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BizBuySell Article

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Must Haves to Be Found Online

Part 2: SEO and Getting Found Online

In an effort to expand on material we presented at the Spring IBBA Conference, we've created an exclusive IBBA series to help uncover online trends, what they mean for you, and actionable items to ensure your company's name will rise in the online search ranks. Last month, we reviewed company websites and what to include for an effective web presence. This post's goal is to help you increase your visibility online.

Even though you have a website, how can you make sure new clients can find you? Placement is crucial in this day and age with an overwhelming number of search results. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the process of enhancing the visibility of a website or page in order to appear in the un-paid search results and drive more visitors to a website.

Appearing near the top of the organic (unpaid) search results is the goal. According to Compete.com, the first ranked organic entry in search engine results receives 53% of clicks, and steeply decreases down to the fifth result which gets only 4%. It's not enough to just create a website and hope for the best if your goal is to build brand awareness and clientele. Luckily, there are clear rules that can help you get better results, and we'll explain how to help your website rank highly in the organic results.

Anatomy of a Google Search Results Page & How to Get There



Organic



Pay Per Click (PPC)



Local Search

Organic Results: Where 94% of searchers click.

How to Appear Here: Organic results are achieved through the use of keywords, inbound links, and relevant, timely content on your website. It is hardest to achieve top placement, but the use of local keywords and geographic modifiers will help. Take into consideration the following items when employing SEO:

1. **Relevant Content, Website Structure, and Referral Links:** Search engines like Google, Bing, and Yahoo have a hard job to do. These sites have to deliver the most relevant search results from trillions of searches each year or else users will leave to go to one of their competitors. As a result, they have to index all of the websites/webpages in the world and create a fast way to sort through this massive database to quickly return relevant results to the user based on the relevance of the keywords being entered. When sorting results search engines are looking at certain things to help them with this arduous task, including keyword matching, URL matching, examining how the website title tags are set-up, and the websites' domain authority (how many referral links, and from what other trusted sources are the links from?) in order to serve up the most relevant match.
2. **Tags:** Covered in more detail below, tags will help search engines to match your website with qualified traffic. These are titles you can designate as the visible links in search results, and will help convert impressions to clicks when crafted correctly.
3. **Links:** Inbound links can help promote your website. Each link to your website is a 'vote' from that website for yours. Links from more important and established sites carry even more weight (or votes). Having links that direct back to your website are as good as word of mouth to search engines, and will help your content get found.

Pay Per Click (PPC): Paid advertising that allows you to bid on keywords. About 6% of visitors click on paid ads on search results pages.

How to Appear Here: Set up your [Google Adwords Account](#) and create your ads. Select the top 10 local search terms you'd like to "bid" on to match what potential customers are looking for. This option is the only one you'll have to pay for, so if you're still not seeing your site in the top 10 organic results after implementing the free optimization tactics, you may want to consider testing a Pay-Per-Click campaign.

Local/Map Search: Google local listings, or [Google Places for Business](#), are free advertisements for your business, allowing it to appear when local search parameters are used.

How to Appear Here: By claiming the [Google Places for Business](#) profile (similar for Bing Local, Yahoo, etc.), your business is indexed when online users search by terms in your industry and location. Location-aware searches on mobile devices and search engines will indicate that your business is nearby and show it to local customers. For more tips on using Google+ which has merged with Google Places for Business, you can visit the BizBuySell Blog [here](#).

Website SEO Best Practices

The goal with SEO is to focus on the specific local area you serve and become #1 in your local market for various keywords. Here is how you can find which words to use, and how to effectively use them on your website.

Choose Highly Searched Phrases or Keywords

Use Google's free [AdWords Keyword Tool](#) to see how people might be searching for your services and content. This tool will show you where search volume exists, and help identify how searchers are using keywords, business categories, location, etc. Choose to include phrases that have the highest monthly searches to rank higher in results when they are used.

Example: Instead of "los angeles business broker", use "business for sale los angeles", which has a higher number of local monthly searches.

Keyword	Competition	Global Monthly Searches [?]	Local Monthly Searches [?]
<input type="checkbox"/> los angeles business brokers ▼	High	1,300	1,300
<input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Save all Keyword ideas (100) 1 - 50 of 100 ◀ ▶			
Keyword	Competition	Global Monthly Searches [?]	Local Monthly Searches [?]
<input type="checkbox"/> los angeles business broker ▼	High	1,000	1,000
<input type="checkbox"/> business for sale los angeles ▼	High	4,400	3,600
<input type="checkbox"/> business broker los angeles ▼	High	1,000	1,000
<input type="checkbox"/> los angeles business for sale ▼	High	4,400	3,600
<input type="checkbox"/> business for sale in los angeles ▼	High	4,400	3,600
<input type="checkbox"/> business brokers los angeles ▼	High	1,300	1,300
<input type="checkbox"/> businesses for sale in los angeles ▼	High	1,300	1,300
<input type="checkbox"/> business brokers in los angeles ▼	High	1,300	1,300

Title Tags

The <title> tags are what you name your page, and will appear in search results. These title tags will tell the searcher, and search engine, what topic your page is about. Since your title is also what appears within the search result listing, it will also affect your click-through rate as well as your rank.

Here are a few simple rules to creating effective Title Tags:

1. Make sure to use a unique title tag for every page to help search engines detect distinct pages of your site.
2. Use keywords in your title tags and make sure your page content supports them.
3. Create brief, but descriptive titles to make sure the full title is displayed.

Example Title Tag:

[IBBA: Home](#)
www.ibba.org/ ▾
Business brokerage association offering information for consumers and professionals.
[Member Directory](#) - [2013 IBBA Spring Conference](#) - [Become a Business Broker](#)

Friendly URLs

Allow search engines to find our website through descriptive URLs. Remember the URL appears in the search result and will also affect the click-through rate as searches will determine if the content is what they're looking for based on your link.

Tips for Creating Friendly URLs:

1. Make your URLs as simple as possible while including descriptive keywords.
2. Use names that relate to the content on the page. Ex: "san-francisco-businesses-for-sale".
3. Avoid parameters and non-alpha characters, which can confuse search engines and prevent clicks.

Example URL:

www.ibba.org/about

For additional reading, Google publishes a "[Search Engine Optimization Starters Guide](#)" which I highly recommend, as it will give you a clear understanding of how search engines will bring the right audience to you.

By making small changes to your website you can start to bring more traffic to your website and awareness to your services. In next month's newsletter, we'll explain how to guarantee local placement and increase your online presence through local profiles and directories. These will serve to supplement your website and marketing efforts, earning your brand more local awareness.

Helpful Resources:

[What are Google's 200 Ranking Factors for SEO](#)

[Google+ For Franchises and Small Business](#)

Bob House is General Manager for BizBuySell.com – the Internet's largest and most heavily trafficked business-for-sale marketplace. Currently, approximately 45,000 businesses are listed for sale on BizBuySell and the site receives more than 910,000 monthly visits. BizBuySell also has one of the largest databases of recently sold businesses and a leading franchise directory.