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Search engine submissions - the truth! (no snake oil applied)

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With millions of websites available today, web surfers need help finding sites that are relevant to whatever topic or subject they are looking for. These potential customers turn to search engines millions of times a day for help. If you are not listed in the top-30 results for a given keyword or phrase, you probably won't be found by your potential customers. Achieving those top rankings is the Holy Grail of search engine placement. Unfortunately, there's a lot of confusion, misinformation and outright deception going on in the marketplace today.

Search engine placement is a weird science at best. There are lots of myths and rumors and no one can say for sure where you will wind up ranking, except the snake oil salesmen.... You've seen the pitches: sites that promise to submit your site to 5,000 search engines for just \$79.95 a year, or that guarantee top-10 placement in all the popular engines.

It's all false statements and inflated promises! - and also an easy way to get on the spam mailing lists of thousands of unscrupulous companies!

That said, here's what we've learned through careful but common-sense research and study:

There are **two types of search engines** out there: robot-based indexes and human-fed directories. Ask, Google and Microsoft Live are examples of robot-driven sites; they have software robots, or spiders, that find your site and index the content, and attempt to classify your site based on the keywords and phrases they find throughout your site.

Human-fed directories are populated by human editors who will review all sites submitted to them by web owners, and then decide where to place a given site into the categories that they think best apply. Yahoo & About.com are 2 examples of the latter.

Search engine submission used to be free, but in the last few years, the economics of the Internet have shifted, and now almost all relevant search engines charge some sort of fee to be indexed (with no guarantee of any high ranking, the fee is just to be considered for inclusion!). Considering the costs involved, it makes sense to have a professional service review your site, and optimize your chances of achieving a high ranking in the engines. There are a lot of valuable tweaks and adjustments that a knowledgeable firm can provide to a given website that will provide the engines with a better understanding and access to your site's content. Why waste your time and money on submission, if you have a site that's not optimized and ready to be indexed?

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Also keep in mind - there are only a handful of truly relevant search engines – those other 5,000 (or more!) engines some “submission experts” mention are little more than email address gatherers, set up to capture spam targets. Think of your own experiences – how many search engines can you name? And how much more spam do you really need?

No one can guarantee you any position or ranking, as no one has any control over how a given search engine will view your content and relevancy. Too many dirty tricks have left the search engine systems very wary and very sensitive to any attempts at manipulating their rankings. And if any trickery is detected, your website could be banned for life!

Meta Tags mean nothing! Or at least the **keyword meta-tag**, which so many ‘experts’ claim to be the Holy Grail of placement. What is a meta-tag? It’s a small bit of code that is added to your web page, which visitors to the site cannot see, but search engine spiders can. These meta tags were supposed to be used as summaries and keyword directories for the content of a page or site.

Since visitors cannot see them, a website programmer could put any terms they wanted into the meta tags. Imagine looking for a site on Brittany Spears, seeing a link in a search engine, click through, and finding yourself at a site about gardening, or worse, a porn site! For this reason, almost all quality search engines ignore meta tags, and instead index what regular visitors see: the content of the site! Doesn’t that make a lot more sense? We think so.

Please read [‘Death of a Meta Tag’](#) for more information about the Keyword meta-tag.

The only meta tag worth mentioning is the ‘description’ tag. While in the same boat as the ‘keyword’ tag (unseen by visitors, defined by website owner), it has some value to an engine, in that it is this description that a search engine uses when returning a result back from a search. You know the sentence you can click on after you enter a search term, which takes you to a given site? That’s usually the description meta-tag for the site, or if not found, the title of the site. We’ll help make sure your description and title tags are set up properly.

The best way to get good rankings is to provide good content that is helpful to your visitors, and is keyword or key-phrase rich for the search engine spiders. Think about how you would ‘find yourself’ (find your product or service if you DID NOT KNOW YOU EXISTED – how Zen!) in a search engine, and lookup those phrases – see what other sites appear, and what content they present to the visitor. From there, you can figure out how best to approach your own content and search engine preparations.

For more great information about Search Engines, you can visit www.searchenginewatch.com or www.seomoz.org Here, you’ll find links to all the popular search engines, and submission guidelines for each, as well as articles, tools, SEO marketplace – all sorts of great resources.