

Optimize Keyword Density Without Writing Clunky Copy

By Peter J. Fogel

The line, "Build it and they will come," might work in "Field of Dreams," but in the wildest west of cyberspace where millions of Web sites reside — it just won't cut it.

Some companies (not yours, of course) think that all they have to do is submit their Web site to search engines, then sit back and look at travel brochures to Tahiti because once that revenue comes in to www.lucyfunkyweddingcakes.com, everyone's going on a well-paid vacation. These folks might be in their own field of dreams.

We know that reaching the top of search engine nirvana can be as daunting as trying to see the all-powerful Oz. It's as if you're in line at the DMV and all you want to do is get in front of the Wizard quicker and more efficiently for his elusive higher search engine ranking. And that can be done only with proper search engine optimization.

The secret that the big boys use correctly. One of the fastest, easiest ways to get to see the Wizard is to improve the "key word density" in the body of your copy. But being an effective marketer or copywriter, you don't want to do that by sacrificing the purity of your offer and via the redundancy that accompanies the overuse of certain words. Like fingers on a chalkboard, copywriters cringe at the thought of repeating words in the same sentence or even the same paragraph.

The prospect will type a specific "key word" or phrase into Google or another search engine, hoping to acquire information that solves his or her problem with a

specific product or service. Naturally, you want your firm, which produces this product or service, to be first to the person's rescue.

Keyword density is the ratio of that particular "keyword" typed in (i.e., leaky faucets) appearing against the total number of words on your Web site. If that exact word is mentioned only twice in Web page copy of 500 words, it undoubtedly will have a lower density rating than a keyword appearing six or seven times on a similar page.

What should the keyword density ratio be? Take the number of keywords and divide by the total number of

words on a page. Now the "page density" of those targeted key terms should lie between 3 percent and 7 percent. And search engines love to calculate key word density with important tags such as title tags and link anchor text. (Remember: This is the basics. Each search engine has its own calculations when it comes to proprietary algorithms.)

Online success boils down to your compelling offer and what it means to your prospect, who is one click away from going to another site. What good is focusing on keyword density if once you get the prospect to your site your copy is weak, meandering, unfocused, repetitive and boring?

Here's a sample of lousy offline copy that gives you an idea of poor "key word density." I'm sure you've gotten this type of offer in the mail and chuckled it.

"Congratulations Peter J. Fogel of Richmond Hill, Queens, NY you've been awarded a 3 night/2 day vacation in luxu-

J. Fogel of Richmond Hill, Queens, NY, you will now enjoy the excitement of the entertainment capital of the world, **Las Vegas, Nevada.** Yes, **Las Vegas, Nevada** will give you, **Peter J. Fogel of Richmond Hill, Queens NY ...** and your family ...

This is exaggerated, but you get the picture: It's clunky, phony and the "personalization" does anything but make the reader feel special. Besides, if you used this type of keyword density online, the Wizard would consider it "keyword stuffing" and penalize you. And it might trigger a spam filter, which will punish your page ranking even more.

Offline or online, you have to figure out what customers want! As an effective marketer you've done due diligence offline to determine your customers' buying habits, right? That's why you should identify what they're searching for online. One cost-efficient way to do that is to use a keyword analysis service such as "word tracker" (www.wordtracker.com). This enormous database of keywords and key phrases will help you find all the necessary keywords (and combinations) that have any relation to your product, industry or service.

Once you have this information, you can place it strategically in your copy to improve your search engine ranking (pay per click uses this formula). Here are surprising statistics using one example: If you did a search of the phrase "copywriting," it would produce 324 results. The phrase "online copywriting" would give you 75. And "copywriting techniques" would generate 55. So to target specific search engine users, include all variations of that word or phrase.

think that prospects might type in a specific phrase the same way you would. But if you did a search for "keywords," your results would be 273. For "Keywords," it would be 103. For the phrase "key words," it's only 68. So choose your words like you'd choose your sales force — carefully. Vary the spelling of them and determine how applicable they are to your product or service.

Incorrect keywords, or if they're too broad in scope, will bring you the wrong online visitors who might not be interested in what you offer — lookers, not buyers.

For instance, if you sell mortgages, you'd do a search for mortgages and find that related keywords are "mortgage calculator" with the result being 18,658 searches. The phrase "mortgages" returned 8,513 and "mortgage rates" only 6,789. So your copy and offer should strategically include those related phrases about "mortgages" in moderation, and only if they help educate customers in and how your product will solve their problem.

And did you notice how many times I used keyword density, key words, search engine optimization, SEO, search engine ranking, copywriting, searches and Web site in this article? I methodically did it in a way to give you the information to make an educated decision about improving your SEO, hopefully without taking you out of the copy.

Common sense dictates that you want to attract, not distract, the Web surfer with your message. Find the happy medium and make keyword density your ally. Use them (don't abuse them) along with an irresistible offer, and you can't help but catapult your site to the top, or at least the top 10, of the convoluted search engine hierarchy.

The playing field for SEO (yes, I used the phrase again) changes daily. Remember: Search engines are egoless entities that just want first-class searches for end users. Perhaps they should do a movie about that, and the new catch phrase could be: "Give

Incorrect keywords will bring you the wrong online visitors.



Peter J. Fogel

DM NEWS