



# “The free consumers guide on how to make your web site rank higher in search engines and 8 fatal mistakes to avoid”

Anyone who uses the internet will most likely use a search engine at some stage. Most of the time when using a search engine you will find exactly what you are looking for, other times you won't, even though you may have made a specific search. When it comes to your own website are your customers bypassing you?

**InfoAge.co.nz**  
**March 2008**

## Understand Search Engines

Most search engines operate by a means of "spidering" the web searching for new pages to add to their database. Although you can wait for one of these spiders to locate your website, it would take a long time before you would be found. You are far better off to go to the search engine and tell them about your website, this can be done by utilising a submission service.

You need to appear on the first page (or at least the first 20-30 results).

Results following a search will be ranked in order of importance, based on the search engines own rules or algorithm.

## The 7 deadly secrets about SEO

### 1/ Choosing killer keywords

It is vitally important to choose the right keywords for your website. Think long and hard about the kind of keywords people are likely to search on if they were looking for your site.

Remember that search engines are a competitive marketing space, there are potentially thousands of other businesses out there of which share the same keywords as you, so you need to be quite specific in your choice of words and preferably use two to three word phrases as opposed to singular words. A great example of this is the word 'travel', being a huge industry you would find it near impossible to rank in the top ten of a search based solely on this one word.

If I searched using the word 'travel', I could be:

## The 8 fatal SEO mistakes to avoid with your web site

### *Fatal Mistake #1*

**DON'T HIDE:** Search engines don't trust hidden keywords. Even though some engines like Google will say flatly "don't hide keywords," this, as with many statements, must be tempered with reality. Keywords in meta tags for example will not get you banned or labelled as a spammer even though they are hidden. The same goes with other hidden areas like ALT tags, NOFRAMES, hyperlink URLs, and comments. These are some of the "acceptable" hidden areas so long as you include only relevant keywords and you don't over-do it. Hiding keywords by using the same colour text as the background is almost always considered to be spam. Some web developers will vary the colour codes just a little to avoid detection, but you certainly take a risk using this strategy.

- ❖ Helping my son or daughter with a school assignment on some aspects of “travel.
- ❖ Planning a holiday.
- ❖ Looking for driving directions from A to B.
- ❖ Looking for an airline’s travel partner rewards.
- ❖ Looking for travelling supplies or stores.

Therefore, if you are marketing river cruises in the UK you are far more likely to be placed in the top ten if you use words more specific to your business.

## Choosing Keywords and Phrases

Put yourself in the shoes of the type of visitor you want to attract to your website and write a list of the kind of keywords or phrases you believe they are most likely to search on. It’s also a good idea to ask friends or co-workers what they might type in a search engine to find your website, alternatively you could ask them to go to a search engine and try to find information on the topic or subject your website falls into and get them to make a note of what words or phrases they use.

### Some important points

- ❖ Include ‘concept’ keywords, i.e. “laptop computers”; if that’s what you sell. Also try not to make these too broad.
- ❖ Include some quite specific brand names such as Hewlett Packard. If you are offering a service as opposed to a product, try to use service brand names when possible but remember that legally if you are a service re-seller, you should include reserved or trade mark symbol beside any brand names.
- ❖ If you are offering a product or products from a well known company you should include that company name in your keywords.
- ❖ It is not important to use your name in keywords. It is however a great idea to have an ‘about us’ page where you may list the people within your company so that someone searching for you or one of your employees will find that page.
- ❖ A great tip for choosing your keywords is to see how many other pages match the keywords people would be likely to search on to find your site. You need to find search phrases that have fewer matches and aim to be at the top of that searches results, that way you are filling a keyword ‘gap’ that your competition are not utilising. These keywords are potentially bringing up unrelated ‘garbage’ sites that your target audience are not interested in so with the strategy your site could be the only site that appears near the top of that search.
- ❖ Most people will begin searching using single words of which will commonly not provide enough scope. So the next step in searching is to do a multiple word search; i.e. “river

### *Fatal Mistake #2*

**DON'T STUFF:** If you stuff too many keywords into your page, you could get in trouble for spamming. Repeating the same word multiple times in a row is the worst offence. However, over-use of your keyword can cause your ranking to drop. What's the magic number? That varies by the area of the page and the search engine.

cruises england”, so therefore you should make a list of phrases people are likely to search for.

## 2/ Meta Tags

Meta Tags are invisible elements incorporating; titles, descriptions & keywords. These elements significantly influence the search engines appraisal of your site impacting on whether the searchers actually click on your link within the search results.

### **Titles**

The title tag is one of the most important HTML tags in a website. All search engines rank the keywords within the title very highly, so if you were to create

a page with one keyword in the title and another page with the keyword in the body tag you would find the one with the keyword in the title will rank higher in most search engines.

### **Description**

The description tag is the second most important tag on a website, so it is important that the description is well written as it is displayed in search engine results meaning you can control what is shown and allows you to sell the page. If a description is not given to a webpage, the search engine will automatically generate one from page content which most likely will not make any sense and detract the searcher from clicking the link and entering your website. The descriptions should be unique to each page so a generic description is not a good idea as each page and description is a selling opportunity that needs to be taken advantage of.

### **Keywords**

Keyword meta tag’s need to be added to each page to help define your page in search engines. Only some search engines will read this tag, and those that do read the tag often don’t place as much importance on it as they do with keywords found within the content of the page.

### *Fatal Mistake #3*

**DON'T MISREPRESENT:** Perhaps the greatest of all the commandments, don't misrepresent your site! If you optimise for keywords that have little or nothing to do with what the visitor will see on the page, you're asking for trouble.

### 3/ Site Map

Every website must have a site map. A site map is absolutely essential as it lists all pages within a website along with links to each page, this is especially important if your website uses JavaScript for the menu as it will be invisible to spiders.

### 4/ Domain Names

Your domain name should include your main keyword.

Also creating web pages with names that include the main keyword relevant to that page; i.e.

rivercruises.com/europe\_river\_cruises.html, can help increase its relevance on some search engines. Search engines do not pay a lot of attention to this, but if you are serious every little detail helps.

### 5/ Page Content

Ultimately, web pages need a good amount of content in order to be truly search engine friendly. A minimum of 300-400 words is ideal, along with images (with Alt tags, of which we will talk about later).

#### **Page Headings**

All pages must have headings; the heading must contain the main keywords of the page as they specify to the search engine what the page is about.

It is also vital that the heading's font uses the h1 tag, this being located within the sites CSS (Cascading Style Sheet) as it is where the search engine will define that this is the page heading containing the pages keywords.

### *Fatal Mistake #4*

**DON'T REDIRECT:** Some Webmasters will try to hide "ugly" content designed for a search engine. As soon as a human-visitor arrives, they are redirected to the real page via a meta refresh tag, javascript, or other trick. Basically this is the "poor man's" version of cloaking. If an engine determines your intent was to trick the engine, you may find your page banned. However, since there are also many legitimate reasons to redirect a page, such as when a page is moved, engines tend to avoid harsher punishments. Instead, they will usually try to index only the page to which the user is being redirected.

## **First Paragraph**

The first paragraph on a webpage is the second most important part of a page as it specifies to the search engines what the page content is about. Primary key phrases should be placed at the start of the first paragraph.

It is also a great idea to include linked anchors within the text on all pages to other pages within the site at either the same level or below.

## **Error**

All pages should be carefully checked for spelling errors and broken links on a regular basis as these could affect the search engine rating of your site.

## **Links**

You need to attain as many links back to your site as possible. The more links you have to your site from highly ranked sites, the higher your site will be ranked within search engines. If no one links to you, then the search engines' assessment of your site is that you are not worth linking to.

It is a very good idea to have a links page providing links to useful sites for your visitors, and ultimately to also have reciprocal links back to you from useful or high ranking websites. If you want to have some control over what links come back to you and how they appear, you can create a 'Links to Us' page where you can specify links to include keyword rich phrases similar to that of your titles and descriptions.

## **6/ ALT Tags**

An ALT tag is the box that pops up when the cursor is moved over an image. ALT tags have three main purposes;

1. Readers used by the sight impaired read these words.
2. If a user has the graphics turned off, this text will show.
3. Some search engines will look for keywords in the ALT tags.

However, ALT tags should not be used too excessively as some search engines will interpret this as keyword spamming, if a competitor were to lodge a complaint with Google, this plus any other optimisation no-no's may be enough to justify your site's removal from their index.

## **7/ File Names**

### **Image File Names**

Using keywords within your image file names will help your search engine ranking.

i.e. [http://www.rivercruises.com/europe\\_river\\_cruises.jpg](http://www.rivercruises.com/europe_river_cruises.jpg)

### Page File Names

Naming your pages in accordance with the main keyword or keywords from the page will also help with search engine ranking.

i.e. [http://www.rivercruises.com/europe\\_river\\_cruises.jhtml](http://www.rivercruises.com/europe_river_cruises.jhtml)

## 4 Misconceptions about SEO

### 1/ Get as many links to your website as possible

Link Popularity is related to a sites significance ranking because it is believed that one measure of a sites value is in the number of other websites who felt your site was important enough to link to.

This is a big reason why you need to get other sites to link to you. Sometimes if you agree to link to them, they'll do the same for you. In web marketing this is called cross-linking or reciprocal linking and is another way to drive traffic to your website.

You want qualified, relevant links to your site – not links from unrelated sites (as you probably receive requests in spam email). For example, links from travel web sites to our river cruises site are important. Links from cheap cosmetic sites should be avoided.

#### *Fatal Mistake #6*

**DON'T FAIL TO CROSS-LINK:** You should create links that travel from your home page to all other pages you wish to be indexed. If your optimised page has only outbound links and no inbound links, you run the risk of a search engine penalizing it for smelling like a one-directional doorway or entrance page. Although this is not likely to get your site banned, it may prevent the page from being indexed or ranked highly.

### 2/ Repeat keywords

Never repeat a keyword multiple times in a row on a single page and be aware that using a keyword too often on a page is as bad as not using it at all.

### 3/ Frames are indexed

Some search engine spiders will not follow links that are in frames. This means that if your website's homepage opens in frames the spider will find absolutely nothing else on your site and you will limit exposure to people doing searches for you unless you submit each secondary frame manually.

It is a good idea if you are to use frames in your site (if you can't avoid using frames all together) to place links and text in the no-frames section of the page.

*Insert a link such as <A HREF="my\_other\_page.htm">Click here</A> should work.*

As this won't appear on your page, no one will be able to click on it but the spider will be able to follow it.

### 4/ You don't need to link each page to your home page

Many big companies make the mistake of neglecting to have a very obvious link back to their home page. This is a real problem if people find one of your pages in a search engine but can't find your home page in order to view other pages on your website, they will give up quickly and move on to another site, maybe your competition!

## 6 ways to get traffic to your web site

### 1/ Submit your pages

There are basically three ways to get your web site indexed:

1. Wait for search engines to find you by following a link from another site, although this may take a long time.
2. Go to each search engine and select their submit URL option.
3. Run submission software.

It can take anywhere from a few days to 6-12 weeks depending on the search engine and also whether or not you have submitted it or are waiting for the engine to find you.

## 2/ Banner Ads

You see banner ads all over the internet. Click through rates can vary from 0-17% or higher. They can be cost effective if you use an eye-catching design and slogan and target your message.

Try to advertise on sites that are related to your target audience. Many search engines also allow you to display banners based on the keyword searched on.

## 3/ Offer something for free

This is used all over the internet and can work well if you have a related product to the product or service you offer for free, but make sure you combine this method with another (i.e. banner ads) otherwise no one will know you're giving away something.

Because so many things on the internet are free, you need to be sure your website's content gives a message of perceived value, otherwise people will be led to believe you are giving away something to make up for the fact that your product or service is overpriced leading them to find another site offering better value.

### *Fatal Mistake #7*

**DON'T OVER-SUBMIT:** It won't do you any good to submit your URL multiple times a day. While most search engines are thought to be reluctant to ban a site for over-submission, they will gladly ignore submissions from sites that exceed their limits. Unfortunately, they don't often tell you what the limits are or warn you when you exceed them. For this reason, we maintain a database of safe submission limits and adhere to those limits by manually submitting on a daily basis within these limits.

## 4/ Use newsgroups

Find newsgroups that your target audience may participate in and leave helpful messages; sign your messages leaving a tag-line describing your website, product or service. Be careful not to sound like a blatant sales person or you will violate the rules of many groups.

## 5/ Promote using e-mail

E-mail is a powerful sales tool but it is important not to send un-solicited or untargeted emails. These boundaries are often blurred so it is best to only use email if visitors to your site have asked to be on your mailing list to receive certain types of information.

We strongly recommend to consult the New Zealand Unsolicited Email Act (or your country's similar legislation) prior to marketing via email.

## 6/ Write newsletters

Try writing a newsletter, a free newsletter is a great way to keep you in your targets thoughts and lead them to your website. Before you know it you will have a large following and greatly increased traffic to your site.

As above, we strongly recommend you consult your country's rules on spamming prior to marketing via email.

### *Fatal Mistake #8*

**DON'T BUILD JUNK:** Search engines hate pages with "little or no useful content" since they diminish the search experience for their patrons. Too often Web marketers focus so much on optimising their rankings that they forget about things like aesthetics, rich-content, and user-friendliness. While the search engines don't have a magic bullet to filter "junk" pages, this is one commandment we should all desire to follow.

## The 4 steps to drive traffic to your website

### 1/ Optimise your website

Correct your web pages, write good text content with appropriate keywords, use meta tags and design pages and their associated files correctly. Use keyword -rich page titles and H1 and H2 headings. Cross link from keywords to other internal web pages.

Avoid the 8 fatal mistakes.

### 2/ Promote

Submit your site to search engines, get incoming links, use online and offline advertising, use Google adwords, create a newsletter, and use your URL on all correspondence and material.



[www.infoage.co.nz](http://www.infoage.co.nz)

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## *Fatal Mistake #5*

**DON'T DUPLICATE:** The search engines understandably do not wish to serve duplicate or near-duplicate pages to their visitors. Some unethical Webmasters will flood a search engine with thousands of near-duplicate pages in an attempt to dominate every keyword search relating (or not relating) to their site.

So, many engines actively look for content that is very similar and will drop pages or domains they find crossing the line. These "dupe-checkers" unfortunately can catch folks who are not even trying to create duplicate content. Even the famous Amazon.com was accidentally banned by AltaVista at one time. They had so many affiliates with similar pages regarding books that AltaVista's dup-checker dropped them until someone complained. Many catalogue sites will offer similar products with similar descriptions. You may not be trying to spam, but a search engine spider may conclude otherwise. Therefore, be sure to vary your content as much as possible. If you still have concerns that a spider might jump to false conclusions, add a random amount of blank space and other "benign" tags to the page to vary the file size by 100 bytes or more. You can also vary your meta tags, ALT tags, title, etc. Don't misunderstand me though: This is no substitute for failing to create unique content!

If you create custom versions of basically the same page for each search engine, you may attract the unwanted attention of a dup-checker.