Basic Search Engine Optimisation

What was true only a couple of years ago might not apply now, so it is good practice to keep informed about the latest developments in SEO. There are many sites and news feeds you can subscribe to in order to do this. We recommend just googling 'SEO news' and check out the sites at the top of the list. After all, if they are top in Google for SEO news, then the chances are, they know what they are talking about.

First principles in SEO

Here are a few quick and simple principles which you should apply from the start of the SEO efforts:

1. **Focus your site.**
   When starting SEO the first question you should ask is: 'What is your site about, and who is it for?' You need to have a clear idea about the purpose of your website. If your site is a random collection of different pages with maybe a forum, and maybe a gallery, and with maybe a couple of products linking to PayPal and maybe based around a range of different topics and interests, then your SEO will fail at the first hurdle. If you have a site designed to cater for different audiences, then you should really consider splitting your site into several more focused websites.

   To get a good, clear SEO strategy you need a site that is easy to classify. If YOU can't tell anyone in one sentence what your site is about, then Google, which is (one assumes) infinitely less clever than you are, will find it impossible to classify your site, and your pages will appear nowhere in the Google search engine results pages (SERPs).

2. **Make sure Google can read the content.**
   Using flash for content or menus? That's bad. Using images for navigation buttons? That's very bad. Putting your text in graphics because you liked the font better? That's even worse. Linking pages with JavaScript? = SEO suicide.
   If Google cannot read your content or follow your links, then your site is not going to fulfil its potential. If you really need to use images as links, put an alt tag on them, or better still, use CSS so they are written as text links but look like image links.

3. **Flash.**

   Flash animations can be really nice, and were quite a common site until recently. Steve Jobs effectively put the nail in the flash coffin by refusing to allow it on apple devices. Google isn't keen on flash either because it's difficult to read any content in there. So best advice is abandon flash now. If you want nice animation effects, html5 can do quite a lot now, and many more browsers support it.

4. **Google Loves Big Websites.**

   The bigger your website is, the sexier it is in Google's eyes. If you have a web page with only a couple of sentences on it, this could be seen by Google as low quality and you could be penalised for it. Having chunky paragraphs of rich keyword themed content makes Google happy. So if your website is thin on content, consider beefing it up with more rich content. Beware of using artificial padding though. If it reads like you have stuffed your content with keywords, then not only will it be less likely that people will like (and hopefully share) your page, but also more likely that Google will downgrade it.

5. **SEO is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration**

   Ok so Thomas Edison was talking about Genius when he originally coined the phrase in 1903, but the same principles apply. If anyone tells you they can get you to the top of Google in a couple of weeks, don't believe them. Getting high rankings involves a lot of time and effort. This is why reputable SEO companies don't come cheap. Sure, you can throw money at an Indian SEO company, but more than likely you'll never to see any difference in your rankings. Doing SEO is sometimes compared to having a baby (usually by men who have never experienced childbirth, but that's a separate issue). The hardest part is the first few months. After that, things get easier.

   In SEO, the initial on-site work - Checking links are all working, checking content and spelling, updating metatags, doing keyword research and competitor analysis - all takes the greatest time and effort. Once you've done the initial work, things get easier.