

Search Engine Optimization Project Report

Introduction

This report will discuss my approach to the Search Engine Optimization (SEO) project as part of the course, LIS768 Social Media & Emerging Technologies.

Each student in the class was charged with creating a blog, via Wordpress, to aid in marketing the LIS768 course itself, using a standard body of content. Using SEO techniques, our goal was to increase the page ranking of our blog on the search engines, Google, Bing, and Yahoo.

Below, I shall provide an explanation of how and why certain decisions were made in order to aid in SEO and improved ranking of my individual blog.

Site Set-Up

My first step was to establish an account with Wordpress, a popular blogging platform, as assigned, before I evaluated the content to be used. The account set-up was fairly easy to accomplish; however, I first made two decisions that I felt important to the project, those being the choice of a URL (uniform resource locator) and a general page theme.

Choosing the URL is a crucial step in SEO, since this is the initial part of a site that is crawled and indexed by search engines. Since my focus here (and throughout) was to get certain keywords, such as “Dominican” and “LIS768”, seen and indexed, I spent time trying different URLs with Wordpress, attempting to get the most descriptive possible, but also, one that was available for my use. After a few tries, I was able to secure the URL

<http://dominicangslis768.wordpress.com/> for my blog site.

I also searched through the myriad of available (and free of charge) page “themes” to find one visually appealing, yet appropriate for the subject matter. I decided on a theme called “My

Life”; it was understated, yet easy to read, with a light background and dark-colored font, which would also aid in its accessibility to visually handicapped visitors.

Content Analysis and Manipulation

Examining the body of text/content for which I was provided, I determined that it should be divided into three separate blog posts, each post with its own separate focus. Not only would this keep my posts desirably “above the fold” or “one-screen”, but it would provide me an opportunity to have three different headings (or HTML H1 tags), which would enable more efficient and useful consideration by search engine bots, seeking to rank the page for indexing.

Also, a variety of posts would afford an increased usage of tags over merely a single post, which would again aid in SEO processes. Additionally, several images with keyword-laden captions could be included, as well.

Finally, the use of multiple posts would give viewers the appearance that content was being kept fresh, another important SEO concern.

Anchor Text

My next step in evaluating the blog content (now divided into three posts) was to search for certain words for use as anchor text, which could be used to create descriptive or keyword-laden hyperlinks to other relevant pages, thus hopefully boosting my page ranking via SEO.

The posts contained many opportunities for anchor text. For example, in the post created for Dominican GSLIS, I was able to use anchor text for “Dominican” “faculty” and “wide variety of courses” which linked to relevant pages on the Dominican GSLIS website.

For other important terms, such as “social media” and “Web 2.0”, I was able to link to the Wikipedia pages for definition of those terms, thus creating pathways to a well ranked, trusted site, which in turn, would hopefully help my page ranking with search engines.

Meta-Tags

For each post, I created a variety of relevant subject tags, which would not only serve as additional keywords for search engines, but also created internal links that pointed within the site.

Images

To create the blog's visual appeal, as well as create more keyword-rich content through captions and alt-tags, I added an image to each post. Two were created by me, while the third exists under a Creative Commons license, available for free online use.

Other Site Considerations

I was careful to not to use text to create headings on the site that was not provided in our initial assignment. Therefore, I created the "Categories" section in the right navigation bar that contained desired keywords to describe the posts of which they included, but also was from the original content provided for the assignment.

Also, in the "About" section, a section of the text describing the LIS768 course was used, in order to increase the usage of desired keywords, as reflected by the post headings and tags.

If I were to continue work on the site, I would also research and include other appropriate blogs for the "Blogroll" in order to create more external links.

Google and Bing Results

With a minimal amount of effort, I submitted my site to both Google and Bing for indexing, then waited to confirm that it had been crawled, which took about three days.

In exploring the Google Webmaster tools, I did not find a great deal to help in my SEO efforts, per se; however, it appeared that many of the suggestions depending on being able to

access and alter the source code of my site (e.g., adding tags or sitemaps), which is not possible, since it exists on the Wordpress platform.

The Bing counterpart offered even less, but once again, it proved valuable exploring the options and tools available for future use.

I then decided to test my site page ranking on Google, Bing and Yahoo. For the best results, I utilized for my search, two keywords in tandem that I felt would give me an idea of how my efforts had worked (or not) up until this point: “Dominican” and “LIS768”:

Search Engine	Page Ranking
Google	5
Bing	6
Yahoo	1

Figure 1. Search engine page rankings of site (as of this writing)

My work appeared to have been successful, and I was pleased with the results.

Conclusion

In applying the techniques of SEO through both study and practice, I learned many valuable lessons about search engines and to use their power to increase the visibility and traffic for a web presence, be it commercial or nonprofit.

However, I believe there is a fine balance between engaging certain principles of SEO and the aesthetics of a site. For example, too much tagging and obvious keyword “stuffing” in content can be a negative experience for readers of a site.

There is still much to learn, including the types of code adjustment that can be made to increase SEO efforts, as well. I look forward to feedback on my project, and sharing the experience with other classmates.