

# Caravan's Super Successful Search Engine Savvy Secrets

## Goal 1: Select effective keyphrases

Search engines use keywords to index your site, and customers use them in searches to find your site. Even Excite, which ignores keywords in meta tags, uses keywords pulled from your content.

Strategies for developing keywords:

- Develop keyword *phrases*. It's very difficult to place high on a single-word search. Matching the phrases customers use in searches increases both placement and the reliability ratings many search engines use.
- Ask potential customers what keyphrases they might use if they were searching for a site like yours.
- Brainstorm for keyphrases that effectively describe the image you want to evoke. Consider different aspects—items for sale, information you offer, tone of the site, customer benefits, secure online transactions.
- Look for keyphrases in the text of your site, and other marketing copy.
- Check meta tags on competitors' sites to find out what keyphrases they're using.
- Check meta tags on sites that place high for your keyphrases, and find out what other keyphrases they're using.
- If you have only a few keyphrases, include plural versions, variant capitalization, and common misspellings in your meta keywords tag. Some search engines are not plural- or case-sensitive, and visitors often misspell search terms.

## Goal 2: Create content that uses keyphrases effectively

Search engines use keyphrases in many ways, and place you higher depending on how keyphrases are distributed throughout the page.

Strategies

- Create a meta keywords tag for each page on your site with all the relevant keyphrases, separated by commas.
- Use keyphrases throughout the document. Important places search engines look for keyphrases are **title tags, heading tags, img alt tags, and links**.
- Reflect your keyphrases in the text. Not only will you get higher placement, but many search engines will place you lower if your keyphrases don't show up frequently in the text.
- Concentrate keyphrases toward the top of the page. Some search engines only index the top of the page, and most rate content toward the top higher.
- Use important keyphrases only in the pages where the content reflects them. Not only will you place higher, but keyphrase searches will take customers directly to the relevant pages on your site.
- Using your important keyphrases in the links, create a page with a list of links to similar sites. This broadens your content, and some search engines love lists of links.

- In multi-column pages, with a menu on the left, keyphrases in the menu's image alt tags are especially important, since body text is further down the page.
- Use keyphrases in image alt tags for spacer images. If a transparent image is only 1 pixel wide or high, customers will never see the alt text, but search engines will.

### **Goal 3: Create content that draws in both customers and search engine reviewers.**

On many search engines, a site will place higher if it has been reviewed. But to get reviewed, the site must seem interesting both from its description and the first page a visitor sees. Additionally, high search engine placement isn't enough. Potential customers must find your description compelling enough to take the time to visit your site.

#### Strategies

- Most sites use your meta content tag or the first text on the page as the caption when they list your site. Write a brief description (< 25 words) of each page in the site and put it in the page's meta content tag. The description should both effectively describe what you have to offer and spark the reader's interest. It will be most effective if it briefly describes how you can solve a problem for the visitor quickly and cheaply. Be sure to include your most important keyphrases in the description.
- Grab the visitor's attention immediately. Make sure the content at the top of the page is interesting and describes or hints at anything that may be out of view further down the page.
- Include useful, interesting content on every page. Visitors shouldn't have to poke around the site before they find something interesting, and a page that's only a graphic is wasted unless it's very compelling.
- Update content frequently so visitors don't get a been-there-done-that feeling when they return. Promote limited-time specials. Use JavaScript date fields to give a latest-news feel.
- While the visual aesthetic of a site may not directly affect placement, it definitely affects the time visitors spend on your site, whether they buy anything, whether the site gets reviewed by search engines, and whether other sites want to link to you. Don't think that text is the only important part of search engine placement.

### **Goal 4: Raise link popularity**

Many search engines use link popularity, or the number of sites with links to your site, to gauge your worthiness and determine your reliability rating.

#### Strategies

- Check your link popularity. Where *mysite* is your site,  
On Alta Vista, enter link:*mysite.com* -host:*mysite.com*  
On Excite, try [www.mysite.com](http://www.mysite.com) and *mysite.com*  
On HotBot, enter *mysite.com* and choose "links to URL"  
On Ultraseek, enter *mysite.com*  
([www.infoseek.com/forms?&sv=IS&lk=noframes&page=special.html](http://www.infoseek.com/forms?&sv=IS&lk=noframes&page=special.html))

- Check the sites that link to you, and update them if necessary. Thank them, provide them with a description, invite them to visit when you update the site.
- Check the sites that link to your competitors, and get them to link to you. Email the webmaster a note like:  
My name is Fred Furbo and I manage a site called Super Successful Search Engine Savvy Secrets. It's a free service offering advice on raising search engine placement. Additionally, we sell an overpriced book with fancy graphics. We were chosen Yahoo!'s Slickest Slickster site of 1999. I noticed you're interested in helping your visitors find the kind of information we offer, and I believe our site would be useful to your visitors. Please check us out at [www.sssess.com](http://www.sssess.com) and add us to your listing. Thanks for your time.
- Create a links page and offer to exchange reciprocal links with other sites, particularly ones that are related, but not direct competitors. A site selling fine teas could exchange links with sites selling teacups, or offering information about tea rituals, recipes, and cultures of tea-producing countries.
- Again, improving and updating your content increases the chances other sites will want to link to you.

### **Goal 5: Submit your key pages to search engines and directories**

Search engines may find you eventually, but they'll find you much faster, and may rate you higher, if you go to them. Directories won't find you at all if you don't submit to them.

#### Strategies

- Focus on the big 6: Yahoo!, Infoseek, Alta Vista, Excite (AOL Netfind), HotBot, and Lycos. Studies show that over 90% of internet users use one of these sites.
- Submit pages:  
Alta Vista: <http://www.altavista.digital.com/av/content/addurl.htm>  
Excite: [http://www.excite.com/Info/add\\_url.html](http://www.excite.com/Info/add_url.html)  
HotBot: <http://www.hotbot.com/addurl.html>  
Infoseek: <http://www.infoseek.com/AddUrl?pg=DCaddurl.html>  
Lycos: <http://www.lycos.com/addasite.html>
- For Yahoo!, write a short (25 words or less), descriptive, compelling, interesting description using your most important keyphrases (this can be the same as your meta content tag). Find the best category for your site and submit it directly from that page, using the Add URL button.
- Learn the site's submission policies and follow them. You don't want to do anything to get you blackballed or low-rated.
- Avoid submission services like SubmitIt! or WebPromote. Placement is important enough to do by hand, and you don't want to take the chance of having a service spam the search engine, or not submit you at all. Also, if you submit manually, you'll know if there are any problems.

### **Goal 6: Maintain high placement**

Submitting a site with well-chosen keyphrases used strategically may get you a top listing, but your placement may fall if you don't keep on top of it.

#### Strategies

- Use a service like PositionAgent (<http://www.positionagent.com/free.htm>) to check your placement with various keyphrases. If you place higher with certain keyphrases than others, try to figure out why. Do you have enough density of keyphrases in title tags, heading tags, img alt tags, links, and body text? What are the sites that place higher doing different?
- Update your content regularly. Search engine spiders will visit you more often if they see the site has been updated. In addition to regular updates from the spiders, keeping content current will help your reliability rating.
- Resubmit pages whenever you do any major updating.
- If your placement falls, don't just resubmit—update first. Search engines will lower your reliability rating if you resubmit the same pages over and over.

## **Goal 7: Make the site spider-friendly**

While submitting pages is important, regular updates from web spiders also help. But they need to be able to read your site.

### Strategies

- **Frames:** Many spiders ignore pages linked through frames. If you use frames, always have a noframes tag that starts with your site description, NOT “Sorry, you don't have a frames-capable browser.” This text is what will appear on those search engines' captions.
- **Image Maps:** Many spiders ignore image map links. If you use image maps for navigation, create a text-only site map with links and descriptions of all content, and submit that page. Visitors will also appreciate the map.
- Update your content regularly, and spiders will visit you more frequently.

## **Procedures**

1. **Select effective keyphrases**
  - a) Identify competitors
  - b) Develop keyphrases—read competitors' keyphrases, consider everything the site does, the image to convey, and exactly why you want to attract visitors.
2. **Write meta tags**
  - a) meta keywords and meta content for each entry page, relevant to page content
  - b) keywords: include keywords, keyphrases, plurals, variant capitalization, misspellings
  - c) content: keep it under 900 characters; begin with a 25 word description of the site; use keyphrases. The first 10 words should adequately describe the page and your business.
3. **Add keyphrases to content**
  - a) Concentrate them near the top
  - b) Include them in title tag, body text, heading tags, img alt tags, and links
4. **Overhaul content**
  - a) Make sure look and feel are interesting, professional, pleasing, compelling, and set the right tone for the site.
  - b) Make sure text backs up look and feel, provides the needed information elegantly, clearly, and concisely.

5. **Manage link popularity**
  - a) Find sites that already link to you and update them.
  - b) Secure links on sites that link to competitors
  - c) Develop reciprocal links with other sites, including non-competitive commercial sites, link lists, informational sites.
6. **Submit entry pages to the big 6 search engines.**

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