

AN USMAN GROUP WHITEPAPER:

# Everything You Need To Know About Search Engine Optimization in 10 Minutes.

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# Executive Overview

Expect high-level explanations of search engine optimization with very little industry jargon. Period.

We wrote this whitepaper for you – the person who needs to understand what search engine optimization (SEO) is, and how it can be integrated to achieve important business goals – from a decision maker’s perspective.

Many whitepapers on this subject rely heavily on technical explanations of what search engine optimization means and how to implement it from a programming standpoint. Our approach is different.

We will explain what search engine optimization is, what it costs, how to measure it and what to expect in clear, easy to understand language. We’ve focused on the essentials – so you can focus on making an informed business decision. We promised to take just 10 minutes of your time, so let’s get started.

## Key Take-Aways From This Whitepaper:

1. SEO allows for sustainable exposure without incurring additional costs.
2. SEO allows for measurable progress and goal accomplishment.
3. SEO allows for alignment with global marketing initiatives.



# What is Search Engine Optimization?

It allows search engines to understand what you do and how relevant you are.

You already know that search engines have become the new electronic marketplace where buyers and sellers go to conduct business. What you might not know is that the price of admission requires more than just cold hard cash. **Translating what your company provides in a way that search engines will understand is at the heart of what search engine optimization is all about.**

Generally speaking, you'll be relying on soft value targets like trust, reputation, experience and history. Then there are the semi-hard assets like keywords, code, paragraphs, and hyperlinks - the building blocks for how search engines will determine your website's ultimate value.

How will your company measure value on these seemingly intangible assets? Time. The time that is required for search engine optimization (SEO) professionals to properly execute on-page alterations *throughout* your website and cultivate highly credible sources of trust *to* your website in the form of hyperlinks.

An experienced SEO professional can identify critical obstacles and perform complicated tasks in a fraction of the time that an unskilled employee would take to complete – and that's assuming the unskilled employee would actually *know* which tools to use and tasks to perform in order to achieve desired results.

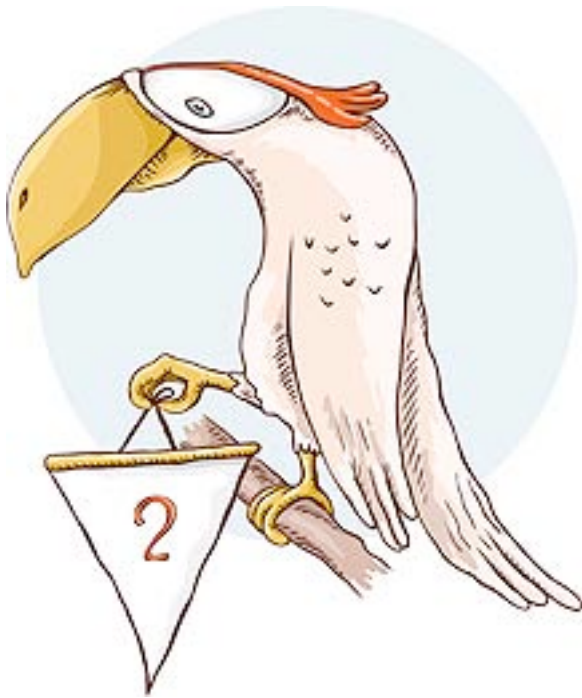
**According to *Marketing Sherpa's 2009 Search Marketing Benchmark Guide*:**

- Successful companies that have invested in SEO will dedicate approximately 10% of their total marketing budget in order to acquire sustainable gains.
- Annual marketing budgets of \$50K - \$300K will spend approximately \$10K - \$42K.
- Annual marketing budgets of a million dollars or more will spend \$80K and above.

Companies that are engaged in SEO should realize that these efforts are actually investments in sustainable long-term exposure and continued growth opportunities. Once the fundamentals of optimization are in place, the entire website will gain greater ranking momentum each day without having to incur a cost. You've *gotta* love that.

SEO also offers new opportunities in customer awareness and acquisition. By truly understanding your customer's desires and intent through a keyword lens, you can begin to reach new customers who were completely unaware of your company's products or services. Furthermore, proper saturation on search engines reinforces your brand – without having to pay extra for it.

In addition to the unlimited growth potential that search engines will help cultivate, search engine optimization is also extremely accountable. By using sophisticated search engine position reporting tools and website statistics software, you're privy to vast amounts of quantifiable information at any moment.



# Successful Benchmarking Criteria

There are plenty of ways to measure progress.

What metrics should you use to track progress and establish success? The good news is that you'll have plenty of new information at your fingertips - thanks to website analytics and various reporting software.

You should expect to see gradual improvements for each of the following key performance indicators as your company becomes more engaged in the search engine optimization process.

- **Volume** – It is important to track the amount of visitors, pages generated per visit and the ratio of new visits specific to individual keyword phrases so you can assign value from a quantitative perspective.
- **Time** – The average time the user will spend on a particular page. Depending on what the company's goals are, a longer length of stay suggests that your customer has found the information or which they had been searching for.
- **Desertion** - Also known as a bounce rate or an abandonment rate. This is expressed as a percentage of visitors that have decided to leave your page in relation to the total amount of visitors. A high bounce rate suggests irrelevant information and a poor choice of keyword phrases as determined by the user.

- **Variation** – The amount of similar keyword phrases that your website will rank highly for. For example, successful optimization for the keyword stem “hybrid car” may yield relevance for the term “hybrid car review” since the keyword stem is similar in nature and possible intent.
- **Rank** – Where the actual keyword phrases rank within the search engine results page. Monitoring keyword position phrases across Google, Yahoo, MSN and ASK on a regular basis provides insightful status information. As you might imagine, being ranked within the top 5 results for a particular keyword phrase will yield greater traffic volumes than those positioned within the bottom 10 results.
- **Reputation** – Constantly evaluate the quality of textual hyperlinks and manage the various textual phrases used to describe the company’s website. Authoritative websites provide a “vote of confidence” in the form of a hyperlink that can greatly enhance your company’s online reputation. This form of reputation management ensures proper credentials will pass *to* and *through* the pages.
- **Conversion** – This is where you establish website goals beforehand (i.e. signups, downloads, requests, and purchases), so that you can determine an individual keyword’s performance and assign an actual dollar value.



# Marketing Coordination

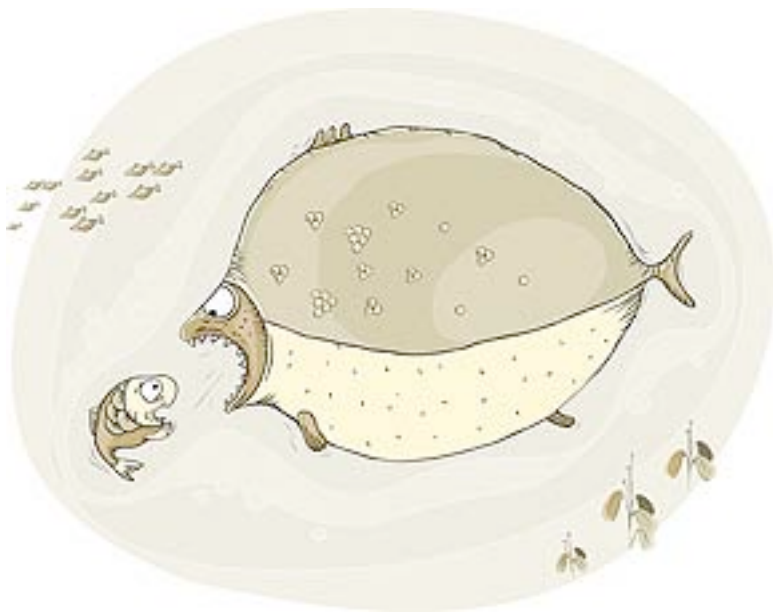
The same story will be told  
but in a variety of ways.

As your company becomes more involved in the search engine optimization process, alignment and coordination of global marketing initiatives is the next logical step. Trade shows, company events, product launches, promotions, and other company announcements should be communicated months in advance to ensure timely search engine positioning.

You should expect *some* interaction between your marketing department and your SEO professional. Communication and coordination through bi-weekly phone calls and regular e-mail correspondence with the team are essential in communicating the company's vision and notifying the SEO professional of any shifts in marketing strategies. In return, you can anticipate the following from your SEO professional:

- Specific progress reports
- Regular position ranking details
- Competitive intelligence updates
- New keyword opportunities

By partnering closely with an SEO professional, your company will leverage internal marketing resources properly, utilize specialized resources strategically, respond to online competitors effectively and deliver consistent marketing messages across different media channels expeditiously.



# Ranking Signals

What makes some websites “better” than others?

Search engines will weigh in on a variety of signals when determining your website's relevance and ranking. Factors that can be easily influenced garner little weight, while those that are more difficult to manipulate carry a greater weight. The following are the most recognized ranking signals that search engines use to assign value based on consensus and experience.

- **Code** – Search engines look at how each page's code is structured. They will parse important sections of the page called “tags”, and look specifically for keyword phrases, keyword frequency and keyword placement.
- **Hyperlinks** – Links serve as the glue that unites pages (and websites) together. Search engines look at where the “glue” comes from and where it points to, to assign link value.
- **Age** – Factors like the actual age of the domain name, the date a link was established or how long a specific page has been in existence will impact your ranking.
- **Content** – What's important is how the page actually “reads”. If a user will spend the time reading your pages, search engines will factor in a time of stay value and assume you have relevant content.
- **Load Time** – How quickly a page loads has become a recent (and debatable) factor. Reusing, removing and condensing code helps shrink pages to smaller, more acceptable file sizes – which expedites the time required to understand page contents.



# About The Usman Group

We hope you thoroughly enjoyed this whitepaper and welcome *any* questions, comments or feedback.

Usman Group is a full-service interactive design agency, specializing in the creation of unique online experiences and Internet marketing solutions. Usman Group's expertise in the search engine optimization arena has enabled clients to achieve significant increases in traffic, visibility and brand awareness.

Our team is very serious about producing smart, searchable and scalable web properties. Our previous work experiences inside big box agencies have given us the processes and procedures necessary to execute projects nimbly and skillfully.

We're seasoned veterans of the dot-com era and our *working* knowledge of the latest trends, styles and techniques will serve as an invaluable addition for success.

To connect with an Usman Group team member, please visit [www.theusmangroup.com](http://www.theusmangroup.com), call **847-325-5466** or e-mail [projects@theusmangroup.com](mailto:projects@theusmangroup.com)