

## Website performance and Google

We endeavor to make websites that by design position them favorably for website search (sometimes called SEO or Search Engine Optimisation). For client work where we are producing recruitment sites web search is an important aspect of performance and it is this aspect, which is outlined in this paper.

There are lots of web blogs and pages of 'advice' on the internet on this issue. Some of it seems reasonable advice but there is much that is misleading and even plain wrong. So we felt it was important to give our clients and Partners some guidance.

As a general guide to designing and building sites to be more search friendly and to confirm our common practice; this is what we do to make your site more search friendly. *See also section on Google at the end for recent development in Google Search*



**Coding:** As we have outlined search engines love to find fresh and unique content. They also like an easy life and we need to take care that our coding for JavaScript and CSS does not make things harder for them to find your content. We thus try and ensure that scripts and CSS files are added as external files to decrease the time required for the search engines to search your pages.

**Google Analytics:** Unless you have a preference for another tool that is also available to us we will add the Google Analytics tool to every page. This gives us a range of data and statistics – some of which is quite useful. We look to understand: keywords, traffic sources, and page metrics to help fine tune the site over time.

**Unique pages:** In general search engines rank your website according to both the uniqueness and quality of content. We will thus structure your site to not replicate content and where we publish multiple sites for you to seek to localise content so each page is at least slightly different. The theory is that if you have any content same/similar to other websites your rankings will suffer.

**Meta Tags:** We will ensure each page has a custom title is relevant to its purpose and content. We also use the Meta descriptor facilities that can be published for each page to capture keywords etc. Whilst this is by no means as importance as it once was and in itself will not necessarily influence SEO ranking, it in our experience positively affect the way your website appears in search engine results pages. We of course need customer help to get this right and make sure that good descriptions are used as well as ensure that your site captures the interest and attention of visitors.

**Page Linking:** SEO ranking by linking between Web pages definitely helps SEO (as well as making your site more useable for visitors). Unlike some we try and avoid Flash or JavaScript navigations - i.e. menus – as they don't help SEO. Ideally the links should consist of targeted keywords to be most effective for SEO and you may find us advising on use of wording and phrasing that repeats to some extent the keywords that have been selected as most important for your site.

**Google – recent developments**

When creating any site we endeavor to produce it in a manner that will favour it with search engines. Specifically we concentrate on Google, which is by far the largest (according to netmarketshare.com it averages over 80% of all Searches through Search Engines). Over the last year Google has been making changes to its algorithms that govern which sites are displayed in response to search terms. They have always made changes of course but in Feb 2011 their update codenamed “Panda” was a big one. Panda introduced many new ranking factors into the mix (Google does not publicise exactly how its algorithms’ work so we can only give you very broad details). Some older ones that are referred to extensively on the internet like PageRank were decreased in terms of importance following this update.

This would all be academic save for the fact that a good number of websites had their search performance affected. Indeed Google’s technical forums got lots of complaints from webmasters and from what we could see there were complaints that sites with original content were getting better rankings than ones that simply copied content (known as scrapers). It also appears to have negatively affected sites with what is called ‘evergreen’ content and this is we believe a particular issue for some of our clients.

Evergreen content are pages which are factual and inform but don’t change. Search Engines, and the Panda update in particular it seems, like web pages to change. As a broad rule of thumb if sites don’t change – or get updated - they will slip down the rankings.

We do continually advise our direct customers both direct and those through our Partners/Resellers to keep content up to date and amend fairly frequently. We note however that many clients struggle with making time to do this and assume that once it is done it is done forever.

At the risk of injecting a small advert for additional services; we can equip your site with Content amendment and update facilities that will allow you to refresh content directly on your pages and help you with your search performance.

*The message is keep your content fresh and amend it periodically*