Website Search Engine Optimization (SEO) Evaluation

For

XXXXXXX

July 22, 2008

Web **1** Marketing

Introduction

This report provides recommendations that can be implemented on XXXXX's website to improve acquisition from search engines. The primary purpose is suggesting changes to improve the site's search engine ranking for terms that help potential customers find the site. A secondary goal to increase customer conversion by improving site usability and the information provided. The website analyzed can be found at www.XXXXX.com. Particular attention is being paid to the Careers section.

Technical Issues

To ensure that search engines can properly index a website, the most critical step is identifying any technical or permission-related issues that could prevent search spiders from reaching all content. The following table lists specific technical areas and their apparent status. Each aspect is color coded according to its status (Green = good, yellow = some changes recommended or unknown, red = significant changes recommended or critical problem found).

Color Coding	
Green	Good, no changes needed
Yellow	Some changes recommended or unknown
Red	Problem(s) found, changes highly recommended

Detail	Description	Status
Indexed Depth	The best way to evaluate if search engines can see all parts of your website is to find out how many pages they have in their index.	The site appears to be somewhat well indexed on Google, with approximately 117 pages indexed. Yahoo shows 230, and Live shows 488.
Robots.txt	The robots.txt file can be used to tell search engine robots (spiders) not to index certain areas of a site.	The site does not have a robots.txt file.
Dynamic Content	Depending upon how dynamic content (ASP, PHP, etc.) is created, search engines may not be able to read it. Online catalogs are particularly susceptible to problems.	The site uses ASP, but there don't appear to be any problems with Google and others indexing the site.
Orphaned or Missing Content	Orphaned content consists of web pages and other files on a website that cannot be accessed by search spiders because no standard links exist. For example, if some pages can only be accessed by a drop-down list box, search engines will not find them.	All key pages that can be seen without a source-file review appear to be linked by the main navigation area or on subsequent pages. Content linked by dropdown menus appears to be available by standard links and thus indexable by search spiders. A full source file review might reveal additional orphaned content.

Detail	Description	Status
404 Page	The 404 error code tells search engines that the requested page does not exist. Custom 404 pages can be created that also help the user still find useful information.	A 404 page returns the proper 404 header and a valid, but generic, message from the server. The page does not provide any useful content for the visitor. A custom 404 page, with a similar look to the site, should be added with links useful for the most common reasons people visit the site. An advanced implementation can automatically include search results similar to the URL the user attempted to load.
Canonicalization	URL canonicalization refers to the use of a single domain prefix, typically "www", for a given site. Multiple prefixes can sometimes cause problems with search engine rankings. Google's system identifies one URL path as preferred, or canonized.	The www and non-www sub-domains return the same content.
Single URL for Each Page	Having each page identified by a single URL will concentrate the search engine ranking impact of external and internal links to that page.	The home page displays on www.XXXXX.com when typed directly, but seemingly identical content is displayed by clicking the "HOME" link within the site, taking the visitor to www.XXXXX.com/default.aspx. Links to the site's home page are particularly important but will be divided between the two URLs, reducing SEO effectiveness.
Folder Listings	Web folders / directories should not enable listing of contents for security reasons, and index pages provide SEO and usability benefits.	Listings have been disabled.

External Factors

Site and page rankings are significantly influenced by external factors. Search engines look to other sites to see where they link, treating such links as external validation of the target website's ranking in search results.

Detail	Description	Status
DMOZ	Many directories and search engines use the open directory project as a source for sites to include, and it provides valuable links to your site.	The site is currently listed in the DMOZ directory.
Yahoo Directory	While not as important as in the past, the Yahoo directory is still in use and provides high-quality link credit.	The site is currently listed in the Yahoo Directory.

Detail	Description	Status
Wikipedia	While Wikipedia links use "nofollow", other resources repurpose their content. If your company or management are in Wikipedia, you should get links.	XXXXX is not listed in Wikipedia.
Google Page Rank	Low or non-existent Google Page Rank values may indicate problems with your website. Higher page rank is better but does not guarantee a page will be found for particular search terms.	The home page is ranked 5, which is satisfactory. A site of this size, sophistication, and age should achieve a ranking of 5 or greater with some SEO effort and additional inbound links.
In-Bound Links (back links)	In-bound links, or back links, help with search engine ranking. More links are better, particularly from highly ranked sites.	Yahoo! lists 596 links.

On-Page Factors

The following table summarizes the status of various factors that reside on each web page. These *on-page factors* should utilize keywords that are specific to the content of that page. For instance, a page that talks about "blue convertibles" should focus on those and closely related terms more than more general or off topic terms like "cars" or "pickup trucks".

Detail	Description	Status
Text as Text	Search engines cannot read text that appears in graphics elements and most dynamic content formats (like Flash).	Nearly all key site text is standard text, making important content easily indexable. The notable exceptions are the section headings, which are implemented in graphics above the content.
Text in JavaScript	Search engines cannot read text that is generated dynamically on the client side, such as through JavaScript.	While most content is static HTML and thus easily readable by people and search engines, the primary navigation requires JavaScript. Search engines and those users with it disabled cannot browse using the menu bar or drop-down menus.
No Frames	Using HTML frames presents usability and SEO problems since links to some content may not be followed properly and visitors may arrive at the site without the intended context.	Frames are not used on this site.
Page Titles	Keywords should be in page titles which are specified in the <head> of each page. The page titles should contain keywords specific to that page and as little else as possible to improve "keyword density".	The same page title is used throughout the site.

Detail	Description	Status
Link Titles	Each link tag can include a "Title" attribute that displays in some browsers when the mouse hovers over the link (tooltip) and provides accessibility for the blind. Optimized, keyword-rich link titles may provide an SEO benefit for some search engines.	Link titles are not used.
Keywords meta tag	The keywords meta tag provides some search engines with a starting point toward understanding the page. Though seemingly less used today by Google and other search engines, this tag should contain a concentrated, non-repetitive set of the most important keywords.	Keywords meta tags are used, but the values are the same for every page.
Description meta tag	Keywords in the description tag can affect ranking, and often search engines display this description in search results, thus they can impact the number of people who click on your search listings.	The meta description has the same value as the meta keywords tag. It should be complete phrases or sentences that include keywords specific to the particular page upon which they appear.
Robots meta tag	The robots meta tag can be used to tell search engines *not* to index specific pages. If a page should be indexed, we advise omitting this tag entirely.	The robots meta tag does not appear to be used.
Page-Level Nofollow	Defining page-level nofollow in the head section results in no credit for any outbound links on the page.	It does not appear that nofollow is used.
Image ALT tags	Any clickable image (link) should have the ALT attribute set with keywords that are appropriate for the pages to which they link. Others should have ALT text that uses keywords and is descriptive of the picture.	Image ALT tags are not specified.
Heading Styles	It appears that search engines may give preferential weight to keywords in headings. Standard headings styles should be used (<h1>, <h2>, etc.), and they should contain keywords.	Heading styles are not in use.
Use of Bold and Italics	Bold and italicized words are given more weight. Use bold and italics within the page to emphasize keywords.	Bold and italics are used rarely and not for keyword emphasis.

Detail	Description	Status
Internal Site Linking	Links from page-to-page within the site should be plentiful and use keywords in anchor text (the text comprising the link).	Internal cross-linking is poor.
Copyright Link	The copyright notice in the footer should link to the home page to strongly associate the company name with the site.	The copyright notice does not have a link.
Mailing / Physical Address on Pages	Adding addresses on every page, usually in the footer, associates your keywords with your location and can improve localized search results.	The mailing address is present in the footer.
PDF and Text	PDFs seem to rank well in Google and are recommended, using the same keyword-focused approach for text. Some search engines can read PDF files while some can't, so it's a good idea to make sure there is an HTML equivalent for any important content presented in PDFs. Easy links to points in the website should be included in all PDFs.	Case studies are provided in PDF format only, not HTML as well. The PDFs lack descriptive or keyword-rich titles and the PDFs do not appear to have keyword or other metatag data.
HTML Site Map	HTML site maps help users and search engines find content.	There appears to be no HTML site map.
XML Site Map	XML sitemaps tell search engines about what content to index and notify them of new content.	There appears to be no XML site map.

General Observations and Recommendations

There are many changes that could be made to the XXXXX website that would likely improve search engine rankings:

- The home page is i[...]directly, the resulting URL is simply http:/[...], such as the "Home" button in the top na[...]age, the resulting URL is http://www.X[...]ceive this as two different pages rath[...]d links. Since a site visitor sees this ext[...]ave copied this extended version, w[...]rch engine ranking benefit of inbound l[...]s only referred to by one URL.

  > Most reports include 4-6 pages of site- and page-specific recommendations that elaborate and extend the preceding "checklist" of SEO factors. This section has been almost entirely redacted to protect the client for whom this particular report was created.

- The web server should be configured …

- The main navigation requires JavaScript, and …

- The number of inbound links is …

- The main headings on each page …

- Page titles are the single most important …

- Links should have their title attributes …

- The keywords meta tag is …

- The description meta tag should …

- Images, particularly those that are links …

- The number of internal site links should …

- Longer pages should be broken up …

- The company name in the …

- We recommend providing …

- Overall the site copy does not …

- Breadcrumbs are a terrific SEO tool ([more on this](#) topic)….

- An RSS feed of …

Content

Content is the most important factor for search engine rankings. Search spiders examine page text, looking for the frequency and patterns of use of various phrases. Rankings for particular keywords are based upon these factors, the presence of related vocabulary, and other factors discussed in other sections of this report. From a search engine ranking perspective, ideal page content uses a target keyword numerous times throughout as well as in headings and bullets. In addition, the higher the keywords appear on the page, the better.

Identifying additional keyword phrases to target, then developing content or incorporating those phrases in current content to attract these visitors, may be one of the most beneficial SEO strategies for XXXXX at this point. As noted earlier, …

In order to rank well on particular …

Creating categories for …

External Links

External links coming in to a website are extremely important because they can generate direct web referrals as well as substantially influence website rankings. In general, more links are better, but not all links are created equal. There are two aspects to link *quality*: the value of the site linking to yours and the text within the link itself (called *anchor text*). Links from "authoritative" sites have more of an influence upon ranking than those from lesser-known sites. For example, links from the New York Times website are likely to carry much more weight than those from a personal website. The link (anchor) text should include keywords whenever possible because search engines associate the link text with the content being linked to. For instance, Ethan Allen may benefit more from links that say "Ethan Allen Home Furniture" than ones saying simply "Ethan Allen."

XXXXX has a moderate number of links. We recommend …