

8 Steps to Getting Top Search Engine Rankings

There's no "magic bullet" that you can use to get to the top page of Google or any major search engine; it simply takes time and persistence. Here is a simple 8 step program that anyone can follow to get to top search engine rankings, with or without an advertising budget.

Obviously, you can't just place a collection of keywords you would like to target in your meta tags and then expect a number 1 ranking for your site on Google. People have tried nearly all the tricks in nearly all the books, and Google gets wise to 'blackhat' SEOers. The ultimate punishment is being dropped all together from Google's index - and it doesn't take a great deal for them to do so, especially if you aren't already well established. The best way to get good rankings in any search engine that is worth being ranked on is by providing *quality, optimized content*, and being patient. If your site contains good content, then search engines will pick up on this, and your rankings will start to rise.

Our 8 step program is based on three points of approach

- Content
- Keywords
- Links

1. Content

Web sites that are content rich and provide visitors with lots of information tend to do better on the search engines than barebones web sites. You can write your own content, hire a writer to help you with your content, or republish articles from others (with the authors permission, of course). NACHI (www.nachi.org) makes dozens of articles available for free for its members to use on their websites, and there are several independent authors who are willing to share their copyrighted materials for republication on your website as long as you give credit where credit is due.

2. Keywords

Keywords are part of your content, but are contained in a different part of your website (the meta tags). Keywords and keyphrases are the words that you most want visitors to be able to find your site on when these phrases are typed into a search engine like Google. Be specific about the keywords you are targeting, and be sure to integrate those keywords throughout your website content by putting them in your meta tags, your content, your link text and images. If you need help developing your keywords/keyphrases, look at what your competitors are using, or try services like Wordtracker (<http://www.wordtracker.com>) or Google Adwords to find the right keywords for your site.

3. Links

No man is an island. On the world wide web, websites that are isolated (acting as islands rather than participating in the web by linking with other websites) do not do as well on Google and other major search engines as the sites that participate in the web by linking

out to other sites and having other sites linking to them. Linking within your own industry is generally the best idea, though high ranking web sites outside your industry can also contribute to your website relevance. For the best results, make sure your link titles are relevant to your targeted keywords.

8 Step Program

Step 1 – Planning (week 1)

- Identify your target search engines (the ones you most want to be well indexed on). Most people target Google as the Big Kahuna of all search engines, but you may also want to be indexed on MSN, Yahoo, etc.
- Identify the top 3-5 keyphrases that you want to be found on. Examples of this would be “Connecticut home inspector” or “Hartford home inspection” or “CT certified mold inspector”
- Identify your budget for advertising and search engine optimization – if you do have a budget to spend, consider pricing out the cost of paid placement and PPC (Pay Per Click) programs. See sections on paid placement and PPC in our Advanced Strategies article for more information.

Step 2 – Preparation (week 1)

- Identify your keywords and keyphrases. Here, you should be focusing on 10-30 keyphrases that you will be integrating into your metatags and content.
- Check out your competition to see who is ahead of you on Google. Look at their content, meta tags and who they are linking to, as these are all factors which influence search engine rankings.
- Prepare your links program by writing your website title, description and URL information. I also find it useful to draft a couple of canned emails – one to request a reciprocal link and another to confirm or reject a link exchange.
- Check your website’s current Google Page Rank (<http://toolbar.google.com>) and also check your site’s current rankings on Google and other search engines for your top 3 targeted keyphrases.

Step 3 – Code Review/ Code Changes (week 1)

- Build your metatags and title tags in your html.
- Deep link content within your site and outside your site to other relevant resources.
- Make your site relevant to your area and to home inspection.
- Make your site easy to navigate. If you have javascript or flash based navigation, consider changing to plain html as searchbots can follow it better.
- Clean up your code to be sure your site is viewable to the search engines. See http://www.homeinspectionwebsite.com/seo_tools.php for a tool which will show you what a search engine sees when they visit your website.
- Add a site map in plain html that links to every page on your website. Use your sitemap to emphasize relevant keywords.
- Utilize your image alt tags to embed additional keywords into your site.

- Beef up your content. Well-written pages that are keyword rich (but not too many keywords) will help you get the rankings you want. You should check your keyword density using a free density checker like the one we offer on www.homeinspectionwebsite.com/seo_tools.php.

Step 4 – Initial submission (week 2)

You can submit your site to the search engines yourself, or hire a company to do this for you. The cost for search engine submission ranges from free to several hundred dollars. Beware of any company that guarantees results, as they may be engaging in search engine manipulation, which can get your site banned from Google and other search engines.

Here are some companies that do free and low-cost search engine submissions. Important – do not use multiple services to submit your site, as this is construed by the search engines as spamming and may get your site permanently banned.

- **Add Me** (<http://www.addme.com/submission.htm>) - free submission to 14 search engines, paid submission for \$49.95
- **AddPro** (<http://www.addpro.com>) - free submission to 18 search engines, paid submission to 120 engines for \$49.95
- **Search Engine Submission Biz** (<http://www.searchenginesubmission.biz/>) - free submission to 34 directories, paid submission to 300 obscure directories for \$4.95
- **Grassfrog** (<http://www.homeinspectionwebsite.com/seo.php>) – free search engine optimization analysis and submission to 20 search engines, paid submissions to over 800 websites for \$25.

Here are some links you can use if you would like to submit your site yourself to the search engines:

- Google <http://www.google.com/addurl.html>
- Alta Vista <http://www.altavista.com/addurl/default> (Yahoo ID/login required)
- Yahoo Search: <https://siteexplorer.search.yahoo.com/submit>
- MSN: <http://submitit.bcentral.com/msnsubmit.htm>
- Scrub the web: <http://www.scrubtheweb.com/addurl.html>
- Walhello <http://www.walhello.com/addlinkgl.html>
- ExactSeek <http://new.exactseek.com/add.html>
- Infotiger: <http://www.infotiger.com/addurl.html>
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Step 5 – Manual Submissions (week 3)

Manually submit your site to DMOZ and other human edited directories. To get listed on these directories, be sure you have value-added content and that you are submitting to the correct category. Some of these sites offer expedited submission for a fee – in my experience this is NOT worth the money – simply follow their guidelines to get your site submitted for free instead.

- <http://dmoz.org/>

- <http://www.joeant.com/>
- <http://www.getmelinked.com/>
- <http://www.hedir.com/>
- <http://www.gamsis.com/>
- <http://www.freelinks.com/>
- <http://www.gimpsy.com/>
- <http://www.thebest25sites.com/linkex/directory/>
- <http://www.searchblitz.net/>

Manually submit to real estate and inspection directories

- Realsites.info (<http://www.realsites.info/directory/listing.php>)
- Inspection Zone
<http://www.inspectionzone.com/contribute/homeinspectors/b.507.html>
- Home Inspection.com <http://www.homeinspection.com/SubmitListing.asp>
free listing of your business, no link to your website
- http://www.homeinspectorefinder.com/list_your_home_inspection_compan1.htm
free listing of your business, no link to your website
- <http://www.propertyinspectiondirectory.com/>
- <http://www.homeinspectionmold.com/> (florida only)

Step 6 – Link Exchange (week 3)

Having links from other websites pointing to your site is good for your Google Page Rank. Search engines weigh links based on how important they consider the page that contains the link to your site - so a poorly ranked site that the engine sees as having low-quality content and not being of much use will not do anything to help your rankings, while a link from a highly ranked site that the engine considers to be of high importance will help to increase your rankings. They way they figure, if a good site is pointing to your site, then your site mustn't be so bad either (although a single link from a decent site won't automatically grant you number 1 rankings). Try to stick with link partners within your own (or related) industries. Make your link title the same as one of your top keyphrases (for example "Florida home inspector") rather than just your domain or company name.

Start your Link Exchange Program with the NACHI Link Exchange list, which you can find on <http://www.homeinspectionwebsite.com>. Realestatelinkexchange.com is also a good resource for finding high quality link partners. If you would like to exchange links outside your immediate industry, try linkmarket.net, a free link exchange service.

Step 7 – Checkpoint (week 8)

Check and review your website rankings against your top 3 keyphrases. Also, check your manual submissions to ensure your site was published.

If you're not quite where you want to be, consider updating your content to add more articles and relevant keywords, and also make appropriate changes to your metatags. Resubmit your site as you did in step 4.

Step 8 – Repeat step 7 every 8-10 weeks for 6 months. The minimum time between search engine submissions should be every 2 months – submitting more often than that can be construed as spamming the search engines and can get you banned.

Grassfrog Technologies LLC offers free search engine analysis and submission for NACHI members. Visit www.homeinspectionwebsite.com for more information.