

How To Make Your Website “Search Engine Friendly”

In this Marketing Action Guide, I’m going to walk you through the 4 specific steps you must take to make your website “search engine friendly,” so you have a better chance of showing up on the first page of search engines (like Google.com) when potential customers are searching for your services.

WHY YOU WANT A “SEARCH ENGINE FRIENDLY” WEBSITE

Search engine optimization (or SEO) is the process of getting your website to show up in the search engines. The benefit of SEO is that you can attract on-going “free” traffic. In order to maximize your ability to rank in the search engines, you need to first make your website search engine friendly. This means avoiding common mistakes and following SEO best practices when it comes to the content and structure of your website. If you don’t follow these best practices, then you’ll have a very hard time outranking your competition in Google.

OVERVIEW OF THE 4 STEPS

There are 4 steps to make your website search engine friendly and they are:

1. Research to identify the exact keyword phrases prospects are searching in Google.com to find your products or services
2. Match keywords to pages on your website to tell Google.com which webpages you want to show in the search results for each particular keyword phrase
3. Edit key sections of your webpages to match the keyword phrases you want to rank for
4. Fix the canonicalization problem so each webpage has only one unique URL.

OK, let’s dive in...

STEP 1: RESEARCH POTENTIAL KEYWORD PHRASES

The first step to get your website ranking in Google's Top 10 results is to identify the keywords your potential customers are searching in Google when shopping for your services or products. This process is called **keyword research**.

Luckily, you don't have to guess at which words your potential customers are using. Google has a free tool called the Google Keyword Suggestion Tool that will tell you the exact words and phrases people are typing into Google.com.

Use the link below to review the Google Keyword Suggestion Tool:

<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>

Google's keyword tool acts like a thesaurus. You provide an initial word or phrase, and then the keyword tool returns dozens to hundreds of relevant phrases. When performing Top 10 SEO research with Google's keyword tool, you should set the keyword settings to 'Exact'. This means the keyword tool will return the number of searches per month for that exact keyword phrase.

If you are a business serving local clientele, we recommend you research keywords in the following format:

- City + service
- Service + city

For example, let's imagine you're a partner at the (fictional) law firm of Dewey Cheatem & Howe, based in Dallas, Texas. In that case, you'd start by researching the search volume for keywords such as:

- Dallas attorney
- Dallas attorneys
- Dallas lawyer
- Dallas lawyers
- Dallas law firm
- Attorney in Dallas

- Attorneys in Dallas
- Lawyers in Dallas
- Law firm in Dallas

You'll also want to research relevant phrases for specific services you provide. So, continuing with our example, let's say Dewey Cheatem & Howe focuses on these 3 areas of law:

- Estate planning
- Divorce law
- Personal Injury

In that case, you'd want to research different phrases like:

- Dallas estate planning lawyer
- Dallas estate planning lawyers
- Dallas estate planning attorney
- Dallas estate planning attorneys
- Dallas estate planning law firm
- Dallas divorce lawyer
- Dallas divorce lawyers
- Dallas divorce attorney
- Dallas divorce attorneys
- Dallas divorce law firm
- Dallas personal injury lawyer
- Dallas personal injury lawyers
- Dallas personal injury attorney
- Dallas personal injury attorneys
- Dallas personal injury law firm

And so you'd add those keywords into the Keyword Suggestion Tool as well.

As you're using the keyword tool, in order to return the most relevant keywords, select the checkbox that says "***Only show ideas closely related to my search terms.***"

You'll want to focus on the keywords that are most relevant and frequently-searched.

STEP 2: MATCH KEYWORDS TO PAGES ON YOUR WEBSITE

The next step is to assign different keywords to the different pages on your website.

Why is this important?

Google will typically only show one of your webpages (the most relevant page that matches the keyword searched) in the search results. If you try to get a webpage to rank for multiple unrelated keywords then you probably will not rank for ANY of the keywords.

So it's best to be laser focused and match related keywords to only one webpage.

Also, by ranking very focused pages you increase the likelihood your prospects will contact you because you're addressing the exact need of the prospect vs. trying to be all things to everyone.

If you just have 1 service, this is really easy -- you'll be optimizing your homepage for your target keyword phrase. But if you have multiple services, you'll want to optimize different pages of your website for different keywords.

Either way, you'll want to download your keywords from the Google Keyword Suggestion tool into a spreadsheet.

1. Click "download" and then save the keywords in a spreadsheet on your computer.
2. Open up the spreadsheet.
3. Add an extra column called "Page" – where you'll assign each keyword to a particular page.

Let's go back to our Dewey Cheatem & Howe example. They have 3 practice areas (Divorce, Injury, Estate Planning), so we need to optimize 4 pages: Homepage, Divorce, Injury, and Estate Planning. And we want to assign the various keywords to different pages on the firm's website.

For example, we would assign the general keywords (like "Dallas attorney") to the homepage. And then we'd assign the specific practice area keywords (such as "Dallas divorce lawyer" and

INNER CIRCLE **MARKETING ACTION GUIDE** MARCH 2012

“Dallas personal injury lawyer”) to the specific page on the website devoted to those practice areas (such as Divorce Law and Personal Injury Law).

Here’s an example of how we’d assign the various keywords to different pages:

Keyword	Search Volume	Page
dallas divorce lawyer	590	Divorce
dallas personal injury lawyer	590	Injury
dallas attorney	390	Home
dallas lawyer	390	Home
dallas lawyers	390	Home
dallas divorce attorney	390	Divorce
dallas personal injury attorney	390	Injury
dallas attorneys	320	Home
attorneys in dallas	210	Home
dallas law firm	170	Home
law firms in dallas	170	Home
dallas personal injury lawyers	140	Injury
dallas divorce lawyers	110	Divorce
dallas personal injury attorneys	110	Injury
attorney in dallas	91	Home
lawyers in dallas	91	Home
dallas divorce attorneys	91	Divorce
dallas personal injury law firm	73	Injury
dallas estate planning attorney	36	Estate
law firm in dallas	28	Home
dallas estate planning lawyer	16	Estate

STEP 3: EDIT PAGES FOR YOUR TARGET KEYWORDS

Next, it's time to "optimize" the various pages of your website for your different target keywords.

This is critical so that Google and other search engines can properly categorize and index your webpage. If the key sections of your webpages do not match the keywords you're targeting, then you're not going to rank in Google. You need to tell Google exactly which keywords are relevant to your webpage so Google will display your page in the search results.

The most important webpage elements to edit are:

- Title tag
- Body copy
- Headers
- URL
- Meta description

You should start by making edits to your **home page**, because that's the most important page on your website.

Let's go through each of these, one at a time...

TITLE TAG EDITS

The title of a webpage is one of the most important elements because it's the equivalent to the title of a book. If your webpage title matches a particular keyword then you are going to greatly improve your chances of ranking for that keyword.

Your Title tag is also what appears at the top left corner of your browser and it's what shows up as the blue under-lined link in the search results. And in the HTML code, the Title tag appears at the top of the page as something like this: `<title> TEXT </title>`. (To view the HTML code of your homepage, right-click and select View Source.)

What edit should you make to your Title tag? We recommend you put the relevant keyword with the most search volume at the beginning of your Title tag. In this case, we'd want to focus on the

phrases: Dallas attorney, Dallas lawyer, and Dallas lawyers because they have the most search volume, according to Google.

Keyword	Search Volume	Page
dallas lawyers	390	Home
dallas lawyer	390	Home
dallas attorney	390	Home
dallas attorneys	320	Home
attorneys in dallas	210	Home
dallas law firm	170	Home
law firms in dallas	170	Home
attorney in dallas	91	Home
lawyers in dallas	91	Home
law firm in dallas	28	Home

So, we might edit the homepage Title tag to say:

Dallas Lawyers – Dewey Cheatem & Howe

In the HTML code, that would appear as:

```
<title>Dallas Lawyers – Dewey Cheatem & Howe </title>
```

Here are some best practices for Title tag edits:

- Keep it under 65 characters.
- Don't stuff multiple keywords in the Title tag. Try to combine keyword phrases so they look natural.
- Write it like a short, compelling headline so people will see it in the search engine results and click through to your website.
- Create unique title tags for ALL pages of your website.

WEBPAGE BODY COPY EDITS

It's really important to have text copy on your webpages. We generally recommend a minimum of 200 words per page, and ideally around 500 words. When you're editing your copy, don't try to stuff your keywords all over the page in order to impress Google. The search engines are smarter than that. Plus, that will appear unnatural to your prospects and will not help convince them to contact you and start doing business with you.

However, we DO recommend you try and naturally incorporate relevant keyword phrases into your body copy, if possible. Go back to your keyword research list, and try to incorporate some of the different phrases relevant to that page, as long as it sounds natural.

For example, for the Dewey Cheatem & Howe homepage, instead of repeating "Dallas lawyers" several times, we might want to use the word "attorney" and "law firm" – and doing that can help the page rank in Google for the different keyword variations.

HEADLINE OR H1 EDITS

Headers are the visual headlines and sub-headlines on your page. Usually, webmasters use <H1> for the main headline and <H2> or <H3> for sub-headlines. We recommend you incorporate your keywords in the headers of your pages, too. But you don't want it to look spammy. Keep it natural and write it like a compelling headline.

We recommend you use a slightly different phrase in your header versus your title. So, if we chose "Dallas Lawyers" for the Title tag, we might choose "Dallas Law Firm" for the H1.

META DESCRIPTION EDITS

The Meta Description is a hidden HTML Tag on your webpage. No one can see this information except for search engines and they use it as the description of your webpage in the search results. So when your webpage ranks in Google, the Title Tag is the blue underlined link and underneath is the description of your webpage, which is generated using your Meta Description information.

A lot of SEO “experts” put too much emphasis on Meta Tags, but the Meta Description doesn’t really help your page rank higher in Google. However, a well-written Meta Description can help you get more clicks once you’re already ranking.

Here are some Meta Description guidelines:

- Incorporate your keywords, but don’t over-do it. Including your keywords won’t help you rank higher in Google, but the keywords will get **bolded** in the search results – and that’s how it can help increase the number of clicks you receive.
- Write naturally – think of the Title tag as a headline, and the Meta Description as the copy in a classified ad. If your prospects like what they see, they’ll be more likely to click. We recommend including a couple different keyword variations in your Meta Description, as long as it reads well. Don’t make your Meta Description just a list of keywords.
- Keep it under 150 characters or else it will get cut off and Google will display ellipses.
- If you want to encourage phone calls, include your phone number in your Meta Description with a call-to-action.

REPEAT EDITS ON ALL KEY PAGES

Next, you’ll want to repeat those steps for all of your other key pages on your website. So, in the case of Dewey Cheatem & Howe, we’d repeat the same steps for the Divorce page, Estate Planning page, and Injury page.

If you want to optimize for certain keyword phrases, but you don’t have relevant pages for them, then you’ll need to add new pages to your website, and then follow the same optimization steps outlined above. When creating new pages, try to optimize the **URL** to include your keywords.

For example, if Dewey Cheatem & Howe were adding a new page for divorce, they could create one with a URL like this: www.deweycheatemhowe.com/dallas-divorce-attorney

Those are the major elements you need to edit to optimize your web pages, but there's 1 more little-known step you should take...

STEP 4: FIX CANONICALIZATION

Once you've completed the 3 steps above, then there's one more little-known step that will improve your website's ability to rank higher in Google.

It's called "**Canonicalization**" – and it's a weird name, but it's critically important.

Most website owners make the mistake of allowing their website pages to load in many different URL formats. For example, here are 6 potential variations of a homepage address:

1. <http://www.website.com>
2. <http://www.website.com/>
3. <http://www.website.com/index.html>
4. <http://website.com>
5. <http://website.com/>
6. <http://website.com/index.html>

Instead of allowing all of these different variations, you should **pick just 1** for consistency's sake, so you concentrate your website's SEO power to 1 central location. Otherwise, you'll diffuse all of your SEO work.

The reason this is important is because Google actually treats <http://www.website.com> and <http://website.com> as 2 entirely different websites!

And Google treats <http://www.website.com/index.html> and <http://www.website.com> and <http://www.website.com/> as different pages, even though the user will see the same information on the pages.

It's crazy, but true.

Here's how to fix it: Ask your webmaster to "301 redirect" all the different variations to just one webpage. We usually choose <http://www.website.com> as the primary location, and forward the other potential variations there. If your website is on a Linux server, then your webmaster should be able to edit the .htaccess file to accomplish this task. If your website is on a Windows server, then your webmaster should be able to use ISAPI_Rewrite or another IIS solution.

YOU'RE INVITED...

If you're reading this MAG, I figure you're interested in learning more of our SEO strategies...

And that's why I'm inviting you to be one of the 10 students in our upcoming **"SEO Jumpstart"** class.

When you enroll, I'll teach you everything you need to know to get ranked in Google, so you attract new customers every month.

The class is limited to 10 students, so you'll get lots of personal attention from me. And it's 100% web-based, so you can attend from the convenience of your office.

If you're interested learning more, send an email to phil.frost@mainstreetroi.com and I'll send you all the details, so you can see if it's right for you.



To Your Success!
Phil Frost