

SEO Checklist: Top Ten for 2010

It's a New Year! What a great time to take a fresh look at your SEO strategies. While Search Engine Optimization should be an ongoing process throughout the year, reviewing some core elements is too often overlooked. By addressing all of the strategies outlined in our checklist, you will be well on your way to improving your website's visibility in the search engines.

Here is WebFuel's 2010 Search Engine Optimization (SEO) Checklist:

1. Domain Name Ownership

Review your domain name registration and ensure that it does not expire. This is likely the most important item on the checklist. No rights to use your domain name equals no live website. Just imagine what that would do to your search engine visibility. While you are checking your domain status, register the other extensions (.ca, .com, .org, .net) if available. This is known as Google insurance.

2. Reliable Hosting

It likely goes without saying, but a site that is down due to hosting issues does not help your Internet visibility. Ensure that you have engaged a reliable company to provide you with hosting services. There is software (some free) that can track uptime as well as alert you if your site goes down. Being live 24/7 is a **must**.

3. Crawl & Index Friendly

Making certain that your site stays live is the foundation of the SEO process. The next step is to ensure that your website design, including the navigation system, is "spiderable" so that search engines can crawl and index your web pages. Do a check. Test using Google and the other major search engines.

4. Robots.txt

Review and update your robots.txt file. This is usually the most overlooked item on the checklist. The robots.txt file tells search engine crawlers what content you do / don't want crawled. Not everything on your site should be found in a Search.

5. Search Engine Submissions

If you haven't already done so, submit your XML sitemap to Google, Bing & Yahoo. You can do this via your various Webmaster Tools accounts. While there is no need to submit to the major search engines (they find you), you should take this opportunity to review what industry-related engines exist (always new ones). And... of course, submit your URL.

6. Content Review

Yes - content is still King. After all, this is what generates the possibility of appearing in search results. Content review should include checking for content starved pages, outdated information, as well as building new content pages - if required. Copywriting revisions should also include adding keywords and addressing internal lingo (not what people search for).

7. Social Media

Now think beyond just your website and explore Social Media sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube – and *of course* Twitter. Even if they are currently not a good fit for your particular business, create a company profile (just in case). Once again, this is also known as Google insurance.

8. Online Reputation Management (ORM)

Don't just pay attention to your company brand based on your site and/or social media profiles. Manage your reputation on the Internet as well. To get started, simply *Google* your company name, products and/or services, key people in your organization etc... and review the search results. Again, there is lots of software available to track what is being said on the web about your brand – some are fee-based and others are free (Google Alerts). And... of course you can hire a company that specializes in monitoring your brand and keeping your online reputation clean.

9. Web Analytics and Measurement

Review your filters, goals and conversions to ensure that they are in place as well as a system to analyze the data. Make sure that you are tracking everything on your website that should be measured. If you don't have a application installed to track your web visitors, put this on the top of your "to do" list. Google Analytics is a powerful tool – and it is free!

10. Search Engine Ranking Reports

If you haven't already done so, invest in ongoing website search engine ranking monitoring and reporting. In a nutshell, this type of report lets you know which web pages from your site are showing up in a SERP (search engine results page), your keyword positions – and in which search engines. This data will help you understand which SEO strategies are working – and which ones are not. It also documents and tracks keywords and search engine performance over time (good to have if you hired a Search Engine Optimizer). This is likely the best investment you can make when it comes to search.

Our SEO prediction for 2010 is that search will continue to remain strong – with another year of **enormous growth** expected in Social Media. Ensure that this year you manage and improve your online visibility.

Source: <http://www.webfuel.ca/seo-checklist-top-ten-2010>

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