On-Site SEO Checklist & Tips

a) Page Title tag

- The page title is what you see as the blue text in a Google listing. It almost acts as the headline for each page in search pages.
- The page title is located right at the top of your web browser. Go to your homepage and check to see what it says.
- It should be descriptive, contain keywords and should be what someone would search for if they didn't know of your company name.
- Every page on your website must have a unique page title.
- Your CMS should allow you to change the page title without affecting any other areas of the website such as the URL, navigation titles or headings.
- Avoid calling your homepage 'Home' or your about us page 'About Us'. Be creative.

b) Description tag

- The description text is what you as black text in a Google listing. It almost acts as a sub-headline for each page and lets visitors know what kind of information this page has.
- The description text is not visible on the page itself but it is in the code of each page. This text is controlled by your content management system.
- If you want to see the description tag then go to a web page and select 'view source'. Then find the tag <description>.
- Every page should have unique description text.
- Ensure the description text outlines what the page is about and contains one or two of the target keywords.

c) URL's

- Ensure URL's are clean and well organised.
- Ensure all URL's contain keywords.
- Keep them short if possible.
- Avoid using symbols, random words, codes, numbers which mean nothing to search engines or people.

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d) Header tags
- Each page should contain at least one H1 tag (header 1) and used to describe the overall page.
- Use H2 tag to describe sub-paragraphs or products descriptions.

e) Images
- Ensure all images are using ALT tags. You can see the ALT tag for an image by just hovering your mouse over a picture and waiting for the little pop up box to appear.
- Ensure ALT tags are descriptive of what that image is showing.
- ALT tags are controlled via the CMS when uploading images.

f) Internal Links
- Internal links point to other key pages within the site.
- Internal links help search engines crawl pages which are deep within the site.
- Ensure you use descriptive but relevant words to link to another page.
- Key pages are linked from the homepage, this is where site architecture is so important.

g) Sitemap
- Sitemaps help search engines understand how your website is sorted.
- A sitemap is submitted to search engines. Check with your agency to see if your sitemap has been submitted. If it has then they should be able to provide you with some data.
- Easy way to check if your website has a sitemap is to type in:
  www.yourwebsite.co.uk/sitemap.xml or
  www.yourwebsite.co.uk/sitemap_index.xml (wordpress websites)
- If you get an error page then your site doesn't have a sitemap.

h) Robots.txt
- Again, like a sitemap, this text file helps search engines understand pages which you don't want indexed, such as confirmation pages or folders.
- Easy way to check is to type into your website browser:
  www.yourwebsite.co.uk/robots.txt
- If you get an error page then your website doesn't have a robots.txt file. You could have folders, pages in search engines which you may not want in there.

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i) **Outbound links**

- Ensure you also link out from your website to other high authoritative websites such as bodies, organisations and governmental websites.

j) **Canonical Issues:**

- You should only have one version of your homepage. Duplication issues are sometimes caused due to trailing slashes or no redirects in place. The following are all duplicates of the homepage:

> *yourwebsite.co.uk*
> *www.yourwebsite.co.uk*
> *www.yourwebsite.co.uk/*
> *yourwebsite.co.uk/*
> *www.yourwebsite.co.uk/index.php*
> *www.yourwebsite.co.uk/index.html*
> *www.yourwebsite.co.uk/home*
> *www.yourwebsite.co.uk/home.asp*
> *yourwebsite.co.uk/home.asp*

- The best way to check is to type in your website into to the browser, and then delete the **www.** part and hit enter.
- If you get an error then you have a problem.
- Some website don't use the www. at the beginning, if your website doesn't then try adding www. and see what happens. If it continues to work then you will have to get your web administrators to set up a redirect to the preferred version.

Resources & Further Reading:

[Blog]Measuring brand and non-brand search traffic: http://bit.ly/brandnonbrand

[Video] Optimising for non-brand search terms: http://bit.ly/videononbrand

[How-to] 6 tips for optimising your product pages: http://bit.ly/tipsforoptimisation

[Case study] 4 things we did to grow organic traffic by 208%: http://bit.ly/growtraffic

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