



### **So what are keywords?**

Keywords are the words and phrases that people type into search engines to find what they are looking for, for example 'internet marketing'.

You may also come across the term 'long tail keywords' these tend to be more specific, multi word phrases such as 'internet marketing companies in Cornwall'.

### **Doing the research**

So now you know that you need keywords for your website but now comes the tricky part, deciding which keywords to use.

The first stage should be brainstorming. Write a list of the keywords which you think match the products or services you offer, remember to think about alternative words and spellings. Write down generic keywords as well as more specific ones.

The second stage is to use keyword research tools. These are generally online tools which allow you to see the number of times people search for specific keywords or phrases. Some tools also include the amount of other websites using these keywords so you can determine how competitive a particular keyword is.

The next stage is deciding which keywords to use. Put all your keyword research together and look at which keywords are likely to perform best for your website. Don't just look at the keywords with the highest traffic, consider the competition and how relevant the keyword is to your product and services.

### **Now I have them, what should I do with them?**

As the search engines don't disclose how they determine their page ranks, there are many theories to how to optimise a website. Generally there are three main areas to focus on relating to the use of keywords:

#### **Number of keyword to use**

It is not wise to try to optimise your website for a whole list of keywords. Just select a few for each page of your website – very specific web pages are likely to use just one or two keywords, more general web pages up to five is a good guideline.

#### **Frequency of keyword use**

Several years ago the search engines used the number of times a keyword appeared on a page to determine it's page rank, that is no longer the case. There is considerable debate about how much weighting search engines give keyword frequency in their algorithms today but your keywords should be used throughout your web page. A good guideline would be a keyword density of around 5%.

## Where to use keywords

**Title tag** – this is the title text that appears when your page is listed by the search engines so it should include at least your main keyword. Ideally your title tag should not be more than 100 characters (including spaces). Google will show the first 66 characters although sites such as Yahoo will show more.

**Description tag** – this text is also displayed when the search engines list your web page in their results. Search engines also use the description tag to get an understanding of what your website is about so it's very important to include your keywords here.

**Alt tag** – the alt tag is the tag which should be on all your images as a legal requirement. These should include your main keyword as the search engines use this text when indexing your website.

**Headings** – known as the <h> tags by developers, these are considered as important by the search engines. You should try to include your keywords in the heading of pages where possible.

**Content** – the main content or copy of your website should include your keywords. However remember that the aim of each of your web pages is to convert a visitor into a lead or a sale. Therefore you need to always remember to write your content with the visitor in mind, adding the keywords in naturally for the benefit of the search engines.

**Links** – try to use your keywords in any links within your website and in external links from other websites. The search engines following these links will pick up on the keywords as being relevant to your website.

## Pitfalls to avoid

### 'Black hat' techniques

While researching search engine optimisation, you may come across the term 'black hat' techniques – basically this means trying to cheat or fool the search engines. Here are a few 'black hat' techniques to avoid:

### Keyword stuffing

This is the process of using keywords too often on your website with the aim of increasing your page rank. Although several years ago this was common practice and worked, the search engines are now wise to the technique and keyword stuffing should be avoided.

However keyword stuffing is not always done deliberately. Sometimes once you know which keywords you are focusing on, you will subconsciously use the word or phrase repeatedly within your copy.

### Redirects

This is the process of having a web page which is specifically optimised for a certain set of keywords or phrases. This page is used to rise through the search engine rankings but when a visitor clicks on the link, the site automatically redirects them to another page.

### Cloaking

This is the process of having keywords written in a font colour which is the same as the background colour of the website. Visitors to the website will not be able to see the keywords but search engines will. This technique should be avoided as search engines check the font colour against the background colour – if the two match, your website may be penalised.