

# XEBIDY STRATEGIC DESIGN

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Climbing to the top of search engine rankings is a daunting task. But it need not be! Optimising your website for better search results is not rocket science - here are few basic steps to follow.



## Search Engine Optimisation And Internet Marketing

By Dan Roberts

SEO is simultaneously science and bullshit. While there is a fair understanding as to how search algorithms are constructed there is also a large degree of guess work - what weighting does Google put on inward links, heading tags, meta data etc. Further search algorithms are regularly changing, taking into account the evolving nature of the Internet. For example, links are regarded as very important as they are seen as an endorsement of a web page by a third party. So everyone started linking pages and reciprocal links regardless of likeness. Not quite what Google had in mind. The solution; Google devalues the amount of weight it gives to reciprocal links and inbound links on pages with lots of links.

The purpose of an Internet Marketing strategy is clear and

simple – to generate more and better quality traffic to your website. The website thereafter takes over with the purpose of converting that traffic to customers (known as the looker to booker ratio). This paper focuses on how to generate more of the right customers to your website.

“The right customer” is an important phrase. Search engine and Internet marketing that focuses purely on traffic numbers is a flawed strategy. Rather the focus should be on identifying the ideal customer (those customers willing to spend their time and money with you) and attracting them to your website.

The goal of the Internet Marketing strategy is to create the perception of authority, credibility and authenticity of your

brand wherever the customer comes in contact with the your URL, be it the first time or after multiple points of contact.

Assuming that all customers that type your URL in directly arrive at your site because of an intrinsic brand value generated by all offline and online channels, the measurable concern of an Internet Marketing Strategy is with all visitors who come to the site through search engine listings or links from other sites.

The following paper covers four distinct but inextricably linked elements:

1. Website Optimisation
2. Search Marketing
3. Link Campaign
4. Content Syndication

# Search Engine Optimisation Website Optimisation

## Optimising your website Keywords

**One of the biggest mistakes made by website owners is that they try to target too many and too general keywords.**

The goal of SEO is to generate more and better quality traffic to your website. One of the worse errors is to put effort into very general keywords such as Australia at the expense of very specific phrases such as “hostel Sydney city.” Focus on 5 to 8 keyword phrases. If top spots are achieved with these keywords, then the focus can be expanded while simultaneously maintaining effort on the main keywords (you can easily lose rankings just as quickly as you have gained them).

A common practice is to stuff lots of keywords into the keyword and description meta tags of your website. While it is debatable the impact if any these tags have on your search engine rankings, it is the case that at the most the keywords and description should be no more than 250 characters long.

There are many methods for deriving the optimal keywords for an Internet Marketing and Optimisation Campaign. Below is a simple suggested methodology that takes advantage of free software.

### Google Keywords

This [tool](#) allows you to extract the keywords that Google sees from any website.

First: Select the region, repeating the process for every region, where your customers are expected to search from.

Secondly: Select the site related keywords tab and enter your URL. Google will return a big long list of keywords from which you go through and select the ones you are interested in. NOTE: you are only interested in phrases with high search volume. Repeat the process for your competitors URL to build up your list.

### Overture & Wordtracker

This particular tool analyses Wordtracker and Overture at the same time. Type in the keyword phrases individually that you selected from your Google analysis to look for keywords that were missed and to get relative search volumes. Begin to eliminate phrases from your list based on the search volumes. Once again enter each keyword phrase for each region that you are interested in;

note, that Wordtracker does not distinguish regionally while Overture does not differentiate between single and plural.

### Web CEO

Finally, after reducing the list in step 2 above, download the free version of an application called [Web CEO](#). Setup a project, and go to the Keyword research tab. Enter each of the final list of keywords that you are interested in. Web CEO gives a very broad perspective of the overall search volume for the particular keyword phrases, plus suggests others. Web CEO also gives an approximate number of the websites that include the keyword phrase in their bundle. From Web CEO, make a final selection of 5 to 8 phrases for your first round of optimisation. Select words and phrases, that have high search volume, relatively low competitor numbers and describe your business.

Now use these keyword phrases within your main content generously. The ideal situation is to have your main keyword phrases at the beginning and toward the end of the page. Keywords can also be made bold to emphasize them as long as this is done liberally. The most important rule however about keywords relative to the content is that the website must make sense to the reader.

## Content For the customer

**The most important questions in a website readers subconscious are “what does this mean to me”, and “what shall I do?”**

The keyword intensive content might appeal to search engines but equally it must entice your customers into the site.

Make “a big fat claim”. For example, “lose weight in 21 days“, or “the highest rating hostel in Rotorua”. This claim must not be too generic and must be able to be substantiated.

Another important point is the tone of your website content. When marketing on a website (or in an email) you are in fact only marketing to one person. Websites are seldom read as a group, rather just by one person and so should be marketed as such – talk directly to the reader rather than use the third person. An interesting tool is the “we-we” test. The we-we test analyses the number of times you discuss yourself or use

the word 'we', or your company name, relative to the number of references to the customer themselves. Try this tools "[we-we test](#)" for fun

## Coding your site

### Meta data, title tags and headings and code

**The use of Meta data in the web page head influences search engine rankings less and less.**

However, there are some minimum data that should be supplied, including the author of the website, the date the website was created, the type of content (whether it is general or adult), and a description of the website

The title tag is almost the single most important part of the entire website content with regard to search engines. Search engine algorithms (read Google) place a decent amount of weight on the content and construction of the title. The title tag is the text that appears at the very top of your browser.

The title should contain your keywords, and most importantly make sense as it also appears in the search results and as such must be the primary call to action for your customer. Here is a good example for the search term "Sydney hostel" from [www.hostelbookers.com](http://www.hostelbookers.com):

**Sydney Hostels: Book a cheap hostel in Sydney, Australia**  
**Sydney hostels** and cheap accommodation. No booking fees on any **Sydney hostel** at HostelBookers.com  
[www.hostelbookers.com/hostels/australia/sydney/](http://www.hostelbookers.com/hostels/australia/sydney/) - 62k - 15 Jan 2007



#### Selecting your Keywords

Is not a leap of faith, but a very laborious research process. Good keyword selection almost guarantees "the right" traffic to your site.



A well coded website, thorough ongoing research into keywords and web analytics and a mountain of hard work will generate rewarding results.

The description under the blue heading comes from your description meta tag:

The second most important piece of content is the headings within the site. A good website is coded with up to 6 heading tags. Search engines give weighting to the content that appears in those tags in descending order – heading 1 being the most important should therefore contain the most important headings on the page and preferably your main keywords.

## Code Optimisation Simple tricks using CSS

A strong consideration should be the code to content ratio. Good websites are developed in CSS as much as possible thereby removing any formatting code from the actual web page and storing it in a separate file. Likewise any JavaScript code for menus etc should be stored in a separate file. The goal is to have the minimum amount of code against the all important content.

The order of the content can also be

Finally, Images should be labeled in line with your keyword analysis. Rather than calling an image "image1" it should be labelled something like "Sydney-hostel-kitchen". Dashes are the preferred method for search engines to separate words over the underscore symbol. All images should also contain alt text. Alt text (or tool tips) is actually there for disability uses who use reading software to describe the site Search engines can not view the image so they rely on the description of the image to build up the database of information about your site.

manipulated such that the most important content appears as high in the web-page code as possible even if it does not appear like that on the page when displayed. This is most important where a site has traditional left hand menus – the site should be coded in effective in reverse so that the content appears in the code before the menu (although it renders on the screen in the correct order).

## Site Maps Help Google, help you!

A website site map has always been seen as a necessary from a users point of view, but recently the importance of a site map was kicked up a gear when Google and other search engines allowed the submission of your site map directly to their servers to assist them in identifying which parts of your website that should be indexed. Some search engines will not index a page that can not be reached either in the normal course of navigation or even directly from the home page. Google however, will access and index these pages by following your site map. There is a particular format for the site map (which is produced in XML) and they should include a priority weighting on the pages to indicate the importance of the content (keywords) and also notification of the regularity of changes made to the pages.

Every time the site is updated the site map should also be updated. If Google (or any other search engines for that matter) follow the site map to non-existent pages and links they will certainly devalue the site and may even stop returning to the site for some time. There are automatic tools to keep the site map updated, including RSS feeds of new content.

## Linking In-Site, Outbound and RSS Feeds

**The goal of an Internet Marketing Strategy is to create a perception of authority and credibility.**

The use of anchor text and in-site links is an important element of search engine optimisation and one that is increasingly done well on all websites, as it is so easy to institute. Anchor text refers to the text that is used as a link to somewhere else. So rather than using the words click here, the link is put onto the specific relevant text.

Search engines place quality weight against the keywords which contain links. But, an important corollary is that search engines will also discount the link and the keyword if the link does not go to relevant content! Make sure that the link goes to the content with

the same keywords, preferably straight to a heading containing the keyword that was used in the link.

Links contained in your content to other parts of your site also provide secondary guides to those pages for search engines. Dynamic menus, expanding menus, and images within menus all pose problems for search engines to follow and the use of in-site linking within the content can navigate the search engine to those pages instead.

The goal of the Internet Marketing Strategy is create the perception of authority and credibility.

**One of the accepted methodologies (from both a reader and a search engines point of view) is to provide outgoing links to valuable resources.**

Like in-site linking the valuable rule is to use quality keyword anchor text as part of the link and most importantly to only link to relevant content directly within the site your are referencing. A handful of high quality outward links to similarly high quality sites increases your sites search engine rankings for the keywords causing the links. Some warnings: ensure the website you are linking to is refutable – called being associated with the right neighbourhood; and ensure the content you are linking to is relevant to your users and that the site is not using any illegal search engine tactics that may devalue your site by association - the Google Page Rank is a good reference point for the quality of the site and pages you are linking to.

**In the same way as outbound links reaffirm a sites credibility and authority on a particular subject so to can inbound RSS feeds build up your websites content for particular keywords.**

Like outbound links the content must be relevant and also credible. Travel companies, particularly backpacking companies are in an enviable position of being able to draw on the vast number of Travelogues that travellers produce often talking about a company. or product This content can be fed into a website via inbound RSS feeds.

The important point is to only use the

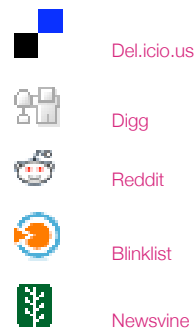
inbound content as a supplement to your own content, rather than as a replacement or Google will see these pages purely as link pages. The inbound feeds are designed to add third party weight to the value of your keyword optimised content!

## Social optimisation Bookmarking

The social Internet is a factor of the Internet – in a very short time social or community elements have completely gone mainstream. At the minimum a website optimisation programme should facilitate social bookmarking. According to Wikipedia:

*“In a social bookmarking system, users store lists of Internet resources (usually webpages), which they find useful. These lists are usually accessible to the public, and other people with similar interests can view the links by category, tags, or even randomly. They also categorize their resources by the use of informally assigned, user-defined keywords or tags. Most social bookmarking services allow users to search for bookmarks which are associated with given "tags", and rank the resources by the number of users which have bookmarked them. Many social bookmarking services also have implemented algorithms to draw inferences from the tag keywords that are assigned to resources by examining the clustering of particular keywords, and the relation of keywords to one another.”*

To make bookmarking your site easier you should provide the links to the main bookmarking sites pre coded to take your web page URL and suggested keywords directly into the social bookmark site. Some examples are:





Q: "What steps can I now take to improve my website performance?"

A: Reduce friction and barriers to conversion and develop an ongoing testing and optimisation platform"

**Avenue A Razor - Actionable Analytics**



## Advertising Cost per click and banners

Cost per click advertising is popular, particularly with Google and there are few key rules that must be followed. These are:

- Only target keyword phrases in which your website does not already come in the top 10 results
- Use the ads to target specific pages. For example, for the keyword phrase "Melbourne hostel" the ad should link to the Melbourne hostel page.
- The heading and content of the ad are very important and should be continually reworked and tested. The best method is A/B testing which involves running exactly the same ad at the same time but with ever so slightly subtle text changes. For example, one add might say "Ayres Rock day trip" while the other says "Ayres Rock day tour". Monitor the number of visits over say one week and see if there is an improvement from one to another. This process is dynamic and should never stop.
- Conversion rates must be monitored. This is very easily done with Google AdSense. A piece of JavaScript code is supplied that can be entered into the booking confirmation page which tracks the purchase to the ad that the customer came in on. Keyword phrases that do not generate conversion should be eliminated as they are costing money without generating revenue.

- Only target those keyword phrases that will realistically generate business.

Advertising on other people's websites works! However, the most important rule as with any advertising is to identify those websites that attract your target cliental and are therefore are a relevant point of contact for your customers. Statistical analysis show there is an optimum mix of banner ads that reinforce brand and banner ads that have a direct call to action message. It is possible to control the ads and a message a customer sees throughout this campaign to optimise this mix.

Similarly, it has also been statistically shown that a mix of banner ads and search engine ads are optimal. A person who has been exposed to banner ads is as much as 27% more likely to select a search engine ad for a search term, and up 40% more likely thereafter to actually convert to a sale as a response to the search ad click, than a customer who comes to the website only via the search engine ad..

# The Link Campaign

## The most important element

**In many ways, and unfortunately (due to the time they take to maintain), links are perhaps the most important element in Internet Marketing.**

The sheer number of inbound links to your site is very important. However, a link to your site from a web page that is highly regarded by both a customer and a search engine as a credible page, and that links to your page with similar relevant content, is worth a 1,000 links stashed in the back of someone's website on their links page! The problem then is getting those quality links. A target for a serious link campaign is at least one or two quality inbound links added per day. There are a number of places to go hunting links and these are discussed below.

A useful tool, and probably the best place to start, is this [link harvester](#). Start by going to Google and typing in your selected keyword search and record the URLs' of the top 10 results. Next go to the links harvester and type in every one of those URLs' to get a list of all their back links in Yahoo and MSN – download the results to CSV files. Now go through the list you create and if appropriate seek a link from every one of these pages.

### Directories

The authoritative value of the web page from where the link comes from is important, and there is no better place to start than industry specific directories. Some key travel directories are:

Other important directories which it should be ensured that your website is listed in are:

- DMOZ
- Yahoo
- JoeAnt
- Gimpsy
- Craigs List ([www.craigslist.com](http://www.craigslist.com))

Before submitting your site in a directory ensure that your onsite SEO has been completed as per the outline plan above, including checking all links etc are working within the website. Research each directory or search engine and its categories individually to ensure you submit the site to the correct area – it is very difficult to change afterward. Research the best description for each directory to match other websites that have already been accepted, but also make sure it is unique – don't stock use the same description for

every directory. Submit the home page and wait for that to be listed before submitting internal web pages – but don't ignore the importance of listing internal pages. Finally, consider paying for expedited submissions, don't use automated software and don't over submit – check that your site is not already listed.

### Authoritative sites

Again harping on about the value of the authoritative link, but moving away from the more mainstream directories links can be searched for from unusual authority sites such as public libraries. Wikis are important places to have links of high quality. To find wikis regarding your keywords type: "keywords" inurl:wiki into Google. Wikis are websites where anyone can update content and you can contribute to this content with your website address if appropriate.

### Content Specific Partners

The real task exists in getting links from industry partners on high quality pages with similar content, and even more preferably with the anchor text that is your keywords that links to your pages with that content. Achieving this is a monumental task.

The first place to start is to devise a programme that other sites will link to your website as part of some level of recognition. These companies could be sent a logo, or onsite award, or similar that they can put on their website promoting you. Think about a programme that gives independent acknowledgment for them and in repayment you receive the inbound link.

# Content Syndication

## Articles and Press Releases

**Syndicating articles and press releases across the Internet will provide exponential traffic to your site if done properly.**

The value of your articles on the Internet is that they maybe used by others to build up content in their own websites because the article is of interest to themselves and their website readers. In this way, the article must be interesting, well written, and easy to read, have a unique point of view or theme and have some personality! The value of the article when its' republished online is that it contains a number of good quality links back to the relevant part of your site using relevant anchor text.

There are a few basic rules to consider; only target a few keyword phrases per article (three at the outside); don't create too many links within the text so that it looks like a candy cane (one or two per paragraph max); and finally create a balance between a readable article and keyword density (remembering that the value of the article is in its' readability and hence its' volume of distribution – about 4-7% of your content can be keywords).

When it comes to actually syndicating the articles the one rule is “follow the rules!” Every article feeding site has its own submission rules that must be followed – or the article wont' get syndicated. On most sites you select the category you think is most appropriate to your article (only one category). The article syndicating sites can, and will, shift it to another category if they think it is wrongly placed – which only slows down the publishing process. Finally, articles usually come with an “author bio” or “resource box” in which you give a brief plug for yourself and your

**There is no such thing as “permanent” search engine positions. Search engine indices are constantly evolving and algorithms are always changing. As a result, positioning will always fluctuate**

**Jennifer Horowitz, Ecom Buffet**

business (for example, this article is written by Dan Roberts who when not skiing in Queenstown is Humpty Dumpty of Xebidy Strategic Design, which designs, develops and implements Web 2.0 strategies and websites for Australia and New Zealand tourism companies.)

A final point and it is the most important (and unfortunately very time consuming), is the negative role of duplicate content. To avoid sites building themselves up purely with other peoples' content (particularly non-syndicated plagiarised content) Google introduced an element in their algorithm that determines how old content is and who the first publisher of it was and gives diminishing value to all subsequent publishers. It is hence important that the articles are first published on your website and dated with the date they are produced, and that Google indexes them before they are syndicated. Further, simply sending out the same article to multiple sources just exacerbates the issue of duplicate content. So, for the laborious part, create different versions of the article for each syndicating site, vary the text used as the anchor text in each version, and vary the pages linked to within your site with each version.

The same basic principals of article syndication apply to press releases. An informative keyword rich press release is expected to generate about 30 days traffic for each release. The most important thing in press releases is to ensure they are newsworthy! Because press releases are on the spot newsworthy they will be much shorter than articles; they may contain links to more information on your site; and it is not important who is the originator of the content – don't worry about getting the press release indexed by the search engine on your site first.

Unlike article syndication sites the majority of the press release sites are not free. There is a wide range of pricing models and methods.

### Article Syndication

One of the most important elements in syndicating your articles online is producing different versions for each syndicating site - that's right! Time for the office in the toilet.



# About XEBIDY Strategic Design

Xebidy Strategic Design (XSD) provides leading edge eCommerce strategy, design and implementation for New Zealand and Australia travel companies

## Products:

- Competitor analysis, derivation of strategy canvas, “space” identification
- Design and specification of functionality
- Return on investment modelling
- Web design and development
- Ongoing support, maintenance, and mentoring
- Search Engine Optimisation and Internet marketing strategies – design and implementation

Leading edge is defined as Web 2.0 applications and strategies and development of Rich Internet Applications (RIAs) for booking processes, mapping and shopping carts

In a follow up paper as part of this series we will deal with the online avenues for creating a relationship with the customer.

Other papers in this series to look out for include “The Art of Writing Web Content” and “Syndicating Articles and Press Releases”

### XEBIDY

Creatively designing travel and the Internet to create an emotive network: authentic content, connecting technology and an engaged customer.

*The image to the right is a sneak preview of the new Xebidy.com website coming soon*

