The Real Estate Agent's Guide to
Search Engine Visibility

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Introduction

Making Sense of Search
With so many buyers and sellers using the Internet these days, it's no wonder search engines are a hot topic among real estate agents. After all, a website by itself is a grain of sand on a long beach. But a website with strong search engine visibility becomes much more—it becomes a beacon. And that's how people will find it through their natural search behavior.

But where do you start? There's so much information out there (and worse, misinformation). How do you distill it into something useful?

This guide will help you make sense of it all. The information that follows comes from a variety of search engine professionals, from my own experience, and even from the search engine developers themselves. This guide will help you understand what search engines are, how they work, and how you can optimize your website for them.

How This Guide is Arranged
I strongly recommend you read this guide in the order it is presented. Each section in this guide builds on the section before. By starting at the beginning, you'll better understand the lessons, concepts and terminology that come later in the guide.

This is a Beginning — Not an End
This guide is the beginning of your search engine education—and a good beginning at that! This guide offers more real estate-specific search engine advice than any other publication currently on the market. Even so, you will need to further your education constantly. The search engine industry changes all the time. You need to keep up with such changes so you can optimize your website accordingly. It's a never-ending education, but it's well worth the effort.

At the end of this guide, you'll find a variety of resources for further education. Pay particular attention to the newsletters listed. Search engine newsletters are an excellent learning tool because the information provided is current, continuous and convenient.

Part 1 – What's a Search Engine?

What's a Search Engine?

Before we begin looking at ways to improve your website's search engine performance, we have to define search engines. We will also talk about web directories, as many people confuse them with search engines.

A search engine is an Internet-based tool that identifies websites based on search terms you have entered. These search terms are referred to as keywords and key phrases.

Google is the most well-known search engine. Yahoo is both a search engine and a directory. Don't worry, we'll cover directories next.

Search engines create databases (or "indexes") through the use of robotic crawlers. These robotic web crawlers are often called "spiders." Both terms—crawler and spider—signify the way these robotic components scour the web automatically in search of websites to index.

When search engine crawlers find a particular website, they then crawl through the various pages of that site to determine what it's about. If the site has a good navigation system in place, crawlers can follow the hyperlinks from page to page, much the same way as a person would. In this way, the search engine can identify what the website is about (or what it thinks the website is about) and thus how to categorize it.

> **In Plain English:** Search engines crawl the web automatically and constantly. When they find websites that match a certain phrase (like "Dallas real estate"), they add it to their database. When you conduct a search using Google, you are actually searching Google's database.

How Search Engines Work:

Although they determine their results differently, all search engines operate the same:

1. The searcher enters a key phrase into a search engine.
2. The search engine searches its database (or "index") to find matches.
3. The search engine displays the results in a ranked order based on relevancy.

Why Are Links Important?

Links today are what keywords were several years ago. The hottest topic in SEO. Most search engines, and Google in particular, use "link popularity" as one of several criteria to evaluate and rank your website. Link popularity refers to the number, quality and relevance of inbound hyperlinks from other websites to yours.

What do other experts have to say on the subject of links?

> "Backlinks are very important because they are supposed to be a measure of the popularity of your site among the Web audience. It is necessary to say that not all backlinks are equal. There are good and bad backlinks. Good backlinks are from reputable places - preferably from sites with a similar theme."
>
> **SEO Tutorial**
> www.WebConfs.com

> Link analysis is one of the most important techniques search engines use to determine relevance, and understanding how it works is successful search engine optimization.
>
> **Craig Fifield, "Search Engine Strategies: Looking at Links"**
> Article from www.SearchEngineWatch.com

> Then when Google arrived with their link-based PageRank, link popularity took off and became an absolute essential ingredient in achieving top rankings.
>
> **"Inbound links, link exchanges, and link acquisition"**
> Article from www.WebWorkshop.net

> It's not always "He with the most links" who wins the game……often, "He with the right links" can win the game as well. Really, very often, he with the right 10 links can beat the guy with 1000 of the wrong links - I see it all the time.
>
> **SEO expert Jim Boykin**
> Blog post from www.JimBoykin.com

Where Do I Get Links?

Now we get to the $10,000 question. "Where do I go to get links?"

As a full-time SEO professional, I can tell you this is where I spend most of my time over the long haul. When I first start working with a site, I spend a lot of time researching the audience, assessing the website, building a list of key phrases, adding or editing title tags, adding content as needed. I usually finish this task list in a matter of days.

After my initial on-site efforts, I focus my attention on building a strong linking profile. This goes on for weeks, months or years in some cases. If you're serious about the long-term visibility of your website (and you should be), then you're never really done with link-building.

The Value of This Guide

The real value of this link-building manual does not come from my explanation of its importance. If you've been reading up on search engine visibility in some way, you've no doubt heard that links are important. You would've learned this sooner or later, and with or without my help.

But here's where I bring the value. I've spent the last several years building websites, promoting websites, writing content for websites, and yes ... acquiring links for websites. I do it for clients, and I do it for myself. And in all that time around websites, I've learned a thing or two about link-building. More specifically, I've learned how to build a strong linking profile efficiently and affordably.

Link-Building, One Hour a Day

Like most real estate professionals, you're probably busy with a hundred details on any given day, from paperwork to client relations. But at the same time, you know the importance of having a website that people can find (otherwise you wouldn't have bought this book). Sure, you'd love to spend hours on your SEO program and rise to the top of the listings, but you just don't have the time.

I'm here to tell you that if you set aside an hour a day for SEO, you can do just fine. In the beginning, you'll spend a lot of time to research your key phrases, improve your title tags, etc. But once you get through all of that preliminary work, SEO is more of an ongoing maintenance project.

That's where this manual comes into play. The information that follows will help you make the best use of your one hour per day (or however much time you can spend on link-building). In the pages that follow, I will pass along all of the link-building strategies I know. I'll even list hundreds of link opportunities you can pursue to get started! This knowledge will save you time and energy, while increasing your SEO success at the same time.

Link-Building Strategies

Let's start by covering some of the link-building strategies mentioned earlier in this book. We will then examine each strategy in greater detail, and I'll give you a list of resources and opportunities to get you on your way.

We will cover the following link-building strategies:

Strategy #1 — Articles

When you downloaded this book, you should've also received the Agent's Guide to Article Marketing. That guide will explain the "how" of article marketing in great detail. So in this link-building manual, I'll only briefly cover the subject. Then I'll provide a list of article publishing opportunities for you.

Strategy #2 — Press Releases

By submitting a press release online, you're able to distribute your message far and wide. This can instantly generate dozens or hundreds of inbound links that would otherwise take you hours to acquire. I'll show you how to do this.

Strategy #3 — Link Exchanges

Link exchanges range from genuinely helpful to "big waste of time." I'll tell you how to pursue the right kinds of link exchanges, as well as some things you should watch out for.

Strategy #4 — Forums

Online forums are a great place to share ideas and information with others in your profession. They're also a good source for links. We'll talk about why.

Strategy #5 — Tools & Resources

Wouldn't it be great if people linked to your website without you having to ask them? Put the right content on your site, and it can happen. I'll tell you how to go about it.

Strategy #6 — Directories

The Agent's Guide to Search Engine Visibility starts off by explaining web directories as they apply to SEO. In this link-building manual, I'll give you a list of both free and paid directories you might consider submitting your website to.