

SEO Overview
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April 6, 2006

This document outlines Portent and our search engine optimization (SEO) methods.

If you have any questions, you can also contact:

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About Portent Interactive

The first thing you should know about Portent Interactive is what we are **not**: We are not a web site production firm, or an assembly-line search engine optimization firm. While we work with prominent clients and help them achieve a great deal both in their search marketing and overall look-and-feel campaigns on the Internet, we have a broader focus: Internet Marketing.

What does this mean? It means we help our clients better understand who their audience is, and then combine creativity, technology and good old-fashioned number crunching to run internet campaigns that really generate results.

How We Work: The Four Pillars of SEO

Our primary goal, of course, is to increase targeted traffic to your web site. But we need to accomplish a few other things first. There are four lynchpins to any successful search engine marketing campaign:

Semantic Space. First, we have to establish a clear picture of the words and phrases that will bring relevant visitors to your site, and what you want those visitors to do. Your best online audience defines your organization in their own terms. If your message is well-defined, then the terms that audience uses will overlap with the ones you **want** them to use; those terms will also bring you visitors that are most likely to convert into leads, customers, etc.. We call that overlap your **semantic space**. We use a proprietary data mining technique to find the terms and phrases that exist in that space, and back it up with audience and goals research. Semantic space is the foundation for your entire campaign.

Search engine readiness. Your site must be coded using clean HTML code that complies with current standards. That creates a site that a search engine can easily read and add to its index, and yields the best long-term results. A well-coded site forms the basis for a successful campaign with a high ratio of content to code and the kind of fast-loading, accessible structure that search engines love to see.

About Code

I prattle on about code, code code. Why? Because search engines weigh your site's ratio of visible text content to code. The higher the content-to-code ratio, the better the foundation for sound SEO. Plus code is either a doorway to your content, or a roadblock – bad code stops search engines dead in their tracks.

Content & Structure. Search engines look for text content - not images, video or (in most cases) Flash. They also respect structure: Your site structure should have the most semantically relevant information higher up in the site hierarchy, and each page on your site should use structural elements - heading, paragraph and other HTML tags - to indicate what's most important. Search engines want to know what's important about your organization. Show them that with content and structure, and your results will be more predictable.

Link Popularity. Search engines also look for your site's 'popularity' - Google, Yahoo and the other major search players want to see sites that have incoming links from other relevant sites. We will seek out relevant linking opportunities, free and paid (paid links have less relevance after Google's 'Jagger' update - but we still keep them in mind as an option. Resources include current Portent clients, online directories and press releases you submit to news wire organizations. We maintain an extensive database of directories and potential links for this purpose.

Truly 'organic' search engine marketing improves your ranking while improving the quality of your overall Internet marketing campaign. Note that accomplishing each of these goals will improve the overall value of your site, too: Improved HTML code will increase usability; content will teach visitors more about your product; increased link popularity will increase the legitimacy of your site.

We Wear White Hats

Portent is definitely a 'white hat' search marketing agency. We don't try any dirty tricks, such as hidden text, redirects or 'link farms'. As you can see from what you've read so far, we get results through solid business practices, not snake oil.

The Process

Our process centers on building each of the Four Pillars:

Semantic Space

Goal Analysis. Bottom line, a search engine campaign isn't really about traffic. It's about selling more, or getting more subscribers, or getting your message out to a wider audience, or something else. You have an objective in mind - your search engine campaign should demonstrate a real return in that respect, or it's not worth it. We make sure that we understand your goals - sell more, get votes, get the word out, increase subscriptions, etc. - and use this to drive all of our campaign decisions. We'll also use these goals as one measure of campaign effectiveness.

Audience Analysis. Who's going to look for you in a search engine? How is that audience unique? We answer these questions first through audience research, surveys and other methods, so that we have a foundation for intelligent keyword selection.

Keyword Analysis. We work with you to generate a list of desirable keywords and phrases that, based on our research, present the best opportunities for drawing potential customers. Then, we test these keywords using our proprietary keyword performance modeler. This formula helps us predict which keywords will generate the maximum click-thru. At the end of this first step, we provide you with a complete list of all keywords and phrases that might generate traffic, plus the 10-15 we feel we should emphasize. We revisit this step periodically to make any necessary changes to your campaign.

Search Engine Readiness

Code review and revisions. We review your site for coding and design issues that might prevent a search engine from successfully 'crawling' your site. Then we will revise your site's HTML code and, where possible, content and linking structure to best optimize it for search engine visibility. Of course, we always balance tactical SEO decisions against the impact of any changes on site usability and performance. This is the most critical step in the process. Site readiness doesn't just maximize visibility for you for the keywords we choose. It also opens your site up for high rank with keywords we don't anticipate, but generate good traffic.

Are you a do-it-yourselfer?

Portent can also show you what needs to be done, and provide instructions for optimizing your site.

Feeds. We'll set up a Google and Yahoo sitemap feed, to insure the search engines receive all of the URLs on your site. If you sell products online, then it makes sense to set up a Froogle and potentially a Yahoo Products feed. We can automate that process for you, by enhancing your shopping cart system to generate the required data and format on a schedule. In some cases your site may also benefit from a 'trusted feed' via Overture Site Match or other feed services - Portent Interactive can set up these feeds for you, to maximize your exposure.

Content and Structure

Architecture. We will help you bring the most semantically relevant content higher up in your site structure. It might be as simple as adding a home page text link to a previously buried page on your site. We might create a selective site map, or a more complete directory. Regardless of how we do it, we'll help you create an architecture that makes sense to search engines and to your audience.

Creative. We will also work with you to add new, unique content to your site. This might include taking existing print materials and adding them to your site. We can also help you write new, original content. Portent always helps you develop new strategies to constructively grow your site and search engine profile.

Link Popularity

Campaign. We will review how your site and partner sites link to each other, how they link internally, and which other web sites link to yours. Then we develop a structure that maximizes the link relevance of optimized pages on your site, and work to increase the number of 'inbound' links from other semantically relevant sites. We also cover all possible bases by submitting your site to our own list of free and pay directories.

PR. Depending on your needs, we may also recommend doing a PR campaign using PRWeb or PR Newswire. Both offer search-optimized 'feeds' for their press releases that will get you better visibility with the major search engines. We can help you write and optimize releases for these services, so that you can take advantage of the extra boost they can provide.

Ongoing Work

Search engine optimization is an ongoing effort. Once we complete each of these steps, we develop a plan for submitting your site to free search engines where needed, and to free & paid inclusion directories, such as Yahoo and Open Directory.

The fastest search engines (Google and AltaVista) will generally show results within 4-6 weeks. The slower engines and directories will show results within 12-18 weeks.

No Submission Necessary

Note that many major search engines, such as Google, no longer require a submission. You **can** submit your domain name, but it's usually better to get found because you're linked from other relevant sites.

Measurement. We track traffic to your site from each search engine keyword. We also monitor your position on each search engine. And, most important, we measure audience response - are visitors to your site from search engines buying, registering or doing whatever it is you want them to do when they get there? We will provide this data to you in a monthly report.

Adjust. Based on the data we collect, we will suggest changes and additions to your site. We may suggest additional content as indicated by your movement in major search engine rankings. And we'll likely suggest changes to your site that will make the most of your increased traffic, by maximizing conversion rates.

More About Goals

We measure more than rankings and traffic – we measure campaign effectiveness in terms of your business goals. And, because we're a full-service marketing agency, we can build more than traffic – we build your business.

Timeframe

We can usually complete the initial keyword research, site readiness and link building within 4-6 weeks of project start. Then we repeat these steps over the duration of your campaign. A typical SEO campaign lasts 6 months to 1 year.

Successes

Here are a few examples of ranking we've helped our clients achieve. Note that results can change without notice:

Client	Term	Rank	Competitors	Engine
Dessy Creations	Bridesmaid Dresses	2	5,260,000	Google
Dessy Creations	Bridesmaid Dresses	5	1,920,000	Yahoo!
Dessy Creations	Bridesmaid Dresses	2	643,000	MSN
Princess Lodges	Alaska Hotels	2	62,000,000	Google
Princess Lodges	Alaska Hotels	3	2,000,000	MSN
Brides.com	Wedding Planning	3	52,900,000	Google
Survival, Inc	Survival Tools	2	61,700,000	Google
Brides.com	Wedding Dresses	1	4,200,000	MSN
Alfred Sung	Bridesmaid Separates	1	176,000	Google
Portent	Internet Marketing Agency	3	92,000,000	Google
Flow Corp.	Waterjet Cutting	1	1,670,000	Google
Flow Corp.	Waterjet Cutting	1	122,000	MSN
Groomstand.com	Groomsmen Gifts	2	3,800,000	Google
SaltWorks	Sea Salts	1	5,200,000	Google

Real Results

Rankings are impressive, of course, and they make for great advertising. But Portent Interactive's search engine optimization strategy focuses on results, not rankings. By first establishing semantic space, we insure that the terms for which your site achieves a high search engine rank are also terms that will bring true potential customers, member/participants.

A Portent SEO campaign increased Princess Alaska Lodges' site traffic by 200%. That's great. But it increased their Internet revenue by over 400%. That's even better. Our campaigns don't just make you more visible - they make you more visible in the right places.