

Increase Online Web Site Traffic: Effectively Using Title Tags

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Increasing online web site traffic through search engine optimization is quite common. However many people overlook how using a web page's title and meta tags more effectively can increase traffic with their current rankings.

When optimizing a web page, the pages' title and meta description should be unique and keyword dense. The meta description tag is not as important as it used to be, but some currently speculate that search engines use it to help distinguish duplicate pages. Use of the meta description tag on the results page can often be a crap shoot. Some times a search engine will use the description tag, and sometimes search engines will use "snippets" (this includes Google, Yahoo! and MSN) to display your web pages' description. With Google's new support of the "NOODP" tag, webmasters now have a little more control over the description displayed on a the search engine results page. And recent observations show that if you meta tag includes the keyword phrase being searched for, it has a better chance of being displayed on the results page. People often focus on where their site ranks, yet forget to look at how their web page is displayed in the results. Increase online web site traffic even when you can't get ranked # 1

Consider this, a search engine results page uses your web pages title and meta description in the display. The title is usually displayed as is, and so is the meta tag. I know you are thinking, well duh! But how many of you have focused on how your page title & description are displayed versus your competitors? Have you ever looked at the results page through your customers eyes?

Marketing Sherpa's Search Marketing Benchmark Guide 2005-2006 discusses what people look at and how they are drawn to click on Google's search engine results. Important points of note are:

- People are more likely to click a link if the header contains the keyword they searched for
- Results containing the keyword attracted a person's attention (even if the listing is far down the page)
- Listings not containing the keyword in the front of the header (or not at all) were often passed over.

So let's take this information and see how we may be able to increase online web site traffic by beating the top ranking at getting the searcher's attention.

Let's look at the keyword phrase "Color Printer";

Now let's analyze the top listings from a "searcher's" perspective: Listing 1:

Title: The title does not have any highlighted words because the title uses the web site's name and not actual words. Not exactly attention grabbing.

Meta description: It uses the keyword but the description itself does a half hearted job of convincing us to click.

Even though this listing is number 1, most people will NOT click it. Listing 2:

Title: The first word is "color"; so it is highlighted, but the plural "Printers" is not highlighted. So it doesn't fully grab our attention.

Meta description: It uses the keyword phrase a couple of times, so it may get a "once over". But the description is not appealing (unless we are looking for this specific model).

Even though this listing is number 2, we keep looking Listing 3:

Title: BINGO! The title has the keyword phrase we are searching for and is therefore highlighted. I don't know about you, but this one grabbed my attention immediately.

Meta description: It uses the keyword phrase effectively resulting in several highlights. Not only that, the meta description actually speaks to a customer's need. And on top of that the description is compelling and it gives us a reason to click.

This is the one that I would click, how about you?

How can we make it better? In this case there is not much to do. I would suggest putting the keyword first and then add a slight soft sell to it.. So making the title "Color Printer: What You Need To Know Before You Buy". However

this adds words to the title, so the keyword density may change and affect the placement. So let's look at other possibilities that try to keep the density from changing:

- Color Printer: Know before you buy
- Color Printer: What you need to know

In this case I suggest switching the title to "Color Printer: What You Need To Know Before You Buy"; and then keeping a close eye on the listings SERP's and web site traffic. If the web site traffic goes down I would test "Color Printer: Know before you buy";

And that is how you can increase online web site traffic by making better use of title and meta tags.

As an action step, you may want to look at your web analytics for the keywords that get you the most web site traffic. Run a search like we did above and see how you compare to the competition. Are there any improvements that can be made? Now find keywords that you aren't doing well on, run some searches on that. Look for opportunities where you can beat your competitors at "grabbing attention". Remember, if you are stuck at #5 and can't get higher rankings, grabbing your customers attention is your best bet to increase online web site traffic. If you are able to effectively grab attention, you may end up with more clicks than the #1 listing. And after all, isn't that why you want to be #1 anyway, increased web site traffic?