

You are ready to create your business website. But it's not enough to just publish it to the web. You want to ensure that your potential customers will find it when using the major search engines, such as Google and Yahoo!

Check off each of the items on this list to make sure that your site stands out from the crowd! More detail about each checklist item is provided below.

- 1** Publish content that appeals to your customers' needs and desires.
- 2** Give each page a unique title tag.
- 3** Write clearly and plainly, in language that contains keywords relevant to your topic.
- 4** Obtain links from other Web sites that point to yours.
- 5** Add descriptive ALT tags to your image files.
- 6** Ensure each page in your Web site is reachable in no more than 4 clicks.
- 7** Give each Web page in your Web site a unique meta-description tag that contains relevant keywords.
- 8** Use Google's free Sitemap and Local Business Center free tools.
- 9** Limit the use of technologies such as JavaScript and Flash, or have links to an alternate HTML-based content.
- 10** Do not engage in spam!  
Don't publish content not intended for human readers.

## Checklist Details

1. Make sure the text on your website provides information that your customers want and need, in language they use. Make sure your Web site's content is current by making regular updates. Also, you may consider advanced features (such as forums, blogs and message boards) that enable your customers to interact with your Web site by submitting feedback, reviews and questions. All these factors make your site compelling to both visitors and search engines (which are designed to reward sites that are most relevant or interesting to users).
2. Give each Web page in your Web site a unique title that clearly states the subject or purpose of the page. Each Web page should have a title that appears at the top of the browser window.
3. Write in plain, easy-to-read language that is full of keywords relevant to your topic, including synonyms, plurals, and other word variations. For example, an online electronics store that sells televisions may have words such as 'TV', 'TVs', 'flat panel', 'LCD', 'Plasma' and 'widescreen' in the text of its Web pages.
4. Seek out links from other Web sites to point to your Web site.
  - The quantity and quality of links pointing to your Web site from other Web sites are the primary measure of page rank, as determined by search engines.
  - One single link from an informative source such as a blog, Web forum or trade association is far more valuable than 100 links from sites that engage in spamming (which, in fact, hurts your site's rank). Ensure that the inbound links your site receives are from Web sites you know and respect – or that they are from a reputable affiliate network.
5. Where you have text that is embedded in an image (such as a logo), write out the text in the ALT tag associated with that image.
  - ALT tags are descriptive text snippets in the HTML code of a Web page that aren't displayed on the page, but are read by search engines.
  - Where possible have all of the text in your site coded into the page rather than embedded in an image.
6. Make sure visitors can reach any page in your Web site in no more than 4 clicks from any other page. A sitemap is one good way to help accomplish this. Another is to use navigational links (called "bread crumbs"). Place these links at the top of each page in your Web site. "Bread Crumbs" should link each page back to your homepage and the category and/or section page for that product, blog entry or article.
7. Give each page a unique meta-description tag full of keywords relevant to the page's purpose.
  - The contents of this tag should be written as you would want a search engine to display your site on the search results pages.
  - The text should be written in 1 to 2 plain English sentences that contain the keywords most relevant to the page. The tag should not exceed 200 characters.
8. Use Google's free Sitemap and Local Business Center tools.
  - Google has a free sitemap submission tool ([www.google.com/webmasters/sitemaps](http://www.google.com/webmasters/sitemaps)) that allows you to provide Google with a directory to each page in your Web site. This helps Google find all of your content and classify your pages.
  - Google Local Business Center (<https://www.google.com/local/add/login>) allows you to enter directory information for your company so that users find your business when searching local business listings.
9. Limit the use of technologies such as JavaScript, Flash, iFrames and Ajax – or have a plain text alternative to that content. Search engines cannot access content embedded inside these. Ensure that your site displays as quickly as possible. Sites that take a long time to load turn visitors away and cannot be fully indexed by search engines. At high-speed download rates, ideally, your page should load in 5 to 10 seconds, or less. No Web page should ever take more than 15 seconds to load (about the time an airfare query takes on a travel Web site).
10. Don't engage in Spam! Similarly:
  - a. Don't buy or sell links, except through a reputable affiliate network.
  - b. Don't hide text from human users by using white font or other methods.
  - c. Don't hide external links with small images or other means.
  - d. And don't publish pages or content not intended for human readers.