

# Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

## An Introduction

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## 1. Introduction

Marketing your website via search engines such as Google, Yahoo, Bing (Microsoft's new product) can be one of the most cost-effective ways to promote your website and online business.

It is also surrounded with more myth, contradicting claims, 'quick fix' methods and general smoke and mirrors than any other area of marketing.

This guide is our attempt to provide clients with a clearer path to follow when starting a search engine optimisation programme. It follows the ethical guidelines set down by Google themselves and which can be viewed here:

<http://www.google.com/support/webmasters/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=35769>

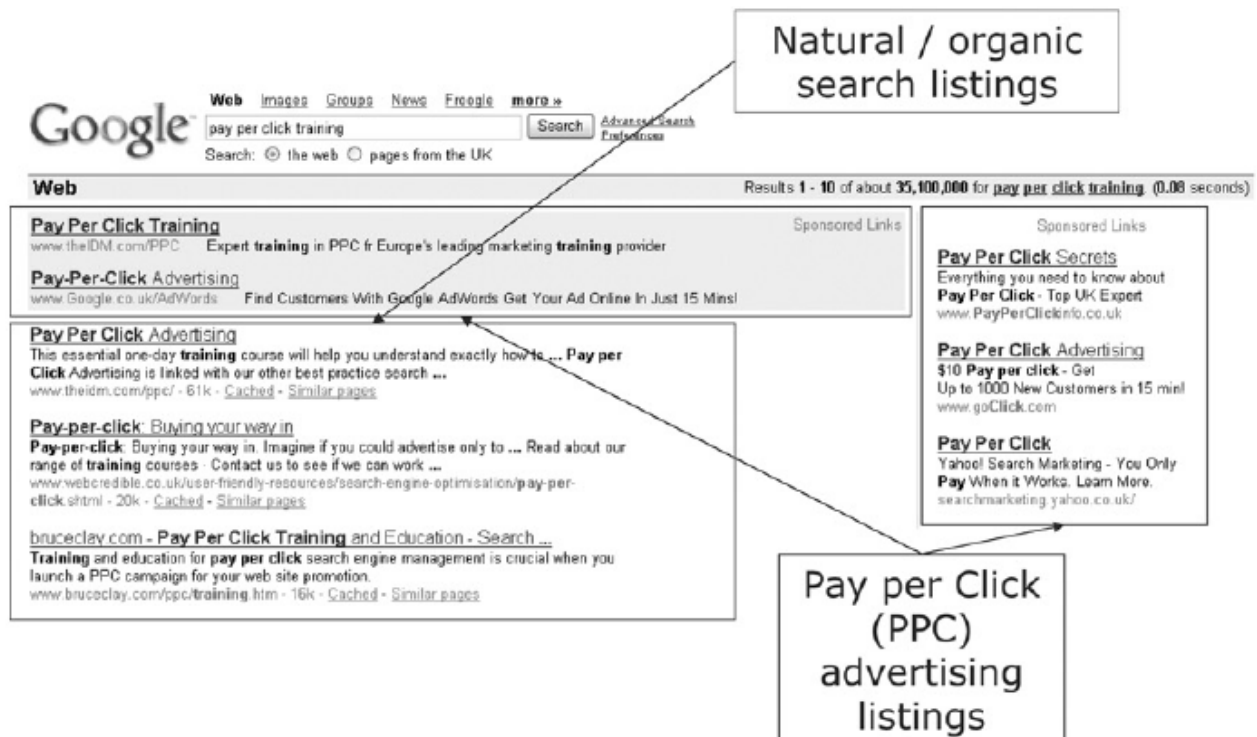
## 2. What is SEO?

Wikipedia defines SEO as the following:

“Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of improving the volume or quality of traffic to a web site from search engines via "natural" ("organic" or "algorithmic") search results. Typically, the earlier (or higher) a site appears in the search results list, the more visitors it will receive from the search engine. SEO may target different kinds of search, including image search, local search, and industry-specific vertical search engines. This gives a web site web presence.”

When marketers talk about “Search Engine Marketing” they may also be referring to Pay Per Click (PPC) advertising. These are the paid for listings found to the top and left of search engine results.

This guide does not deal with PPC advertising, only how to achieve the 'natural/organic' listings.



The image shows a Google search results page for the query "pay per click training". The search bar at the top shows the query and a search button. Below the search bar, the results are categorized into "Web" and "Sponsored Links".

**Natural / organic search listings:** This box points to the top three organic search results:

- Pay Per Click Training** (Sponsored Links): www.theDM.com/PPC Expert training in PPC fr Europe's leading marketing training provider
- Pay-Per-Click Advertising** (Sponsored Links): www.google.co.uk/AdWords Find Customers With Google AdWords. Get Your Ad Online in Just 15 Mins!
- Pay Per Click Advertising**: This essential one-day training course will help you understand exactly how to ... Pay per Click Advertising is linked with our other best practice search ... www.theDM.com/ppc/ - 61k - Cached - Similar pages

**Pay per Click (PPC) advertising listings:** This box points to the sponsored links on the right side of the page:

- Pay Per Click Secrets** (Sponsored Links): Everything you need to know about Pay Per Click - Top UK Expert www.PayPerClickInfo.co.uk
- Pay Per Click Advertising** (Sponsored Links): \$10 Pay per click - Get Up to 1000 New Customers in 15 min! www.goClick.com
- Pay Per Click** (Sponsored Links): Yahoo! Search Marketing - You Only Pay When it Works. Learn More. searchmarketing.yahoo.co.uk/

### 3. How do I get to the top of Google?

Good performance in the search engines is based on 4 factors:

1. Keywords
2. Content
3. Structure
4. Links

These are described below. Get each of these right, and concentrate your efforts where it matters and over time you should expect to see your traffic from the search engines improve.

Remember though that search engine marketing is **competitive**. There are only around ten results on the first page of Google for any given word or phrase, and only one site can hold the top slot.

Getting to #1 for 'cheap mobile phones' is going to be lot harder then getting to #1 for 'worm breeding in Glamorgan'

## 4. Keywords

The first step in your strategy is to decide what word or phrase you want to rank well for.

You might already have a phrase that describes your business such as “eCommerce for upmarket brands”, but ask yourself the following three questions before moving on.

1. Are enough people looking for that phrase?
2. Will these people turn into buyers?
3. Is beating the competition realistic?

Let's look at an example:

#### 4.1. Are enough people looking for that phrase?

Google can help here, with their keyword research tool: <https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>

Using our example we can see that hardly anyone actively looks for this phrase but other suggestions are made:

**How would you like to generate keyword ideas?**

Descriptive words or phrases (e.g. green tea)

Website content (e.g. www.example.co.uk/product?id=74893)

Enter one keyword or phrase per line:

Use synonyms

[Filter my results](#)

Choose columns to be displayed: [?](#)

Keywords	Advertiser Competition <a href="#">?</a>	Local Search Volume: July <a href="#">?</a>	Global Monthly Search Volume <a href="#">?</a>	Match Type: <a href="#">?</a> Exact <input type="button" value="v"/>
<b>Keywords related to term(s) entered</b> - sorted by relevance <a href="#">?</a>				
[ecommerce for upmarket brands]	<input type="text"/>	Not enough data	Not enough data	<a href="#">Add Exact</a> <input type="button" value="v"/>
<a href="#">Add all 1 &gt;&gt;</a>				
Download all keywords: <a href="#">text</a> , <a href="#">.csv (for excel)</a> , <a href="#">.csv</a>				
<b>Additional keywords to be considered</b> - sorted by relevance <a href="#">?</a>				
[website design]	<div style="width: 100%; height: 10px; background-color: #8bc34a;"></div>	49,500	201,000	<a href="#">Add Exact</a> <input type="button" value="v"/>
[e commerce]	<div style="width: 100%; height: 10px; background-color: #8bc34a;"></div>	14,800	368,000	<a href="#">Add Exact</a> <input type="button" value="v"/>
[ecommerce site]	<div style="width: 100%; height: 10px; background-color: #8bc34a;"></div>	1,600	2,400	<a href="#">Add Exact</a> <input type="button" value="v"/>
[ecommerce]	<div style="width: 100%; height: 10px; background-color: #8bc34a;"></div>	14,800	201,000	<a href="#">Add Exact</a> <input type="button" value="v"/>
[ecommerce hosting]	<div style="width: 100%; height: 10px; background-color: #8bc34a;"></div>	1,600	18,100	<a href="#">Add Exact</a> <input type="button" value="v"/>
[ecommerce websites]	<div style="width: 100%; height: 10px; background-color: #8bc34a;"></div>	1,300	5,400	<a href="#">Add Exact</a> <input type="button" value="v"/>
[ecommerce website design]	<div style="width: 100%; height: 10px; background-color: #8bc34a;"></div>	2,900	9,900	<a href="#">Add Exact</a> <input type="button" value="v"/>
[ecommerce web hosting]	<div style="width: 100%; height: 10px; background-color: #8bc34a;"></div>	880	12,100	<a href="#">Add Exact</a> <input type="button" value="v"/>

Let's pick "eCommerce website design" which has 2,900 people a month looking for it in the UK and describes our business.

#### 4.2. Will these people turn into buyers?

This takes a little gut feel and experience but as a rule, phrases which include active phrases like 'buy', 'hire' or 'company' (i.e. not trying a DIY approach!), are very good, whilst tyre kickers tend to look for 'cheap', 'review' or other 'research phrases.

#### 4.3. Is beating the competition realistic?

Let's put our phrase into Google. *ecommerce website design* brings back 33,900,000 results!

However let's get this in perspective. That includes every page that mentions these words, not necessarily that phrase.

Now try "*ecommerce website design*" using quote marks. 279,000 results, these are sites who have that exact phrase in them. More realistic.

Now let's refine a little further and enter *allintitle: "ecommerce website design"* 23,000

This means pages which have this phrase in their page title – i.e. have been optimized for this exact phrase.

Lastly we're just going to select "pages from the UK" and we're down to 3,470 competitors who are optimizing for that exact phrase.

A look at is list only shows one major business – Actinic – who might be tough to beat, but a top 3 position with some concerted effort is achievable within a few months.

Let's take this and move on.

## 5. Content

You are not going to get to #1 for “eCommerce Website Design”, unless you have content on your site about that subject. So start writing!

Blog posts, case studies, how-to articles and more all on this subject will tell Google what your site is all about.

Make sure your website includes areas where you can add this information. A blog is an excellent addition to your website for this purpose.

If it all seems a bit odd to be putting this on your site, forget about Google for a moment, what you are trying to do is show off your expertise in the subject area to website visitors and create some trust in your abilities.

Google’s algorithm tries to make the same judgements about you, so write for your intended prospects and Google will follow.

Take a look at our blog at <http://shinemarketing.com/blog> to see how we try to do this ourselves.

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## 6. Structure

Structure is how your site is coded and built.

The two essential things to know about your site are:

- 1) Can Google find its way through my site just by following links?
- 2) Can Google understand what my page is about?

Here's how to find out...

### 6.1. Can Google find its way through my site just by following links?

Go to Google and type the following:

site:yourwebsite.com (e.g. site:shinemarketing.com)

Google brings back 102 results which is roughly how many pages I know are on our website. If a significant number of pages have not been found, you may have a problem and it would be worth spending some time with a specialist to find out what the problems are.

Most SEO firms will provide a basic audit for around £300

### 6.2. Can Google understand what my page is about?

Try typing your website address into this handy tool:

<http://www.seochat.com/seo-tools/spider-simulator/>

As a minimum your phrase should appear in the Page title, meta description, and a couple of times in the body of the page.

Also try right clicking on your web page and selecting *View Source*. Search in the code for <H1>. This is a heading tag which shows the reader what the main subject of the page is.

e.g. <h1>eCommerce / Website Design / Online Marketing</h1>

If you've had an audit done, your SEO consultant should be able to instruct your developer on the changes needed.

### 6.3. Stop tinkering!

In our opinion this area of SEO is given far too much importance. There is a tendency to continually 'tweak' your own website because you are in control of it, but remember, SEO is **competitive**. Anything you do beyond the basics described above will be being done by your competitors. Spend your money on writing good content and promoting to other sites to get links and you will achieve far better results.

## 7. Links

This is where you need to spend the bulk of your time and effort.

Links are central to Google's algorithm as they reveal sites which are 'popular' or 'authoritative' in their sector.

An important site will gather attention from other websites, Google sees this and reflects it in their algorithm.

The best way to achieve links is to have good quality content on your site that other websites will want to refer to, then go and tell other people about it.

### 7.1. Where to get links from

- ◆ Directories – plenty of these covering geographic areas and industry sectors as well as large general sites like Yahoo directory.
- ◆ Forums – mention your site in **relevant** threads
- ◆ Blogs – Comment on blog posts relevant to your customers and steer them to your site
- ◆ Press release distribution services – e.g. PR Web, many of these will allow you to link to your site, press releases may then get picked up by more blogs, news sites and others
- ◆ Social media sites – talk about your site and your business on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and other sites. Make sure you have a profile page on all the major ones with a consistent message

### 7.2. Good links vs bad links

Thinks quality, not quantity.

Google has plenty of data on which websites link to each other and will give more weight if a site like the FT links to you than if an unheard of blog links to you.

They can also spot the same content appearing in several places (duplicate content), sites owned by the same people and many more 'tricks' that worked in the early days of SEO.

Judge each site and ask yourself what your prospects would think if they saw you there.

If you find yourself doing things 'just for the SEO', it's probably not a sustainable strategy. You may get good short term results but sites built around trying to 'trick' the search engines have a nasty habit of crashing out of sight overnight.

## 8. Budgeting

If you are trying to estimate budgets for your campaign, it's useful to see how much the same phrase would cost you in PPC each month.

Our phrase would cost us around £5-10 per day, or £150-£300 / month. This is a rough budget you should be prepared to set aside for your SEO efforts.

We recommend this rather than just spending the same on PPC for the following reasons:

- 1) PPC is instantly on, but also instantly off when your budget ends. SEO efforts last a lot longer.
- 2) The PPC budget will only get you people looking for "ecommerce website design" but over time your SEO will get you a mass of other phrases related phrases which appear in your copy. This can as much as double the ROI of SEO over PPC.

## 9. Summary

Overall your SEO strategy is very much the same as building your brand. It's a long term effort that needs an understanding of your core business, promoted over the long term.

Don't expect quick fixes, but on the other hand, you can expect the effects to last a long time once they are in place.

Make sure your site describes and demonstrates your expertise, is visible to search engines, then promote that in as many places as possible where potential customers can be found and you won't go far wrong.

If you'd like to find out how Shine Marketing can help the SEO strategy and deployment for upmarket eCommerce sites, drop us a note to [sales@shinemarketing.com](mailto:sales@shinemarketing.com)

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