

Tips on How to Start a Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) Campaign

Nowadays hotels understand the importance of the internet and the difference it can make to their business. They also know that being at the top of the search engine results pages is important for driving traffic to a website and subsequently making sales. The big question is how can they achieve this & at a reasonable cost?

Now, it's not difficult to get to the top of Google if you are willing to pay to appear as a sponsored link, where you bid for the position and every time someone clicks on your advert you pay. However, as competition for the keyword phrases increases so do the costs and hotels will not be able to afford to continue with PPC forever.

The more cost effective way to appear at the top of the organic rankings, on Google that's just below the sponsored links (normally 3) which appear on most search engine results pages, is to conduct an SEO campaign to get Google and the other search engines to index your website content and return it in search results. The other fact is that once you get towards the top of the rankings it becomes a lot easier to stay there because one of the key factors Google looks at is the popularity (traffic) of a website and by being high on the results you will get more traffic.

So how do you start an SEO Campaign?

Assuming that you already have a good, relevant domain name and have access to a Content Management System (CMS) to update your website, here are some of the most important steps that your marketing team can do **before** you employ a SEO specialist.

1. Research your targeted keywords / phrases

The first and most important step is to determine what are the most important keywords or phrases, usually 2 or 3 words, for which you want your website to appear on search engines? You know your hotel better than anyone else. You know your target audience. So find the key phrases, probably between 10 and 20, which you think that customers will use to type into the search engine and relate to your hotel. (E.g. "hotel in Town Name")

2. Choose the right page titles for your website pages

After you have decided on your keyword/ phrases, the next step is to place them in certain areas of your website pages. The title of your web page is the very first thing that any search engine crawler will read and take as a factor to rank your website – you can see the page title at the very top left of the internet browser. Your homepage title should contain your main 2 or 3 targeted keyword phrases. All the other pages of your website should have title related to the content of that respective page. (E.g.) the Keyword phrase "hotel in Town Name" would appear in the page title.

3. Set up meta keywords and description

Although Google has said they do not read meta tags content I you advise to put your targeted keywords in the meta keyword and a one line description about that webpage in the meta description. Many other search engines will still read them and if you are not stuffing keywords that are irrelevant to the page content then Google is unlikely to penalise you.

4. Create unique content for every webpage

Your website pages should have unique content describing the hotels featured services and facilities. The content should include the keyword phrases that are in the title of the page. Experts say that you should use your targeted keyword phrase 2-3 times per every 200 words.

5. Create a business blog

Google gets excited by new and original content and a blog fits the bill. Use a business blog to communicate with your customers about anything happening in the hotel and very importantly update at regular intervals. Once or twice a week is good. Articles don't have to be long and as long as they relate to your hotel then that's good. Perhaps consider asking management to provide comments for the blog on a rotation basis. For example the chef can talk about what food is seasonal, the restaurant manager about the revised wine list etc. Wordpress or blogspot are easy to use and set up.

6. Use Web Analytics

Once your website is up and running you want to know more about where the traffic is coming from, the volume of traffic & the search terms being used amongst other things. Analytics software can do this and Google provide theirs free of charge so use it.

7. Review your website positions for the keyword phrases

Having put in the work to get the keywords phrases right and in the correct places on the web pages you are going to want to know that it has worked. Conduct some simple searches yourself for your key phrases and record the position each keyword phrase achieves and the page it is pointing to. I suggest you do this every 10-14 days and keep a record to see the movement. If you are improving then great, if however you start to drop down then you should consider making some changes to the keywords or content on that page. You can buy software to automate this or if and when you appoint an SEO company they can run these reports for you as well.

8. Use social media websites to promote the hotel

Twitter, Facebook, Digg, Delicious are some of the buzz words today in social media industry and your hotel should be represented on them. Setting up your hotel profile on these & similar websites are must and then use them to have some fun. For more ideas on this take a [look at this article I wrote a while back.](#)

9. Register on the [Open Directory \(DMOZ\)](#)

The open directory is used as a base database by many search engines and is free so get your hotel listed on it. Go to

10. Register your Hotel with [Google Local Business Centre.](#)

The local business centre is free and supplies the results for Google Maps. Create your own entry and load as much information as you can including images, video etc.

11. Start a link exchange policy

Allowing other websites which are of a good quality (look at Google Page rank) and are relevant to your own business to link to your site in return for a link from you to them is good practice. I recommend using www.linkmarket.net to manage the process. It's only about \$50 a year and easy to use.

I hope you find these tips useful and would welcome any thoughts or comments.

Kind regards

Robert Smith