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Search Engine Marketing: The Basics

OVERVIEW

Search Engine Marketing (or SEM) is a form of Internet marketing geared towards increasing the visibility of your online store in search engines. Simply put, the more visible you are on the Internet, the more likely it is that search engines will rank your site higher than other, less visible sites.

By increasing your site’s ranking, you can target the shoppers actively searching for your product, drive more traffic to your site, and significantly increase your conversion rate.

There are many techniques you can do yourself to optimize your site and make your site more visible on the Internet. There is no single technique that will significantly increase your rankings. Rather, it’s the combination of multiple techniques based on your specific market that work together to increase your rankings.

Radiant Systems offers a variety of SEM services designed exclusively for CPOnline merchants (learn more on page 10).

TIP: Review “Marketing Your CPOnline Store” for general information about how to actively market your store, and review “Ecommerce Tips & Techniques” for additional tips on creating a successful online business. These documents are located in CPOnline under Help + Support / Documentation.

QUICK TIPS

There are many techniques you can do yourself to optimize your site. Here are a few simple techniques to start improving your Internet visibility right away:

- **Enable Search Engine Friendly URLs.** Learn more on page 7.
- **Add keywords to your page footer.** Add hyperlinks for keywords and/or name brands that point to the applicable items or categories. Learn more about keywords on page 9.
- **Add keywords to category names.** Rename your product categories and sub-categories to include high-volume, multi-keyword search phrases. Learn more about keywords on page 9.
- **Revamp your home page.** If your home page is looking a little tired, spruce it up with fresh information. Incorporate keywords as much as possible. Learn more on page 8.
- **Add Alt tags to images.** On your home page, extra pages, page header, etc., add Alt tags to the HTML code for every image. Alt tags should describe the image and incorporate your keywords.
- **Add informational content.** Informational content helps boost search engine rankings. For example, if you have a site that sells specialty food items, you could use Extra Pages for recipes and include the key ingredients as featured items (featured items help encourage impulse buys).
- **Add your address to the page footer.** Because local search results are based on the location of your brick-and-mortar store, your city and state are important. Learn more about local searches on page 13.
- **Start a blog.** Learn more on page 13.
- **Schedule a FREE, one-hour SEM consultation.** Sign up online at [www.counterpointpos.com/seo](http://www.counterpointpos.com/seo). Radiant’s SEM experts will analyze your CPOnline site and discuss ways to increase your traffic.
SEARCH ENGINE BASICS

Search engines play an important role in the success of an online business. Take a look at the results of one study that analyzes how consumers find products on the internet [Source: Overture]:

Of those shoppers using search engines, most will explore only the first few pages of search results. In fact, 87% of all traffic goes to the websites listed within the top 20 results for any search.

To increase your chances of being highly ranked by today’s most popular search engines, design and configure your store to be “search engine friendly” and plan to invest some of your marketing budget in Search Engine Marketing.

KEYWORD SELECTION

Internet shoppers find the products that they’re searching for by typing keywords or search phrases into popular search engines. It is very important to choose keywords that shoppers will use when searching for your merchandise or store.

Make a list of every keyword that you can imagine a shopper might use to find your online store. Ask yourself, “What are people typing into search engines to find the products that I am selling?” Choose your target keywords from this list by determining:

- How popular is the phrase and how many times was it searched for in the last 90 days?
- How competitive is the phrase and are there many companies targeting the keyword?
- Is the keyword relevant to my business and specific enough to capture potential buyers of my products?

You can find more information to help you select your keywords at:

https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal and www.freekeywords.wordtracker.com

PUT YOUR KEYWORDS TO WORK

Once you have identified your targeted list of keywords, you need to put them to work on your website so that search engines will find your products.

Keyword-Rich Domain Names

If you suspect that most of your store traffic will be generated by search engines, it helps to have a keyword-rich domain name. Registering more than one domain name will help boost your search engine rankings and prevent your competitors from securing them for their benefit. Some examples of keyword-rich domain names are:

- www.hanksfishandtackle.com
- www.atlantafurniture.com
Keyword Rich Page Content

Strategic use of your target keywords throughout your website helps search engines understand what your website has to sell. Use your keywords as much as possible within your website content, but make sure that it is still pleasant for your customer to read.

Include keywords in each of the following areas of your website:

- **Page Title**: One sentence using four to five keywords that are specific to the page. Keep this to 60 characters or less. (See the screenshots on page 5 for an example of a Page Title.)

- **Meta Descriptions**: Two to three sentences totaling 255 characters or less. Load meta descriptions with four to five keywords that are specific to the page and that match the same keywords in the title tag, and make sure the descriptions are pleasant to read. (See the screenshots on page 5 for an example of a Meta Description.) Meta descriptions are not used by search engines when determining your search engine ranking; they are simply displayed by search engines on the search results page.

- **Meta Keywords**: Three to five words relevant to the specific item on that page. Don’t use the same keywords on every page of your entire site.

- **Home Page**: Two to three paragraphs about your store. It’s common for the home page to include a description about the business and the products and services offered. This is another great opportunity to place strategic keywords on the page for search engines while sending a strong yet readable marketing message to the shoppers visiting your site.

- **Categories**: Name your product categories and sub-categories using high-volume, multi-keyword search phrases. Similarly, be sure to include all your best categories as top-level categories. Because top-level categories display on every page on your site, search engines are more likely to find them. Add items to multiple categories to give shoppers multiple ways to find items in your store. Limit subcategories to two to three layers deep.

- **Page content**: Load page content and item descriptions with keywords. Focus on only three to five keywords per page.

- **Extra Pages**: Create valuable, informational content on Extra Pages to increase the total keyword count on your website. For example, if you sell specialty foods, add Extra Pages for recipes or nutritional information.
Adding Keywords in CPOnline Store Management

Throughout your site, you can add keywords (i.e., meta information) to help search engines and shoppers locate products in your online store:

- **Home Page:** *Store Appearance / Home Page*
- **Category-Specific Keywords:** *Items + Categories / Items + Categories / [Select A Category] / Advanced Options*
- **Item-Specific Keywords:** *Items + Categories / Items + Categories / [Select An Item] / Item Detail Page*

The screenshots below demonstrate how the page title and meta information are used in search engines and your CPOnline store:

- Include 4 or 5 keywords in addition to your store name (place keywords before store name)
- Include the same 4 or 5 keywords or phrases separated by commas
- Enter 2 sentences that describe this category (include keywords)
- Page title
- Meta description
- Category URL
EXAMPLE OF OPTIMIZED CONTENT

In the following example, a sporting goods store wants to target “Rawlings baseballs”. Note the differences in keyword usage before and after the content was optimized.

Not Optimized

Item Name: Rawlings Base Ball
Description: Durable performance ball with raised seams and a cushioned red cork center. Features premium grade full grain leather cover and wool blend windings with a durable vinyl finish wind. Ideal for professional and college.
Category: Sporting Goods / Baseball
Page Title: Rawlings Baseball - SportingGoods.com
Meta Keywords: Baseball, MLB, SportingGoods.com, ball, bat, glove, cleats
Meta Description: SportingGoods.com is the world’s greatest sporting goods dealer. Visit our site for the best selection of sporting goods.

Optimized

Item Name: Rawlings Official Major League Baseball
Description: The Rawlings Official Major League Baseball is a durable performance baseball with raised seams and a cushioned red cork center. Rawlings baseballs feature premium grade full grain leather cover and wool blend windings with a durable vinyl finish wind. Each baseball is carefully weighed, measured, inspected, and tested. Rawlings Official Major League Baseballs are ideal for professional and collegiate game ball.

For over 25 years, Rawlings has been the exclusive supplier of baseballs and sporting goods to the Major Leagues. Rawlings baseballs are crafted from the finest materials.

Categories: Sporting Goods / Baseballs
Shop by Brand / Rawlings Baseball / Equipment / Baseballs

Related items: Rawlings Big Stick Baseball Bat
Rawlings Baseball Catcher’s Face Mask

Page Title: Rawlings Official Major League Baseball | Leather Baseball | SportingGoods.com
Meta Keywords: Rawlings Official Major League Baseball, Leather Baseball, Rawlings Baseball

Meta Description: Rawlings Official Major League Baseball is one of the finest in the industry. Not only is it leather bound, but it is the official baseball of the Major League. Play baseball like you’re in the Major Leagues with a Rawlings Baseball from SportingGoods.com.

Additionally, keyword-dense content is used throughout the optimized site, including the home page, about us page, footer, etc. Extra Pages are used for relative, informational content such as a “Baseball Glove Fitting Guide.” The optimized site also includes reciprocal links to complementary websites such as websites for summer baseball camps and little league trophies.
SEARCH ENGINE FRIENDLY URLS

CPOnline: Configuration/Setup / Store Setup

Enabling search engine friendly URLs will alter existing URLs and may negatively impact your search engine rankings! If you have an established site with historical rankings, please contact CPOnline Support before activating this feature.

Search Engine Friendly URLs are optimized for search engines and utilize common language in the URLs (links to specific pages within your online store). The use of common language in URLs allows search engines to better understand your products and the way your site is organized thereby boosting your search engine rankings.

Because this feature alters existing URLs on your site, it’s strongly recommended only for newly established online stores or for online stores that are not currently ranking well with search engines. Once you have enabled search engine friendly URLs, disabling this feature can also negatively impact your search engine rankings.

NOTE: Any URL to a specific item or category page on your site will redirect to the new URLs when you enable (or disable) this feature.

To enable search engine-friendly URLs in CPOnline, select Configuration/Setup / Store Setup and select Enabled for Search Engine Friendly URLs on the Basic Information tab.
EXAMPLES

The following examples show URLs before and after enabling search engine friendly URLs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard URL</th>
<th>With Search Engine Friendly URLs Enabled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category Page</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mystore.com/browse.cfm/golf/golf-clubs/irons/2,32.html">www.mystore.com/browse.cfm/golf/golf-clubs/irons/2,32.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.mystore.com/browse.cfm/2,32.html">www.mystore.com/browse.cfm/2,32.html</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item Page</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mystore.com/browse.cfm/brands/adam/adams-vmi-irons,-set/4,56.html">www.mystore.com/browse.cfm/brands/adam/adams-vmi-irons,-set/4,56.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.mystore.com/browse.cfm/4,56.html">www.mystore.com/browse.cfm/4,56.html</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SITE DESIGN

SEM techniques can drive more traffic to your online store. But if shoppers don’t like what they see when they get there, they may look for another site to do business with.

If you need assistance improving the look and feel of your site, contact Radiant Systems at (800) 932-1058 or cponline@radiantsystems.com. Radiant Systems offers CPOnline Design Packages to help give your online store a unique, professional look. Additional graphic design services are available if you need a new logo, assistance creating a visually-pleasing home page, category images, etc.

STORE TEMPLATE

**CPOnline: Store Appearance / Template Selection**

CPOnline’s built-in Meridian template follows established web conventions and usability guidelines, including a search engine-friendly design, primary navigation located in the upper left quadrant, shopping cart located in the upper right quadrant, and a summary of links located in the footer area.

We strongly recommend that you use the Meridian template (or a custom template based on similar web conventions).

HOME PAGE

**CPOnline: Store Appearance / Home Page**

Your home page impacts how customers view you and your products. It is the shop window, billboard, welcome greeting, and store map all on one page. A quality home page will grab shoppers’ attention and stimulate purchasing decisions.

- Make it clear that shoppers can buy online through your site.
- Create an online ‘window display.’ Showcase new items as well as a variety of your best products.
- Highlight current sales and discounts.
- Minimize distractions that may discourage shoppers from staying on your website. Distractions might include long paragraphs of text, non-product photos, splash pages, animations, and links to other websites.
- Use Extra Pages, not your home page, for non-shopping related content.
- Keep graphics to a minimum to avoid losing customers due to slow page loads.
- Design your home page to fit in a single, non-scrolling window.
PAY-PER-CLICK VS. ORGANIC

There are two primary ways your site can be listed on search engines: pay-per-click (PPC) and organic search results. Pay-per-click (PPC) advertising allows you to pay a search engine to display a link to your website, whereas organic search results are based on the search engine’s algorithm (i.e., the method of determining how websites are ranked on the search engine).

Many CPOnline merchants have found great success by combining PPC advertising with search engine optimization. With PPC advertising, you can benefit from the immediate results of driving new traffic to your site while you gradually increase your organic search rankings.

With PPC advertising (using Google AdWords, Yahoo! Search Marketing, Microsoft adCenter, etc.), you bid on the keywords that shoppers use to find your site through search engines. These “sponsored links” or “sponsored ads” include your targeted keywords and a link to your store, and they typically display above or beside organic search results. Each time a shopper clicks on your link, you pay a small fee.

The more popular the keywords are that you select, the more money it will cost each time a shopper clicks on your link. It’s important to select the right targeted keywords in order to drive traffic to your site. Learn more about selecting keywords on page 9.

BACK-LINKS

Back-links are links from another site ‘back’ to your site. They are valuable because they work like votes for your site. For example, if site A links to site B, then site A is effectively endorsing the content of site B. If site A is an important site on the Internet, that vote means more than a vote from a less important site. Search engines value back-links because they are an indication of the importance of your site.

For example, if you are an authorized dealer for a particular product line, check with your vendors to see if you can be listed on their websites with a link back to your website. Offer to include a link from your site to their site in return (these links are often referred to as reciprocal links).
There are many back-linking services that will list your site in multiple directories. Be sure to choose a reputable back-linking company that will submit your site to high-value directories with a page rank of three or better. Radiant Systems offers back-linking services (learn more about Radiant’s SEM Services in page 10).

**TIP:** If you link from your site to another site, be sure to include “target=_blank” in your hyperlinks (e.g., `<A href="http://www.nike.com" target=_blank">Nike Shoes</A>`). This will open Nike’s website in a new browser window while keeping your website open in the original browser window. Never encourage a potential shopper to leave your website!

**GOOGLE TOOLS**

Google includes a variety of tools to help you drive more traffic to your site.

**GOOGLE ANALYTICS**

Google Analytics is a free service that allows you to monitor your site’s visitors and site usage. By adding a few lines of code (provided by Google when you register for the free service) to the header area and order scripts, you can view detailed behind-the-scenes information about your site.

Google Analytics helps you find out what keywords are attracting shoppers, what advertising copy is generating the most responses, and what landing pages and content are making the most money for you. Learn more at [www.google.com/analytics](http://www.google.com/analytics).

**GOOGLE PRODUCT SEARCH**

Google Product Search helps shoppers find the items you sell. Google Product Search is a place where you can easily submit information about the merchandise you sell on your site. Using item attributes (e.g., price, description, brand, etc.), you can describe the items you sell so that shoppers can easily find your items. The better your item’s attributes, the more likely it is that your item will appear in relevant searches. Depending on the relevance of an item, it may be included in the main Google search index, Google Product Search, Google Local, etc. Because CPOOnline uses item- or category-specific page titles, you can submit individual pages to help increase search engine placement.

It’s free to submit your items to Google Product Search.

Learn more about Google Product Feeds in *Help + Support / Documentation* in CPOOnline.

**GOOGLE COUPONS**

Attract new customers to your brick-and-mortar store by adding [Google Coupons](https://www.google.com/coupons) to your local business listing. It’s free!
GOOGLE SITEMAP

Marketing Tools / Google Sitemap

Google Sitemaps provide an easy way for you to submit all your URLs to the Google search engine index and get detailed reports about the visibility of your pages on Google. With Google Sitemaps, you can automatically keep Google informed of all your web pages to help improve your Google coverage.

CPOOnline allows you to create a Google Sitemap file in the root folder of your CPOOnline storefront. You can control the freshness and accuracy of your Google Sitemap file by creating a new sitemap as often as once per day.

Creating a Google Sitemap

1. Create a Google Sitemaps account. Visit the Google Sitemaps homepage to create a Google Sitemaps account and add your sitemap URL. When asked about the verification method, choose HTML file.

2. Email the validation filename to CPOOnline Support Team. Google will let you know the exact filename of an HTML file that will be placed in your store directory (example: googlef195738a75f5d829.html). Email the filename to cponline@radiantsystems.com to place the file in your store directory. The file will allow Google to validate that you own the site.

3. Create new sitemap. Go to Marketing Tools / Google Sitemaps / Create Sitemap and click the Create New Sitemap button.

Create a new sitemap as often as once per day
GOOGLE MAPS

Once you have created a Google Map of your store locations, you can embed the map in any page of your CPOnline store. To create a Google Map, log into your Google account and go to maps.google.com and click on the My Maps tab. (If you don’t already have a Google account, you can create one for free.)

Click on Create new map:

1. Enter the map title (e.g., your business name) and a description of your map or business.
2. Choose to create a Public map. Public maps are included in the search results on Google Maps and Google Earth. Public maps also appear in your user profile.
3. In the entry field at the top of the page, enter the address of your store location and click the Search Maps button. Google will add a temporary pointer to the specific address.
4. In the popup address details window, click Save to My Maps to add a permanent pointer to your public map. Optionally enter a title for the location (e.g., Wolfchase Mall) and additional details about this store, including directions to the store, store hours, phone numbers, a picture of the store, etc. When done, click OK.
5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 to add additional stores to the same map. When done, click the Save button.
6. When done, select Link to this page (the link is located in the upper right hand corner of the page).
7. Copy the block of code from the Paste HTML to embed in website field, and then paste the code into the applicable CPOnline page. (Alternatively, you can click on Customize and preview embedded map to change the size of the map before you copy the block of code.)
BUSINESS LISTINGS

Take advantage of free local business listings to increase your site’s visibility. You can also boost your site’s exposure through popular websites such as the Yahoo! business directory and dmoz.org.

LOCAL BUSINESS LISTINGS

Most search engines allow you to list your company information with them for free. Depending on the search engine, your business listing may include your address, phone number, hours of operation, listing in one or more business categories, a link to your website, and even photos of your store. Business listings are particularly useful for shoppers searching for businesses in their particular area.

TIP: Incorporate your targeted keywords in your business description.

Add your business listing for free to popular search engines:

- Google Local Business Center
- Yahoo! Local
- SuperPages (for MSN Live Search)
- Ask City

You should also add or update your business listing with your local chambers of commerce website as well as your local phone company’s website. Also, make sure that your information is correct at InfoUSA, Amacai, and Acxiom, which are all major sources of local business data licensed by many directories.

Customer Reviews

Many local business listings allow customers to write reviews and rate your business. Encourage your satisfied customers to write a review about your business. If possible, ask them to use the same targeted keywords that you use in the business description and on your web site as part of their review.

TIP: Don’t add too many reviews over a short period of time, and make sure the reviews are unique!

BLOGS

A blog (short for “web log”) is an online commentary focused on a particular subject. A typical blog combines text, links, and images on a particular subject. Blogs are typically updated frequently and include the ability for readers to post comments about your blog entries.

Free blog hosting sites:

- www.blogger.com
- www.myspace.com
- www.wordpress.com
- www.livejournal.com

TIP: Include links from your blog to your online store, and vice-versa. Use your blog to talk about new products and services, happy customers, charitable and socially responsible initiatives, etc.
YOUTUBE VIDEOS

In an online shopping environment, shoppers can not touch your products or see them in use. To increase their visual—and audible—shopping experience, use www.youtube.com to add videos of featured products to your website. YouTube is a free and easy video hosting service.

For example, if you sell guitars, you could create a video of how a Fender Telecaster electric guitar looks and sounds, and demonstrate some of its best features. Or you could create basic videos on learning how to play the guitar. Or a clothing store could include video highlights of their spring runway show.

YouTube accepts a wide range of video file formats such as .WMV, .AVI, .MOV, and .MPG transferred from most digital cameras, camcorders, and cell phones. If your current video file format isn’t recognized by YouTube, you may get the best results from converting your file to MPEG4 video with MP3 audio.

**TIP:** Embed your YouTube videos in your online store, and be sure to include a link from your YouTube page to your online store. Refer to YouTube’s Help Center for more information.

SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING SERVICES

Radiant Systems offers a variety of SEM services designed to help you get noticed—and stay noticed. Radiant’s SEM Services are designed exclusively for CPOnline merchants.

Dollar for dollar, SEM bring a higher return on investment than any other form of marketing. SEM targets the customers who are already searching for your products and directs them to your online store. The higher your conversion rate, the more visitors that end up purchasing from your store—which means you get more sales from the same amount of traffic.

To schedule a FREE, one-hour SEM consultation from Radiant Systems, call (800) 932-1058, email cponline@radiantsystems.com, or sign up online at www.counterpointpos.com/seo. Our SEM experts will analyze your CPOnline site and discuss ways to increase your traffic.

SERVICES

CPOnline’s Search Engine Marketing Services are designed to optimize your site, increase your visibility, and boost your sales. Your personal SEM Consultant will work with you to identify your top-selling items, target audience, and best possible keywords and use this information to optimize your site.

Radiant Systems will use a combination of the following techniques to optimize your site, including:

- **Keyword Selection:** The keywords chosen for your site are the focal point of your SEM efforts. The most profitable keywords are identified by reviewing your online product offerings, analyzing your competitors’ sites, and researching product trends.

- **Content Optimization:** Strategically placed keywords throughout your site—on your home page, extra pages, category descriptions, and item descriptions—to boost your site’s ranking and stimulate purchasing decisions. Use extra pages for informative content, such as recipes, installation instructions, or fashion trends. Keyword-dense informational pages not only help shoppers learn more about your products, they also help increase your rankings with search engines.

- **Meta Information:** Meta information is used to drive traffic to your site. By optimizing your page titles, meta descriptions, and meta keywords, you will make the best use of your targeted keywords and help shoppers pinpoint the products they’re searching for. CPOnline allows you to add Meta tags to your home page as well as to every category, item, and Extra Page.
• **Site Map Submissions:** Your site map will be submitted to popular online directories. A well-planned site map gives both shoppers and search engines a clear and concise picture of your entire site.

• **Directory Submissions:** Even more valuable than your content are the directory links that point to your site. Your site will be submitted to “high-value” directories with a page rank between one and eight.

• **Back-Links:** Back-links are links from another site ‘back’ to your site. Back-links help increase your exposure on search engines.

• **Newsletters & Press Releases:** These communication mechanisms can generate valuable back-links to your site.

Once your site has been optimized, Radiant Systems will analyze your results and work with you to refine and implement your ongoing strategy.