



My top 10 Internet Marketing Myths

I regularly teach the Online Marketing Web Academy, and one of my favourite sessions is asking the participants "what has somebody told you to do to optimise your site that you suspect is not a good idea."

You'd be amazed at the garbage people are told. Or worse, the garbage they pay good money for...

And so today I present my **Top 10 Search Engine Optimisation Myths**:

1. Meta Tags will improve your search engine rankings

Repeat after me: *search engine crawlers ignore the keyword and description meta tags*. Why? Because they know you can stuff them full of whatever words you want and the words don't display to your human visitors. You can safely assume that meta tags have little or no influence over your rankings. And search engine specialists have known this fact since the dark days of 2002.

The description meta tags *are important* because they can control what displays in the Google results page.

Another important meta tag is robots.txt as it can be used primarily to keep search engines spiders *out* of your website.

And remember: the Title Tag is not a meta tag! Great Title Tags are crucial. If you need help, download my [Title Tag factsheet](#).

2. Hide some text on your pages by putting white text on a white background

This is a trick that worked in 1999, but today only idiots are suggesting you stuff invisible keywords into your websites. The theory is to increase the density of your keyphrase without human visitors seeing it. Bad, bad idea.

Google explicitly advises against hidden text in it's [Webmaster Quality Guidelines](#) (and in 2005 Google's Jagger update slammed websites using invisible text).

3. A high Google Page Rank Means High Positions in the search results

A high [Page Rank](#) score means nothing if the content on your web page doesn't match a searcher's query. Page Rank is just one of many factors considered when

Google produces search engine results. And lots of websites with low Page Ranks still get high rankings in those all important results pages.

Don't get me wrong: Page Rank is important. It's the acknowledged cornerstone of

Google's web search tools. And it's essential to understand Page Rank reflects the importance of web pages based on the number of inbound links from other, high quality websites.

There's lots of Page Rank Junkies out there, watching your Page Rank every day, worrying about how it might change. Stop wasting your time.

4. The Perfect Keyword Density

Search engine optimisation specialists tend to throw around statistics like 3-7% as the perfect density for key phrases in your web site's copy. You may be lead to believe that success depends on using tools which allow you to [analyse your keyword density](#) in your title, your meta tags, evaluating each and every page of your site. You could spend hours tweaking phrases to get the perfect density.

There isn't such a thing as a "perfect density"; if you look at high ranking pages then you'll find a wide range of density scores.

Instead, focus on writing well and writing about your business. If you write descriptive copy and accurate Title Tags then you will naturally write key phrase rich copy.

And remember, the most important objective of the writing on your web page is to make the sale. Don't get distracted by the "perfect" key phrase density.

5. Just get lots and lots of links

Inbound links from reputable, high quality sites form an essential part of your SEO strategy.

But getting lots of links from rubbish websites is bad news, and indeed you can be penalised by Google if it thinks you're trying to manipulate the search engine results by getting lots of directory links.

Instead focus on getting fewer, better quality links. Try to get links from:

- reputable organisation like your professional association or accrediting bodies
- specialist or topical directories which focus on your business activities.
- local or regional directories (especially if you're trading internationally, get into those overseas or export directories)
- university or government sites

As for buying inbound links, Google is sharpening up its ability to spot paid-for links, so these may work at the moment, but probably will not be helpful in your longer term search engine optimisation efforts.

6. Buy more domain names

I've had clients go out and buy literally hundreds of domain names in the hopes it will

help their rankings in the search engines.

And they might even make the fatal mistake of putting duplicate copies of their website onto more than one of those domain names. This is a sure way to risk [getting blocked from the Google index](#).

Whilst a keyword rich domain name does help (as do keyword rich directories and file names) buying lots of domain names won't help a bit.

These purchases will stop your competitors from getting their hands on the names, or perhaps gives you some options for memorable domain names to use in your marketing.

But more domains names just doesn't equate to higher search engine rankings.

7. Don't forget to Resubmit to the search engines regularly

I'm amazed how many small businesses that are sold an SEO package that includes an automated monthly resubmit to the major search engines.

What an absolute waste of money: the search engines prefer to find your site via quality inbound links, and they also prefer to discover your new content by their own regular programme of crawling your site.

It's a con, trust me.

8. Submit your website to 10,000 directories

Excuse me, but I don't think there are even 10,000 search engines or directories. Do the right thing and only submit to the main search engines because they got most of the searches in the world.

And beware these service that sell packages of 10,000 submissions. You will be conned into getting your site into FFA (free for all) directories which are harvesting email addresses for spam merchants.

9. Guaranteed Number One Ranking

Any search engine optimisation company that promises to make you number one is either telling porky pies or pulling the wool over your eyes.

SEO's don't own the search engines. And they can't predict the changes that are happening on a regular basis

What they might do is make you number one for an obscure phrase like "**American internet marketing guru Nottingham.**" Phrases like that just aren't going to help your business at all.

If you hear promises like that, just shake hands and say goodbye.

10. A bit of Black Hat is just what you need.

Danger, danger: warning, warning.

Black hat search engine optimisation is cheating plain and simple. Google has a long memory; that means if you do a bit of black hat now and then stop, Google will still remember your misdemeanours. And track you down.

Google is quite plain talking in terms of what it considers to be [good and bad practice](#). And it doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand the principles of [black hat search engine optimisation](#). Spamming on blogs. Link farms. Doorway pages. Keyword stuffing.

It's just not worth it.

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She specialises in providing support to companies seeking to expand their businesses internationally, and is committed to raising awareness of the opportunities and issues surrounding international trade.

Born in Philadelphia but a resident of Nottingham since 1985, Susan now delivers training and consultancy across Europe and North America. Her consultancy combines her expertise as a former Senior Lecturer in Computing at Nottingham Trent University with her experience of senior Internet marketing roles at BT and Capital One.

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