


MAX 2006 Beyond Boundaries


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What determines your page ranking?


- According to Google...tens of thousands of different metrics determine your page's ranking
- Some influencers are easier to change and take higher precedence than others...
- Search engine algorithms are a closely guarded industry secret (like Coke™)
- Reverse engineering the algorithms is a long process of trial and error



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Topics

- Before you start...
- Google SEO
- Yahoo SEO
- Google SiteMaps
- Google Adwords (paid placement)
- Google Analytics
- What NOT to do (Black-hat SEO)



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Before you start your SEO efforts


- Define a budget
- Take a logical approach
- Accept that web marketing can be effective
- Generate some baseline statistics
- Fix your site
- Research your competitors
- Design success metrics



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Define a Budget


- SEO takes time to implement
- Significant latency between when you implement a change, and when it actually appears on a search engine
- Trial-and-Error process
- Natural vs. Paid listings



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Web Marketing Can Be Effective!

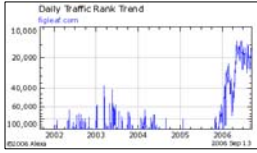
- Drink the Kool-Aid!
- SEO is just one component of your overall marketing strategy
- Define a budget (time)
- Realize that SEO is a process, not a single-time operation
- Case Study
 - Fig Leaf started its campaign to improve SE placement in February 2006 for <http://training.figleaf.com>
 - Customers finding us through search engine queries (self-reported)
 - Feb 06: 3
 - Mar 06: 5
 - Apr 06: 19
 - More students now register directly through the web site than call our registrar
 - Weekend registrations



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Generate Base Line Statistics

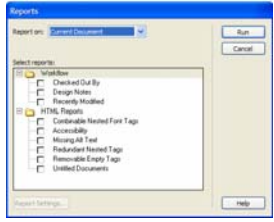
- Use Alexa (www.alexa.com) to compare your traffic against a competitor
- Use webserver logging
- Track http_referrer
- Capture current referrer traffic to a database
- Analyze Log files
 - Free or timed-trial log analyzers
 - <http://www.sawmill.net> (timed trial)
- Determine sell-through %
- Use third-party tools
 - Google Analytics



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Fix Your Site

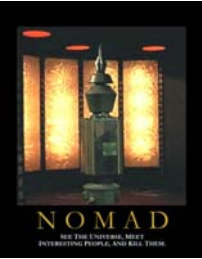
- Update your content**
 - Provide practical info
 - Make the community work for you
 - Blogs
 - News Articles
- Dreamweaver can help!**
 - Link Checker
 - Target Browser Check
 - Validation
 - Accessibility
 - Tag Redundancy
- Usability Analysis
- Develop a coherent marketing message
- Target a geography



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Research your competition


- "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em... then beat 'em"
- Use your keywords on Google to identify top listed sites
- Search on your trademarked names
 - Do ads for your competitors show up?
- Use Google's advanced syntax to find where they're linked from
 - link:
 - allinurl:



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Define Success Metrics

- Increase in traffic
- Increase in sell-through
- Get better rankings than your competition
- Increase in # of pages viewed / session
- Increase in returning visitors




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Search Engine Optimization

- Creating a Search-Engine Friendly site
- Google SiteMaps
- Page Metadata
- Page Structure
- Google PageRank

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Creating a Google Friendly Site



- Use valid html
- Do not use dynamic content for site navigation
- Create a text-only site map containing a list of all of your pages
- Create a Robots.txt file
- Use Google SiteMaps
- Look at your site in a text-only browser (like a bot) @ (<http://lynx.isc.org>)
- Cross Links

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Identifying which pages in your site are indexed by Google

- Site: www.figleaf.com

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Text-Only Site Map

- Text-based hyperlinks
- Not really intended for public consumption

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Robots.txt

- Text file used to inform search robots about which pages to crawl, or not to crawl
- Can be used to feed SEO pages to specific crawlers
- Inspect your sever logs to discover which search engines have come calling

(sample robots.txt)

```
User-Agent: Googlebot
Disallow: page_optimized_for_yahoo.html
Disallow: topsecretreportdata.cfm

User-Agent: Slurp
Disallow: page_optimized_for_google.html
Disallow: topsecretreportdata.cfm
```

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Google Sitemaps

- Free service from Google
- Works in conjunction with Google Spider to index your site
- Provides valuable feedback about site performance
 - Broken Links
 - Unreachable URL's
 - Timed-out responses
- Provides invaluable feedback about your placement on Google relative to keywords
- <http://www.google.com/webmaster/sitemaps/>
- Must supply XML containing link info for site
- Must validate by placing google generated file on root of web site

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Google Sitemap Data Format

- Uses XML format
- Easily generated from ColdFusion (particularly if you have a content management system)

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<urlset xmlns="http://www.google.com/schemas/sitemap/0.84">
  <url>
    <loc>http://www.figleaf.com/index.cfm</loc>
    <lastmod>2006-08-05</lastmod>
    <changefreq>weekly</changefreq>
  </url>
</urlset>
```


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Google Sitemaps Features

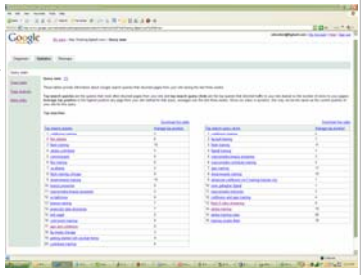
- Diagnostics
 - HTTP Errors
 - Unreachable URLs
 - URLs restricted by robots.txt
 - URLs not followed
 - URLs timed out
- Statistics
 - Query stats
 - Crawl Stats
 - Page Analysis
 - Index Stats

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Google Query Stats




- Provides information about Google search queries that returned pages from your site during the last three weeks
- Top Search Queries report the queries that most often returned pages from your site
- Top search query clicks are the top queries that directed traffic to your site
- Average top position is the highest position any pages from your site ranked for that query




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Google Crawl Stats




- Provides distribution information about crawled pages
- Shows Google Pagerank stats




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Page Analysis



- Shows you how Googlebot sees your site




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Enhancing Results in Google Through Content Changes

- Page Metadata
- Page Structure
- Keyword Density

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Page Metadata




- <title> content
 - Single biggest determinant
- Meta Description and Meta Keywords
 - Don't overload the description & keywords
 - Fewer keywords are better
 - Use the description to further entice users to click on your linked result

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Page Structure



- Content that occurs higher up in the code of your page (not necessarily in your browser) is given a higher weight than content lower down in the code
- A properly structured site will be lower in code through the use of **CSS**, reduced or eliminated table use, etc
- The reduction in code will push the content higher up the page as far as a search engine is concerned and thus, it will be given more weight
- Organize your content hierarchically
 - Use <h1>, <h2> to contain keywords
- Images should have ALT tags
- Text in the document should contain keywords (keyword density)


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Are URL Variables Bad?

- Google treats pages with URL variables as independent entities
- Nothing necessarily wrong with using URL variables, as long as <title> metadata is dynamic
- Use "stub file" approach
 - Create a CMS that outputs CFM/ASP/PHP which set an embedded value representing the URL value
 - Dynamically include your rendering engine

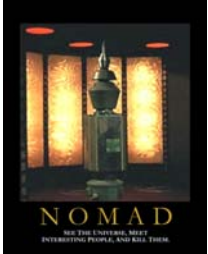
```
(mypage.cfm)
<cfset contentid=2345>
<cfinclude template="contentrender.cfm">
```



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Web 2.0 – Search Engine Hostile?


- Yeah, pretty much
- Text within Flash SWF's not indexed by Google (yet)
- AJAX / Frame based applications where content is dynamically determined at runtime by user input is also problematic
- Tips for taming web 2.0
 - Create HTML files that contain search terms
 - Place a hyperlink on the page that redirects to the web 2.0 object



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Enhancing your Page Rank

- Get pages that have higher PageRank to link to you using your relevant keyword phrases
 - Blogs
 - RSS Feeds
- Get your site listed with human-maintained directories (www.dmoz.org)
- Wikis
- Build an affiliate program
- Link Trading
- Domain age
- Code to text ratio
- Produce quality content



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Identifying Page Rank

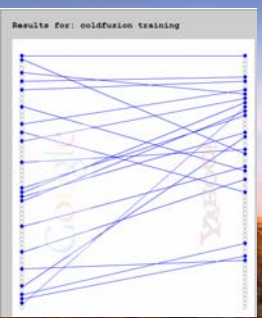
- www.seotools.com
- Install the Google Toolbar
- Original PageRank formula
 - <http://www-db.stanford.edu/~backrub/google.html>



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Google vs. Yahoo

Results for: coldfusion training




- The search engines use vastly different algorithms
- Image at left depicts location of matches for the search term "ColdFusion Training" where the results place on the different engines

Source: www.seotool.com

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Creating a Yahoo Friendly Site



- Uses the Slurp Crawler (inherited from inktomi)
- Returns the Entire Text of the web page to Yahoo
- Obeys Robots.txt (previously discussed)
- Indexes dynamic pages (CFM, JSP, ASPX, etc) frequently
- SLURP only follows HREF tags, not SRC tags (Frameset implication)

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More Tips for Yahoo

- Submit your site to one of the directories that Yahoo crawls often (visit yahoo directories – <http://dir.yahoo.com>)
- Use the Yahoo Companion Toolbar
- Keyword Density
- Backlinks
- Keywords in URL of site or page
- Social Search
- Concept Searching

Keyword Density


- The frequency of keywords within a site / page
- Analyze your specific competitors to determine what the best density is in your area and for your type of website
- Keyword densities that are too high could result in exclusion for suspicion of keyword spamming
- Optimal densities change over time

Backlinks

- Anchor Text
- Quality of Site
- Position of Link (links near the top more important than the bottom)
- Non-reciprocal links
- Links from sites whose content is complementary
- Links from community sites
- Links from Blog comments (watch for nofollow directives)
- Use Google Related feature to locate sites that might want to link to you
 - related:www.figleaf.com produces a list of sites that Google feels are similar to www.figleaf.com


Aging

- New sites and links are not given the same precedence as established content that has been around awhile




Analyzing Results: Google Analytics

- Free service
- Need to be applied
- Acquired by Google (formerly Urchin)
- Deploy by calling an external javascript resident on Google's servers
- Provides highly detailed use information




Google Analytics Demo



Paying for Links

- Google Adwords
- CPC vs. CPI
- Paying for pagerank



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Google Adwords

- Pay Per Click service, allowing you to create a sponsored link on Google
- Specify max CPC or use "Budget Optimizer"
- Limited text/images
- Certain editorial guidelines apply

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CPC vs. CPI

- Cost per click vs. Cost Per Impression
- CPI used to place ads on Google content provider network (affiliated web sites)

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Paying for PageRank

- Pay for links from highly ranked Google sites
- Costs vary
- www.linkadage.com

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What not to do (Black hat SEO)

- Hidden text
 - Style="visibility:hidden"
 - Style="display:none;"
 - onLoad="document.getElementById('HiddenSEOTerms').style.display='none;'"
- Doorway Pages (pages created expressly for search engines)
- Click Fraud
- Redirects
- Cloaking (serving different pages to search engine than a user)
- Spamdexing



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Tools of the trade

- Free
 - <http://googlewebmastercentral.blogspot.com/>
 - http://groups.google.com/group/Google_Webmaster_Help
 - www.seochat.com
 - Total Optimizer Pro (Keyword density analyzer) <http://www.seotoolstudies.com/>
 - SEEPS <http://www.seo-guy.com/seo-tools/seo-post.php>
- Pay
 - WebCEO <http://www.webceo.com>
 - Many, many, many others



- Star Trek Inspiration: http://echosphere.net/star_trek_insp/star_trek_insp.html

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For More Information



- For more information about SEO and a bunch of other topics that I only think I know something about, contact:
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