

## SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION – THE WAY TO E-BUSINESS SUCCESS?

“Search Engine Optimization - it's not a project. It's a process.”

Fredrick Marckini, Founder & CEO of <http://www.iprospect.com/>

For many people SEO [Search Engine Optimization] term may sound strange. But for sure it shouldn't be unknown for those who are active in e-business and also for everyone who wants to be present in today's business life. In many countries (also in Poland) search engine optimization is still undervaluated. Why is search engine optimization called to be a big part of all e-business?

The aim of this paper is to present a new, complex approach to Internet marketing. It shows the growing role of search engines as a place of marketing. It also tries to define SEO.

The major goal is to emphasize the interdependence of three levels: webdesign, corporate identity and search engine optimization.

**Keywords:** e-business, search engine optimization, web positioning

### 1. WHAT IS SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

Talking about Internet, people mostly emphasize its following characteristics: range, availability 24 hours per day, 7 days a week and interactiveness. But often they forget about something what makes Internet different from other media. Its user is no longer a passive recipient of unwanted adverts but has possibility of choice, which consists not in limited TV or radio channels but in unlimited number of web sites. Internet provides so many information that to spread and process them additional tools are needed. The aim is to find the exact information in possible shortest time. These tools are search engines, which are being used on the Internet every day by the user. Taking Google.com search engine for example: it has largest index of web pages (more than 3 billion) and conduct more than 200 million searches per day<sup>1</sup>. Therefore “google” became a verb, which means searching. Its spread from professionals to housewives literally happened overnight!

The majority of Internet users, 85 percent, use search engines to find solutions and vendors.<sup>2</sup> Question is: If you have website, what is a chance, that your potential clients will find you? How people will go to you? There are three ways (referral type): direct navigations, web links, search engines.

- direct navigation – somebody knows your web page address from adverts in paper, television, radio, printed materials of your company. Users directly write your address in their browsers or have address in bookmarks.
- web links – links to your page from other web services. In this, banners, the most recognized Internet advertisement, are also included.
- search engines – people search for some words or phrases in search engines such as [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) and get some results. If your page is in results, it is

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.google.com/press/highlights.html>

<sup>2</sup> CyberAtlas staff, “Companies Lack Sound Search Engine Strategies”, [http://cyberatlas.internet.com/markets/advertising/article/0,1323,5941\\_884131,00.html](http://cyberatlas.internet.com/markets/advertising/article/0,1323,5941_884131,00.html)

possible that user will click on link to you. To increase your chance to be found, you should be ranked high for particular phrases, which describe your business.

According to the data culled from StatMarket - website optimization service, significance of search engines is growing, comparing same period of time in 2002 and 2003<sup>3</sup>:

Table 1. Global Internet Usage		
Referral Type	As of March 2003	As March 2002
Direct Navigation	65.48%	50.12%
Web Links	21.04%	42.60%
Search Engines	13.46%	7.18%
Source: StatMarket		

But there are some facts, which can increase importance of search engines. First, people remember your web page address, because they have found it ones in search engines. People are looking for something in their work, remember your address, and next time go directly to your web service (it is counted as direct navigation not as search engine usage in table above). Second, web links often mean banners and a similar type of addresses. Such a way of advertisement is sometimes unavailable for small businesses, mostly because it works for short period of time (duration of advertise campaign) and is expensive (comparing to results, which will be shown further in text). If you offer specific products on business to business market, sometimes it could be difficult to find good web service with a lot of visitors potentially interested in your offer, to put there web links (except search engines and yellow pages).

Danny Sullivan, a well-known person of the search engine market, likened search engines to being a "reverse broadcast network." He says: "People pay tons to be on television because you can get your message out in front of millions of people: broadcasting. With search engines, millions of people are telling you \*their\* messages: what they want to buy, purchase or get information about. You don't broadcast to them; instead, it's the reverse, they broadcast to you. There's very little if anything as a marketing or information medium that I can think of that compares to this."<sup>4</sup>

To sum all these facts up: **What's the point of having a web site if you are not going to improve its ability to be found?** Search Engine Optimization is a process which have to be implemented in your e-business. How it is defined?

- SEO – Search Engine Optimization (or *Web Positioning* ) can be defined as getting a company's web site listed at the top of the search results of search engines and media directories, using selected keywords.<sup>5</sup>
- The goal of search engine optimization is to expose a site's quality content to search engines. In order to do this, the process must ensure that the site's content includes relevant information consistent with how people search for it - above all else, that is the real challenge of SEO<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Brian Morrissey , "Search Guiding More Web Activity",  
[http://cyberatlas.internet.com/big\\_picture/traffic\\_patterns/article/0,,5931\\_2109221,00.html](http://cyberatlas.internet.com/big_picture/traffic_patterns/article/0,,5931_2109221,00.html)

<sup>4</sup> [www.searchengineblog.com](http://www.searchengineblog.com), "Ten Questions with: Danny Sullivan",  
[http://www.searchengineblog.com/interviews/interview\\_danny\\_sullivan.htm](http://www.searchengineblog.com/interviews/interview_danny_sullivan.htm)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.netbooster.co.uk/>

<sup>6</sup> Fredrick Marckini, Founder & CEO of <http://www.iprospect.com/> - The State of Search Engine Optimization - Part II - <http://www.avantmarketer.com/fredrickmarckini2.shtml>

- Web positioning, in great simplification, means support to the website to make it easier to be found by the person, who our web site is addressed to. But simultaneously it is very important for the web site to provide the exact information requested by the user. Otherwise, our opinion about the quality of website is becoming worse, and also confidence to the search engine, which provided wrong source of information, considerably declines<sup>7</sup>.
- search engine optimization, search engine positioning and web positioning essentially mean the exact same thing - the art and science of increasing a web site's visibility in the major search engines and directories across a strategically defined list of keyword phrases that relate to products, services, or information offered on your web site. Search engine positioning is, in reality, search engine marketing. In a world where search properties are changing, your site is changing and your business goals are changing, search engine positioning is an ongoing, iterative process. It is the use of marketing techniques, translated through technology, to capitalize on the behavior of your potential customers.<sup>8</sup>

Search engine optimization is a process (not a project) and has broad meaning. It involves cooperation of people with various tasks, what will be shown further in text.

A report from iProspect<sup>9</sup> reveals that more than half (56.6 percent) of Internet users abandon their searches after the first two pages and with more than three-quarters of Internet users relying on search engines, the first page could be critical. This shows the role of web positioning and a good position of the site in search engines. Big competition for one key word doesn't mean that we have to abandon this kind of advertising. On the contrary, we have to find different words, better describing the site or focus on paid advertising in search engines and its strategy.

## 2. SEARCH ENGINE - POLISH AND WORLD'S MARKET

How big is population of Internet, population of e-business potential clients? According to Nielsen//NetRatings<sup>10</sup> Worldwide Internet Population 2002 is 580 million. Projection for 2004 is 709.1 million (eMarketer researches) or even 945 million (Computer Industry Almanac researches). Some of these 580 million spend 47.98 billions dollars in on-line purchasing in 2002 (34 % growth comparing to 2001). Internet also affected USD 232 billion in offline spending in 2002 - excluding automobiles, prescription drugs, financial services, and travel) - and will grow to USD 573 billion by 2007<sup>11</sup>.

As it was shown in first chapter, 85% of Internet users use search engines to find solutions and vendors. It means 493 million users in 2002. Which search engines do they use?

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<sup>7</sup> [www.netpr.pl](http://www.netpr.pl)

<sup>8</sup> <http://iprospect.com/>

<sup>9</sup> Robyn Greenspan „Search Engine Usage Ranks High”

[http://cyberatlas.internet.com/markets/advertising/article/0,1323,5941\\_1500821,00.html](http://cyberatlas.internet.com/markets/advertising/article/0,1323,5941_1500821,00.html)

<sup>10</sup> CyberAtlas staff, “Population Explosion!”, May 2003,

[http://cyberatlas.internet.com/big\\_picture/geographics/article/0,1323,5911\\_151151,00.html](http://cyberatlas.internet.com/big_picture/geographics/article/0,1323,5911_151151,00.html)

<sup>11</sup> Robyn Greenspan, “2002 E-Commerce Holiday Wrap-Up”. January 2003

[http://cyberatlas.internet.com/markets/retailing/article/0,,6061\\_1563551,00.html](http://cyberatlas.internet.com/markets/retailing/article/0,,6061_1563551,00.html)

Table 2. Search Engine Global Usage Share	
Google	54.7%
Yahoo	22.1%
MSN Search	9.5%
AOL Search	3.7%
Terra Lycos	2.8%
Altavista	2.5%
Askjeeves	1.5%
Source: OneStat (www.onestat.com), January 2003	

If we know that Google conducts more than 200 million searches per day, we can assume that every day search engines conduct approximately 400 millions searches. It means 0,68 search for every Internet user per day (400 million searches / 580 million Internet Users).

And what about Poland? Polish population of Internet is about 6,4 million users in 2002<sup>12</sup>. And here are search engines they use:

Table 3. Search Engine Polish Usage Share	
Google	34.0%
Onet	31.2%
Wirtualna Polska	25.6%
Szukacz.pl	2.3%
MSN Search	2.1%
Interia	2.0%
Source: Gemius StatCentral, April 2003 http://www.ranking.pl/rank.php?stat=domeny10PL	

As Wirtualna Polska ([www.wp.pl](http://www.wp.pl)) states: “We conduct approximately 2 million searches per day. We observe increase of searches:

2001-2000 – approx. 100%

2002-2001 - approx. 100%

2003-2002 - approx. 67% (first 4 months of 2003)”<sup>13</sup>

According to data from table 3, Wirtualna Polska share is approx. 25%. We can assume that searches made by Polish users amount to 8 millions every day (0.8 search for every Internet user per day) in 2003.

All these data lead us to conclusion: the search engine market is big and cannot be ignored in the e-business strategy. Even if our business is placed only on the Polish market, a share of Google in search engine Polish usage alert us that we have to take under consideration web page optimization for world’s search engines.

### 3. TRIANGLE OF E-BUSINESS SUCCESS

At the very beginning, search engines were quite primitive and Internet in general wasn’t a big marketplace. It was easy to create a web page and optimize it for particular word or phrase. Search engines were based on simple algorithms, which analyzed only fields

<sup>12</sup> op. cit.

<sup>13</sup> Source: [www.wp.pl](http://www.wp.pl), own elaboration.

describing the site. Therefore, optimization of web site boiled to 5 minute long operation. But since number of web pages had been growing and growing, search engines had to be improved to provide relevant results. At the moment search algorithms are very sophisticated and use a lots of factors to estimate quality of web pages.

Here are main factors of search engines<sup>14</sup>:

- content of page, keywords density - most search engines index the full text of each page, so it's vital to place keywords throughout your text. If you provide valuable content, which describe in particular the topic and is present on many different pages, your chances to be high ranked are bigger. The content is the most important thing.
- link popularity –search engine counting the number of inbound links to a web site. Links from sites with high link popularity will have more weight in a search engine algorithm than links from unpopular sites. In addition, links from sites with complimentary content count as more than links from sites that have no relevance.
- html code - use of meta description and keyword tags on every page, keyword reach html title and code;
- design - website should be fast downloaded, pleasant and easy to navigate. Search engine can not read text from graphics or Flash presentation, so page should be reach in ordinary text;
- spamming techniques – search engines are able to detect spam, which is not real page value. Examples of spam: invisible text, excessive repetition of keywords, irrelevant keywords in the title. If a search engine detects spamming techniques on page, this page can be banned and removed from index.

Search engines are a wonderful source of traffic on the web page, but the traffic is meaningless if a visitor isn't well served after arriving at a site. Content of page than is real value. Second thing is, how this visits are translating into increase income of our e-business.

Moreover, we have to know, how do people search. Fredrick Marskini says: “We work with a major computer manufacturer who told us that they refused to use the words ‘laptop’ on their web site. They preferred ‘notebook’. That's all well and good, except that many people are searching for ‘laptop computers’ and not ‘notebook computers’. Are you really willing to target just a portion of your audience or would you like it all? You can curse the wind or adjust your sails- but with thousands of qualified potential customers at stake, I say adjust your sails”<sup>15</sup>.

An important thing is to be aware that people change the way of searching using not only one keyword, but more complicated phrases. This process is noticed by world’s search services, also in Polish services. As Wirtualna Polska ([www.wp.pl](http://www.wp.pl)) states: “We observe increase of more than one word search inquiries regarding to one word ones”<sup>16</sup>. Sometimes the task of SEO is analyze, what is more profitable: buying of paid results (Pay Per Click) for a single word or looking for a chance in web optimization for more complicated phrases, in a detail describing what your site offers.

Let’s imagine that we own a firm dealing with a real estate in Poznan and we are highly ranked in search engines for the word “houses”. We may certainly get lots of traffic from that "great" ranking with “houses” keyword. But how many of the people who type "houses" into the search engines are actually searching for houses in Poznan? Chances are, probably not too big. To be aimed at the widest net in this manner is not usually the best way to approach things. People can be disappointed when looking for the general information

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<sup>14</sup> Own research on the basis of freelance studio data, [www.epokaY.net](http://www.epokaY.net)

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.avantmarketer.com/fredrickmarckini2.shtml> - The State of Search Engine Optimization - Part II

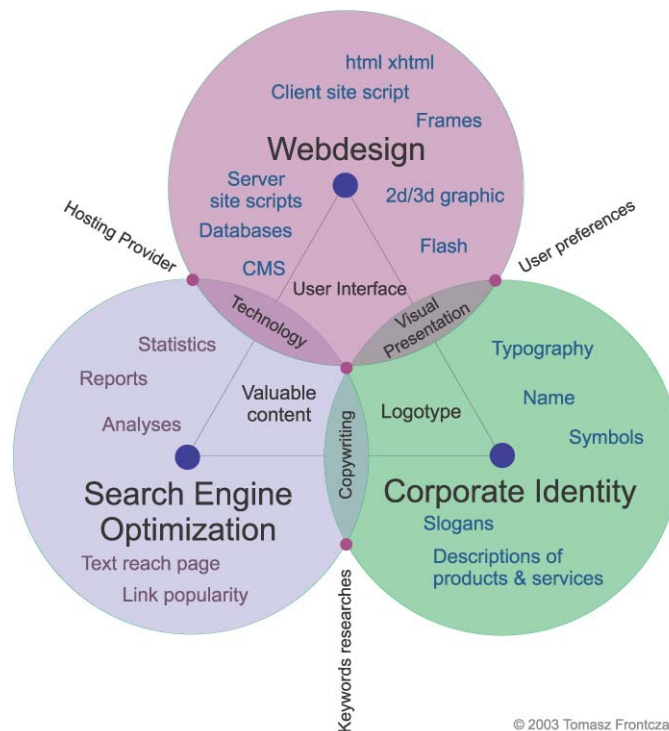
<sup>16</sup> Source: [www.wp.pl](http://www.wp.pl), own elaboration.

about house building they get, redirected by search engine, to your site with perfect information about a real estate but useless for them. These visits don't generate any profits and can even make additional costs for bigger usage of data bandwidth of your Internet Service Provider.

All above shows that search engine optimization is not really about technically based site optimization tactics or methods. Search engine optimization is about marketing - about discovering exactly how various segments of your audience search for your services or products. It is even more than marketing, because working on it, various people from different departments and professions have to cooperate and work simultaneously and agree to a compromise. This is also because much of the technology - such as Frames and Flash - used to build sites actually creates barriers to visibility. We cannot be focused on technology without also fully understanding the marketing challenges and objectives. Since the entire industry and Internet is moving so fast, the firm must be constantly looking to the future and anticipating it through ongoing research. This focus on both achieving top results for clients and developing additional intellectual capital is the recipe for long-term success.

The following schema shows the idea of complex approach to e-business as synchronized actions on three different levels: webdesign, search engine optimization and corporate identity<sup>17</sup>.

**Scheme 1 Triangle of e-business success.**



**Webdesign** is a composition of two aspects: visible by the client (*client site*): user interface and graphics of web site, and invisible for him (*server site*) – software and *technology* used to create the site. But to make functional and easy in navigation web site providing exact information, first *user preferences* must be known – what information is user

<sup>17</sup> conception made by Tomasz Frontczak

expecting and what kind of navigation is best for him. The answer for those preferences is *visual presentation*: the result of webmaster's work in cooperation with people responsible for **corporate identity** (logotype, typography).

Corporate identity is also work with a word to provide description of offered products and services, so *copywriting*, creation of the company's identity by the name, slogans etc. Copywriting is common to **corporate identity** and **search engine optimization**. To do copywriting in proper way, first we need to conduct *keywords researches*. We find out what are the potential keywords a client will use searching for us by search engines. So preparation of web site reach in text with *valuable content* is the middle of success.

Within a framework of our work with **search engine optimization** we have also to take care about our *link popularity*, the number of links to our site from other sites. The more quality links there are, the easier we are to be find and also we are better seen in search engines.

To verify if our work is successful, we need to check all the statistics, analyses, reports. They will also help make improvements of the web page.

Building the statistics, which is determined by available *technology*, provided by *hosting (Internet Service) provider*. By technology we also understand *server site* of webdesign: databases, server site scripts or CMS<sup>18</sup>, as was shown above.

The interdependence of three levels: webdesign, corporate identity and search engine optimization, the interdependence of their interconnects: visual presentation, copywriting and technology and interdependence of external influences: user preferences, keyword researches and hosting providers, form the triangle of complex approach to e-business.

A lot of people with a different aims are involved in continuous, synchronized actions to provide to the customer easy to find, precise and satisfying information about offered products and services so to make your e-business successful.

Fredrick Marckini says: **“The biggest strategic errors come from companies thinking that search engine optimization is a project instead of a process. Search engine optimization is an *iterative, ongoing* process, and it must be performed on an *ongoing* basis”**.

## Conclusions:

The role of search engine in Internet marketing is increasing annually and quickly is becoming the most important part. Search Engine Optimization is a process, which makes possible to get profits from search engine. This process can not be run separately. There is interdependence of three levels: webdesign, corporate identity and search engine optimization.

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<sup>18</sup> Content Management System allows company employees without webdesing skills to publish new content to their websites and update it.

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