



THE JAZZ SERVICES GUIDE TO SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMISATION



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INTRODUCTION

Even the least technically minded among us use search engines as a daily tool on the internet, and more often than not that site is Google. Whether you are looking for a plumber, an antique trouser press, the opening times of your local swimming pool, or trying to find out who wrote the theme tune to Mr Benn*, Google is the first port of call for most people.

If you are on the other end of this equation and are hoping that Google will bring people to you when their search terms are related to your area of business, you will know how frustrating it is to find yourself not on page 1, or even page 2 to 10, but somewhere in the nether regions of the Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs).

Most businesses, whether major corporation or sole trader, have come to realise the importance of a web presence, but creating the website is only half the job. If your potential customers can't find your website, what is the point of having one? 'Findability' may be a daft word, but it is a key concept behind promoting yourself online. If you are a musician, promoter, label, photographer with a website, you want your pages to be found. Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is what you are doing when you try to improve your performance in the search engines, with the universal goal of manoeuvring your website into the top ten sites listed for your area of expertise.

Google keeps the exact mechanisms that they use to decide where your website will appear in the results pages a secret. Otherwise, their competitors Bing, Baidu, Yahoo, and the other alternative search engines would be able to copy exactly their algorithms and produce the same results. However, there are certain factors that we know are key deciders in where you appear in the Google rankings, in particular PageRank and Page Relevance. What these mean and how we can utilise them to promote our own websites make up the core of this Guide.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The guide is divided into three sections, the last of which is simply a glossary of jargon that you may hear around the subject of SEO (there's your first bit...), and as little as often in this text. The first part explores in a little detail the factors involved in Google's ranking of your website, and what you can do to influence these to improve your placement. This is followed by a step-by-step example of how to go about optimising your site for search engines. Feel free to hop around from one to section to another, though the most clarity will come from reading it through from the start. You can read this booklet in conjunction with Jazz Service's other guides to Marketing Your Band and the Guide to the Internet and Digital Music.

* **UK jazz saxophonist Duncan Lamont if you're interested**

1. HOW GOOGLE WORKS

1.1 What Makes Google Different?

It is 16 years since Google launched into a world where existing search engines like Ask, HotBot and Yahoo operated chiefly by allowing website owners to submit their own sites. This manual approach obviously had its limitations as first millions and soon hundreds of millions of new sites started to appear. As of 1999 no search engine was able to index more than 16% of the pages on the world wide web. ¹

Relying on the site owners to submit their own keywords and meta data also created a situation where spammers would manoeuvre their sites to the top of the rankings by cramming keywords and site descriptions with their target words. The search engines paid little or no attention at first to the content of the pages. This meant that the top sites for any given search would sometimes be full of unrelated content. The site WebCrawler, launched in 1994, was the first to index the content of an entire web page, but it was only with Google that this approach became the dominant one.

In fact, the manual Directory of websites still exists in the Open Directory Project (www.dmoz.org). Here they use editors to categorise websites that are still submitted by their owners. The waiting list for being indexed on dmoz.org is notoriously long due to the labour intensive nature of manual indexing.

Google sends out 'spiders' which track through links and cross-check potential new pages against their database of existing pages. The ranking of pages in the search results depends on its own secret algorithms, which we know are based on page relevance (the closeness of your site content to the search terms) and PageRank (your site's popularity and importance in the eyes of Google).

1.2 Why concentrate on Google

As of October 2012 it has a colossal market share of 86% (see Figure 1 below). Such is Google's dominance among search engines that its nearest competitor Yahoo has just 7% of the market share, with Microsoft's Bing just behind on 4%.

In 2011, Google claimed to have caught Bing in a sting, where they were able to demonstrate that their competitor was simply funnelling Google's results into their own results pages. ² Whether or not this is true, as a dominant market leader, Google's approach is followed to a greater or lesser degree by its competitors. This means that by adopting practices that improve your search ranking with Google, you will inevitably see corresponding improvements with Bing, Yahoo, and any other search engines. You do not need to tackle each search engine separately. Good news!

Figure 1: Search engines market share

Search engine	Market share in September 2012
Google	85.15%
Yahoo!	7.3%
Bing	4%
Baidu	1.65%
Ask	0.51%
AOL	0.3%

Source: <http://marketshare.hitslink.com/search-engine-market-share.aspx?qprid=4>

1.3 Content v Design

During the 1990s much time and money was spent on the design of websites, while site content was frequently treated in a rather cavalier fashion. Companies would simply grab the text from their annual reports or promotional literature and slap it up on the site, relying on impressive imagery and animations to win over visitors to the site. There are two problems with this approach:

1. Although your website may make a good first impression, it does nothing to keep your visitors or encourage them to return. They may struggle to find the information they are looking for in text that was never designed to be viewed on a computer.
2. They may not even find your site in the first place. You may run a jazz club in Wrexham, but if the text of your site neglects to use the word 'club' but refers instead to the 'venue', 'pub' or 'bar', then a search for 'jazz club Wrexham' will not find your website at all.

As more and more people relied on Google for their internet searches, it slowly became clear that content was more important than design. This is not to say that you should ignore the aesthetics of your site – a horribly laid out site with orange text on black and garish headers in different colours will drive people away from your site. The point is that they found it in the first place due to the content – keeping them there is a task shared equally between attractive layout and compelling content.

1.4 The Google Spider

The Google spider, web crawler, or Googlebot typically visits a page every three months, and where that page is static and never changes, it will see no reason to return any more frequently. Where the Googlebot detects that changes have been made to a page since its last visit, the spider will increase the frequency of its return visits. Pages that are regularly updated will therefore be visited more often than those that aren't. This is why a blog or News page is a good idea for any site. In any case, by frequently updating the content of your site, you give your visitors a reason to return.

2. PAGE RELEVANCE

One of the key factors behind the ranking of your site in Google is Page Relevance. The search engines try to give people the best possible websites for the search terms that they use. Like the recipe for Coca Cola, Google's exact page relevance algorithm is a closely guarded secret. However, it is possible to make some educated guesses as to elements which effect page relevance. The starting point is to choose keywords that you are going to focus on in your site promotion. Nobody can expect to come top of the Google rankings for every phrase, so we have to choose words that we think reflect best reflect what it is we are trying to sell or promote. They also need to be words or phrases that people do actually search for.

2.1 Choosing Keywords

Before writing the content for your website (or rewriting if you are hoping to improve the ranking of an existing site), you should sit down with a blank piece of paper and brainstorm any key words or phrases that describe what you are promoting – your live work, albums, record label, education work, etc. Try to imagine what your potential customer might type into Google if they are looking for your area of work or style of music: 'bebop birmingham', 'jazz pianists in Wales', 'latin jazz guitar', 'wedding sinatra'.

Once you have chosen a few keywords, you can then use one of Google's own products to check which of your choices you should use to promote your site. Google Adwords are sold on the basis of the popularity of particular words and phrases. If you want an ad on Google to appear any time somebody searches for 'music', then you can expect these ads to be more extremely expensive. As of October 2012 only MTV seem to be able to afford to appear on the results page for this search. The more obscure the search term, the fewer companies will be competing for the advertising, and therefore the cheaper the ad will be. What makes this useful for us, is that Google helps people choose their Adwords with a Keyword Tool (adwords.google.com/o/KeywordTool).

By typing your keywords or phrases into this tool, you can find out how much competition there is around them, and the tool will also give you alternative related ideas. Their competitiveness will be ranked as low, medium or high. Generally you should avoid going for keywords rated as highly competitive, or you will end up battling it out with professional SEO companies, who do this for a living. What the Google Keyword Tool also shows you is how many searches are made for your keywords on average each month, globally and locally. This is fantastically useful. If you planned to focus on the keywords 'Cuban jazz band in Truro', you can now see that nobody uses this search term. There is clearly no point in optimising your website for a phrase that no-one will ever type into Google. By using the Keyword Tool you can hone your keywords until you find a phrase that is regularly searched, but is not overly competitive.

2.2 How to Use Your Keywords

SEO companies talk about something called Keyword Density. This refers to what proportion of the total words on your page is made up of your keywords. The objective is to use your keywords often, but also sensibly. Here are some places you can use your keywords that will help your Page Relevance 'score' with Google:

- Use your keywords in the page title with as few words as you can over and above the keywords you are targeting
- Try to use them in at least one heading if you can.
- Include the keywords more than once in the body of your text – ideally three or four times: once near the beginning and again near the end.
- If you have an image on your page, you can use the keywords again in the 'alt tag' that shows if the image can't be rendered by a users browser.
- Add the keywords to the meta data in the html source code of your page.

As we have said, Google's method of calculating your page relevance is known only to insiders, but all of the above will certainly go towards improving your site's performance for your chosen keywords. The challenge is to make sure the content still reads well. Google aims to penalise text that is keyword-crammed in order to appear at the top of the rankings, but reads horribly. It is the job of SEO professionals to write content which balances the keyword demands of a client with text that is informative and well written. A few hours browsing the net soon demonstrates that this ideal is not always attained.

At the very least you should look at the much neglected area of page titles. Alarmingly often, you can find non-descriptive titles like 'Untitled' or 'Listen' or 'Links' used on websites. This is a wasted opportunity to utilise your key phrase and it is also what users will see in the Search Engine results page that will help them to decide whether to visit your page.

Having made sure that your page will appear in the search results for your chosen keywords is not the end of the battle. If you have written the content of your site judiciously, then you should appear reasonably high up, but unfortunately appearing on page 9 of Google's results can be as unhelpful as appearing on page 2320. Few people ever stray beyond the first couple of results pages and 'click through rates' on sites listed on the second page already drop to around 1% (from over 35% for the top ranked site). In order to appear on the first SERP for your keywords, you need to also consider PageRank.

3. PAGE RANK

Google's PageRank does not care how relevant the content of your site is – it is rather a reflection of the popularity of your site. Your PageRank is determined by a combination of factors:

- The number of other pages that link to your website (or inbound links)?
- The importance of the site(s) that link to pages
- The context in which links to your site appear
- How fast your site is currently gaining new inbound links?
- Are the incoming links temporary or do they last?
- How well you retain users – do they hang around or go back to the Google SERP

Needless to say, your PageRank is improved the more pages link to your site – remember it's a popularity contest! The importance of the site is also taken into account – a link from the BBC or The Guardian to your website is worth more to you than a link from your hobby site on Koi Carp. If the link to your page is one of many hundreds of links, this is less effective than if it is one of two or three external links from a page. Your objective is to encourage as many links as you can from high quality websites, ideally from pages where there are few other outbound links.

You can check the page rank of your site using one of several free websites (www.prchecker.info is easy to use), or by installing the Google toolbar, which shows the page rank of any page you visit as you browse (although since 2011 you now have to switch this function on in the Options). It is important to remember that PageRank does merely reflect the popularity of your site – it does not relate to any keywords people may use in searching for sites like yours.

Be aware that your PageRank may be affected by other factors. Google seems to respect domains that are stable and have a history. It is wise therefore to avoid changing your web address unless for a compelling reason. You should also invest in a reliable host and make sure that you pay attention to billing emails from the host. If your site goes down for technical reasons or because you didn't renew the hosting package, then when you finally get it back up-and-running, you may well find that you start again with a PageRank of zero!

While having dozens of links to your web pages is desirable for a higher PageRank, the fact is that in order for them to truly benefit you, they should be from sites that will bring you traffic that may convert into a sale of a CD or a new fan. Surprisingly often you will find websites linking internally and externally using phrases like 'click here' or 'website' as the link text. This is a terrible waste of a good link, as Google takes notice of this linking text in calculating your Page Relevance when it comes to particular words or phrases.

As an example, if you have a link to a page where you can listen to tracks of your new Cuban jazz album', rather than linking with the word 'Listen' or 'CD' it would be much better to use a keyword you are targeting – 'Listen to Cuban Jazz' or 'Cuban Jazz Album'. These links will then boost your Page Relevance for the phrase in question. You may not be able to bully external sites into using your chosen phrases when they link to you, but there is no excuse for using non-descriptive text for links on your own site.

You can submit your site by simply getting a link from a site that is already indexed by Google or via Google's Webmaster Tools (www.google.com/webmasters/tools/submit-url). If you manage to get a link to your new site, the higher the PageRank of the site your link comes from, the quicker you are likely to be indexed, as the web crawler will visit that page more frequently than one with a lower PageRank.

4. THE DARK SIDE OF SEO

Google updates its algorithms periodically in a battle to penalise those that it considers spammers. For this reason it is strongly advised to avoid using so-called 'black hat' techniques to promote your site in Google. Devious SEO professionals may cram keywords into given pages sometimes using the same colour text and background, so that the keywords are invisible to users. They may create 'doorway pages', which the user will not see but are filled with key words and phrases. These pages are intended only for the web spiders, while a user will be forwarded to a site selling whatever they are trying to push.

Each time Google updates its algorithms in order to truly reflect good content, the aggressive SEO marketers search for loopholes, bugs and xx to exploit. Google developers then work on ways of penalising sites that use these techniques. If your site gets black-listed by Google for utilising 'underhand' SEO methods, it can be a long climb back. So long as you focus on keeping your site relevant and fresh, and don't over-do the keyword usage, then you should never have a problem.

You may even find yourself approached by an SEO company offering to guarantee you a ranking on page one of Google. You should be deeply suspicious of such guarantees, as nobody can fulfil such promises in a way that will really help you. As we saw from Google's Keyword Tool, if you choose keywords where there is no competition, then of course you may be able to sweep into the top ten, but what would be the point if it is for a phrase that nobody has ever searched for. If you are determined to use an SEO company, of which there are many respectable ones too, make sure that your improved ranking will be for keywords that are going to bring increased traffic to your site. Check that the promise to make your site appear on page one, does not mean by buying advertising with Google Adwords. Search engines are suspicious of pages with 50 or more links, so if you are being promised inbound links to your site, check that these are not merely from these 'link farms'

Google is in an ongoing battle to penalise techniques like keyword stuffing, link farms, doorway pages, hidden text, and other 'black hat' tactics. If you choose to use such methods on your site, it may work for a little while, but don't be surprised if with the next Google update your site disappears from the search engines altogether.

5. PRACTICAL STEPS TO IMPROVING YOUR GOOGLE RANKING

5.1 Choose keywords

Let us say we have a Dixieland jazz band 'The Avebury Footwarmers' and we wish to create a website to promote ourselves as a wedding band in our local area and hopefully also sell a few CDs. First we sit down with our blank sheet of paper and come up with a few keywords, for which we would like to perform well in Google searches. We end up with 'wedding band', 'Wiltshire wedding band', 'Avebury wedding band' and 'avebury footwarmers'.

Using the Google Keyword Tool, we check out the relative competitiveness around our preferred keywords and unsurprisingly discover that 'wedding band' is classed as highly competitive with around a million monthly searches. This means that professional SEO companies are likely to be vying aggressively for top spots on those keywords. Better we leave them to it. We find of our other keywords it seems that no-one ever searches for bands in Avebury, so there is not much point in pursuing those keywords as they will attract no traffic. When we look at 'Wiltshire wedding band', although this is classed as highly competitive, there only seem to be 90 or so searches a month. We try 'Wiltshire band' and there are many more searches each month (1000 globally), and yet there seems to be less competition around the Adwords – it is classed as Medium (see figure 2). We decide to take a look at the top sites for the keywords 'Wiltshire band' and see whether we may have a chance of fighting our way onto the first page.

The screenshot shows the Google Keyword Tool interface. The search term is 'band wiltshire'. The results are sorted by Relevance. The interface includes filters for Category (Apparel), Match types (Broad, Exact, Phrase), and filters for Locations (United Kingdom), Languages (All), and Devices (Desktops and laptops).

Search Terms (1)			
Keyword	Competition	Global Monthly Searches	Local Monthly Searches
band wiltshire	Medium	1,000	880

Keyword ideas (1)			
Keyword	Competition	Global Monthly Searches	Local Monthly Searches
wedding band wiltshire	High	91	91

Figure 2: Google Keyword Tool - adwords.google.com/o/KeywordTool

5.2 Choose a domain name

We don't have an existing website, so we spend some time thinking about the domain name carefully. Whilst we would not expect to find that the url www.aveburyfeetwarmers.com has already been used, this doesn't automatically make it the best choice for our web address. 'avebury feetwarmers' will not be keywords where we will face much competition. Mention of the band name on the site will pretty much guarantee we will be top of the SERP for those keywords. We should be a little more ambitious and try and get high up the rankings for the keywords 'wiltshire band'.

In order to find out what web addresses are available, we can visit a site that sells web addresses. One example is www.names.co.uk. We have a look for www.wiltshireband.co.uk and find it's available as is the .com. Generally speaking .com addresses are more expensive than .co.uk. This is good news for our keyword strategy. By including them in the web address, that is a big step towards appearing on page one of the results for 'Wiltshire band'. But let's look at the sites that are currently our main competition.



Congratulations
wiltshireband.co.uk is available
£9.37 for 3 years

 **Add to Order**

<input type="checkbox"/>	wiltshireband .com		AVAILABLE	2 years for £16.74	▼ CHANGE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	wiltshireband .co.uk		AVAILABLE	3 years for £9.37	▼ CHANGE
<input type="checkbox"/>	wiltshireband .org		AVAILABLE	2 years for £24.99	▼ CHANGE
<input type="checkbox"/>	wiltshireband .net		AVAILABLE	2 years for £24.99	▼ CHANGE
<input type="checkbox"/>	wiltshireband .org.uk		AVAILABLE	3 years for £13.99	▼ CHANGE
<input type="checkbox"/>	wiltshireband .uk.com		AVAILABLE	1 year for £24.99	▼ CHANGE
<input type="checkbox"/>	wiltshireband .eu		AVAILABLE	1 year for £12.99	
<input type="checkbox"/>	wiltshireband .info		AVAILABLE	2 years for £19.99	▼ CHANGE
<input type="checkbox"/>	wiltshireband .biz		AVAILABLE	2 years for £19.99	▼ CHANGE

Figure 3: Choosing a Domain Name

5.3 Check out the competition

Ignoring the ads that are paid for at the top and in the right hand column, we discover that the top result for 'band wiltshire' is a directory of bands, which happens to include a list of bands in Wiltshire. The page itself has a PageRank of only 1, while the site's home page rates as PR3. This means that Google does not consider them to be particularly authoritative or important. We check how many pages are linking to this one, and find that only two internal links are coming to this page. No external sites link here at all – this confirms our first impressions. Where they perhaps scored highly is the multiple mentions of 'Wiltshire' and 'band' on the page. They use 'Bands in Wiltshire' as a heading, which is probably helping them a lot.

The screenshot shows a Google search for 'band wiltshire'. The search bar at the top contains the text 'band wiltshire' and shows 'About 6,930,000 results (0.33 seconds)'. Below the search bar, there are several sections of results:

- Web:** A list of search results including 'Hire a Live Band | functioncentral.co.uk', 'Wiltshire Band for Hire | TheMixtapeBand.co.uk', and 'Funk Covers Band For Hire | thefunkdamentals.com'.
- Images:** No results are visible.
- Maps:** No results are visible.
- Videos:** No results are visible.
- News:** No results are visible.
- Shopping:** No results are visible.
- More:** A link to 'Show search tools'.
- Ads:** A column of paid advertisements on the right side of the page, including 'South West UK Band Hire?', 'Non Cheesy Wedding Band', 'Need to Hire a Fun Band?', 'Christmas Party Band + DJ', and 'Wiltshire Bands'.

Figure 4: Google Search Results for 'band wiltshire'

A punk band from Marlborough are claiming the second spot, despite their site not having a PageRank. It's not instantly obvious why they rank this high, so we view the source of their home page. Now we can see that they have included 'Wiltshire' and 'Band' in the page title. No external sites link to their website. All of this is quite encouraging. We are hopeful that if we optimise our site sensibly, we have a good chance of making it onto the first page of results, and hopefully into the top five.

5.4 Optimise the website

There are a number of things we can do to optimise our site, so that we perform well for our chosen keywords. By using a web address that includes the words, we will score highly for relevance. Using 'Wiltshire band' in the page title and meta data will help too. If we can use the phrase in an Alt tag for a picture of the band, better still. We now need to write the content in such a way as to include our keywords in a heading and then two or three more times, preferably near the beginning and end of the page. We must avoid making the text too obviously 'keyword focussed' as this can put people off and, if it comes across as spam, can see you penalised by Google. Once we have optimised our site, we can submit it to Google. It may take a few weeks for Google's spider to index our site and for it to therefore appear in the search results, so we need to be a little patient. In the meantime – and in the long term – we should update the site regularly with news or blog posts, freely dropping our keywords into our new material. By keeping the site fresh we will encourage visitors to return to our site, and the Googlebot will come back more often!

5.5 Getting Links

Persuading people to link to our website may not be easy, but of course we can start with our competitor, the band directory. By adding our information to their page and linking to our site, we now have an inbound link which they don't have. Their high position may also help us. Jazz Services also have a directory, so that's another link we know we can get. By searching for such sites that offer a free listing with a link to our website, we can make a good start. After that we need to work a bit harder and perhaps look at some sites with high PageRank (PR5 or more) for related areas like jazz, weddings, etc. Any links we can get are more helpful still if we can persuade the site administrator to include our keywords in the linking text. If we carry out all the steps above, we should certainly make it onto page one for 'Wiltshire band'.

We can also submit our site to any surviving manually indexed Search Engines – www.dmoz.org is the main one. Although there is a long wait to be indexed, the benefits are twofold: we are listed in a popular directory, and this directly is in turn visited by the Googlebot and we benefit from the inbound link that the spider follows.

5.6 Final Words

Needless to say, all of these steps become more complicated when you are trying to rank high for keywords that are more competitive than those we used for our example. Furthermore, most people will be trying to score highly for several keywords, which makes it that much more difficult to get the content right. However, the steps involved remain the same. Optimising your website for search engines is not particularly difficult, but it can be time consuming. There is also a lot of competition from people who do SEO for a living. When you get into competitive areas around words like 'music', 'business' and 'shopping', it is best to steer clear and concentrate on a niche, where you can hope to make some headway. Even if you decide that you would rather hand over the task of optimising your site to an expert, hopefully this guide will at least lift the veil on some of the myths and misconceptions about SEO, and help you avoid some common pitfalls.

¹ Lawrence, Steve; C. Lee Giles (1999-07-08). "Accessibility of information on the web". *Nature* 400 (6740): 107. Bibcode 1999Natur.400..107L. doi:10.1038/21987. PMID 10428673.

² Bing Cheating - <http://googleblog.blogspot.co.uk/2011/02/microsofts-bing-uses-google-search.html#!/2011/02/microsofts-bing-uses-google-search.html>

6. GLOSSARY

AdSense / AdWords

Google runs its own advertising network 'AdSense', which allows you to add subject related advertising to the pages on your website, hopefully earning money in the process. For the buyer of the advertising, you pay to appear on the Search Engine Results Pages (these ads usually appear in the right hand column of the Google results), and also on websites that relate to your chosen 'AdWords'.

ALT Tag

ALT tags are text descriptions that can be attributed to an image on your web page, so that those who are unable to (or choose not to) view the images on your website, know what that image is. ALT Tags are frequently used as another opportunity to cram keywords into a web page. As always, don't overdo it or risk being blocked by the search engines.

Black Hat SEO

Devious and underhand (in the eyes of the Search Engines at least) methods utilised by web masters and SEO professionals to manoeuvre their web pages high up in the rankings. Keyword stuffing, hidden text, and doorway pages are just some of the techniques considered 'Black Hat'. While these methods can be effective in the short term, the Search Engines are constantly looking out for sites that use techniques of which they disapprove with the intention of banning them from the results pages.

Blog (Web Log)

Blogs started out as web diaries, and although they have grown much more complicated than that description implies, it is true that they typically contain content that is more regularly updated than a traditional 'static' website. Google loves blogs because they (in principle) contribute millions of words of fresh content each day. Many notable UK jazz sites started out as blogs - London Jazz, The Jazz Breakfast, etc

CTR (Click Through Rate)

The percentage of people who view a given link and then click to follow that link wherever it leads. If you paid for an ad on a website, you want a high CTR as this would indicate that the ad was attracting potential customers.

Directory

A Directory is a type of 'search engine', which has usually relied on manually edited results. The Jazz Services Directory is a relatively small (in global terms), subject specific searchable Directory.

DMOZ

DMOZ, the informal name for the Open Directory Project, is one of the most significant manually edited Directories. Its results are incorporated into those of most of the key search engines including Google.

Domain Name

The unique name that identifies a website. You have to register a domain name that isn't already being used. www.jazzservices.org.uk is Jazz Services' domain name.

External Link

A link that leads away from your website to a page at another domain name.

Googlebot

Google's web crawler - a software application that extracts the content and links from a given web page, and then follows the links to continue the process on the page that is linked to.

Google Keyword Tool

Designed to be used by Google Adwords customers to help them choose the most popular keywords, the tool is equally useful for website owners to help them choose the best keywords for optimising their site for search engines.

HTML (Hypertext Markup Language)

The simple programming language used to create documents which browsers render as the web pages that you see on the internet. In simple terms, the HTML code of a web page contains the Meta Data as well as all the instructions for which text is a link, which is bold or italic, and much else.

Hyperlink

A text or image link leading to another page, or to a document or action like sending an email or downloading a file.

Internal Link

Internal links are hyperlinks that lead to another page or document within the same domain. A link from the Jazz Services home page to the Directory is an internal link.

Keyword

A word or phrase for which you want your website to rank highly in Google and other search engines.

Keyword Density

The proportion of keywords in relation to the total number of words in a body of text. Many SEO companies operate strict policies of including a specific proportion of keywords when writing articles for website.

Keyword Stuffing

This is where keywords are shoved into a web page with little consideration for how that text reads. The objective is to score as highly as possible for the chosen keywords. However, the search engines are getting better and better at spotting and penalising sites that use this technique. As always, don't overdo it.

Link Farm

A web page that serves only one purpose - to provide links for web pages that hope to earn a better PageRank as a result. Link Farms are routinely blocked by the search engines, and are best avoided - certainly don't let yourself be scammed into paying for such a link. Even a trade of links is probably a bad idea.

Meta Data

A specific kind of HTML tag that contains information not normally displayed to the user. Meta tags contain information 'about' the page itself. There are Meta Titles, Meta Keywords, Meta Descriptions and other types of Meta Data. A few years ago, meta data played a significant part in where your site ranked in some search engines. Although this is less the case today, it is still seen as good practice to populate the Meta Data with relevant information - it can do no harm. By viewing a web page's source code, you can see the HTML code behind the page along with all the Meta Data.

NoFollow

In recent years website owners and SEO professionals have attempted to generate multiple inbound links to improve their PageRank by adding comments on other websites and blogs that contain their web address in the signature. To counter this, many blog owners have taken to applying a 'NoFollow' attribute to all the links in their comments sections. This instruction allows a user to follow a link, but tells the web crawlers not to give the links credit towards their page rank.

PageRank

PageRank is the importance that Google assigns your website based on the number and quality of inbound links. See page 8 for more detail.

Pay Per Click (PPC)

Pay Per Click is an online advertising format that allows you to buy your way onto the page of one of search results for particular phrases relevant to your business. Businesses buy advertising for specific search phrases, and are then charged each time a person clicks through to their website.

Reciprocal Links

An exchange of links with a view to both linking pages seeing their PageRank improve. Before accepting reciprocal links, check that the link you get is not from a Link Farm and that your link is not just on a page with hundreds of other links.

Search Engine

Google, Yahoo, Bing and other online tools, which index the World Wide Web and allow users to search across the resulting database.

SEO (Search Engine Optimization)

The practice of designing web pages so that they rank as high as possible in the results pages of Search Engines. There is 'good' or 'white hat' SEO and 'bad' or 'black hat' SEO. Good SEO involves making the web page clearly describe its subject, making sure it contains truly useful information, including accurate information in Meta tags, and arranging for other web sites to make links to the page. Bad SEO involves attempting to deceive people into believing the page is more relevant than it truly is by doing things like adding inaccurate Meta tags to the page.

SERP

The Search Engine Results Page – the listings returned by the Search Engine.

Spam (or Spamming)

An inappropriate attempt to use a mailing list, or other networked communications facility by sending the same message to a large number of people who didn't ask for it. The term probably comes from a famous Monty Python sketch which featured the word spam repeated over and over. The term may also have come from someone's low opinion of the food product with the same name, which is generally perceived as a generic content-free waste of resources.

Spider

Another name for a web crawler. Google's Spider is the Googlebot.

URL (Uniform Resource Locator)

Another name for the web address. The url differs from the domain name in that every page of your site has a url or unique address, while the whole site usually has just one domain name.

Web Crawler (also known as a spider)

An automated web browser which follows every link on your website.

Wiki

A wiki is a web site for which the content can be easily edited and altered from the web browser in which you are viewing it. Typically there is an "edit" button on each page and the wiki is configured to allow either anyone or only people with passwords to edit each page. The word "wiki" comes from a Hawaiian word meaning 'quick'. Wikipedia is the most famous of these. A link to your site from Wikipedia may help generate more traffic, but does not contribute towards your PageRank.