

## Editorial

### The Other Search Engine Optimization

Most people are familiar with the form of search engine optimization (SEO) where a website is analyzed and changed to promote high page ranking by the major search engines like Google, Yahoo, and MSN. Most cases for this type of optimization involve altering the language code, or starting paid advertising. However, most companies fail to optimize the most important search engine – their internal search engine.

The importance of onsite search is increasing. In today's fast-paced world, users want to quickly find the information they seek. If users are unable to find the information they are looking for, they are more likely to leave a site. This is why it becomes imperative to have a highly functioning search utility.

Web administrators need to use search analytics to enhance the search results. Keyword analysis is the easiest way to improve search satisfaction. Web managers should study all keywords used by searchers. Many words may return no results; usually this is because of two things: users are looking for products that may not be offered on the site, or the marketing strategy is attracting the wrong customer base. Either way, pages should be added to correspond to those terms with no results. The sooner the problem is rectified, the quicker the returns appear.

Another analytic tool is checking for keyword errors. Misspelled words are the most common form of errors encountered by users searching for information. A 2003 study by 37signals showed that over 72 percent of websites could not adequately match misspelled terms. Little has changed today. Web administrators can easily rectify this by adding the list of misspelled words to the keyword terms list.

A final tool is checking for keyword relevance. Users need to find the type of information they are seeking. Irrelevant results in their search turn the user to other means to find the correct information. Whether it's a new search or navigation through the site, it's imperative that the user find what they are looking for, or they will go elsewhere. Web administrators need to make sure that the results correlate to the keyword.

The main goal of internal search analysis is to avoid site abandonment by the user. Users can quickly judge if a site will be relevant to their needs. It is the web administrator's job to ensure that their site meets those needs of the user. A greatly underused tool is the internal search engine optimization that – when used properly, as outlined above – can ensure customer satisfaction and hopefully many happy returns in the business environment.

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