
Secrets To Achieving a Top 10 Position

Provided by FirstPlace Software, Inc.

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Introduction & Important Tips About the Author

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<http://www.webposition.com>

To subscribe to the monthly MarketPosition Newsletter, send an e-mail to subscribe@webposition.com

MarketPosition provides the latest tips and techniques related to search engine positioning.

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DISCLAIMER:

The information contained in this report is accurate as of May 3rd, 2002, **to the best of our knowledge**. Remember, search engines can and often do change the way they rank pages. Many statements in this report are based on our own observations or the observations of others at some point in time. **iProspect.com, Inc. disclaims all representations and warranties, express or implied, about the accuracy of the information contained herein.** All trademarks, service marks and trade names contained herein, whether or not registered, are the properties of their respective owners.

Use this information as a base line, but also compare it to what you find to be true today when doing searches and checking your positions.

If you find anything you believe might be inaccurate or could be improved, please e-mail us at:

feedback@iProspect.com

Our goal is to continue to revise this material and integrate your comments and feedback. We want Internet marketers to continuously benefit from this guide.

That said, you should find this report to be very helpful in improving your rankings on the search engines.

MarketPosition Newsletter

If you have not yet subscribed to the FREE MarketPosition newsletter, you MUST! Of course it's not required, but you'd be crazy not to! The MarketPosition newsletter is essentially a monthly update to this report.

Each month FirstPlace Software observes and reports changes in search engine ranking algorithms, spam penalties, new techniques that work and old techniques that stopped working. This newsletter information eventually makes it into this report, and you will receive periodic updates. Your top position depends on your being proactive! If you haven't already, take a moment and subscribe to the MarketPosition newsletter:

<http://www.webposition.com/newsletter.htm>

Or e-mail subscribe@webposition.com

In addition, you can find help to common questions from fellow Web marketers at the MarketPositionTalk.com discussion forums at:

<http://www.marketpositiontalk.com>

If you have any suggestions or comments you'd like to share with the author, please e-mail them to author@iProspect.com.

Thank you for your continued patronage of our report, now in its third printing. *Secrets to Achieving a TOP 10 Position* is one of the longest running, most respected search engine reports available anywhere. This is due in great part to people like you who submit tips, tricks and inside information. Thank you for your continued support and keep sending us those great techniques!

Sincerely,

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Why Your Web Site's Rank Matters!

There's a pervasive myth among Web site managers that simply submitting your Web site to hundreds of search engines will increase traffic to your site. That's just not true! WebPosition Gold™, by FirstPlace Software offers proof that submitting alone is not enough. When someone queries a search engine for a keyword related to your site's products or services, does your page appear in the top 10 matches – or does your competition's?

If you're not listed within the first two or three pages of results, you lose, no matter how many engines you submitted your site to. There are two barriers to solving this problem. First, you have to know the techniques that will move you into a top 10 position – the very techniques contained in this special report. Once you learn how to achieve a top 10 search position, you have to monitor your progress – a crucial step that takes hours to do right.

A top 10 ranking in a major search engine such as Yahoo!, Lycos or AltaVista often will generate more targeted traffic than an expensive banner advertising campaign. Plus, a good search engine position is free – anyone can do it. Consider this:

- Virtually everyone begins their Web browsing at one of the eight major search engines. Your rank within these search engines determines how many people will find and visit your Web site.
- Major search engines attract more distinct visitors than almost any other Web site. Yahoo! alone boasts 55 million page views a day – and that was back in December 1997!
- Other forms of online advertising such as banner ads cost money. Just a few good positions under a few important keywords can deliver the same or better results – for FREE.
- Being in the Yellow Pages doesn't ensure even one phone call. You need a good listing and a large display ad. In search engines, the higher you rank under important keywords, the more traffic you'll get.

Nearly 90% of traffic to most Web sites comes from search engines: This fact was demonstrated by the *Seventh WWW User Survey* conducted by the Georgia Institute of Technology, October 1997 (paraphrased):

...The ways in which people discover Web sites:

1. Via search engines (86.34% Seventh Survey vs. 87.71% Sixth Survey)
2. Links from other Web pages (84.63% Seventh vs. 86.92% Sixth)

This demonstrates a trend from the Fifth Survey with 90.7% reported finding Web pages linked from other Web pages and 83.1% from search engines. People discovered Web sites through printed media (62.47% Seventh vs. 67.95% Sixth), through their friends (56.92% Seventh vs. 56.66% Sixth), TV (30.20% Seventh vs. 35.54% Sixth), “signatures” with Web site addresses at the end of e-mail messages (31.23% Seventh vs. 30.01% Sixth) and through Usenet newsgroups (32.75% Seventh vs. 34.25% Sixth). Usenet newsgroups decreased in their popularity by 12 percentage points from the Fifth Survey (44.4%). The Seventh Survey shows that, like the Sixth Survey, the younger generations will learn about Web sites from their friends – older generations are more likely to be influenced by the printed media.

Note that search engines are the number one way people find Web sites – two years in a row. This study proves something most of you already know – good positioning in the search engines produce big results!

I highly recommend that you review the Georgia Tech report yourself at:

http://www.gvu.gatech.edu/user_surveys/survey-1997-04/graphs/

For those of you using your Web site to actually transact business, the question is: Are people buying anything once they visit these Web sites?

YES! They most certainly are coming with their wallets, and they’re not afraid to spend that cash on your site.

Secrets to Achieving a TOP 10 Position details the specific steps you will take to move your Web site into a top position. Best of all, it’s not hard! You don’t need to be a super-talented Web page designer to do the things to your Web pages that will improve your rankings. Most of it is rudimentary HTML coding, and we provide much of the code for you!

This special report is about teaching you the steps. These specific techniques will move your site from “The Land of the Lost” into “The Land of the Found” – found at the top of search engines’ rankings, that is. No single tip can guarantee you a top position. However, by using this information your odds are greatly improved.

You can do this. It’s not hard, but it takes a little time. Our reviewers made it through the entire book in an hour or two.

If you give it an hour, you'll build your traffic. When you build your traffic without spending advertising dollars, you'll have unequivocal online success. Read on and learn all you need to know to get your Web site into a top position!

Search Engines Are Advertising That Works

According to a study by WebCMO (<http://WebCMO.com>), guess what the most effective advertising strategy is for Web marketers?

Banner ads?

Print ads?

Spam mail?

Sorry, none of the above! The most effective method of generating Web site traffic is "Search Engine Submissions," followed closely by "Solicited or Opt-In Email".

The following scale demonstrates how each Web marketer rated the over-all effectiveness of the following methods on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most effective.

Search Engine Submissions 3.35

Solicited or Opt-In Email 3.34

Offline Advertising 3.04

Press Release 3.00

Banner Advertising 2.85

Discussion Forums 2.83

Sponsorships 2.61

Newsgroups 2.46

Strategic Linking 2.44

Spam 1.83

Submitting to search engines, by itself, is just NOT effective. That is only the first part of an effective search engine strategy. You must achieve good search positions for anyone to "find" your listing. This is the real secret to producing the most cost-effective advertising available on the Web. This knowledge will separate you from the vast majority of businesses on the Web that do nothing to improve their positions.

Another important highlight of the study demonstrates that Opt-in E-mail is also very effective -- a close second to search engine promotion. If you're looking to expand your business, find a very TARGETED e-mail list or newsletter and negotiate a good rate.

Spam e-mail ranks at the bottom of their effectiveness list. Sending spam can do terrible damage to your reputation and business. Despite all the wonderful claims made by sellers of bulk e-mail software, we still recommend you avoid this method at all cost. Look at targeted, opt-in lists, or collect e-mail addresses on your own site by offering a newsletter or an information package of some kind.

The survey had two parts. Rather than simply rating how to generate traffic, it also rates the most effective methods for generating sales as perceived by the Web marketer. Search engines are close to the top of this chart, but opt-in mailing lists rate a little higher in this category. This is probably because sales associated with mass e-mailing are more easily tracked than sales from search engine traffic unless special software is used.

Search engine promotion offers an advantage over most other advertising because you can get effective results without having to spend hard earned money. Unlike acquiring mailing lists or buying banner ad impressions from other sites, search engine submission and positioning is FREE. The trick to making a big profit is simply knowing the secrets of doing it properly and having the tools to automate some of the work.

For the complete text of the study see:

<http://www.webcmo.com/report/opss1/report1.htm>

Types of Search Engines

This document assumes you have either purchased WebPosition Gold™ or have at least downloaded the demo. The product is not necessary to implement these tips, but it will certainly help save you a lot of time.

As you come to understand the steps necessary to improve your rankings, you'll quickly learn why WebPosition Gold™ is a critical tool in your success. The Page Critic feature has up to date advice on exactly what to change on a page to make it rank higher. Where this document can only talk about generalities, WebPosition's Page Critic can analyze your page and then give you specific, customized advice on what to add, change, or improve to make it rank higher for your selected keyword and search engine. To try out WebPosition Gold for free or to learn more, see:

<http://www.webposition.com>

Primary Types of Search Engines and Directories

Key to improving your Web site's rank in the different search engines is an understanding of the basic criteria by which search engines index and then retrieve documents. Before you submit your Web site to each search engine, we want you to have the tools and information to maximize your results.

There are two primary kinds of search services:

1. **Crawler-based search engines:** These rely on “software spiders” to crawl and index Web sites. You submit your page to a search engine and the spider will index your entire site. Theoretically, these spiders might find your site by accident, but odds are they won't unless you go to them and tell them about your site by filling out their “submit” page. Examples of search engines are AltaVista, Google, and Lycos.
2. **Directories:** These rely on submissions from users and Web site owners to populate their indexes. Most directories add your site to their index, but generally they link only to your home page rather than indexing the full text of each page on your site. Examples of directories are Yahoo! and Open Directory.
3. **Pay-Per-Placement (PPC):** These engines index sites based on how high a bid they place. The the purpose of this document, we will focus our discussion on search engines and directories.

We will refer to both crawler-based search engines and directories as simply “search engines.”

What Is a Software Spider (or Robot)?

A “software spider” is an unmanned program operated by a search engine that surfs the Web just like you would. As it visits each Web site, it records (saves to its hard drive) all the words on each site and notes each link to other sites. It then “clicks” on a link, and off it goes to read, index and store another Web site.

The software spider often reads and then indexes the entire text of each Web site it visits into the main database of the search engine it is working for. (Some engines indexing up to a certain number of pages of a site, often about 400, and then stopping. Apparently, this is because the Web has become so large that it’s unfeasible to index everything. How many pages the spider will index is not entirely predictable. Therefore, it’s a good idea to specifically submit each important page in your site that you want to be indexed, such as those that contain important keywords).

A software spider is like an electronic librarian who cuts out the table of contents of each book in every library in the world, sorts them into a gigantic master index, and then builds an electronic bibliography that stores information on which texts reference which other texts. Some software spiders can index over a million documents a day!

For your marketing purposes, you should know that some search engines have spiders that will visit your Web site. What the spider sees on your site will determine how your site is listed in its index.

Remember, as a software spider visits your site it notes any links on your page to other sites. In any search engine’s vast database are recorded all the links between sites. The search engine knows which sites you linked to, and more importantly, which ones linked to you. Many engines will even use the number of links to your site as an indication of popularity, and will then boost your ranking based on that factor.

How the Spider Searches the Pages

Nobody except the search engine developers themselves know exactly what happens after a webmaster submits a page to a search engine. However, since search engines are databases, they must follow general database principles.

Once you submit your page, the search engine will add your URL to a list of sites to be spidered. It can take anywhere from one day to a number of months for a search engine to spider your site. When your URL is spidered by a search engine, it will read all the words on the page and filter out parts it does not want to see.

For example, most engines save space and improve search speed by excluding many common words from its database. These are called "stop" words and include words like "a," "and," "the" and "or." It is not clear exactly which words are excluded from search engine databases. This should not be of great concern, however, since the search engine will automatically, behind the scenes, exclude these same words from the user's search. To convince yourself that there are words that are excluded from the search engines, go to Lycos and search for the word "the." Lycos will find no matches even though there are millions of occurrences of the word "the" throughout the Web.

Each search engine will also filter out other things like META tags, comment tags, or whatever else they don't want to include in their database. Each search engine is different.

One of the biggest potential pitfalls for Webmasters is search engines that do not index the text within frames. Some major engines do not support frames. For these engines, include text in the <NOFRAMES> tag. Another solution is to create pages (without frames) to act as alternate entrances to your site for the purpose of giving these engines something they can see and index. Creating these "search engine friendly" pages can help your rankings immensely.

After "stop" words are filtered, and any tags not supported by the engine are excluded, EVERYTHING else remaining contains potential keywords that could be used to find your page. However, to actually be found in an engine, you must emphasize the specific keywords and phrases that you want your site to be found under. Your important keywords and keyword phrases must be strategically placed throughout your Web page in order to return your site as one of the top 10 matches.

Search engines determine a site's relevancy by using a complex scoring system that the search engines try to keep secret. This system

adds or subtracts points based on things like how many times the keyword appeared on the page, where on the page it appeared, how many total words were found, and other variables. Points can be subtracted if you repeat a keyword too often, don't use enough words on the page, or do any of a dozen other things. The pages that achieve the most points are returned at the top of the search results, the rest are buried at the bottom, never to be found.

All of this may sound complicated. But armed with the right information, it's not hard to rank well on most keywords. Those who make the effort reap big rewards in the form of free traffic to your Web site.

Search Engine Ranking Criteria

Search engines that are populated by spiders or by submissions result in large databases that Web surfers query to find Web sites. When you visit Lycos, Yahoo!, AltaVista or another search engine and type in a keyword, you're actually performing a database query. To determine which document or Web site to return for a particular keyword search, each search engine must have its own method of ranking documents, the Web sites, within its directory. Most use a "probable relevance" scoring method.

Important Note: From time to time, search engines change their scoring systems and stop rewarding certain techniques that gave you an advantage just days before. This report contains the best tips and techniques at time of publication. Some techniques will stop working if a search engine changes its relevancy scoring system, which is bound to happen. Updates will be made to this report as we become aware of changes.

Choose the Right Keywords! (Very Important)

Target the wrong keywords and all your efforts will be in vain. Choose the right keywords and you'll see your traffic skyrocket. Therefore, think long and hard about what keywords people are most likely to use to find you. Make lists of single keywords and then combine them into phrases.

You rarely want to target a single keyword. With billions of words indexed on the Web now, generally one word simply won't cut it. People learn quickly that if they type in "properties," they get listings for real estate from all over the world! While it would be nice if you were positioned well on this extremely broad keyword, a better use of your time is to pair the generic keyword with something more specific. You might get lucky and rank well on just "property" since its in your page too, but if not, at least you'll rank well on "Boston property," which will be far less difficult to achieve a top 10 or top 20 listing for. These more specific keywords will also bring you far more qualified prospects.

Our product, WebPosition Gold™, is designed to monitor your rankings on a broad array of keywords and pages very quickly. However, people still continuously try to monitor their rankings on keywords that people using search engines are not likely to query. For example, I had a well-meaning customer send me a list of his keywords for the "cheap airfares" that his company sold. His list went something like this:

cheap
flights
cheap flights
quote
discounted
airfares

The word "cheap" alone does nothing to target their audience. It has to be paired with other words like "flights" or "airline reservations" to have any meaning. It's the same with "quote" and "discounted" – too broad. They must be paired with one or two other words. Statistically, most people search for two- to three-word phrases to avoid getting back too many unrelated matches. Keep this in mind when you design your pages.

Don't worry about there not being enough top-10 slots where you can achieve a high ranking. True, there are some keywords that are very competitive. If you find that no matter what you do, you can't get in that top-10 spot for that word or phrase, just be creative! There are SO

MANY other keywords and keyword combinations where you can achieve a top-10 ranking! It's really NOT very difficult at all!

If you don't achieve a good ranking on "cheap airfares," keep trying, but also be creative and target "inexpensive airfares" too. See, it's all about thinking like your customer or clientele – and it's really pretty easy to find a keyword combination that you can dominate in the search engines. You'll often find that there are more people searching for these alternate phrases than were searching for the first phrase you had in mind. In marketing, this is called carving out your niche.

If you're Microsoft, you can afford to fight over who has the best "Browser software." But, for the rest of us, we know we can't always fight the big boys. So instead, savvy marketers identify a "niche" (keywords and keyword combinations) that few others are targeting and go after them. I've created pages for web sites where I posted an optimized page that has remained in the Top 10 for six to ten months in a row. Other slots may change more often, but that's why you have WebPosition Gold™ to help you stay on top of your rank under ALL the important keywords and keyword combinations.

If you're Microsoft, you can afford to fight over who has the best "browser software." But, for the rest of us, we know we can't always fight the big boys. So instead, savvy marketers identify a "niche" (keywords and keyword combinations) that few others are targeting and go after them. We've created optimized pages for Web sites that have remained in the top 10 for ten months in a row. Other slots may change more often, but that's why you have WebPosition Gold™ to help you stay on top of your rank under ALL the important keywords and keyword combinations.

Brainstorming for the Right Keywords

We ask clients to write down every imaginable keyword that someone might type into a search engine to find their site. Usually, the client returns a list that is very specific to their product, what they sell or their industry. We have to help them go beyond that.

If you are a wedding planner, what keywords will someone use to find your site? Most clients would tell me something like this:

weddings
wedding planners
wedding planning
bridal consultant

What they forget is that people who are planning weddings may be surfing the Web for a variety of wedding-related things. Sometimes people planning weddings may be conducting keyword searches for

things not directly related to the actual wedding ceremony. For these reasons, we advise clients to consider keywords such as the following as well:

- bachelorette party
- bachelor party
- best man
- banquet halls
- bridal decoration
- bridal registry
- bridesmaid dresses
- honeymoon
- honeymoon vacations
- limos
- mother of the groom
- toasts
- wedding bouquets
- wedding invitations
- boutonnieres
- bridal bouquet
- bridal veils
- engagement rings
- caterers
- disc Jockeys
- bridal shower
- bridal gowns
- flower girl
- limousines
- ring bearer
- wedding cakes
- groomsman
- wedding rings

And the list goes on. We encourage clients to come up with at least 50 keywords before we go about the business of creating a site title and description. For example, you might create a title for one of your pages “Bridesmaid and Best Man’s resource area – boutonnieres to bridal bouquets!”

Don’t Forget Misspelled Keywohods – Whoops! Keywords, Nope, Keywords!

There is a famous marketing folktale about misspelling being used for a marketing advantage involving MCI and AT&T. AT&T wanted to counter MCI’s highly successful 1-800-COLLECT campaign and introduced a collect-calling product of its own. Have you ever wondered why AT&T keeps asking the world to dial 1-800-CALL-ATT? The reason is simple. AT&T learned firsthand that people often make obvious spelling mistakes.

AT&T started to advertise its collect-calling service, and then the number was 1-800-OPERATOR. Do you remember that short-lived ad campaign? Well, it turned out that many Americans can’t spell and were dialing 1-800-OPERATER by mistake. Well, wouldn’t you know

it that some sharp-eyed employee at MCI noticed an unusually high call volume on an MCI-owned 800 number. Believe it or not, MCI owned 1-800-OPERATER! So the folks at MCI redirected that number to point at MCI's 1-800-COLLECT product and raked in the bucks until AT&T figured out what was going on.

The point is to think hard about keywords that people will be looking for you under and decide if they frequently misspell those words. If they do, include these misspelled keywords in your submissions and META tags!

Common-Sense Strategy for Misspelled Keywords

Here's a really good idea that can save you hours of time. While we firmly recommend that you consider optimizing your pages for misspelled keywords, why not take a quick moment and make sure there will be a return on this effort.

Here's what we do. We purchase banner advertising with some of the search engines. For those of you who haven't yet experimented with banner advertising, you may not know that you can purchase specific keywords so that your banner ads are only displayed when someone visiting that search engine searches on that specific keyword. Your banner would display with the results of that search, and conceivably, the search engine user might be enticed to click on your banner ad and visit your site.

If you build a relationship with sales representatives at a search engine, you can ask them how often the misspelling of one of your keywords is searched on, as opposed to the correct spelling.

We were surprised to learn that two misspellings of the keyword "balloons," both "baloons" and "ballons," were very rarely searched on – we thought misspellings would be more common. In fact, the two misspellings combined didn't even account for less than 10 percent of the total occurrences of the correct spelling of "balloons" in Yahoo!.

What did this mean to us as a Web site promoters? Even though these misspellings were rare, they are still worth targeting because the competition will be much less intense for a misspelled keywords. You can probably get top rankings on both "baloons" and "ballons" without too much effort. This means that you can guarantee yourself some traffic from the 10 percent who are searching on misspelled words. This may be the easiest traffic you will ever attract!

Here's a list of commonly misspelled words you might wish to consider when deciding if a keyword pertinent to your Web site might be frequently misspelled.

believing	changeable	Fourteen	oversight
bouquet	chosen	Fulfill	parallel
campaign	collateral	Government	payroll
Accelerate	committee	Grateful	percent
accessible	congratulate	Liquid	personnel
accidentally	control	Guaranteeing	phenomenal
accrued	controversy	Harass	policyholder
achievement	courtesy	Hindrance	postmortem
advertise	criticize	Identical	postgraduate
advisory	cynical	Indictment	preponderance
affiliate	deceive	Installment	privacy
benefited	defense	Intelligence	procedure
airport	deferred	Intercede	promissory
alignment	delegate	Issuing	questionnaire
alleged	desirable	Lacquer	unanimous
alphabetize	dilemma	Liaison	worthwhile
analyze	disastrous	Losing	recede
annulment	ecstasy	Maneuver	referring
apiece	efficiency	Merchandise	regrettable
apostrophe	embarrassing	Mortgage	separate
archives	enforceable	Preferable	serviceable
article	everyday	Professor	simultaneous
assessed	exasperated	Negotiate	someday
assignment	excitable	Nickel	spontaneous
attorneys	fascinating	Ninth	stimulus
bankruptcy	lien	Miscellaneous	receive
bureau	mailbox	Notifying	subsidiary
cancellation	mediocre	Occasion	substantial
casualty	fireproof	Occurrence	susceptible
comparative	foreclosure	Offense	tariff
compromise	forfeit	Omission	warehouse
conference	Optimistic	welfare	

Take your time reviewing this list. Find any keyword that might pertain to your Web site and ask a few friends how to spell the word – changes are one will misspell it! Take note of the many close, but not quite right, spellings of each word. Consider incorporating these misspelled words into your promotion and Web page optimization efforts.

A good example of when a Web marketer should consider optimizing commonly misspelled words for Web pages is for a current news story. For instance, some years ago the Clinton presidential scandal was spiraling out of control. How do you spell the infamous intern, Monica's, last name?

- A. Lewinski?
- B. Lewinsky?
- C. Leuinsky?

The correct answer is “B.” ☺ Know that when the story broke, many people searched for the spelling that sounded correct – “A” an incorrect spelling.

Location, Location, Location! The Art and Skill of Being Regional

Most people visit a search engine when they are looking for some sort of product or service and conduct a search on a rather broad topic. Someone looking to buy a house in their own town might type the keywords “real estate” into the search engine. When they are returned a list of Web sites starting in Alaska showing all the real estate in the world, over 300,000 sites from Alaska to Wyoming, they quickly see the value of narrowing their query. The next search they conduct will be something like “Virginia Real Estate.” This will give them something more manageable.

What this should tell any Web marketer promoting any product of regional significance is to regionalize their site description and keywords where appropriate. A real estate agent client of ours learned that by keeping his site title and description stuffed with “VA” and “Virginia” his site ranked well above other similar sites that didn't pay attention to this technique.

Use LONGER Keywords

In general, choose the longer form of a keyword. The reason is a concept called “word stemming.” This often pulls in results that are not an exact match for what was searched for, but may be close or the same thing. When a search engine does use word stemming, it means that searches for word roots will also include the variations of that

word. For instance, searches for “consult” would also return documents that have the words “consulting” and “consultants” unless the user chooses to do an exact search.

What this means to Web marketers is that they can reduce the number of words in their META tags and on their page because search engines that practice word stemming will return their Web site for searches on those other word variations. Therefore, putting the word “consulting” in the META tag will likely come up on searches for both “consult” and “consulting.”

This can be important when you are designing your Web site and have to choose which keywords to include. When facing this decision, always choose the longer form of the word.

Keyword Power Combinations

If you conduct a search on the word “software” at almost any search engine, your result will likely be several thousand documents. The ones at the top are there because of an array of factors, and some will be beyond your control (e.g., the search engine awards points for the number of sites linked to a Web site, and they have thousands, you have none!).

You can't be in first place under every keyword, and you have to be realistic about which keywords offer you a reasonable chance at achieving a good ranking. Many people make the mistake of targeting very general keywords and get frustrated when they can't get into the top 10. However, statistically, more people narrow their searches by searching on two or more keywords in combination.

One technique you should consider is to visit different search engines and conduct searches for a variety of your keywords and keyword combinations. Sometimes you will find that certain keywords return a limited set of Web site descriptions, and therefore, you have a better chance of attaining a great ranking for that keyword combo.

Don't waste efforts trying to get your Web site to the top of the list for a keyword like “software” or some other keyword where the competition is so stiff. If the engine is giving Microsoft a boost because of the “popularity” factor, it will not likely lose its first-place ranking under the keyword software to your home-office-based company, “Joey's Software Utilities.”

However, if your little company makes a great software product, we strongly urge you to attempt to own the keyword combination “utility software.” If you conduct a search on the keyword “software,” Yahoo! returns 22,934 site matches. But if you searched for “utility software,” Yahoo! returns only 825 site matches. You have at least a fighting

chance of getting to the top of the “utility software” result set. You should decide which battles you wish to fight.

The industry vernacular for these low site match keyword combinations is “powercombos.” We strongly suggest you visit the important search engines and try a few keyword queries. When you find a power combo, write it down and prepare your META tags, title and description submissions to leverage this little bit of marketing advantage you have uncovered.

It’s important that the phrase, or power combo, you pick would likely be thought of by someone else. There’s no guaranteed way to determine what people will search for and in what quantity. However, try to determine the most generic phrasing for a particular subject matter that is still somewhat specific. The more sophisticated the search phrase is, the less likely people will choose that combination to search on.

Avoid “Stop” Keywords

Most search engines save resources by skipping over certain words, which are sometimes called “stop” words. These are very common words such as *a, the, and, of, that, it, too, Web, home page*, etc. Search engines do this to both speed their searches and to save disk space.

So if your site contains stop words in areas where a spider looks for copy to index, the stop words are ignored, possibly affecting how you’re indexed – your site may be slotted in an irrelevant category.

For instance, suppose you want to be indexed as a “Web copywriter.” Many search engines will likely skip over the word “Web,” reading only “copywriter.” So you will be indexed under “copywriter” as opposed to “Web copywriter.”

Or, if the prominence of a keyword in your title is crucial for a particular search engine’s ranking scheme, having the first word in your title be “the” could damage your ranking.

SOLUTION: If a stop word is part of your site name or title, put it in quotes, or come up with another name or title that doesn’t include the stop word. To determine which words are considered stop words for a particular engine, do a search for a list of words and take note of which ones it says were ignored on the results page.

Factors That Greatly Affect Your Relevancy

People visit search engines to find information or Web sites. They enter keywords into the search line of these search engines. Often they enter multiple search strings of several keywords to further refine their searches. Search engines are in the business of sorting Web sites in their databases by the keywords contained in a Web site or keywords used to describe a Web site for submission-based directories.

Which keywords each individual search engine determines your site is relevant to and how often those keyword are queried will determine how often your Web site's description is presented.

How well you organize the important keywords in your Web site to fit with each search engine's ranking criteria will determine your Web site's rank.

Generally, each search engine based on some predefined criteria assigns "points" to Web sites or the submission someone made describing that Web site. And, while all search engines measure a keyword's position on your pages, there are a variety of places where you can include "keyword-rich" copy or hidden HTML tags to achieve better rankings. Right now, we are simply talking about basic keyword placement and order and general rules you should consider when creating site descriptions and titles for your pages.

While the ranking criteria vary among search engines, most grade the placement of keywords on your Web site, the site's title and description based on these factors:

1. Prominence of the keyword
2. Frequency of the keyword
3. Site popularity
4. Weight of the keywords
5. Proximity of keywords
6. Keyword placement

1. Keyword Prominence: How early in a Web site's title or description a keyword appears. For example, did the title of the site start with a particular keyword or was that keyword the fourth or fifth word of the site's title? See the following example.

Search results for keyword "Pre-Owned Electronics":

Pre-Owned Electronics, Inc - Refurbished and Used Apple Macintosh Systems, The independent source for new, remanufactured and used Apple Macintosh computer systems, parts, peripherals and accessories. We offer a full line of refurbished as well as used...

98% <http://www.preowned.com/> (Size 3.1K)

Note that the queried keyword, “Pre-Owned Electronics,” is the first word of the site title and is the first match in the search results. Documents that are exactly the same, but with keywords as the second or third word in the title will score lower. Prominence also applies to the words within the body of the document, the headings and other tags.

2. **Keyword Frequency:** How often a keyword appears in a site’s title or description. See the following example.

Search for keyword “marketing”:

marketing budget improvements for your business from DVC, Inc. Digital Vision Communications is an interactive marketing agency that can help you with your marketing budget. If you need creative or advertising...

<http://www.80.com/tips/digitalvisioncommunications>

Note that the queried keyword, “marketing,” appears three times in the Lycos search results (underlined for emphasis).

You don’t want to go overboard with frequency, however, since on some engines if you repeat a word too many times, you’ll be penalized for “spamming” or keyword stuffing. In general though, repeat your keyword in the document as many times as possible and three to seven times in your META tags.

3. **Site Popularity:** The number of other Web sites linked to your site. This ranking measurement is sometimes called a site’s significance ranking because it is believed that one measure of a site’s value is the number of other Web sites that felt your site was sufficiently important to link to. If a lot of other sites link to your site, chances are your site is relatively important – or so a number of other Web site owners thought.

For instance, at least 315,990 Web sites link to the IBM (www.ibm.com) Web site in AltaVista’s index (on Jan. 21, 1998). Because of these links, IBM would achieve better ranking in certain search engines with all other factors being equal. This is simply another reason why you want to get other sites to link to yours. However, this is only one factor, and you can certainly achieve high rankings without being linked from thousands of sites. Sometimes if you agree to link to them, they’ll do the same for you. In Web marketing, this is called cross-linking or reciprocal linking and is another way to increase traffic to your Web site.

One engine that will let you check the popularity of your site is HotBot.

4. **Keyword Weight:** The number of keywords appearing on a Web page compared to the total number of words appearing on that page. Some search engines consider this when determining the rank of your Web site for a particular keyword search. This ranking criterion cannot be properly illustrated by showing a particular search result from a search engine since keyword weight is not directly evidenced in the search engine's matches. It is measured on the actual Web page that is described by the search engine's listing.

One technique that often works well is to create some smaller pages, generally just a paragraph long, which emphasize a particular keyword. By keeping the overall number of words to a minimum, you will increase the weight of the keyword you are emphasizing.

When designing your site, keep this in mind: Do not provide detailed product or service information on your home page. Instead design a page for each product or service and provide a brief description and a link to the home page. This will allow you to be more specific with your keywords for each product or service page and increase the weight of the keyword.

5. **Keyword Proximity:** The placement of keywords on a Web page in relation to each other or, in some cases, in relation to other words with a similar meaning as the queried keyword. For search engines that grade a keyword match by keyword proximity, the connected phrase "home loans" will outrank a citation that mentions "home mortgage loans" if you are searching only for the phrase "home loans."

6. **Keyword Placement:** Where on your page your keywords are located. For example, in most engines, placing the keywords in the title tag of the page or in the heading tag will give it more relevancy. On some engines, placing keywords in the link text, the part that is underlined on the screen in a browser, can add more relevancy to those words.

Possible Places to Put Keywords

To break this concept down just a bit further, let's look at what a search engine can measure on your Web site. Below is a list of places where you can include keywords to affect your rank in search engines. The point here is for you to consider the many places that a keyword can be included to affect your site's score in a search engine's ranking algorithm. Later in this report, we will explain in detail, the effect that placement has on the different search engines.

Consider the following list of possibilities. The point of this exercise is for you to understand the scope of variables that you have at your disposal to influence the different search engines – or more importantly, what a site listed ahead of yours in a particular search engine might have done to outrank you. Consider the following options:

- Keywords in the <TITLE> tag(s) (And, believe it or not, sometimes you gain an advantage by including more than one <TITLE> tag on a single page!)
- Keywords in the <META NAME="DESCRIPTION"> tag
- Keywords in the <META NAME="KEYWORD"> tag
- Keywords in <H1> or other headline tags
- Keywords in the
link tags
- Keywords in the body copy
- Keywords in ALT tags – Web designers use this tag to describe the contents of a picture that hasn't finished loading or to describe a picture that you would be looking at if you had not opted to turn the graphics off on your Web browser. A recent study showed that a surprising number of people, perhaps as high as 25%, still browse the Web with the graphics off because of slow connections or slow computers!
- Keywords in <!-- > comment tags
- Keywords contained in <INPUT TYPE="HIDDEN"
 NAME="HIDDEN" VALUE="include list of keywords
 here"> hidden type tag.
- Keywords contained in the URL or site address, e.g.,
<http://www.keyword.com/keywordkeyword.htm>

Factors That Do NOT Affect Your Rank in Search Engines

- The size or content of your graphics.
- Your choice of colors (however, some engines will penalize you for hiding words on a page by using the same color of text as the background).
- Your Web site's overall layout or design. This will only matter insofar as keyword prominence may be affected if a graphic appears before the body copy on your site. Most Web site marketers espouse the use of text before graphics as some search engines assign weight to the first 25 words on a page.
- Words that are graphics, e.g., a gif or jpeg file that spells out a word or words. Search only see the file name of the graphic. It can't hurt to use a file name that is also a keyword you want to emphasize.

The macro point is that there are only so many places where keywords can be included within a Web site. Where, how often and how early these keywords are placed will determine your ranking. Remember these variables when you are analyzing other Web sites that have ranked higher than yours. If you look at it like a puzzle, each player has a number of pieces and the order and distribution of them determines the winner – not some magic bullet or immeasurable force.

Example of Keyword Placement Affecting Rank

To know what kinds of keyword placement or other keyword factors can affect a Web site's ranking is to know how to shuffle the elements that make up your Web site so as to outrank any other site on the Web.

Consider this final series of examples. Which of the following word paintings (representing hypothetical Web sites) would rank higher in a hypothetical search engine for a search on the keyword VanGogh? (HTML is omitted or included as necessary to improve the clarity of the illustration):

Web site #1:

word word, word, word, word, word VanGogh, word, word word, word word, word, word, word, word, word VanGogh, word word, word, word, word, word word word, word, word, word, word word, word, word, word VanGogh word word, word, word, word, word.

Web site #2:

word word, word, word, VanGogh word, word, word, word word, word word, word, word, word, VanGogh word, word, word word, word, word, word, VanGogh word word word, word, word, word, word word, word, word, word word word, word, word, word, word.

Answer: Probably Web site #2 as the occurrences of "VanGogh" are more prominent – they occur earlier or closer to the beginning of document.

Now, consider another more complicated situation, also two Web sites that might be returned for a search on the keyword "VanGogh":

Web site #3:

<TITLE>VanGogh's life and early work</TITLE>

word word, word, word, word, word VanGogh, word, word word, word word, word, word, word, VanGogh word, word, word word, word, word, word, word word word, word, word, word, word word, word, word, word VanGogh word word, word, word, word, word

Web site #4:

<TITLE>VanGogh</TITLE>

word word, word, word, word, word VanGogh, word, word word, word word, word, word, word, VanGogh

Answer: There is no definitive answer because each search engine uses a slightly different ranking system, but we believe that Web site #4 would win more often. "How can that be?!" you might ask in shock and amazement, because "Web site #3 has four occurrences of the

keyword “VanGogh” and the first three have an equal prominence – they are the same distance from the beginning of the document!” It was the keyword weight (the number of times that the keyword “VanGogh” appears on the page as a percentage of the total) that could help Web site #4 outrank #3.

The point is that while not all situations are as clear as the example presented, most ranking problems can be diagnosed by evaluating the same keyword placement variables. Once you understand how to evaluate the variables, you can build Web pages that achieve top rankings.

Caution: Simply because you determine how to and then achieve a high ranking for a particular keyword, does not mean that you will maintain this rank consistently. Every day, thousands of new Web sites are being built and registered in search engines. Search engines continually refine their search algorithms, and sometimes they affect a fundamental change in methodology in pursuit of more accurate searches for visitors.

Nonetheless, your best bet for achieving high rankings is to optimize your pages in the ways described in this guide. Now it’s time to learn the techniques, implement them on your Web pages, and use WebPosition Gold™ to measure your search positions.

How to Create Effective Site Titles and Descriptions

Keep one eye on the prominence and frequency of your keywords in the title and description of your Web site and another eye on the weight of these keywords as a percentage of the total number of words that make up your first page. You'll need to keep your third eye on the appeal of the statements you make in your description of the Web site. You have more than two eyes, don't you? All good Web marketing folks need lots of eyes.

The following title and description may get you a high ranking for a keyword search on the word "mortgage":

!AAA Mortgage banking, the Mortgage money lenders - Mortgage, lenders, money, mortgages, mortgage money, mortgage loans, home equity loans, mortgage money,

What it says, however, is unappealing. Instead, look at another site description that would also rank high, and see which site you would be more likely to visit:

Mortgages Applications Approved Overnight!! - Mortgages and mortgage financing techniques that the larger banks just can't offer. Learn the 8 important things to include on your application so that your mortgage can be approved in 24 hours, even if you have poor credit.

The listing above has the word "mortgage" as the first word of the title, the first word of the description and repeats the word "mortgage" 4 times. The difference is that this description is compelling, solves a problem and offers "8 important things" or pieces of information that could be valuable to consumers visiting the site.

Direct response companies, those firms that make infomercials and run classified ads in papers across the country, have studied and mastered the art of writing headlines. What they learned is that headlines are most effective when they accomplish four things:

1. Solve a problem
2. Solve that problem quickly
3. Solve that problem for what appears to be a small or reasonable amount of money
4. Make the reader curious to learn more

With that in mind, the following headline is acceptable, but not as effective as it could be:

"I can help you to get out of debt and get a good credit rating – I've done it for others; I can do it for you!"

A better approach is to use a headline that will draw more inquiries:
“Correct your bad credit in under a week for less than \$49!”

The second example solves a problem, does so quickly and shows how much money is involved. People relate to this appeal because it has a fundamental basis. Remember one of the many adages about goal setting, “A goal without a deadline is a wish!” Or, how about what they teach you in business school about proposal writing, “Never offer a plan that does not include both time and money.”

The direct response model is effective because it addresses these things, especially time and money. As you write your page description and title, think about this. Then, ask yourself before you submit them to the search engines:

- Is my headline compelling?
- Is it interesting?
- Will it make someone curious to learn more?
- Would I read it and want to visit the site?
- Does it include time and money?
- Does it solve a problem?
- Does it suggest that it solves that problem quickly?
- Does it show a price? (Only emphasize the price if yours is very attractive)

Be careful, you don't want to offend anyone's intelligence – and many direct marketers write headlines that underestimate readers. Read it yourself and make a determination if you would find the title interesting – if you don't, you can be sure that others won't.

This direct response model does not apply universally in its purest form. Many Web sites do not sell things directly and are informational in nature or support what ad execs would call image advertising. However, do not overlook this fundamental truth:

Being first in the search engines is great.
Being first **and compelling** is better!

Your listing in the search engine should be compelling. If the description of the site directly below yours is more compelling, you lose – a prospect will pass over your site.

The Summary report in WebPosition Gold™ shows each position along with your page's summary description. Many people only concern themselves with their position number. Remember, that is only half the battle!

Writing Killer Page Titles

The <TITLE> tag of your Web site is arguably the most important HTML tag or element of your Web site. All the search engines consider the keywords in this tag and give those keywords a lot of importance in their ranking systems. Many search engines use this <TITLE> tag as the title of your site returned in their search results. This means that your HTML tag must not only work to your advantage for keyword scoring, it must also be compelling.

There are two elements to every Web site listing in the search engines:

- the site title, which will be blue and an activated link to the site and
- the site description.

Of course both must be compelling, but the <TITLE> tag has a special relevance because so many search engines use the title exactly as it appears on your page. Some search engines will use the site description that you give in the META tags, but others will not. For this reason, the <TITLE> of the site is more important than the site description.

Here are the important principles to remember when writing site titles:

A. Longer <TITLE>s are more effective because more words allow you to build a more compelling reason to visit a Web site.

B. People don't read text, they recognize words.

Point A – that longer <TITLE>s work better – is true because it takes a certain number of words to persuade someone to take action.

Remember, in a direct response approach it's difficult to offer time, money and value in just two words. People scan headlines in brochures and magazines often, even when they don't read all the information.

Since the title is usually a hyperlink, it is a different color, and it is generally bold and easy to read. When it's longer, there are more words with which to hook a reader. If something catches the readers' eye as they scroll down a list of site titles, they will hopefully read the site description. If you've done your work, they will be hooked.

Research has also shown that Point B is true. People don't read individual letters after about the time they turn 12 years old – they recognize words. Educators know that people glance at words and recognize the words by the shape they see defined by the tops of the words. If you don't believe it, take a sentence in any newspaper or book and cover the bottom half of the words. You can still read the words with relative ease. Now, cover the top of a different sentence.

You'll find that the words are harder to read because there is not much difference in the shape or line of the bottom of the words.

You'll see that you recognize words by their tops, by the differences in the height of the different letters. You might think to yourself, "Interesting, but how does this apply to me and my marketing efforts?"

If people recognize words by looking at the tops of the words, and that this is accomplished because the tops of words vary in height and appearance, then sentences that start with just one capital letter and then lowercase letters will be easier to recognize and will get read first. Every little advantage helps you!

WORDS IN ALL CAPS ARE HARD TO READ! PEOPLE DON'T LIKE TO READ THEM AND DON'T READ THEM AS EASILY. RECOGNIZING THE WORDS IN THE SENTENCES IS TEDIOUS, AND THESE LISTINGS ARE FREQUENTLY OVERLOOKED.

To further illustrate the "tops of words" principle, look at how difficult it is to read this sentence:

SeNtEnCeS ThAT VaRy CaPs AnD LoWErCaSe LeTtErS ArE
mAdDEnInG AnD EvEn HarDeR To ReAd.

See what a difference the tops of words can make? For this reason, construct your <TITLE> tags and site title submissions with one capital letter to start the tag, then use lower case letters for the rest of the site title. This technique is just one more advantage that you can realize over your Web site's competitors in search results.

Problems With Using Frames

While frames make Web site design and navigation a bit easier, they wreak havoc on your Web site's ranking in the search engines for two reasons:

1. Half of the search engines cannot read the content contained in frames.
2. Frames increase the file size and the number of total words that make up the Web site, and thereby can decrease keyword weight.

Non-frames-capable search engines view the Web site just as if you were viewing your site with an outdated browser. This is evidenced by the large number of search engines that return listings like this:

Used-PCs.com

is your webstore for Used PCs and PC parts. This web page uses frames;

You'll need Netscape or IE 2.0 or better to view them.

98% <http://www.used-pcs.com/> (Size 1.3K)

What happened here?! This is how this terrific company that sells used Pentiums at reasonable prices and operates a great Web site is listed in a particular search engine. Why? The search engine's spider couldn't read frames. Therefore, it only read the contents of the <NOFRAMES> tag. This information is returned to browsers that are not frames-capable instead of just a jumbled page. Unfortunately, the text in the <NOFRAMES> tag is often instructions to the reader that they need a frames-capable browser to view the site properly. Note: This company has corrected their site and designed a new site that does not employ frames. Check out the new site. They always have some great bargains there!

So, how do you overcome this problem? First, if at all possible, do not design your Web site with frames. In our opinion, only very large, complex sites with many menu options and levels truly need frames.

If you insist on using frames, take measures to ensure that the major search engines' spiders can index your page. You can accomplish this by carefully using the <NOFRAMES> tag. Also, don't forget effective site titles and META tags. Just because you're using frames doesn't mean you should leave out the META tags.

It's really quite simple. You must create an alternate Web page within the <NOFRAMES> tag so that search engines have something to

index. Compose a complete HTML Web page between the <NOFRAMES> tag and its end tag </NOFRAMES>. Make sure that you include the <NOFRAMES> tag immediately below the very first frameset tag, because, as always, you want the keyword rich text to appear as close to the top of the page as possible like so:

```
<FRAMESET COLS="125,*" border="0">
<NOFRAMES>
<BODY>
```

```
<H1>I'll start the content in my NOFRAMES tag with a header tag
that I'll fill with keywords</H1>
```

```
<P>In the copy you can include all the text and HTML that would
otherwise make up your Web site. Here's a link to another page,
maybe one that would make up another frame:</P>
```

```
<A HREF="http://www.yourcompany.com/otherpage.htm">Click to
link to another page</A>
```

```
<P> And here's some more text for the search engines to index </P>
</BODY>
```

```
</NOFRAMES>
```

```
<FRAME SRC="html/lftmenu.htm" NAME="frame517420"
MARGINWIDTH=3 SCROLLING=NO NORESIZE>
```

```
<FRAME SRC="html/main.html" NAME="main"
SCROLLING=YES>
```

```
</FRAMESET>
```

The preferred method is to include all the information from the other framed pages on this new, separate page contained in the <NOFRAMES> tag. When you design this new Web page within the <NOFRAMES> tag, make sure you include links to other pages in your site so that the search engine can spider to those pages and index them as well.

Make sure <NOFRAMES> follows the <FRAMESET> tag. Moving it up higher in the page such as in the <HEAD> section could make your wording more prominent to the search engine but would be incompatible with some browsers.

Since the extra tags to set up frames may dilute the density of keywords versus other words on the page, you should definitely consider creating optimized pages. These pages would not use frames at all, but would serve as pointers to your main site that uses frames. This solution can provide the best of both worlds.

How to Combat the “Ol’ Switcheroo” Technique

If you haven’t achieved top rankings in search engines, we strongly suggest looking at the Web sites that did achieve one of those rankings to try and understand why they rated so well. There is one catch you need to be aware of:

The site you are viewing may not be the site that achieved that top ranking.

How can this be? Simply put, it’s called the “ol’ switcheroo” or cloaking. A clever marketer creates a Web page, usually all text with carefully constructed META tags, comment tags and body copy, and submits that page to a search engine. If he’s done a good job, voila, number one ranking. Now, the site that achieved such a high ranking is probably not very attractive – often, depending on the search engine, it contains just one word on the actual page, or one paragraph stuffed with keywords, repeated two or three times. Since it is so unattractive, the person who just achieved that ranking will switch out that one Web page and substitute their real site complete with graphics and the other trappings of good Web site design.

I do NOT recommend this technique. First, it is dishonest since the page a user searches for should be the page they get. Second, you’ll get burned when the search engine periodically without notice automatically re-indexes your site. When this happens, you’ll immediately and without warning lose your ranking.

One of the first clues that this tactic is being used is that the site title and description displayed in the search summary results are not found anywhere on the actual Web site.

Our point here is this: Before you begin to try and learn from the people who have Web sites in the top positions in a search engine, make sure the site you are looking at is the actual Web site that garnered that top ranking. If you suspect that a highly ranked site is employing the “ol’ switcheroo” tactic, you can resubmit it to the search engine. When it get re-indexed, it will likely lose its ranking. This can help you learn from sites which honestly deserve their top position.

There is just one occasion when re-indexing a site that shouldn’t be at the top of a list won’t work. Some really cunning Web site managers use a CGI script to automatically detect a particular search engine’s spider and then dynamically serve a Web site front page that is different from the one that the rest of the world sees. This page will guarantee them that top rank even if it is an extremely ugly nonsense

page. There is almost no certain way to tell if someone is using this technique. However, there are the same hints as before (e.g., the words that make up the site description and title are not found on the actual page, and re-indexing the site doesn't cause a new headline and site description to be generated by the search engine). I don't believe this is a very commonly used technique *yet*, since it's difficult and time-consuming to implement.

Make sure you are competing and positioning against a site that is in fact, the actual site that was indexed. If not, you can report your suspicion that they are using a CGI script to serve up a different page to search engines. If investigated, the site may be removed from the search engine database for displaying a page that doesn't match what they submitted.

As far as the legalities of submitting a page other than your own, most of the search engines themselves ask you to submit or suggest a favorite page from any site, not just your own. If the page has not changed since it was last indexed, their ranking should not change or be affected by the resubmission.

How to Avoid Trouble With the Engines

More and more, search engines are cracking down on the use of techniques they consider inappropriate for gaining top rankings in their indexes. No doubt many techniques in this special report are now or will be targeted sooner or later.

Because the search engines are working to penalize the small minority of spammers who inappropriately submit dozens of pages and present off-topic material, legitimate Web masters must be careful that they don't get clipped in one of these stings.

Penalties can be draconian and can include having your domain name, your IP address and even pages registered under your Internic handle banned from a particular search engine. In extreme cases, we've heard of search engines checking domain registrations with Internic for owner's names and addresses. With this information they can prevent known spammers from registering new domains and getting back into their index. We received an e-mail from someone claiming that AltaVista was blocking submissions of all of his URLs, even new ones he registered. He suspected that AltaVista had captured his Nic handle information and was blocking any new URLs he registered under it, though we could not confirm this practice. You do not want to suffer such a fate. There is no reason you should if you observe these guidelines:

1. Never use keywords in your META tags that do not apply to your site's content.

Tip: Let's say you have a travel service business. The single keyword "travel" will probably be very hard to be positioned well on. To attract the visitors you want, you may want to create good content related to your business in order to attract the right type of visitors. For example, if you sell vacation cruises to the Caribbean, make a page all about "Parasailing in the Caribbean." Give them all the information they'd want to know about the sport, the pros and cons, then show them how to get there on one of your vacation plans! However, good content is the KEY. Your page must really get the prospect excited about going parasailing before they're going to start thinking seriously about buying a ticket.

2. Avoid repeating the same keyword dozens of times in a row on your page or in your META tags. Increasingly, search engines are penalizing and even banning Web sites for employing this technique. List a keyword one to seven

times, no more. Any more than that and you're entering the "danger zone."

3. Do not create too many optimized pages. It's good to create multiple pages that each target different sets of keywords or topics related to your site, but **DO NOT BE EXCESSIVE!** Search engines now watch for multiple submissions that appear the same or very similar. Try a couple of variations, submit them, then wait and see how you rank.

Tip: It's important to review your Web site and check your rankings for many keywords that appear in the text that makes up the different pages of your Web site. Often you'll find that your Web site did not rank well for one important keyword, but it may rank very well on some other keyword or phrase found on the page!

If you don't rank well anywhere, read "The Golden Rule" (see page 56), redesign your page and resubmit. Search engines don't really care if you resubmit a page after making changes. In fact, they encourage it.

The easiest way to get in trouble is to have three, four or more of your pages all appear together in the matches for a single keyword search. One of your competitors will likely report you. This could get you banned from that search engine.

4. Avoid submitting too many pages at once. If you have 100 pages you need indexed, first review the rules of the particular search engine to make certain the search engine will index this number. I suggest you play it safe and break up your submissions. Submit half one day and half the next avoiding any undocumented limits a search engine may have whereby they simply ignore your pages after a certain number of submissions. Also be wary of automated site submission tools that submit too many pages simultaneously.
5. Avoid submitting the same page twice on the same day. Generally search engines will simply ignore a second submission. You can, however, rename the page and resubmit it, but again, don't abuse the system. Keep page variations to a minimum, follow up, and if you don't rank well for your keywords, then redesign the page and submit it again. Consider it page recycling.
6. Following up by checking your rank for many keywords in 10 search engines sounds like a lot of work. It is. Some

people tell us they spend 30 hours a week checking their rank for their important keywords. That's why we designed WebPosition Gold™. It does all the grunt work for you by doing the searches in parallel and then putting together all the results in neat, concise reports

7. After you've been in business awhile, you'll learn that to succeed, you need a competitive advantage. Use technology and knowledge to do more in less time. This is how the smaller or newer companies can often compete against the big boys. However, don't sacrifice your ethics to achieve your goals. Using Princess Diana's name on your Web site to bring traffic is patently offensive. It's deception in every application whether the keyword concerns a sensitive current event or simply a high-interest keyword. Most importantly, it won't translate into revenue, only aggravated visitors. And even if you make a buck or two, it will be on your conscience. Making money on the Web is not that hard. WebPosition Gold™ and this report make it even easier. Now go make lots of money and report back and tell us how you did it!

Maximize Your Visibility with Optimized Pages!

With the exception of catalog sites like Yahoo!, you can submit more than one URL to a search engine. An optimized or search engine friendly page is simply a page that has been created for the purpose of ranking higher in search engines. Normally you'd have a particular keyword or set of keywords in mind when you make the optimizations. These pages act as additional entrances to the remaining content of your site. They can help you achieve top rankings without having to completely redesign or remove content from the rest of your site.

You can create these pages to take advantage of a search engine's criteria for a specific keyword or keyword combination. Let's say you want to rank well on AltaVista for the keyword combination "Utility Software" and for your company name of "ABC Software, Inc." Build one page for your company site specific to AltaVista, and another customized for achieving the best ranking for "Utility Software" at AltaVista. It's simple – two optimized pages as follows:

<http://www.abc-software.com/abc-software-av.htm> (optimized company page for AltaVista)

<http://www.abc-software.com/utility-software-av.htm> (Customized for AltaVista-specific for "Utility Software")

Then, customize the META tags, body copy and everything else on the pages to try and gain an advantage for that particular keyword in AltaVista. You will emphasize primarily that keyword on that page. In your sentences, try to fit it around other keywords you want to target as well, but keep the primary emphasis of the page on a single topic. You will then want to add a link on that page to the home page on your site.

These additional optimized pages help you solve the most troubling Web marketing dilemma:

The techniques that will get you a high ranking in one search engine can get you penalized or even removed from the index of another search engine. It is impossible to design a single page that will rank well for all of your chosen keywords in all engines.

Since there are so many sites indexed by Web search engines, the content of your page must be very focused to rank well in today's overflowing search engines.

Most companies want their Web sites found under several keywords that their prospects are likely querying in search engines. For this reason, you'll want to create separate pages that emphasize each of those keywords. Look at an example of a Web site that would like to

rank well for searches on keywords related to horses. This company would like its site to rank well under three keywords in particular:

1. horse
2. performance horse
3. equine

The following Web page naming convention illustrates how you might name the individual pages optimized to achieve a high ranking for each keyword:

<http://www.horsesite.com/horse-av.htm> (optimized for the keyword “horse” for AltaVista)

<http://www.horsesite.com/performance-horse-av.htm> (optimized for the keyword “performance horse” for AltaVista)

<http://www.horsesite.com/equine-av.htm> (optimized for the keyword “equine” for AltaVista)

Remember you can create dozens of these pages, each optimized to rank well for a different keyword in a different engine. Typically, when targeting five keywords, across eight search engines, you end up with 40 pages pointing to your home page or other section on your site. Don’t worry, this is not unusual. If you are cautious and heed the warnings below, you won’t have any problems.

WARNING #1: Some search engines will consider the act of creating dozens of nearly identical pages as “spamming” their index and could remove your pages altogether. This is most dangerous when you either inadvertently (or intentionally) cause dozens of your site’s pages to rank well for one keyword search. The poor search engine user is returned 30 matches, all of them going to one of your pages and looking identical or very similar! If your competitor sees this, you can bet they’ll inform the search engine in hopes of getting your Web site permanently expelled from the search engine.

This result also devalues the search engine. Nobody wants to scroll through dozens of duplicate sites to locate the information they need. And, unless you run the CNN Web site or some other huge content-based site, chances are you don’t have something to please everyone yet.

You can avoid potential problems by first optimizing your existing pages on your site before creating new ones. Only create new ones to fill gaps. Make the content of each optimized page vary, and you won’t be breaking any rules.

WARNING #2: Some search engine “experts” have long advised that you simply create copies of your index page (and make changes to a page to emphasize different keywords), and then name them

index1.htm, index2.htm, index3.htm, etc. Doing this only asks for trouble since anyone seeing index10.htm is going to know immediately that you've got at least nine other copies of your home page out there. If one of your competitors complains to a search engine, you then run the risk of getting dropped from the index. The search engine could easily search for and red flag pages that are named this way in order to filter out potential troublemakers.

Tip: Some techniques work better than others, depending on the engine. Sometimes, a shorter, more concise page will rank higher on AltaVista than a longer one. You could create alternate shorter pages and name them accordingly:

<http://www.theraquine.com/horse-short.htm>

<http://www.theraquine.com/performance-horse-short.htm>

<http://www.theraquine.com/equine-short.htm>

Experiment with different pages and page names to describe these experiments, but be careful and do NOT go overboard.

After several tests, we believe that some engines may have implemented a penalty to combat potential spam for pages that contain the word "index" in the page name such as index-widgets.htm, index-widgets2.htm, etc.

The Power of Natural-Sounding Paragraphs

Search engines continually create more sophisticated ways of grading pages based on their content and often ignore pages that try to list the same keyword over and over. Occasionally this technique will still work. However, the technique of listing keywords is prone to abuse, so engines are turning to judging the *content* of the page, rather than what keywords you list in your META tags or elsewhere on your Web site.

Pages that naturally integrate keywords into the content of the page often rank better in some search engines. These search engines are probably employing a system where keywords are given less weight or ignored if the keyword is found within so many characters or words of that same keyword. Repeating the keyword, but keeping it spaced apart may work better on these engines.

So, what does this mean? One successful technique is to create a page that includes a normal sounding paragraph, in regular sentence, but go out of your way to repeat certain keywords. Unfortunately, the page might not have the most professional writing style and may sound a bit awkward, but if you're having trouble getting recognized by the engines, this technique often works when others fail. Don't make your home page sound silly by repeating the keywords over and over. You can, however, create optimized pages that lead people into a very

professional-looking home page. You must remember that once you attract the visitor, you have to grab the prospect's attention and inspire confidence in your products or services before the prospect will buy anything.

Another technique that often works well is to do the same thing, but keep the page very small, to perhaps a few sentences followed by a link to your main page. It is important to try a variety of techniques since cannot always anticipate the search engines' next move.

To succeed, you have to be more clever than simply repeating keywords. As described earlier, most search engines penalize you after you've repeated a keyword more than seven times on a given page. Others now penalize if a keyword is repeated more than three times.

Some search engines are now implementing sophisticated code to try to detect flagrant attempts to influence their index. It is believed they now check not only for word repetition but also for sentence construction.

This technology will not affect you if you do not repeat keywords separated by commas, but rather write normal sounding sentences that include your keywords, scattered carefully throughout.

“Click Here” Is Important

Don't forget to tell visitors on your optimized page to “click here” to enter the site or to learn more. All the research on banner advertising extols the virtue of asking the visitor to take the specific action and to “click here.” Don't question this wisdom, just use it. Make the phrase “click here” a part of your marketing practices.

Never Create Optimized Pages for Directories Like Yahoo!

STOP! Don't do it. Do not attempt to submit additional pages on the same site to human-reviewed directories – they will be rejected, and your main page may be penalized. Your rank in these directories will be determined more by how you word your submission describing your site than by the words that make up your main page. However, Yahoo!, in particular, will visit your site and ensure that your content is consistent with your submission.

Submission Tips

Submission has become more and more complicated. Many engines are employing new rules, limits, and preferences not only for how your page should look, but how you should submit the page. Pay careful attention to these new submission guidelines given on the submit page of each search engine.

Something they may not tell you though, is that submitting your important internal pages directly to the engine may actually hurt your chances of ranking high on the search engine.

Many engines request you submit only your home page, and they will then spider the rest of your site by following the links from that page to your other pages. Unfortunately for larger sites, they will often only spider a few hundred pages on a single site before stopping, and may only go down about three levels at the most.

A number of engines seem to be placing greater weight on pages that they spidered, rather than those that you submitted directly. Therefore, if you're in a competitive keyword area, a smarter strategy may be to create a page with links to your other pages, and simply submit the main page and let the engine find the rest. The disadvantage is you may have to wait for weeks before the engine gets around to indexing those other pages, and there's a chance they may never get around to it. If you have the patience though, this technique may give you a competitive edge over other well-designed pages.

At a minimum, avoid submitting more than a few pages on the same day. Submitting too many at once can cause them all to be rejected. The exact number they allow is somewhat ambiguous but recommendations are given in WebPosition Gold's submitter. Submitting one per day is the safest, but you may be able to get away with as many as five or ten depending on the engine.

How to Measure Your Web Site's Popularity

Since some search engines will judge your Web site by the number of other Web sites that link to it, how do you determine who has linked to your Web site?

Some search engines track which Web sites in their directories have links to outside Web sites. This information is noted in their databases and some of the search engines allow you to query this information. The method varies by search engine, but the value of this information cannot be underestimated.

A recent study determined that the second most significant way that people find and use Web sites is by following a link on another Web site. Soliciting links from other Web sites and then tracking how many actually establish those links is important for effective Web site marketing.

Here are instructions for checking who linked to your Web site for the search engines which support this feature:

AltaVista: Type “link:” followed by your URL into the search screen as follows:

link: www.yourcompany.com

Your results will include more sites if you do not include the “www” in your site URL. This is because the search engine only identifies matches if the entire text of the URL that you specify is found. As an example, consider a site which has a link to an e-mail address containing your domain name:

address@yourcompany.com

A search for “link:yourcompany.com” will return the above site, because the search engine finds the text “yourcompany.com” in the link. However, if you searched for “link:www.yourcompany.com” the above site would not be found, since AltaVista would not find the entire text you specified.

HotBot: Type “linkdomain:” followed by your URL into the search screen as follows:

linkdomain:www.yourcompany.com

Another method is to type your entire URL into the search screen and select “links to the URL” in the “Look for” pull-down menu to the left of the search box. Note that this method will not work unless you include the “http/” at the beginning of your URL.

Creating a Winning Strategy

If you're serious about improving your Web site's visibility and thereby increasing your site traffic, you must have a plan of action. Improving your positions is not instantaneous. Instead, it's an ongoing PROCESS. WebPosition Gold™ makes this process much easier, therefore, it is invaluable to improving your site's positions and ultimately increasing your traffic.

This section assumes you have a copy of WebPosition Gold™ which can be downloaded at:

<http://www.webposition.com>

However, even if you don't have WebPosition Gold™, these steps still apply!

Here's an outline of the general strategy we recommend:

1. Check your site's visibility as it stands today. If your Web site has already been submitted to the search engines, you'll want to find out how well you rank right now for keywords and phrases people might use to find you. In WebPosition Gold™, you do this by creating a "Mission." You will then have a baseline to monitor your progress over time. Otherwise, you'll need to do the searches by hand on each of the major engines.
2. Understand why all your pages are not ranking as well as they could. Study the Mission Results or search engine results. Understand how to use the reports which WebPosition Gold™ generates.

There's no way to make a single page rank well with every search engine for every keyword or phrase someone might use. However, you can work to make at least one page in your Web site rank near the top for each engine. Ideally, you'll want one of your pages to be positioned well for each of your primary keywords. This may take some thought on how to set up your pages to achieve the desired results. Study this report for the techniques to improve your positions over the pages that currently appear in the top 10.

3. Try to identify and correct problem areas:
 - A) Are you at least indexed on each engine? Make sure your page design has been optimized for keyword searches, then resubmit. If you submitted recently, make sure you've allowed enough time for the engine to add you to their

database. You'll need to go to the engine's submit area to find out what their current lag time is for indexing new sites.

B) Are you at least in the top 30 positions for your primary keywords? If not, redesign some of your pages (or create new ones), and resubmit. Study this report and subscribe to our FREE MarketPosition Newsletter for ongoing tips.

4. Keep records of everything! You may find your rankings suddenly move up or down dramatically. When this happens, you'll need to understand WHY. We recommend you keep careful notes on when you submitted or resubmitted to each engine and what pages you submitted. You may even wish to create subdirectories with different copies of your Web site at various stages. That way, if you move down in rank after submitting Revision B, you can go back and study what made Revision A better. This requires some planning to be effective. Take advantage of WebPosition Gold™'s Mission archive feature so you can monitor your progress at each step.
5. Follow up! This is the key to achieving good rankings. There's no 100% effective page design or strategy. Each search engine is different and continually changes and adds new pages to its index. These will affect your positions over time and sometimes very quickly. You need to continually monitor and adjust your site.

Tip: If you're not in the top 30 now, you'll probably want to change WebPosition Gold™'s "Reporter" settings on "Options" Tab, under the default setting "Matches to Scan" to a number higher than 30 (like 50 or 100 maybe). If you scan more matches to find your listing, you'll be able to track your progress better on whether your changes and submissions are moving you up or down the list. Beware that searches will take longer the more records you scan, so consider using the WebPosition Gold™ Scheduler if needed.

Is it all really worth it?

Yes! Even minor changes in page design combined with follow-up work can have significant effects on your traffic. There's also no other more cost-effective way to increase traffic to your site. Even better, this traffic tends to be of a high quality since it found you by specifically searching for your product or service. If you're indexed on the keywords that properly describe your products or services, you should see sales increase noticeably. This assumes the content of your site is effective once they get there.

Real-life example: We're familiar with a company that offered various types of software products. They did some traditional advertising and submitted to the search engines. Web site traffic was slow, and Internet sales accounted for only 7 percent of their business. After following the tips outlined here and resubmitting, the site's traffic tripled over a couple of months! Even more astonishing was sales via the Internet increased nearly 500% (to 34% of total company sales!) with zero cost in new advertising dollars! This was all done before WebPosition Gold™ was even invented. Therefore the company was forced to just hope they were ranked well, since monitoring everything by hand was not practical. In the majority of cases, they were not ranked very well at all! Therefore, they were still missing out on the vast majority of their untapped potential.

That company was FirstPlace Software.

Now, with the release of WebPosition Gold™, improving your search rankings is no longer an art, but a science and completely manageable. Not every site will do well on the Internet. Only the ones that work *smart* by taking advantage of the right tools and strategies will be successful.

Ten Steps to Creating Top-Ranking Pages

So many people requested this section that we feel obligated to include it. However, even though this section will give you a quick overview of the process of creating better ranking pages, it's no substitute for reading the entire report and gaining all of its insights.

Still, here are the generic steps to undertake in optimizing pages for search engine submission. Not all of these steps should be used in optimizing pages for all search engines. This is because each search engine ranks Web pages by different criteria. Refer to the WebPosition Gold Page Critic for tips specific to each engine.

Here are the steps in order of importance:

Step 1: Create Optimized Pages. Create short, focused summary pages about a particular topic that emphasizes a keyword, phrase or select group of keywords. Give each file a unique name and avoid numbering your pages like index1.htm, index2.htm, index3.htm, etc.

A sample naming convention might be:

<http://www.yourcompany.com/singing-telegram.htm> (page optimized for "singing telegram")

<http://www.yourcompany.com/magician.htm> (page optimized for "magician")

<http://www.yourcompany.com/clowns.htm> (page optimized for "clowns")

You will probably want to create some variations of these pages to target the preferences of specific search engines. However, avoid submitting more than two to three pages to the same engine that are very similar and discuss the same topic. Instead, submit a couple of your best designs based on the tips in this report and your own observations, and then follow up. If you didn't score as well as you would have liked on each keyword, try some other designs and submit them again reusing the same page name.

Step 2: Begin Optimizing the Pages With the <TITLE> tag. The <TITLE> tag is arguably the most important piece of HTML code you will write to gain a top ranking. Make sure this tag immediately follows the <HEAD> tag and is not placed after other META tags. As we discuss later, some HTML editors place <TITLE> tags arbitrarily within the head tag. It is important that the <TITLE> is placed immediately after the <HEAD> tag in your HTML code:

```
<TITLE>Increase Traffic with iProspect.com!</TITLE>
```

You should repeat this and all following steps for each different optimized page so each page targets a different engine and keyword. Some page designs will often work well on multiple engines, but rarely on all of them.

Extra trick: Some search engines rank pages higher when the pages include multiple <TITLE> tags as follows:

```
<TITLE>Increase Traffic with iProspect.com!</TITLE>  
<TITLE>Increase Traffic with iProspect.com!</TITLE>  
<TITLE>Increase Traffic with iProspect.com!</TITLE>
```

Step 3: Add META tags. There are two META tags that you should concern yourself with: the META description and the META keyword tag. The stated goal of these tags is to provide the search engine's spiders with a description of your site and the keywords that you think are relevant to the content of your site. Without these tags, search engines will randomly select 25 words from the body copy of your Web site and use it to describe the content of your site. Often, search engines select irrelevant words, and then nobody visits your site. Here is how you use these META tags:

```
<META NAME="DESCRIPTION" CONTENT="This is my site  
description that I would like the search engine to use.">
```

```
<META NAME="KEYWORDS" CONTENT="keyword1, keyword2,  
keyword3, keyword4">
```

Step 4: Add keywords to a comment tag. A comment tag describes something within your HTML code that is not viewed by people visiting your Web site. Typically it describes the function of a section of code or the name of the site's designer. For your marketing purposes it can include important keywords:

```
<!-- Here is a sentence that includes a lot of my keywords. I place this  
keyword-rich sentence in the header of the HTML document because  
it is always important to include keywords high on the page -->
```

Step 5: Add keywords in a header tag. Keywords in the <H1> through <H6> tags are assigned more relevancy points by many of the search engines. For this reason, at the very top of my page, often as the first text appearing on the page, it is wise to include a sentence or list of keywords between the header tags. Remember that the larger the number, the smaller the size of the font:

```
<H2>Keywords are important here, and this is a keyword-rich  
sentence that you may notice started with a "keyword" and includes  
another keyword and another keyword.</H2>
```

Step 6: Add a <NO FRAMES> tag for sites with frames. If your page uses frames, you should use the <NO FRAMES> tag to include links to your other pages and a sentence or two describing your Web site. This is because many search engines can't index Web sites which use frames:

<NO FRAMES>Keyword-rich text describing my site is important here and again my first word was a keyword</NO FRAMES>

Step 7: Make the first 25 words on the page keyword rich. Since some search engines use the first 25 words of copy on your page as the site's description in their index and to determine which keywords to rank your site under, carefully construct the beginning of your paragraphs. Below we use the tag just so you recognize that we are talking about viewable copy:

Keyword1, Keyword2, and Keyword3, are important keywords to this Web site so make sure that Keyword1 and Keyword2 and even Keyword 3 appear several times in the first 25 words on your Web page.

Step 8: Make hyperlinks to your other pages flush with keywords. Several search engines assign extra relevance to keywords found in hyperlinks. Since it is likely that your home page will include links to other sections of your site, take time to include keywords in these:

Keyword1 and keyword2 will provide information about our clients

Step 9: Add keywords to your ALT tags. ALT tags describe graphics that haven't completely loaded or that won't be seen if the visitor to your site is browsing the Web with their graphics turned off. Some search engines will consider keywords found in ALT tags for your site's relevancy toward a ranking under that keyword, or they will use the text contained in the ALT tag to describe your site in their index. Either way, it's important to fill up these tags with keyword-rich text as follows:

If you don't have graphics on your page, you can still benefit from this technique. You can employ the "single pixel gif" technique by creating a gif file that is simply one pixel – hardly visible. Open your favorite graphic editor and create an image that consists of just a single dot (one pixel) the same color as your background (you can even define it as a transparent gif if you want to be extra stealthy). Insert that tiny graphic into your page, preferably near the top for the best effect:

This allows you to include important keywords near the top of your page even if you don't have any graphics on your main page.

Step 10: Calculate and then optimize your page's **keyword frequency** (total occurrences) and **keyword weight** (percentage of the total words

that make up the page). Since the search engines will consider these when determining your site's relevance toward particular keyword searches, you should control these variables. Simply copy the viewable text into your word processor or text editor and perform a "word count." Write this number down in a safe place and then select the "replace" feature from the "edit" menu (in most word processors). Replace the particular keyword you are looking to count, with itself. The word processor will then search and replace your keyword with itself and then tell you how many replacements were performed. Take this number, and divide it by the total number of words. If you have 100 total words and three of them were one particular keyword, you have a keyword weight of 3 percent. Work to keep your keyword weight between 3 and 8 percent, though some engines respond better to higher keyword weight. Remember to review the pages that ranked in the top 10 for your keyword searches and determine the keyword weight they employed.

These are the basic steps for optimizing your Web pages for search engines. This is, of course, a very oversimplified example. When you actually optimize your pages, you will be optimizing your pages based on each search engine's ranking criteria. This means you will not use all of these steps for each engine, and some search engines will require extra, advanced steps not described here.

Once you have optimized your pages, you will submit each set to their respective search engines. Remember, don't submit all the pages to all the search engines. What you will have done to gain a top ranking in HotBot could actually hurt you in AltaVista and so on.

After all of the pages are optimized, use WebPosition Gold™ every day to check your rankings and make sure that each search engine added your pages. WebPosition Gold™ is the only tool that can effectively monitor your rankings in the 10 major search engines – the only ones that really matter – and then give you the detailed information necessary to improve those positions.

After you submit the pages, it's up to you and WebPosition Gold™ to check your rankings and tweak your page designs to get your pages into those top positions. Without WebPosition Gold™, it will be much harder.

GOLDEN RULE of Search Engine Marketing

“To Achieve a Top Position in a Particular Search Engine, Analyze What Other High-Ranking Web Pages Have Done!”

If there is one rule that should be referred back to as the refrain in search engine positioning, it is this:

The best way to move up the search result list is to learn what kinds of things affect your rankings and then **analyze the pages of those that ranked higher than yours** for real clues on how you can achieve a higher ranking.

Search engines change their ranking algorithms from time to time. A page in your Web site that earned a top ranking last week might drop in the rankings a few months later. Then, left untouched, that same page could climb right back into its old search position awhile later, although this is unlikely to happen by chance.

The trick to always being on top is to learn the variables that can be influenced and analyze the contents of the top Web sites to see what they're doing better than you. Refer to the detailed report in WebPosition Gold™ for an easy reference.

Literally, click on their listings, visit their site and select “view” from the pull-down menu in Netscape and then the “Document Source” selection on that menu. You can do the same in Microsoft Explorer. This allows you to view the actual HTML code that makes up their page.

Ask yourself, “Is a particular keyword more prominent in their title tag than in mine?” and “is a particular keyword more prominent?” You should also consider whether it is repeated more often in their description META tag or in the actual copy that makes up their page than on my Web site.

Perhaps they are using the keyword in the heading tags, or maybe keywords appear in hyperlinks to other internal pages or some other way that you had not considered or are not using. This is the proven way to isolate the variables and climb ahead of other sites in search engines.

Specific Techniques to Increase “Relevancy”

Now that you understand the variables you control for keyword placement within your Web pages, here are techniques and applications where you must apply those keywords. Each will help you gain a footing and climb toward the top of the rankings in the search engines. Each technique is presented independently and will not work for every search engine. After this overview of techniques, you will need to read the search engine by search engine descriptions to learn which techniques work for which engines.

META Tags and How to Use Them

META tags are the information that you place in the <HEAD> section of your Web site which does not display in the browser window. META tags allow the developer to communicate certain information to the search engines, other automated services and other Web developers about their site.

Think of the META tag as food for a search engine’s spiders. META tags let you tell a search engine’s spider:

1. The name of your site,
2. A description of your site that you would like the search engine to use and
3. The keywords that you would like your site to be found under.

META tags provide Web site developers with control over how your site is listed in a spider-based search engine. If you don’t include them in your document, the spider will likely take the first 25 words on your

Web site and include them as the name and description of the site. Have you ever seen a Web site listed in a search engine as follows?

[COMPANY] [INFORMATION] [PRODUCTS] [SERVICES]
[OVERVIEW]

Hi, and thanks for taking the time to visit our company page. We hope you'll find...

<http://www.gizmonicselectric.com/> - size 22K - 22 Sept 96

You guessed it, this was the navigation bar that the site developer included at the top of the page. The search engine's spider grabbed the first text it found and hoped it described the page. Most important, nothing about this listing is compelling. You have no idea what the company does or why you should visit the page.

META tags are easy to build. Just follow the format below and replace our title, description and keywords with your own. Here is an example of META tags:

```
<HTML>
```

```
<HEAD>
```

```
<TITLE>increase traffic with iProspect.com </TITLE>
```

```
<META NAME="Keywords" CONTENT="increase traffic, increase Web site traffic, search position, report position, report search ranking, rank, search ranking, monitor search positions, web site promotion, internet promotion, optimize search positions, improve traffic">
```

```
<META NAME="Description" CONTENT="INCREASE Web site TRAFFIC. iProspect.com is the premier Web marketing e-agency – want traffic?">
```

```
<!-- This is a comments tag, you can put keywords here, too-->
```

```
</HEAD>
```

Clearly the site above wants to place well for both the product name, "Increase Traffic," and the name of the company, "iProspect.com, Inc."

The <HEAD> Tag

Start your META tag section with a <HEAD> tag and end with a </HEAD> by adding the front leaning slash. All of your META tags should be contained within these two tags.

The <TITLE> Tag – The Most Important HTML Tag on Your Web site

The <TITLE> tag displays the name of the site that will appear in the top of the browser. This is the most important HTML tag on your Web site!

<TITLE> is the title tag and must be ended with a </TITLE> tag.

Many people visiting your Web site never notice this text that appears in the top blue border of their browser, but most search engines assign the most significance to text contained in the <TITLE> tag. Between these two title tags, identify your site but try to make it sound interesting and worth visiting, while at the same time, trying to get as many of your keywords into it as possible. Always put your <TITLE> tag right after the <HEAD> tag.

Important: Most of the large search engines will use as their title for your site in the search results the contents of your <TITLE> tag exactly as you composed it:

The <META NAME="DESCRIPTION"> Tag

This tag allows you to write a description of your Web site that some search engines will use instead of what they would otherwise randomly select from the copy on your pages. Not all search engines recognize or read this HTML tag. Here's how you use it:

```
<META NAME="Description" CONTENT="Description of your site.">
```

Start your description META tag like the above followed by not more than 25 words in general that are a compelling and interesting description of your site.

The <META NAME="KEYWORDS"> Tag

This tag lets you suggest keywords to the search engines that you would like your Web site to be returned for. Again, not all the search engines will use this tag and some won't even consider keywords included in this tag in their scoring of your Web site. Here's how you use this tag:

```
<META NAME="Keywords" CONTENT="Keyword1, Keyword2, Keyword3">
```

List all the keywords you can think of that you would like your site to come up under within the length limits for each engine.

The <!-- Comment Tag -->

A comment or remark tag is typically used to record comments about your Web site or HTML code that you don't want viewed on the actual page. This tag can be filled with relevant keyword content by adding the tag <! and all the keywords you think of. Again, not all the search engines will use this tag, and some won't even consider keywords included in it for scoring of your Web site, but some do. Here's how you use this tag:

```
<!-- Here are some comments that visitors to your Web site won't be able to see in their browser because the words are included in this non-printing tag -->
```

Technically, comment tags are not considered part of the META tag family of HTML code except that for Web site marketing purposes you can include these comments between the <HEAD> and </HEAD> tags where the META tags go. But you can also include comment tags throughout your Web site. I use comment tags to mark sections of copy that I want to remember to delete. I use the comment tag to hide sections of copy that I might want to put back later. I also use comment tags at the top, middle and bottom of Web pages for keyword placement to help increase my keyword weight as necessary.

Using the <ALT> Tag for Keywords

The <ALT> tag is an HTML tag used to describe a graphic on your Web page. Often this tag is used simply to describe the graphic a visitor will see when the page finishes loading. Sometimes, this tag is used to describe a photo or graphic that the user will never see. For instance, if the person visiting the site is browsing the Web in the “graphics off” mode, they will see the text you place in the <ALT> tag instead of the graphic. People do this when they have slow connections and they don’t want to be slowed down by slow-loading images.

The <ALT> tag can be filled with keywords and some search engines will read and assign points to keywords contained in this tag. Again, consult the search engine by search engine breakdown in the second half of this report. Here is how the <ALT> tag is commonly used:

```
<IMG SRC=“manonscooter.gif” ALT =“This is the picture of a man on a scooter”>
```

And here is how the ALT tag might be used to yield a keyword advantage:

```
<IMG SRC=“manonscooter.gif” ALT =“keyword1, keyword2, keyword3, keyword4, keyword4, keyword5”>
```

Using the <H1> Through <H6> Heading Tags

Headings are the larger print or subtitles on a page. The smaller the number in the heading tag, the larger the font size. For example, <H1> is larger than <H3>. Some search engines score keywords and text found in heading tags better than other text on your pages. This makes perfect sense since text found in headings usually identifies a particular theme or section of content. Most marketing brochures and even books have chapter and section headings that talk about something significant to come.

As many reading this report know, for the HTML heading tag, the higher the number, the smaller the font size. Why not mark particularly important phrases and keywords within your body copy with a headline tag? With just a little bit of experimenting you can usually make it look presentable and not that noticeable. This way, some search engines will give extra weight to those words or phrases.

Therefore, repeat your most important keywords in the heading tags just as you should do with the <TITLE> tag for the page. Example of a page with heading tags:

```
<HTML>
<HEAD>
<TITLE>Widgets and More!</TITLE>
<META name="description" content="Widgets by Jerry's Widget Emporium are the best widgets money can buy.">
<META name="keywords" content="blue widgets, green widgets, red widgets, Jerry's Widget Emporium">
</HEAD>
<BODY>
<H1>Widgets Explained:</H1>
<P>Widgets by Jerry's Widget Emporium are the best widgets money can buy.</P>
</BODY>
</HTML>
```

The above example assumes “widget” is my most important keyword, which is why I used it the heading tag as well as the title and the body. Use multiple heading tags throughout your page if you like, but always try to fill them with the keywords you are trying to emphasize. If you’re using Microsoft FrontPage or another WYSIWYG editor, it should allow you to select a heading “style” or some other way to visually create the equivalent to an HTML heading tag.

TIP#1: If you’re building an optimized, or search engine friendly page, always keep the page content focused to a single theme and a limited number of keywords so you don’t dilute the effectiveness of the page.

Avoid the temptation to write about things unrelated to “widgets” or your primary keywords.

TIP#2: Use your keyword at the BEGINNING of the title tag, the heading and first paragraph. When you’re having a tough time getting your page scored higher for your keyword, having the keyword in the first position rather than as the second or third word can make all the difference.

TIP#3: Notice that we purposely used the plural form of the word “widget” to double our visibility. Always add an “s” to your keyword whenever possible.

Include Keywords in Links

The above “widget” example could be improved by taking advantage of another scoring technique favored by some engines. The text within a link is sometimes weighed more heavily than words found in the regular body text.

Here’s our “widget” example revised to reflect this new technique:

```
<HTML>
<HEAD>
<TITLE>Widgets and More!</TITLE>
<META name=“description” content=“Widgets by Jerry’s Widget
Emporium are the best widgets money can buy.”>
<META name=“keywords” content=“blue widgets, green widgets ,red
widgets, Jerry’s Widget Emporium”>
</HEAD>
<BODY>
<H1>Widgets Explained:</H1>
<P>Widgets by Jerry’s Widget Emporium are the best widgets money
can buy.</P>
```

To learn about our widgets, choose one of the following:


```
<A HREF=“blue-widgets.htm”>Blue Widgets</A> <BR>
<A HREF=“red-widgets.htm”>Red Widgets</A> <BR>
<A HREF=“green-widgets.htm”>Green Widgets</A> <BR>
</BODY>
</HTML>
```

The above example again emphasizes the keyword “widget” and also includes other phrases people might search on such as “blue widget.” Most people search on two or more words to narrow the scope of their search, so always include related keywords together whenever possible.

The visible text of the links is where you primarily want to include your keywords. It’s also a good idea to create your page names based on your best keywords. That way you score a few more keyword points for the occasional search engine that indexes the page name portion of the link tag as well.

Using Multiple <TITLE> Tags

Some search engines will give an advantage to Web sites that included multiple <TITLE> tags. It seems strange and goes against the rules of HTML coding, but perhaps search engines just don't know that there should only be one <TITLE> tag and therefore assigns it more points.

We have already told you that many search engines assign the most points to keywords contained within the <TITLE> tag – it only seems natural that if you included a few extra, you might score even higher. Here's how you would apply this technique:

```
<TITLE>Used Pentium Computers, used-pcs.com</TITLE>  
<TITLE>Used PC Computers at used-pcs.com</TITLE>  
<TITLE>Used PCs at used-pcs.com</TITLE>
```

Here we used three title tags. In some engines this will increase your relevance score. Sometimes a very long <TITLE> tag that you cram full of keywords will work too but won't look as pretty.

You won't be able to use this technique unless you use an HTML editor that lets you edit the HTML code directly such as HomeSite (www.allaire.com). Many visual editing tools create the title tag for you, but will only generate one tag.

Multiple Domains Yield a Bonus

For many engines, including HotBot and AltaVista, you will find it easier to get high rankings on your home page over secondary pages. Therefore, you'll score extra relevancy points not only by having domains that include keywords in the name, but by optimizing a different set of keywords for each domain's home page. If you've exhausted all the tricks for your keyword and are still having trouble ranking well, purchase another domain name that will point to a home page with different keyword content!

The Single Pixel Gif Trick

We learned this technique a long time ago but for a different application. Web designers have long used this trick to position text more accurately in Web pages. Now it seems this technique can do double duty by providing a canvas on which Web site promoters can paint their keywords.

We've mentioned before that some engines will index words found in the ALT tag, the tag that describes a graphic image. For this reason, it's a good idea to stuff as many keywords as you can into these tags.

One problem with this technique is that people who browse with their graphics turned off will see only these lists of keywords where a graphic might otherwise be seen. Studies have shown that there are still a good number of people with slower connections who browse the Web in "graphics off" mode. If you stuffed dozens of keywords into this tag, your Web page will look awful to these folks. For this reason, exercise prudence when you fill up the ALT tag with keywords so that your page doesn't look like a hideous gallery of keywords to these folks.

Using single pixel gifs allows you to have your ALT tag cake and eat it too. Use the ALT tag normally (a short description of the graphic only) for the primary graphics on your Web site. Then, open your favorite graphic editor and create an image that consists of just a single dot (one pixel) the same color as your background (you can even define it as a transparent gif if you want to be extra stealthy). Insert that tiny graphic into your page, preferably near the top for the best effect.

Example:

```
<IMG SRC="tinyimage.gif" HEIGHT=1 WIDTH=1 BORDER=0  
ALT="keyword1 keyword2 keyword3 keyword1">
```

Pretty simple, isn't it? This is just another technique to add keywords invisible to those viewing the Web site but still visible and valuable for search engine positioning.

Note: If you're worried about the search engines picking up on this technique, you might drop the use of the HEIGHT and WIDTH tags. This would make it almost impossible for a search engine to view the above as anything other than another graphic on your page.

Hiding Keywords or Using Invisible Keywords on Your Pages

Have you ever seen a Web site that has hundreds of keywords repeated at the bottom of the page? Sometimes these words are the same color as the background so you only notice them if you highlight a section of the page and they show up as reversed white on black text. This is an attempt by that Web site owner to rank well in the different search engines for the keywords listed there.

Search engines used to be fooled by this technique. Some Web site promotion “experts” still recommend using this technique while others believe that it will do little good.

The latest work-around suggests that instead of using a font color that is identical to the background, pick one that is just very similar and hard to see as follows:

```
<BG COLOR=808080> <FONT COLOR=“778899”>
```

The background color above is plain ol’ gray. The text color selected is “lightslategray.” The color is numerically different, yet very similar and difficult or impossible to see (you can choose colors that are even more difficult to detect if you wish). Notice also that the hex code that identifies the “lightslategray” color seems numerically very close to the background color. In time, I expect search engines will recognize colors that are this close numerically. When they do, they will probably recognize it as an attempt to hide text and penalized sites accordingly.

In addition, most engines consider hiding keywords this way as a form of spamming. Therefore, it is not something we recommend. Also, NEVER, NEVER enter keywords on your page that have nothing to do with your site’s content, or are not used elsewhere on the page already. To do so diminishes the value of the search engine service since doing a search could display pages that don’t apply to that search! If you do this, then you deserve to get banned from the search engine.

Additional Web Marketing Topics

How to Block Spiders From Visiting and Indexing Your Site

There are reasons you might not want your Web site to be indexed by search engines. More likely, there are simply certain pages that you don't want indexed by the major search engines. For instance, maybe you constructed an elaborate direct marketing site that requires the visitor to enter through your main page and then proceed through a highly structured series of links that lead them to a buying decision. The internal pages would only confuse visitors who entered through those pages and they would be less likely to buy a product or service.

Whatever your reason, there is a standard that you can implement that will keep *most* of the major search engine spiders from indexing your Web site.

Here's how to block the spiders. Create a file called "robots.txt" that includes the following code:

```
user-agent: *
```

```
Disallow: /*
```

The first line specifies the agents, browsers or spiders that should read this file and adhere to the instructions in the following lines of code. The second line stipulates which files or directories the spider or browser should not read or index. The example above uses the "/" which means the agent should not read or index anything as the asterisks denotes "everything." The robots.txt file must be placed in the root directory of your Web site. What this means is that if you are hosting your Web site using one of the free services and your domain looks something like this:

```
http://members.aol.com/Joessmith/home.htm
```

you cannot use the robots.txt file to keep out the spiders, since you don't have a primary domain name. The primary domain name is aol.com – and America Online will probably not allow you to block all the search engines spiders from indexing their site and the Web sites of the 11 million other subscribers.

This robots.txt file could look like this if there were specific directories and files that you wish the search engines not to index:

- user-agent: *
- Disallow: /clients/
- Disallow: /products/
- Disallow: /pressrelations/
- Disallow: /surveys/survey.htm

In the above example the robots.txt file asks the search engines spider to omit the following directories:

<http://www.yourcompany.com/clients/>

<http://www.yourcompany.com/products/>

<http://www.yourcompany.com/pressrelations/>

And the following specific page:

<http://www.yourcompany.com/survey/survey.htm>

If you are one of the millions of people hosting a Web site on America Online's server or one of the other free or subdirectory Web site services and you can't place a robots.txt file in their root directory, you can use a META tag that talks to some of the spiders:

```
<META NAME="ROBOTS" CONTENT="NOINDEX">
```

You will need this META tag on every page in your Web site that you don't want indexed. If your Web site has 30 or 40 pages (or more), this will take a lot of time. Here's another reason to buy a good HTML editor like Luckman's WebEdit or Allaire's HomeSite. These programs (and others, I'm sure) allow you to do a global search and replace and add an HTML tag to every Web page that you open in the program. As with all META tags, this META tag goes at the top of your HTML document between the <HEAD> and </HEAD> tags.

Referrer Logs

Referrer logs provide the most important information you can get for marketing your Web site.

These logs record a variety of important information about visitors to your Web site. The most important to Web site marketers is information on which search engines were used to find your Web site and which keywords they searched on to find your site. The referrer log also tells you the address of the Web site (other than a search engine) the visitor came *from*. In all likelihood, the site listed in the referrer log has a link to your Web site on one of the pages indicated in the log. This can give you an idea which links from which kinds of sites are working.

Most Web servers can provide referrer logs, but you may have to ask your Web hosting provider to set this up for you. If they won't, or if they claim they can't, change hosting providers immediately. This information is too valuable to do without.

The referrer log includes information about the type of browser the visitor was using and whether or not they downloaded the whole page or only a part of it (which would suggest that it took too long and they moved on).

Information contained in the referrer log can shed light on how people are searching and finding your Web site. For instance, we were under the mistaken impression that very few people on the Web searched with multiple keywords. We believed that the vast majority of people surfing the Web searched on one keyword at a time and choose a Web site to visit from those results. To our surprise, after reviewing referrer logs we discovered that most people visiting one of our client's sites were searching on multiple words

Referrer log data are often retrieved by logging onto the Web hosting provider's server with an FTP client like WS_FTP_95. The log file is usually stored in a file on the hosting provider's server and can be quickly downloaded as a text file to your local hard drive.

There are myriad log analysis programs on the market that will take the volumes of data contained in the log and help you to easily understand it graphically. However, if you don't have such a tool, you can simply open the log file within a text editor or in Microsoft Word (or other word processor). The log file contains strings of data that at first glance look rather difficult to understand, but if you look closely, there are only about eight entries and they are easy to interpret.

When referrer log information is captured, here's an example of what you will see:

198.178.25.131 - - [07/Jan/1998:14:09:45 -0800] "GET /onapixel.gif HTTP/1.0" 200 43 "http://www.preowned.com/" "Mozilla/2.0 (compatible; MSIE 3.0; Windows 95)"

Here is what each part of this log file means. Some referrer logs will contain a few more pieces of information, some a few less. These are what I consider the most important entries:

<u>Referrer Log Entry</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
198.178.25.131	<u>The remote host name</u> : the IP address that identifies the location of the visitor's Internet Service Provider.
[07/Jan/1998:14:09:45 -0800]	<u>The date and time</u> of the request or access of the Web site.
"GET /onapixel.gif -	<u>The actual request</u> – the name of the first file downloaded by the browser. A search engine's spider will almost always request the "robots.txt" file. You can review the section on robots and spider blocking to learn more about search spider's activities.
200	<u>The status code</u> of the request. (Status code "200" means a completed request).
43	<u>The number of bytes</u> that were transferred to the browser. In this case, the first graphic downloaded was 43 bytes.
http://www.preowned.com/	<u>The referrer site</u> , or the previous URL that the visitor came from. This is gold to Web marketers. This tells you which search engine or other Web site sent you this traffic. When this entry contains a search engine name, it will also include the keywords that were searched for. See an example of this below.
"Mozilla/2.0 (compatible; MSIE 3.0; Windows 95)"	<u>The user agent</u> or browser information – in this case the visitor was using Internet Explorer v3.0. Keep an eye on this entry as it will tell you if visitors to your Web site are using current technology. If, for instance, you learn that a large percentage of your visitors are using older browsers you should make sure that you aren't

	using frames or tables as some older browsers don't support them.
--	---

See, this log is not so hard to read. Now, look at this next log entry:

```
208.207.98.111 - - [08/Jan/1998:18:19:11 -0800] "GET /home.html
HTTP/1.0" 200 4723 "http://www.altavista.digital.com/cgi-bin/query?
pg=aq&text=yes&d0=1%2fjan %2f98&q=ballroom+dance%2a
+OR+ballroom dancing%2a&stq=30" "Mozilla/2.0 (compatible;
MSIE 3.0; SK; Windows 95)"
```

Note that the referring Web site is the AltaVista search engine. Pay special attention to this section:

```
%2f98&q=ballroom+dance%2a +OR+ballroom dancing%2a&stq=30"
```

When you remove the code between the percentage signs you are left with what the visitor queried in the AltaVista search engine:

```
ballroom+dance OR ballroom dancing
```

A fast and easy way to search through a large log file for keywords that were searched on in search engines is to use the “find” command in your text editor or word processor and search the document for “cgi” as a keyword. Most of these will be search engines. You can also search on the individual search engine names, like using the “find” command.

We don't yet recommend a particular log file analysis software program, but you can go to any major search engine and search for the keywords “referrer log software” and see what you get. Hopefully, they are using this book too and have optimized their pages to rank well for such a search.

Warning to Microsoft FrontPage and other WYSIWYG Editor Users

As you would expect, Microsoft is hard at work trying to dominate another Internet software product category – Web site creation tools. If you don't own Microsoft FrontPage now, chances are you are considering it for your next Web site project.

We discovered a critical shortcoming in Microsoft FrontPage that Web site marketers must address. It may apply even if you use one of the other visual or WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) editing tools, so pay close attention!

Your <TITLE> tag plays a crucial role in determining your rank in many of the spider-driven search engines. Normally, when writing HTML, the <TITLE> tag is placed immediately after the <HEAD> tag and is followed by assorted <META> tags.

However, if you use Microsoft FrontPage or another visual editing tool, the software writes the HTML and handles all those tedious tags for you. Unfortunately, FrontPage 97 and FrontPage 98 insert the <TITLE> tag AFTER the <META> tags like this:

```
<html>
<head>
<META http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset=iso-8859-1">
<META name="GENERATOR" content="Microsoft FrontPage 3.0">
<META name="Microsoft Theme" content="global 101, default">
<META name="Microsoft Border" content="tl, default">
<title>My test title</title>
</head>
</html>
```

Although this is technically correct and won't interfere with someone viewing your Web site, it gains you no points with the search engines and could hurt your Web site's ranking. We have been advised that some search engines expect the <TITLE> tag to immediately follow the <HEAD> tag. If it doesn't, the search engine may determine that your Web site doesn't have a <TITLE> tag and this would hurt your ranking considerably.

Additionally, as a general rule of thumb, you want your keywords to appear as close to the top of your page as possible. The standard <META> tag is not supported by at least half of the major search engines, but the <TITLE> tag is almost universally recognized. For

this reason, having four lines of META tags proceed your title tag can make it easy for your competitors to outrank you.

FrontPage 98 allows you to modify the HTML code simply by clicking on the HTML tab at the bottom of the screen. To correct the problem in the above example, you would simply move the <TITLE> line up as follows:

```
<html>
<head>
<title>My test title</title>
<META http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset=iso-8859-1">
<META name="GENERATOR" content="Microsoft FrontPage 3.0">
<META name="Microsoft Theme" content="global 101, default">
<META name="Microsoft Border" content="tl, default">
<title>My test title</title>
</head>
</html>
```

If you have an editor that does not allow you to edit HTML directly, you should consider getting an HTML editor such as HomeSite or Luckman Interactive's WebEdit:

<http://www.allaire.com> (HomeSite)
<http://www.luckman.com> (WebEdit)

Later versions of FrontPage may correct this problem. If you have a newer version, you'll have to test it to see if Microsoft corrected the problem.

WebPosition Gold™ Tips

The WebPosition Gold™ help file and the Page Critic portion of the program provides a wealth of information and instructions on dealing with the search engines. The advantage to the Page Critic over a book is that its knowledge base and advice are normally more up to date. The advice is also custom-tailored toward *your* page since it will analyze it before offering tip to improve your rankings.

If you don't have WebPosition Gold™ now, be sure to download a demo at:

<http://www.webposition.com>.

