

The Smart Innkeeper Series - Part 2 Web Site Investment: On-Page SEO

On-Page SEO RFP (Request for Proposal) Check List:

<http://www.acorn-is.com/pdf/part-2-rfp-checklist.pdf>

The Smart Innkeeper Series Video Access

Part 1 - Site Design: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kktzOUmwS0>

Part 2 - On Page SEO: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rA2SYGes0fY>

Part 3 - Ongoing SEO and Marketing Plans: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7i6jGoq8ugY>

Tags: Bed and Breakfast Marketing, Bed and Breakfast Design, SEO, Search Engine Optimization, Ongoing Marketing Plans

Video Transcript

Integrated On-Page Search Engine Optimization, also known as On-Page SEO, can be a complex subject to grasp and understand. That may be one of the reasons why so many Innkeepers move forward with a new Web site design and fail to realize that they must demand that the new design be developed with on-page SEO as an integral part of the design process.

This video is designed to help you understand, in the most basic of terms, all the things you need to consider when discussing SEO with your Web designer.

In the description area located below this video, we are including an RFP (Request for Proposal) checklist to help you organize the right questions to assist you in finding the right company to incorporate on-page SEO for your new Web site design.

If you are seriously considering a new Web site design, I encourage you to take the time to watch this video through to the very end. I cannot stress enough how very important integrated On-Page SEO is to your business's success. When it comes to SEO, it doesn't matter how beautiful your new site is, how lovely the professional photos are, or how cool your gadgets are. If the major search engines such as Google and Bing are unable to index your site properly, your future guests are not going to find you easily. If they can't find you, they will never see your beautiful site, your lovely photos, or your cool gadgets. And if they can't find you, how are they going to ever book with you?

The topic of Search Engine Optimization is SO VERY IMPORTANT, Google produced a 32 page user guide to show developers how to best optimize a Web site for highest possible placement.

<http://bit.ly/d29Dlc>

If Google cares enough to provide a teaching guide for Web developers to build a Search Engine Friendly Site, then shouldn't your new Web site design company care also?

But the sad truth is: many simply don't.

- 1: Some companies say they provide integrated on-page SEO (but then you find out: not so much)
- 2: Some companies say they provide integrated on-page SEO, and they can prove it.
- 3: Some companies will tell you they DO NOT provide integrated on-page SEO and that you'll need to hire an additional firm to handle this part of the project.

For some Web designers and developers the only thing they care about is creating you a Pretty, eye catching site. I can't tell you how many new sites I've seen go live, without any integrated On-Page SEO. Their Placement Drops. Their Traffic Drops. Their Bookings Drop. And they sit back, checkbooks a good deal lighter, and wonder what went wrong!

That's why we at Acorn Internet Services WILL NOT create a new Web site without on-page SEO.

Consider the following "Innkeeper Appropriate" analogy.
Think about the eggs you crack each day when you prepare breakfast.

Every egg has both a White and a Yolk.

Your overall Web presence is like the Egg.
Your Design "Look and Feel Eye Candy" is like the White.
The On-Page SEO is like the Yolk.

And though you can whip up an all white Egg Omelet, it's simply not as good (or as tasty) if you were to use the whole egg.

It's the same with your new Web site design.

You can whip up a Web design that consists of egg whites only, but it simply isn't going to be as good for your business as using the whole egg where you have both a quality design and on-page Search Engine Optimization.

So, let's get down to the basics. What is Search Engine Optimization?

The Formal Definition from Wikipedia:

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of improving the visibility of a Web site or a Web page in search engines via the "natural" or un-paid ("organic" or "algorithmic") search results.

In general, the earlier (or higher ranked on the search results page), and more frequently a site appears in the search results list, the more visitors it will receive from the search engine's users.

SEO may target different kinds of search, including image search, local search, video search, academic search,[1] news search and industry-specific vertical search engines.

Because effective SEO may require changes to the HTML source code of a site and site content, SEO tactics may be incorporated into Web site development and design.

Now ... let's identify what elements you need to ensure are included as part of your new Web site design's on-page SEO? Oh – and just FYI: the majority of these elements are clearly defined in the Google's Search Engine Guide mentioned previously.

1st - Title Tag. Each and every Page of your site should include a unique <title> Tag included in the <head> section of each Web page.

And remember: Not all <title> tags are created equal.

If you see things like: HOME PAGE, ROOMS PAGE, WELCOME TO SUCH AND SUCH INN, or the use of the Inn Name used repetitively on multiple pages as <title> tags, you know the company is not utilizing On-Page SEO Properly.

A quality SEO company will work with you on gathering specific information regarding what is unique about your business. Topics such as:

- Location and Business Type (City or Region + Bed and Breakfast or Inn or Hotel or Lodging or Accommodation)
 - Niches such as (Kid Friendly, Romance, Adventure)
 - Offerings (Events, Weddings, Reunions)
 - Area Attractions (Hiking, Skiing, Biking)
 - Areas of Learning such as Universities, Museums, Art Galleries
 - Area Events such as Festivals
 - Dining Options
- And So On...

Once the design or SEO Company has gathered this information, they will look up the exact phrases of what your guests type to find these things, and incorporate this information into your <title> tags and in turn, code them on each of your pages. This research takes time and money, but is the only way to correctly inform the search engines of what each page of your site is about, and thus be found on those phrases.

But this is only the first step.

2nd - Description Tag. The Description Tag should include a unique text description and also be included on each and every page of the Web site your designer is creating.

This tag gives the Search Engines and Web Surfers an accurate summary of what the page is about.

3rd - Search Engine Friendly Navigation and File Structure. Your design or SEO Company should know how to create a Search Engine Friendly Navigation structure when they build your new Web site. To the user, this looks like buttons or links that they click on to move from page to page on your site. The search engines also use this information to index your site for placement in their search results. Knowledgeable Web developers understand the best way to layout the navigation on your pages, and correctly name those pages, in order to make it useful to both your guests and also for the search engines to crawl, in order for each page of your site to index properly.

4th - Sitemaps. Your design or SEO Company should have a plan in place to create both HTML and XML Sitemaps for your new Web site design. The HTML Sitemap is connected and visible to your guests. It's typically accessed from a link in the footer of each page. The XML Sitemap is created and stored along with your new Web site design on your hosting server. The contents and location of the XML Sitemap is then "TOLD" to the Search Engines, such as Google and Bing, through their Webmaster Tools Services. Your Webmaster should be working with you to create a Webmaster Tools account in your business name to load XML Sitemap files for your Web site, Mobile Site and Video Listings as appropriate.

5th - Content. When you create your new site design, you should be asked by the Web site firm to provide quality content for each page. This means actual WORDS or TEXT. Google cannot index a site without visible text on each page. The text on each page should reinforce what has been defined in the <title> and <description> tags for that page. If your Web designer tells you that Web surfers don't READ any more, and that you don't need to write text for each of your Web site pages, then you are working with a Web designer that clearly doesn't understand integrated on-page SEO. It is true that most Web surfers want to be impressed with gorgeous designs with much "eye candy" as possible, to look at. But the search engines need actual text to read, that support your <title> and <description> tags, in order to index your site well in the search engines.

6th - Social Media. Another facet of content, aside from the text on your Web site pages, is the incorporation of a Blog and Social Media as additional ways to provide quality content to support your site. If your Web designer doesn't encourage you to set up a Blog, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube types of social media accounts for you to use to continue growing your content support for your Web site, they are not setting you up for future success in the search engine listings. Social Media is NO LONGER a nice to have. It's a MUST HAVE to maintain ongoing placement in the search engines.

7th - Anchor Text. A quality SEO company or design firm will make sure that inside your content on each page of your site you have anchor text that supports your <title> and <description> tags. Anchor Text is nothing more than a clickable text link inside your content that will take your visitor to another page on the site. This is useful to your user to learn more about what you offer, but this is also very useful to Google to understand what the page you are linking to, is all about.

8th - Alt Tags. Images you include on your site are visible to your guests, but the search engines can't "SEE" what's "IN" that image. A way to allow search engines to "SEE" what the image is all about is to include an ALT Tag on the image. It's just one more way a new design should be optimized for on-page SEO support.

9th - Heading Tags. Heading Tags are used in defining the structure of the page content. It helps your reader "zoom" in on areas of interest. But these tags are also read by the search engines as part of the indexing process associated with each page of your site. The use of heading tags should be structured in such a way that they are useful to both the user and the search engines.

10th - Local Listing Support. Local Placement is just one more way your guests can find you on the Web. It influences both mobile, desktop and laptop searches. As part of your design, your Web master should be aware of the proper integration of your correct local NAP (Name Address and Phone) as per Schema.org documentation. When coded properly, this information supports your Local Placement in the search engines.

And when it comes to cost, it should be no surprise that a design company that invests in both quality design AND on-page SEO would provide a bid with an additional 20-30% more cost to cover the SEO portion of the work.

A low design bid might be an indication that they have no intent to include the 10 required On-Page SEO steps as discussed into your new design.

So, when you begin interviewing companies for your new Web site design, take the time to print out the PDF check list for Integrated On-Page SEO. Verify that the company you are speaking with does each and every one of these things. If they don't, or they tell you that it's not necessary because they've designed their product to handle it for you, don't expect to be well placed in the search listings, because this type of SEO is imperative to the foundation of being seen in the search results.

All these steps have very little to do with the "Look and Feel" of your new pretty Web design. This type of work is typically done by a writing team; technical editors and SEO Experts that pull together and organize this information to be properly included into the design. Design and On-Page SEO are not one in the same, but they merge together to complete a quality site design that indexes well in the search engines.

Just remember the egg analogy when you begin interviewing design companies.

Do you want an "all whites" Web site?
Or do you want one made with the whole egg?

Due Diligence - You should never invest in any company without taking the time for due diligence. You should check at least 3 references. Look online for any praise, comments and or complaints. Take time to review the Blog, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube accounts of the company you are considering. A little up front time can save a lot of headaches down the road.

And finally, the most important point of all: this on-page SEO work is only the beginning.

These 10 steps simply ready your site for quality placement in the search engines. You need to think of all this work as building a solid Web site foundation.

In order to secure ongoing placement in the search engines, continuing Marketing and SEO work must be scheduled and performed in order to grow or maintain high placement.

To learn more about Web Site Marketing Maintenance: Ongoing SEO and Marketing Plans, please take the time to watch Part 3 of the Smart Innkeeper Series where we detail the ongoing "Work" that needs to be done to continue to reap the benefits of your new design on into the future.

We encourage you to watch Part 1 and Part 3 of The Smart Innkeeper Series to learn more about choosing a Web site Designer and Ongoing SEO and Marketing Plans.

"Know where to find the information and how to use it. That's the secret of success." Albert Einstein

If you have any questions about this or other Smart Innkeeper Series videos, or would like to learn more about how Acorn Internet Services can help you to improve your online presence, please contact us at 877-226-7699 or email us at sales@acorn-is.com.

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