

The Best Website For Your Small Business:

SEO GUIDE

Search Engine Optimisation

The step by step guide to
optimising your site using
The Toolkit



The Best Website For Your Small Business:

Search Engine Optimisation Using the Toolkit

Getting Started

Search Engine Optimisation is a bit of an enigma and how search engines rank sites is a closely guarded secret. It's very difficult to get your site to number one in the listings.

That said, this guide is based on our experience of what works and guidelines accepted across the internet on improving your website ranking. A lot of it we've learnt and applied from working on our own website.

These days the majority of websites are built around a content management system or CMS, allowing the website author to update their website instantly and continuously. This is great news for search engines as websites with a CMS can be constantly changed to improve their search engine rankings. Through this guide we make reference to the "Toolkit", our purpose built CMS, which can make all the necessary changes to a website to improve it's ranking.

You're going to have to work hard to optimise your site for search engines. You may not see results for months, and you're going to want to monitor your results in case you need to adjust them further. All websites need marketing if they're going to be successful, and SEO is good for this. That doesn't make it easy!

The number one thing you have to do is make sure your site content is focused on the keywords you wish to rank highly on in search engine result pages. It's going to take a bit of time but with the Toolkit you have everything you need to get started. We're going to use the site

<http://www.nc-painting-contractors.co.uk> as an example to show you how you can use the Toolkit to optimise your website, step by step.

If you want more specialist help, please search online for SEO consultants or for SEO Articles. Sometimes it's best to turn to the experts, especially if you're looking for the number one spot in a very competitive market.

It's much easier to do it yourself if you've identified what makes you unique. You can then focus on specific and niche or local keywords.

One last thing. We've already said that it's going to take a bit of time to optimise your site. It's also going to take a bit of time before you see results. Search Engine Optimisation is something in which you need to invest time and effort. No one really know how often a search engine will visit your site, we can't tell you how long it will be till your hard work pays off. **But it will pay off.**

Some search engines also seem to reward site that have been around longer than others, as that makes your site seem more credible, and there is nothing like good old fashioned marketing to support your credibility. Make sure your website address is on all of your other publicity material, (headed paper, business cards, van etc..), that it's on any directory listings and do consider some other form of online advertising, either banner ads or Pay Per Click like Google Ad words.

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The Beginning

So, you have a website. You're going to want two things for it:

It gets listed on major search engines

It has a high ranking for your chosen keywords.

To achieve this we need to know what the search engines are looking for. They look for relevance and consistency throughout your site. Here's where they look:

Your URL, otherwise known as the website address:

<http://www.nc-painting-contractors.co.uk/>

Your HTML Page Title, in our example case:

"Portstewart Painting & Decorating Contractor: Northern Ireland Painting & Decorating Contractors"

Your Meta data keywords in the HTML

Your Meta description

The keywords phrases in your content including headings/titles

Links on your pages, such as for pages on your site, anchors to points in your text, and other sites.

Images on your page, such as the name of the image, the caption of the image, and the link on the image.

Referral links. These are links on other websites that point to your site.

Now you can use the Toolkit to make sure that all of the first seven bullet points are consistent, relevant and relate to the contents of the rest of your site.

Getting other websites to link to yours is harder, and you can't control that using the Toolkit, (though we wish you could!), but still achievable.

Beware! Whilst the search engines read your sites mechanically, they are still very clever about doing so. They reward sites that encourage genuine links to relevant sites, and black list sites that are involved in link spamming and link farming.

As we said before, nothing in this guide can guarantee you search results as no one knows for sure how the search engines rank sites, but it is based on solid results that we have had from trying to optimise our own site. So let's Go!

Keywords

Keywords are the cornerstone of all your SEO endeavours. Search engines look for consistency and relevancy of keywords in the different parts of your site, so you better make sure they're consistent!

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What's a keyword?

Basically, they're the words or phrases your website should appear under when someone searches using a search engine. What search terms do you want your site to appear under? How would people describe what your business does in one or two words?

The more specific you can be the better. The more specific words or phrases that match what you offer will drive more traffic to your website. Looking at our example site 'Noel A. Campbell Painting and Decorating Contractor', there are a number of keywords that could work to describe the business. For each of these words or phrases, I've given you how many search results are returned by Google.com. This gives you a good idea of the competitiveness of each term.

Painting - 149 million
Decorating - 426 million
Painting and decorating - 1.4 million
Decorating contractor - 264, 000
Painting contractor - 1.21 million

Now these are all pretty huge numbers aren't they? If you use general keywords like this, the chances of your site being noticed amongst all these results are pretty slim!

Using 2 or 3 words phrases improves your chances as they will attract fewer companies, and you can tailor them to be really specific to your business. Let's try a few more specific phrases.

Painting and decorating Northern Ireland - 115,000
Decorating contractor Northern Ireland - 64,600
Painting and decorating Portstewart - 5700
Painting and decorating Antrim - 380,000
Decorating contractor Antrim - 7650

Phrases like this have fewer results because they're more focused and less competitive, meaning our site would be more likely to score highly under these keywords. Therefore in this example we'll focus on these more detailed keywords in the optimisation process.

How many Keywords?

Now that depends on who you talk to! Some people say 5 really focused keyword phrases; others say 15 - 20 is best. We've used 11 on our example site. If there's anything unique or special about your business, like a brand name, or a distinctive product, this should be included in your keywords.

Keywords also need to vary from page to page, reflecting the content of that page, but still within your overall theme of keywords. On a page on the example site about painting services, we focused on keywords that related to the different services offered by the company, but still within the theme of painting and decorating.

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Now you know a bit more about keywords, you need to sit down and work out groups of keywords and keyword phrases for each of the pages on your site. Don't worry if you're not 100% sure about them. You can easily change them in the future using the Toolkit. The phrases need to summaries of the content of the page in as few words as possible.

Google have a handy tool you can use to generate keywords for you:

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

Get Your Site Listed on Search Engines

Your keywords are now ready for you to use to optimise your site. However the first challenge you need to overcome is getting your site listed with the search engines in the first place! There are a few ways to help speed the search engines along in listing your site as it can take 3 - 6 months for them to find you naturally.

Google uses inbound links to assess how important your site is, and to find out the subject of your site. It looks at how many sites link to yours, and what keywords they use in the links that point to you. The quality of the site linking to you is also used in their calculations. Google assigns each page a page rank based on all these qualities. If high ranking sites link to yours it's known as a valuable link that also increases your page rank.

You can find out more about this here:

<http://www.google.com/technology/>

So how do you get a page rank for your site? Well you need to get it indexed by the search engines so it can be listed. This simply means that the search engines need to find your site.

There are two ways to help search engines find your site. You can submit the website address, (URL) directly to the search engines, or allow links from other sites to build up, gradually pointing the search engines to your site. No one is really sure which works better, so we advise doing both.

Let's start by submitting the site to the search engines directly. Search engines handily give us "Add URL " pages where you can tell them about your site.

Google - <http://www.google.com/addurl/?continue=/addurl>

Yahoo - <http://search.yahoo.com/info/submit.html>

MSN - <http://search.msn.com.sg/docs/submit.aspx>

Now for inbound links. Even one high quality link from another site that has your keywords in its text can alert the search engines to your site. You definitely want some of those! So here's how you go about getting some inbound links:

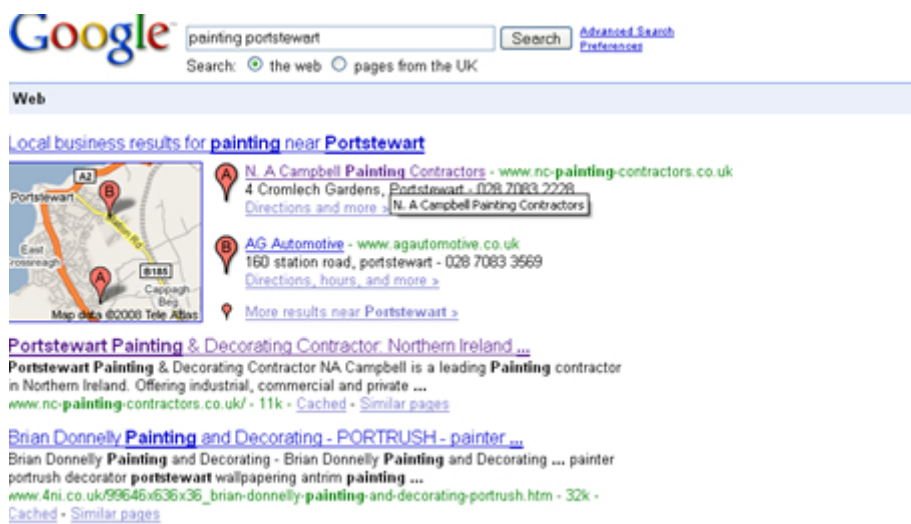
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- Add your site to relevant local directories. You can try business based directories or subject/interest based directories. It's important that you check them out before you sign up as things like link farms are considered really disreputable. Here's a few general directories we've come across:
 - http://www.smilelocal.com/get_listed.php/
 - <http://www.zettai.net/Add/>
 - <https://www.touchtarget.com/product/home/>
- Write articles on your site on your specialist area full of specific and unique keywords. You're going to have a lot of knowledge about your business area. If what you write is really relevant advice for your customers or relevant industry information for people in the same market, you can then submit it to sites that need articles in return for links to your site. You can also post these articles on How - To sites if relevant, or in a blog format.
- Contact the owners of similar sized websites in the same industry as yourself offering to link to their site if they link to yours. This is called reciprocal linking, and really pays off, especially for small local based businesses. Our example site could for example contact decorators in other parts of Northern Ireland outside of their local area.

Local Business Results

Add your business and your site to Google Local Business. This is Google's own directory of businesses that is linked to Google Maps, and these listings appear at the top of Google search results.

<https://www.google.com/local/add/>



You can also add your site to the Yahoo Local Listings too.

<http://yahoo.infoservegroup.com/business-owner-form.html>

After following these steps you will hopefully be picked up by the search engines, and the longer your site is around, the better it will do. Search engines treat older sites as having more authority.

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Use the Toolkit to Optimise your Site

Got your site keywords to hand? Great! Now we can use these to optimise your site for search engines using the special features built into the Toolkit. They make sure that these keywords are used appropriately and consistently to help search engines to find the information. It makes no sense to just dump a list of keywords on your site in any old order as this is frowned on by the search engines. Let's use the Toolkit to do this properly!

Remember to work out keywords for each page of your site and more general ones for your site overall.

At the beginning of this document we gave you a list of places where search engines look for information about your site. We're going to go through it and show you how the Toolkit can help you make sure these are all optimised for search engines. Here it is again:

1. Your URL, otherwise known as the website address e.g <http://www.nc-painting-contractors.co.uk/>
2. Your HTML Page Title, in our example case: "Portstewart Painting & Decorating Contractor: Northern Ireland Painting & Decorating Contractors"4.
3. Your Meta data keywords
4. Your Meta description
5. The keywords in your content including headings/titles
6. Links on your pages, such as for pages on your site, anchors to points in your text, and other sites.
7. Images on your page, such as the name of the image file, the caption of the image, and the link set on the image.
8. Referral links. These are links on other websites that point to your site.

1. The URL of Your Site

Make sure your actual main URL is relevant and related to your keywords. Our example site, <http://www.nc-painting-contractors.co.uk/>, uses the two main keywords that correlate with the business, Painting Contractors.

If yours doesn't, don't worry. We can register other domain names for you. You may want to register the different suffixes for your domain name and also mis-spellings and variations. This ensures that your competitors cannot buy your domain names. If a lot of your business is region specific you might want to register a domain that includes the region. For instance, our example site might consider:

<http://www.decoratingnorthernireland.co.uk>

Or if you're a plumber in York you could see if www.plumbinginyorkshire.co.uk was available.

To find out more about alternate domains, please visit the following article on domain names on Toolkit Support: <http://www.toolkitsupport.co.uk/domainnameregistrations>

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You can also add keywords to the URL of each individual page on your site. This is known as adding page aliases. Let's return to our example site:

The actual URL for the homepage is

<http://www.nc-painting-contractors.co.uk/portstewartpaintingcontractor>

As you can see, there are three keywords in the page alias, Portstewart Painting Contractor. Having a location gives a local focus to your keywords which is useful for SEO. Here are some other examples of page aliases from the example site:

<http://www.nc-painting-contractors.co.uk/portrushpainter>

<http://www.nc-painting-contractors.co.uk/paintingquote>

<http://www.nc-painting-contractors.co.uk/colerainepaintingbusiness>

<http://www.nc-painting-contractors.co.uk/antrimpaintingcompany>

The Toolkit has the facility to allow page aliases to be added really easily. You can find out more here:

<http://www.toolkitsupport.co.uk/addpagealias>

Search Engine Options

Page Title:

Hide Page Title:

Page Alias:

Page Keywords:

Page Description:

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2. The HTML Page Title

Your page titles also need to include relevant keywords. Turning to our example site, you can see that the overall title of the site is full of keywords:

“Northern Ireland Painting & Decorating Contractors”

Each page title is then keyword rich too:

“Portstewart Painting & Decorating Contractor”

“Coleraine Painting & Decorating Company”

Choose titles that succinctly describe your pages and include your main keywords. The Toolkit gives you control over both the main site page title and the individual page titles. They display like so “Individual Page Title: Main Site Title”

You can find out more on editing page titles here:

<http://www.toolkitsupport.co.uk/editpagetitle>

Search Engine Options

Page Title:

Hide Page Title:

Page Alias:

Page Keywords:

Page Description:

and editing your website browser title here:

<http://www.toolkitsupport.co.uk/editbrowsertitle>

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Search Engines Help

Site Information

Website Browser Title:

Meta Keywords:

Meta Description:

Google & Yahoo Verification
Meta Tag Code:

3. Meta Tags

These are keywords that are hidden in the HTML code of your website and can only be read by search engines. They give the search engines an idea about the subject of your site and its pages. You should make sure that the both the main site meta data and the individual pages have similar meta tags to keep everything consistent. Here's the Meta data from our example site:

“painting decorating,decorating contractor,painting decorating contractor,painting decorating contractors,portstewart painting decorating,decorating contractor northern ireland, industrial decorating services”

You can add Meta Tags using the Toolkit.

Here's where you can find out about adding default meta data for your whole site:

<http://www.toolkitsupport.co.uk/adddefaultmeta>

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[Help](#)

Site Information

Website Browser Title:

Meta Keywords:

Meta Description:

[Update your Google and Yahoo sitemap](#)

Google & Yahoo Verification
Meta Tag Code:

Save Changes

Then visit this link to find out how to add meta data for individual pages:

<http://www.toolkitsupport.co.uk/addpagemetatags>

Search Engine Options

Page Title:

Hide Page Title:

Page Alias:

Page Keywords:

Page Description:

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4. Meta Data Description

This is the short description of your site for the search engines. It's the summary that appears under a site name in a listing of search results. Make sure yours is keyword rich and relevant to your business.

The Meta Data Description for our example site is:

“Portstewart Painting & Decorating Contractor N.A Campbell is a leading Painting contractor in Northern Ireland. Offering industrial, commercial and private painting and decorating services.”

Site Information

Website Browser Title:

Meta Keywords:

Meta Description:

Google & Yahoo Verification
Meta Tag Code:

Add a Meta Data description to your Toolkit site:

<http://www.toolkitsupport.co.uk/addpagemetadesc>

5. Keyword Content

Your website content is your number one friend when it comes to SEO. As it's all in HTML code that makes up your website, search engines can view and use it to rank your site. It makes sense then to ensure that your content is keyword rich.

Don't just stick a huge paragraph that lists your keywords on the site as once a search engine has found you, actual people will be reading it! Make sure your text content makes sense to humans whilst including your keywords. Your text needs to be relevant, and fit with the message of the page. Let's look at this in more detail;

On the example site homepage there is the text: “Northern Ireland painter and decorating firm N.A Campbell” and on the Painting Projects page there is the text “[N.A. Campbell Painting Contractors](#) have undertaken...” Both of these use the keywords phrase “N.A. Campbell” but in a way that is understandable for readers of the page.

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To be considered a trustworthy and important site by Google, you need to provide relevant information about your industry, 'Industry news' so to speak. Articles on the latest events in your sector will be full of useful keywords from an SEO perspective, and may generate inbound links if they're picked up by other sites as being useful. You can try the same thing by writing how - to articles or guides on products and services if you're in a slower paced sector. For example, a firm of solicitors could write an article on why making a will is important and how to go about it. This would not only be useful to their existing and prospective customers, it provides a very nice selling opportunity to link to their will writing service.

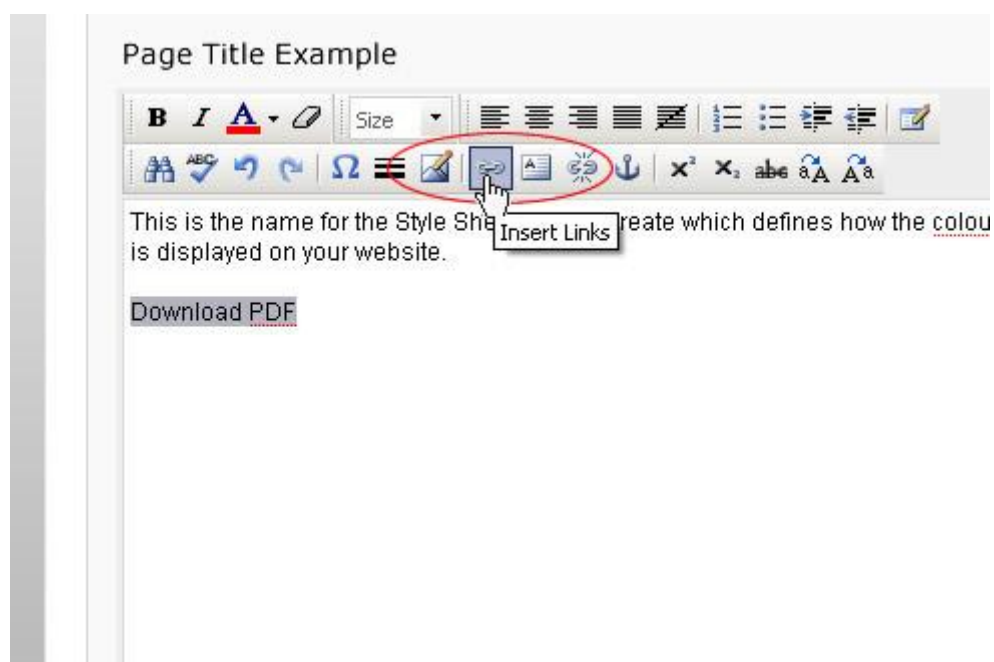
Keeping your site content updated couldn't be easier with the Toolkit. Here's a guide on how to edit a page:

<http://www.toolkitsupport.co.uk/editpage>

6. Links in your pages

Every link on your page can be read by the search engines too, so it's good if the text that is attached to these links is based on your keywords too. On the example site, rather than just having a link to 'Services' the page is called 'Painting Services' and the link in the menu bar is also called 'Painting Services'. The same goes for the Painting Affiliations page, which is linked to in a side bar. Rather than just saying "Click here to read more" it says "[N. A. Campbell are members of all the leading Painting & Decorating Associations...](#)" See how that uses more keywords?

You can also link keywords in your text to relevant pages on your site. It's good to have a link to the homepage on all other pages. Don't go overboard with the internal links as more than 15 - 20 will make search engines think you're a link spammer, but 3 -4 links on each page that point to other pages on your website with keyword based text should be enough.



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Add links to a site using the Toolkit;

Add links to a page: <http://www.toolkitsupport.co.uk/linktopageinpage>

Add links to the menu: <http://www.toolkitsupport.co.uk/addmenu>

Add links to a sidebar: <http://www.toolkitsupport.co.uk/addlinktopageinsidebar>

7. Images

Search engines can't really see images on your website. They just see the code that's used to display the image. You can make sure that images count towards your SEO by adding alternative text to your images, so that when a search engine sees an image it has a textual description of the image. It makes sense to make sure that the alternative text includes some keywords.

It's also good SEO practice to make sure that you don't put any useful text in images or flash animations as search engines can't see the content of those visual elements. It's no good if the only place your full business appears in banner image on your homepage. Replicate any text that's in banners, image or flash animations else where on your site as actually text.

You can add captions to your images using the Toolkit. Here's how:

<http://www.toolkitsupport.co.uk/addaltext>

8. Referral Links

Referral links help get your site listed in the first place, but they are also a good tool to develop the relevancy of your keywords and keep your site high in the rankings. It's always worth enquiring if other site owners in related fields could link back to your site and include some of your keywords in the link text. Not everyone will do this and its best not to pester people too much, but if you already have a connection with another site manager, it's worth a try.

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Conclusion

So this is the end! We said at the beginning that SEO is a bit of an enigma and this guide is by no means the be all and end all. Hopefully it will provide you with some useful tips. Remember that optimizing your site takes time and won't show instant results, but if you're willing to put the effort in, your site will eventually show up!

Finally to prove to you that it actually works here are the rankings of our example site:

<http://www.nc-painting-contractors.co.uk>;

“Painting Contractors Northern Ireland” - No. 1 on Google.com

“Painting Contractors Northern Ireland” - No. 1 on Yahoo.co.uk

“Painting Northern Ireland” - No. 1 on Google.com

“Painting Northern Ireland” - No. 1 on Yahoo.co.uk

“Portstewart Painter” -No. 1 on Google.com

“Portstewart Painter” - No. 1 on Yahoo.co.uk

Positions as of 18/10/2008

“Thanks for reading and good luck!”

www.toolkitwebsites.co.uk

