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Social Search: SEO Best Practices & Tips

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Overview

Search Engine Optimization focuses on four main areas:

1. Technical Architecture
2. On-Site Optimization
3. Off-Site Promotion
4. Social Signals (**New Factor**)

During the last 6 months, the top tier Search Engines has incorporated social signals into their algorithm; as a small factor for determining how a site should rank for targeted keywords.

The evolution and impact of social search is still in its infancy. Media Contacts expects Social Search will continue to gain in popularity and continue to be a larger percentage of the Search Engine's algorithm in the near future, as both Search Engines and users are interested in endorsements from trusted connections.

Impact

Google has recently begun to show social annotations and recommendations in the Search Engine Result Pages, which shows they are encouraging people to use social interactions to share and endorse meaningful content.

SEOMoz has also done some test to see the impact on social elements by monitoring rankings for specific keywords before and after promotion on Google Plus and Twitter. After six weeks of promoting the targeted page and keywords using Google Plus and Twitter, rankings moved from position #4 to position #1.



SEOMoz has also mentioned in the 2011 Ranking Factors, a biennial survey of the industry's top SEO professionals, that Facebook and Twitter popularity is strongly correlated to strong performance in search engine rankings.

Best Practices

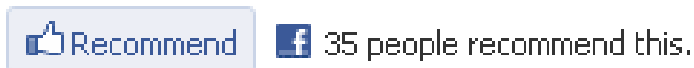
Media Contacts has created this best practice document with a list of best practices and tips for increasing sharing and endorsements utilizing social media, which can have a positive impact on search engine rankings.

- Build your company profile on the most important social outlets. E.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and other social media outlets. Make sure your social media identity is available by checking to see if your company name is available by using services like <http://knowem.com/>
- Create share worthy content and share it socially
- Add the social buttons to important content. The Google +1 Button, Facebook Likes Button, Facebook Shares and Recommend Button, Tweet Button and the LinkedIn Share button should be incorporated into every page of content that should be shared using social media

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- If each button cannot be added to a site, consider using the AddThis or ShareThis functionality
- Find an application or plug-in that remembers your username and password so you don't have to login to the social media sites every time you want to leave a comment or endorse content
- Link to your social media pages on your home page, to engage users and generate more traffic to your social media properties
- Use your brand name and targeted keywords in posts
- Try to get as many Facebook likes and Twitter followers as possible, especially from influential people. The more people like and follow you, the higher impact it can have on search engine rankings
- Think outside the box and be creative to get people to like and recommend your content, by writing compelling content that people would want to naturally link to, comment on and share
- Utilize and test out different social plug-ins, to see which one works best for your site
- Measure social media ROI using analytics, webmaster tools and third party tools to monitor tweets, likes and other social metrics
- Leverage strong networks to improve other properties. For example, if your Facebook profile has a stronger presence than your Digg profile, consider linking to your Digg profile from the Facebook profile, to increase traffic and brand awareness



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- Use social media as a content testing tool. For example, if you write about a certain topic, share it using social media to see if the content is worthy to go viral. If the content does not generate a lot of endorsements or buzz, you may want to consider writing about another topic
- Look for opportunities to share the content by looking through the SERPs to see if you can find content that has not been shared using social media
- Maximize content shareability by making sure the content can be easily found, easy to read and contains minimal advertising
- Build branding consistently, e.g. always use the same logo, company name and look and feel
- Add social login buttons to endorse the sharing of content
- Recognize and reciprocate sharing behavior

Conclusion

Social Media will continue to play an important role, in addition to the three core components of SEO e.g. links, content and a strong technical architecture, for determining how a site will rank in the Search Engine Results for various keywords.

Incorporating social media elements into your website content and link development strategy can ensure that your website will attract more endorsements, traffic and continue to rank for high-volume and targeted keywords, in addition to having a positive impact on your search engine optimization and inbound marketing campaigns.



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Resources

- <http://searchenginewatch.com/article/2079336/4-Steps-to-Measure-Social-Media-ROI-with-Google-Analytics>
- <http://searchenginewatch.com/article/2081719/Social-SEO-Facebook-Twitter-Best-Practices>
- <http://www.seomoz.org/webinars/the-end-of-search-without-social>