, search engines were very simple beasts. They were big databases of keywords with links and relevancy scores. The more 'relevant' a website was to a keyword, the higher the relevancy score, and so the higher up in search engines they would appear. The way the relevancy score was calculated purely on the content of the web page itself. To get high rankings in the search engine, all you had to do was decide which keyword you wanted to target, and make sure that keyword appears in your web page as much as possible, but not too much.

There were rules that you had to follow to get the perfect balance of keyword ratios. For example, the title of your web page should contain between 7 and 12 words, and contain the keyword not more than 3 times. The keyword should appear in at least one heading, preferably twice, and you should have at least one image with the filename containing the keyword. The metatags should have your keyword in at least 6 times.

If you had a web address that contains the keyword that was even better. For example, having 'insurance.com' would have helped greatly if you were selling insurance products, and that is still partly true today (that's why the domain name insurance.com was sold for \$35.6 million in July 2014). There's a lot of money that was made by preregistering domain names. Chris Clark, owner of a small software company, registered pizza.com in 1994 for the princely sum of \$20. 14 years later he sold it at auction for \$2.6 million. Not bad for 14 years of just sitting on it and paying the small annual renewal fees.

One of the easiest ways to get to the top of the generation 1 search engines was to look at the websites that were in the top 5 and just copy the number of keywords they had in their web pages. Easy peasy! You could get to the top of Alta Vista, Lycos or Ask Jeeves in a few weeks using this method.

All you really needed to get included in the search engines was to submit your site to an 'add url' page on the search engine. This process was simplified by the development of search engine submission software that could submit your website(s) to thousands of search engines in a matter of minutes and you could schedule that submission to happen on a monthly basis – this helped in those engines which showed the latest submissions higher up in the list.

Life was easy for us SEO guys; you could almost guarantee top positions to your clients in a short space of time. Competition for keywords was relatively low then, as few people were using SEO to promote their sites. Not even the big companies bothered with it that much. Clients were happy, we were happy. Everything was hippy dippy until generation 2 hit.

Read the next article to see how Generation 2 search engines changed the face of SEO forever....