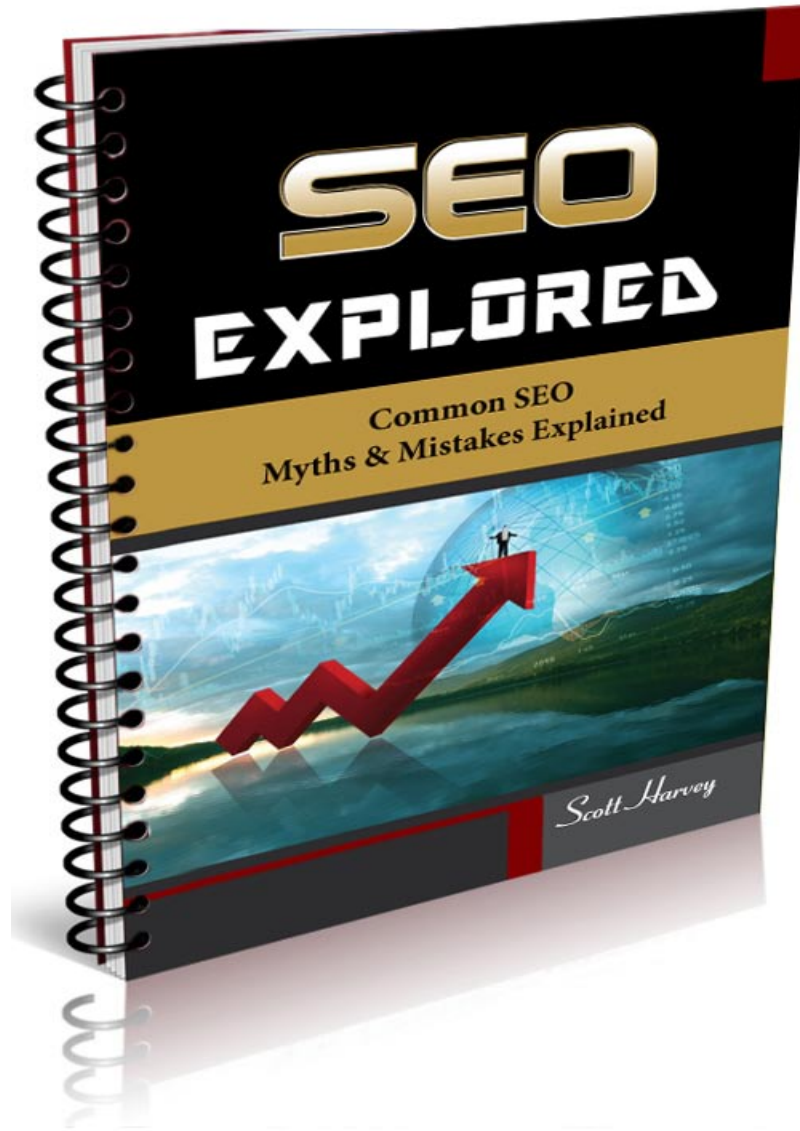


SEO Explored - Common SEO Myths & Mistakes Explained

by Scott Harvey
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Introduction

The world of Search Engine Optimization (aka SEO) is highly technical and ever-changing. As a result, there is much misinformation to be found on the topic on line.

It's to be expected I suppose, as each search engine's algorithm is different and shrouded in secrecy. Because of this, SEO Consultants like us spend much of our time testing a variety of theories to see which pass the test, and which don't.

Some of the myths were never true, while some were true in the past but are no longer true. In addition to a variety of myths, our clients routinely ask us about the most common SEO mistakes that are made.

In response to these questions, I wrote a number of articles. This report is a collection of those articles and as a result, you may see some "overlap" in the information presented.

Before I dive in to the myths/mistakes, I'll do my best to give you my definition of both SEO and SEM. This knowledge will help set the stage for everything that follows it.

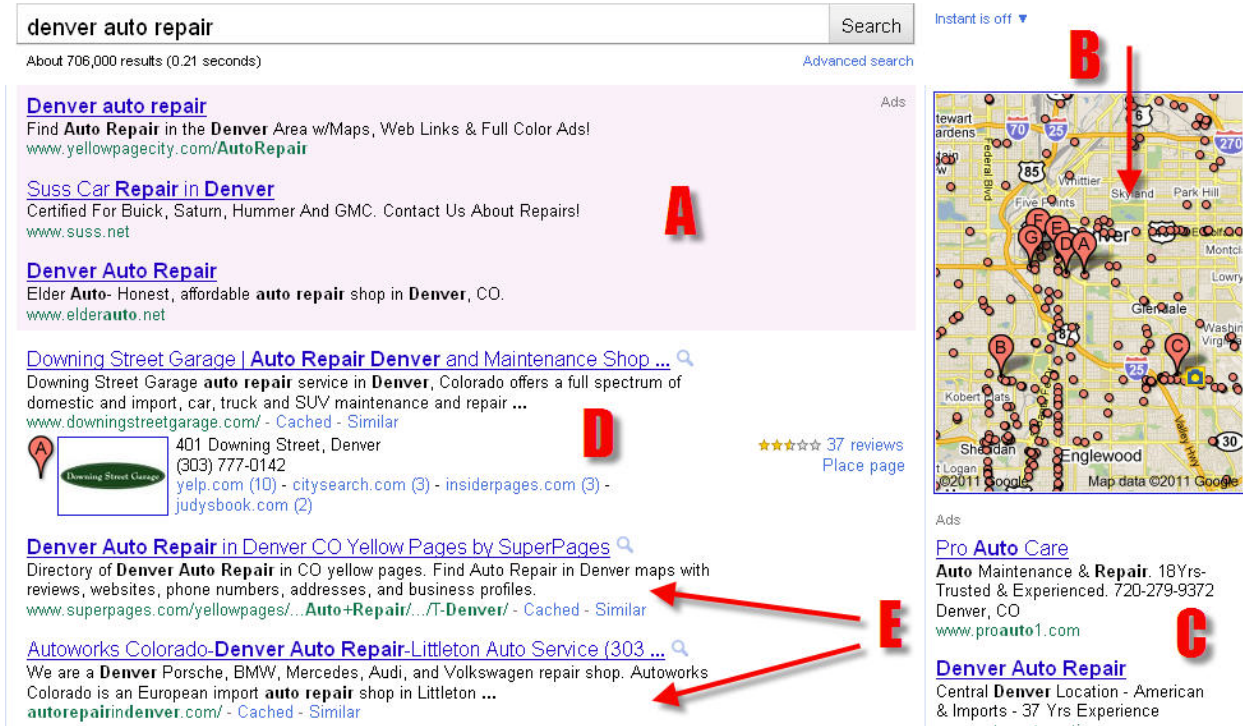
To improving your SEO, and your profits—



Scott Harvey

What Is Search Engine Optimization?

Search Engine Optimization



Here's a partial screenshot of the results of Googling the keyword phrase, "denver auto repair."

- A - The top three ads paid ads. They have been created through Google's Adwords program and are called Pay-Per-Click or "PPC" ads.
- B - Since I conducted a "local" search, a search with the name of a place in it, Google is showing me a Google Map relevant to my search. The red flags, lettered "A-G," represent the businesses that have "claimed" their Google Places listings.
- C - These ads on the far right of the page are also paid ads created through Adwords.
- D - This is an "organic" listing that can be manipulated through SEO. You can see that this business has created/claimed their Google Places listing, as the "A" flag appears in its listing.
- E - These two listings are standard "organic" listings... the kind most people are familiar with

Search engine optimization, aka SEO, is a term that refers to the things you can do to improve your website's ranking in the search engine results. Search engine optimization techniques focus on increasing the organic, or natural, traffic that you receive based on your ranking within the search engines.

The goal of search engine optimization is to ensure that your website appeals to search engine crawlers, or bots, so that the search engines will take note of your site and its content, categorizing it in a way that will allow it to show up in the SERPs (Search Engine Results Pages). Effective SEO will cause your site to appear high on the first page when people search on the terms for which you want to rank highly.

Search engine optimization is achieved through a wide variety of methods. SEO professionals will focus on, among other things, proper keyword research; clarity in the setup of your website's headers, tags, file names and descriptions; external backlinking; internal cross-linking; and quality content creation.

While each search engine uses its own algorithm for determining the ranking of every page that is indexed, it is possible to increase your rankings with all search engines by making your site informative and visible via both on-page and off-page techniques. Sites that are designed with ease of use and quality information in mind tend to do better than those built sloppily and without a solid plan.

Search Engine Marketing

Search engine marketing, or “SEM,” is similar to search engine optimization but focuses less on natural rankings and more on the actual promotion of a website. SEM techniques generally include natural SEO but almost always branch out to include contextual or paid search advertising.

Paid search advertising models became more prominent in the late 1990's, after the search engines themselves became more popular. SEM focuses more on business-oriented websites and their overall online marketing strategies. Because many of the paid advertisements appear at the top of the search engines, the FTC insists that paid advertisements and website listings must be

clearly denoted so that consumers do not confuse them with websites that have obtained high rankings naturally.

It really doesn't matter what type of website you have, whether it's personal, or geared towards your business. Incorporating search engine optimization techniques into the creation and ongoing upkeep of your site will ensure that you receive higher levels of traffic and, ultimately, greater success.

Common SEO Mistakes To Avoid (Part One)

Effective Search Engine Optimization is really not that difficult but it does take a bit of knowledge and a keen attention to detail.

Here are three common SEO mistakes to avoid:

1. Choosing the wrong keywords.

Each page of your website should be optimized for just a small handful of keyword phrases—one or two is considered best. This helps your page get found whenever someone uses a search engine to search for a keyword phrase you've optimized for.

If you optimize for the right keywords, you'll likely get an increase in website traffic from those looking for the types of products and services you offer. However, if you optimize for the "wrong" keywords, you may not get an increase in traffic or you may be found by the wrong audience altogether.

Using a keyword research tool, you can get an idea of how many times per month a particular keyword phrase is searched for. This is important because it won't benefit you to optimize your web page for a term that no one cares about.

Also, you should type each keyword phrase into Google (or your search engine of choice) to see what results you find. If the results show you pages that are related to your own, you are on the right track.

If the results are completely unrelated, you should avoid optimizing for the keyword phrase and look for more targeted terms.

The topic of keywords would easily take a few college-level courses to explore thoroughly, but if you want to learn at least a bit about it, there are lots of free resources on the web, and a lot of paid manuals and courses.

2. Forgetting to include a page title.

Each page of your website should have an intelligent page title... also called the "title tag." This information is added to the html code itself and can be found at the top of the page.

The page title serves a few different purposes. First, it is displayed at the very top of the browser window to let the visitor know what kind of information to expect on the page. It also helps the search engines know what kind of content to expect. This is why it is crucial that your page title include the keyword phrases you are optimizing for.

The page title also appears whenever someone finds your page through the use of the search engine. The page title information is used for the blue, clickable link that will take the searcher to your page.

Forgetting to include a page title may cause the search engines to add the term, "Untitled Document," to your page. This looks quite unprofessional and can hamper your ability to be found for important keyword phrases as well.

3. Using the same page title on all pages.

While effective SEO needn't be difficult, it does take work. All too often, I see webmasters using the exact same page title on every page of a site, which isn't optimal.

Remember that the search engines index pages of your site, not your website as a whole. Your "title tag" should include the keyword phrases you want to optimize a particular page for, and each page should be optimized for just one or two terms.

While there is much, much more to effective search engine optimization, avoiding these three common on-page mistakes will help you outrank the many sites that haven't corrected them.

If you are careful to do thorough keyword research, you should find a set of keyword phrases likely to bring you targeted traffic and new business.

Common SEO Mistakes To Avoid (Part Two)

While there are a variety of SEO mistakes to avoid, these three can be the difference between a nice surge in website traffic and having your website trapped in a virtual "black hole."

1. Keyword Stuffing

So, you've done your keyword research and have found two really great keyword phrases to optimize a page of your site for. You've added the phrases to your "meta page title" and plan to add them to your "meta keywords" list too.

While it can be tempting to add 1,001 keywords into this list, it's the wrong thing to do. Generally, we think that "more is better" but it's certainly not in this case.

You see, the search engines are trying to index your web pages for terms relevant to your "on-page" content. The better they do this, the more likely it is that the "internet surfer" will continue to use their search engine.

As a result, they will usually index your pages to appear for a handful of keyword phrases but they're not going to index it for hundreds or thousands.

While there's no exact value, the practice of using many "meta keywords" or repeating your keyword phrases many times in your "on-page" content is considered "keyword stuffing."

Keyword stuffing is frowned upon by the search engines as it appears you are trying to "game" the system. Instead of getting more traffic, you may actually find that your page gets de-indexed and removed from the search engine results altogether.

2. Forgetting to add a "meta description"

Often times, inexperienced webmasters forget to add appropriate metadata to each page. As most of this information is not displayed to human visitors, it's easy to overlook.

It is vital, however, to add a unique meta description to each page of your site and here's why...

Google, and the other search engines, generally display the meta description content (unless you have an Open Directory listing) as part of your search engine listing. It appears beneath the clickable link to your website.

If you forget to add a page description, the search engines will automatically grab a portion of text from your page and use it instead. This may not sound like a big deal, but it is.

Your page description text can help to improve your "on-page" optimization, but only if it includes the keyword phrase you are optimizing around.

It also acts as a mini advertisement and should do its best to entice a web surfer to click the link to visit YOUR site!

As there are generally ten organic search engine listings on any search results page, you must compete with the others and do your best to see that your listing stands out from the crowd.

Your page description content should be interesting to read and tell the reader what benefit(s) they'll receive by visiting your site. If you accomplish this, you'll likely get an increase in traffic and start to steal clicks from the other listings.

3. Forgetting to build any "anchor text" links

It's important to optimize each page of your site around just one or two keyword phrases but the work doesn't stop there!

While the search engines use many factors to determine where to rank each page in their indexes, none are more important than the presence of "anchor text" links pointing to your site.

Anchor text links (also called "text links," "hypertext links," "backlinks" etc.) are simply pieces of text appearing on another site, that are linked to a particular page on your website. Each link is seen as a vote by the search engines and they use them to help determine where to rank your page for the linked terms.

If the search engines don't find any links, they make the assumption that no one really cares about the content found on your page. Of course, this assumption really isn't fair as it takes some time for a brand-new page to acquire links naturally, but that is the assumption they make.

So in order to speed the process up and help the search engines index your pages for the keyword phrases you've chosen during your research, you have to build some anchor text links yourself.

This can be accomplished in a variety of ways, but building them through article marketing, video marketing, online press release submission and participating on related blogs are some of the fastest methods.

No one can guarantee your exact results but by avoiding these three "SEO Mistakes," you'll set yourself apart from the masses. Doing so will give you a much better chance of getting your pages ranked on the first page for the terms you're targeting.

10 SEO Myths Debunked

The internet may be called the "Information Superhighway" but that doesn't always mean the information is correct!

This is especially true when it comes to Search Engine Optimization. Sometimes, the information may have been valid in the past but is no longer valid and sometimes... it was never valid to begin with.

Here are ten SEO myths and their corresponding "truths" -

1. It's impossible to outrank a web page with a Google PageRank higher than your own.

While Google's PageRank indicator may play a minor role in determining search engine placement, it's not a critical factor.

If you conduct a few searches on Google you will find this to be true. It shouldn't take more than a few minutes to find a page with a lower Google PR outranking a page with a higher one.

2. Having an XML Sitemap will boost your rankings in the SERPs.

It is wise to create an XML Sitemap but don't expect to see any rank improvements. The sitemap is useful to the search engines and will help them crawl your site more efficiently but it won't help you "leap frog" your competitors. It's primarily intended to help the bots find, and index your pages.

3. Including "meta keywords" will improve your SEO.

Most search engines disregard the "meta keyword" information altogether. While it can't hurt to include a handful of relevant terms, don't expect this to improve your rankings at all.

4. It's imperative to update your homepage frequently.

If changing your homepage content is good for your visitors and business model, then have at it. Otherwise, just leave it as is.

That's not to say that your entire site should be stagnant but there's no evidence to conclude that it's necessary to update your homepage's content on a regular basis.

5. Trading links with other webmasters is just as good as building quality "one way" links.

Trading links (aka Reciprocal Linking) was something that worked a long time ago but it is no longer effective for improving one's rankings, because the search engines see that as gaming the system and discount the links.

The only time that the trading of links makes any sense, is when both webmasters may benefit from the traffic that may come from the partner's site, even though they receive no "link juice" from the backlinks.

6. SEO is a "set and forget" activity.

Most webmasters (and business owners) wish this were true but it's simply not the case. Effective Search Engine Optimization is an ongoing activity and if you're not going forward, you'll find your rankings slip over time.

This is especially true as it pertains to link building. The search engines monitor your inbound links and if they find they are dwindling over time, they assume your page is losing its relevance.

7. Using Heading Tags is crucial to your SEO.

The use of Heading Tags (i.e. H1, H2, etc.) is useful to define your site's content but don't expect them to make marked improvements in your rankings.

8. Hiding a bunch of links on your pages is a good idea.

Google, and the other search engines, are incredibly smart and can spot the occurrence of "spammy links" quite easily.

Whether you're using a teeny-tiny font size to display them, coloring them the same as your page background or using CSS to move them so far off the page they can't be seen by visitors... the search engines know!

This practice is foolish, and trust me on this -- no good will come from it!

9. There is a perfect keyword density for your on-page content.

This may have been true in the past but it's no longer as relevant. It's wise to ensure that your targeted keyword phrases appear on your page, but make it natural - don't bother calculating the density percentages.

It's much better to write content that will be found valuable by the humans reading your content than to spend your time writing for the robots.

10. Paying a firm to "register" your site with "hundreds of search engines" is a wise investment.

This type of offer may sound appealing, but it will do little, if anything, to improve your search engine rankings or generate meaningful website traffic.

We hope this information will help you keep from wasting time and money on outdated SEO tactics, or on those that never worked in the first place.

Conclusion

It is my sincere hope that you found this information helpful!

If you'd like professional SEO help, we're here for you.

We specialize in helping business owners build a strong and meaningful (and profitable) presence on the web. We are experts in both on-page and off-page Search Engine Optimization and Website Marketing, and we can help you get new business as a direct result.

If you'd like to see how we can help, give us a call at: (949) 777-5655 or visit: <http://honestwebsitemarketing.com/contact-us> and complete our online form to request more information.

We look forward to talking with you and will do our best to help you increase your web exposure, get new business and outperform your competitors!

About The Author



Scott Harvey (that's me) is the co-founder and chief website optimization strategist of Honest Website Marketing, which specializes in helping businesses build a meaningful & profitable online presence.

Before that, I co-founded In.vision Research Corporation, a leading provider of software that enables authoring and management of large-scale XML knowledge assets. I ran the Western operations, oversaw all software development, and had P&L accountability. I also designed and implemented all marketing campaigns for the company. The 50-person firm was ultimately sold to a Fortune 1000 company.

In other words, I get both the technical side, and the marketing side of website optimization and marketing.

I founded Honest Website Marketing, LLC to help businesses build a meaningful and profitable online presence.

My dream is to own a vineyard and winery in the Napa Valley thirty years from now if I ever retire, which I doubt, because I love what I do. I'm interested in coin collecting, technology and gadgets, books, my wife and daughters, and coaching the girls' soccer teams, among other things.