Small Business Owners Guide

Do-It-Yourself

Web Design SEO Audio EBook

PDF Transcript from Podcast

by: **Jim Degerstrom**

Search Optimization Step by Step Guide

This ebook is taken from a topic in a recent podcast episode and provides a short course about search engine optimization for small business web design with a step by step do-it-yourself guide.
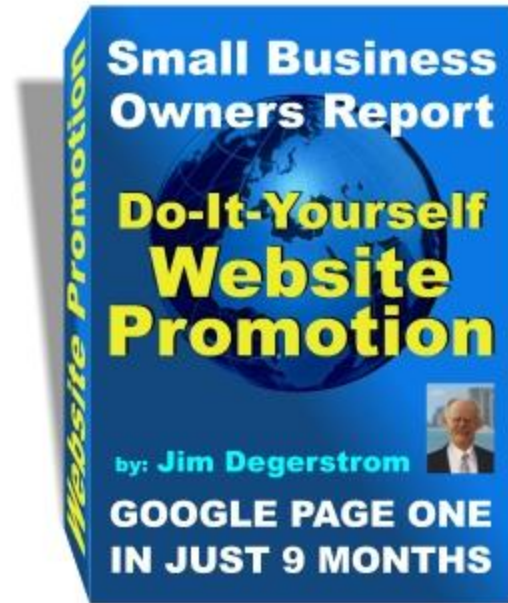
OTHER Small Business Owners Report Series: Do-It-Yourself Website Promotion

This other series of reports includes 6 separate documents that combine for a thorough guide of free methods for promoting your website. Download these reports from my commercial site at www.jimdegerstrom.com/reports.html as published during 2007.

Introduction to Previous Reports

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The Others in the Series (*All featured on my site at* www.jimdegerstrom.com/reports.html)

About the Author

Jim Degerstrom provides expert custom web design services and graphic art for small business owners with advice based on 30 years in management, sales, and marketing, including GM or President of small companies in 5 states. Learn about web design at www.jimdegerstrom.com/web-design-services.html, or the related website advice at www.jimdegerstrom.com/blog/ (blog) and www.jimdegerstrom.com/podcast/ (podcast).

Introduction

The layout of this ebook is a transcript of the script used to record this podcast episode on the Small Business Website Mailbag podcast at www.jimdegerstrom.com/podcast/ including show notes and referenced links. Certain portions in this ebook (like this paragraph) will be skipped in the audio version of the online podcast program.

Welcome to Episode 027 entitled Web Design SEO Audio Ebook.

The topic for this podcast episode is a short course on search engine optimization, or seo, for small business web design, and the show script of this audio ebook is being documented as a PDF for download, also. This tutorial may be used by any website owner, or customers who ordered a web design using my CMS, Content Management System, to learn SEO without further assistance. Here's the outline for today's program and the list of referenced links:

Key SEO Factors in Web Design
Web Design and Keyword Research
Keyword Density and Analysis
Free SEO Analysis Software
Web Design and Implementing SEO
Tip of Day - Ongoing Web Design and Optimization

Referenced links:
www.jimdegerstrom.com/mp3/sbwm-027-web-design-seo-ebook.mp3
Episode 27 SEO EBook MP3 for this podcast audio ebook download
www.jimdegerstrom.com/download/web-design-seo-ebook.zip
Episode 27 SEO EBook PDF download of this podcast transcript (zip, 444Kb, 12 pages)
www.dupefreepro.com/#download
DupeFree Pro software download page for analysis of keyword density

This episode documents strategy for do-it-yourself search engine optimization of keywords for a small business web design. SEO consultants charge $1000's in recurring fees for this same information. With diligence and patience, small business owners can reap the benefits by learning these basics for optimizing their website. Your only investment is your time. Unlike the audio podcast episode limited to sound, this ebook contains illustrations.

SEO, or search engine optimization, is simply the strategy of inserting key words about your business in the content of each page without overdoing it. Search engines rank your theme and importance based on how often those words appear on a given page and throughout the website. Most beginners feel they can knock out web page content in an hour, or less, yet optimizing the page as taught here can take several additional hours once the first draft is written.

Key SEO Factors in Web Design

Key words and key phrases are simply words that accurately describe your business in very specific terms. The secret of keyword success is avoiding general terms that describe just about any business. For example, in my business stating "Expect professional services when contacting us" could just as well be talking about home construction, banking services, or brain surgery.

By inserting "web design" and stating "Expect professional web design services when contacting us" the text content is very specific for people and search engines to understand exactly what I offer.

Keywords are used in two ways: 1) in the META which is hidden in the XHTML and accessed by search engines to understand the theme of each web page, and 2) in the actual text content of headings and paragraphs that display on your page for visitors to view. Here is the list of key SEO factors in web design that you can control, and brief examples or explanations using my main site home page for reference. You MUST use your keywords in each of these to maximize the SEO value.

META Title Tag (70 characters, or less)

Small Business Web Design Services (summarizes the essence of what I do)
This is the MOST important SEO factor on every page. It needs to be different for each, and relative to that individual page with top key words near the beginning. This is not the place for your company name unless you are extremely well known.

META Description Tag (155 characters, or less)

Custom web design services of small business websites including CMS is my primary business plus matching graphics. (A complete sentence with key words near the beginning) This description is often used by Google as the introduction as listed in their search results.

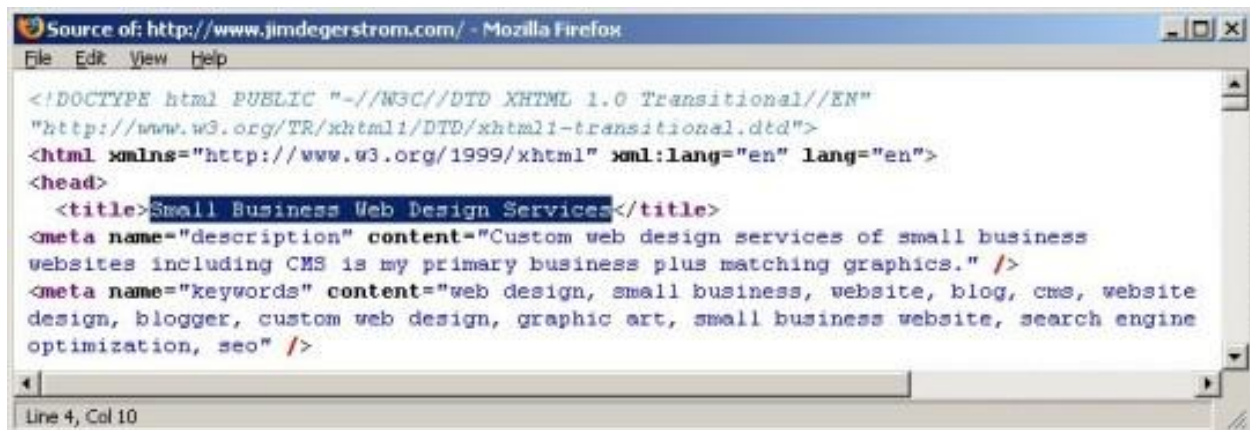### META Keywords Tag (200 characters, or less)

web design, small business, website, blog, cms, website design, blogger, custom web design, graphic art, small business website, search engine optimization, seo

The preceding META code may be viewed while visiting any website page and a screenshot from my home page is inserted in the PDF ebook version of this podcast. Right click on a blank area of any web page and then select "View Source" to see the actual code used to create that page. The META will be near the top if used by that designer.

Screenshot of META from my home page *(smaller than actual size with the Title highlighted)*:

Heading and Subheading (Headline) H Tags
Example H1: Small Business Web Design Services Introduction (only ONE H1 headline per page)

Example H2: Quick Links to the Most Popular Design Services (use H2 or smaller H3 tags, also)

The H tags are like newspaper headlines with the H1 being of higher importance, then H2, and then H3 tags which should be used as subheadings relative to the preceding H2 tag. Search engines assign a higher portion of ranking and importance to H tag "Headlines" compared to text content in paragraphs.

Alt Attribute for Graphics
 (The alt= text is "web design services header" and this is the banner logo, or header, at the top of each of my pages)
The ALT text describes graphics which search engines cannot view, yet the text IS indexed by search engines and provides added keywords to help define each graphic and the theme of your page.

Hyperlinks in Text Body
Near the bottom of my home page is a link, or hyperlink, to "web design and graphic art advice".
This link is to my blog, and while the word blog is not included in the hyperlink, it does appear nearby. The text in "on-page" links should include keywords. The description "web design and graphic art advice" adds value because key words describe what my blog features, and not just the fact that it is a blog.

Visible Copy of Page Text Content
The text content used on your page is the obvious choice for placing key words and phrases. You may want to include your unique META description sentence verbatim in the first paragraph of each page. Keep text content from 200-500 words unless it is absolutely necessary to go into more detail on a topic. Use the key words and phrases often in the text, but not to the point that the text becomes senseless reading.

One of the biggest mistakes people make is using nouns like this, that, and it in website content. As the author, you know the intended meaning, but your readers may not share expert knowledge about your topic, so help them out. Try rewording each instance of this, that, and it with more descriptive words. Not many people will be searching in Google using this, that, or it to describe your product or service.

Design for visitors first, not search engines, yet use enough keywords to assist search engines to properly identify your site theme. The proper ratio of key words to total words on each page is called keyword density, and this subject will be discussed later in more detail.

File Names Assigned to Pages
The name you give each page on your website will add some SEO value if you use keywords in that page. The home page should always be named "index", and then other pages should have a literal meaning using key words separated by dashes. For example, my link to small business web design services is "web-design-services.html". This has extra value compared to "page2.html".

Directory Names if Using Subdirectories
If you have a blog or podcast, or place images in a subdirectory, use a literal name for the subfolder. In the examples just given, I use my main site domain name followed by /blog, /podcast, and /images.

Web Design and Keyword Research

Next, researching keywords for your small business website may seem daunting at first. Whether you have an established site or you're just getting online, start out by making up a list of words that people are likely to put in Google or other search engines to find you. Next, sort that list by placing the MOST important word or phrase at the top of your list. Add each of your key words in descending order of importance.

When you have a list of 10 key words or phrases sorted by importance, it's time to begin the research.

Knowing what potential prospects actually type in search boxes may help you adjust your text content to be more people friendly. There are several free online services that match your key word to real data about the frequency of related key phrases in descending order of importance.

Go to a free online service at www.KeyWordDiscovery.com and input your first key word or phrase in the search box. The search results may provide a few surprises.

View their list of top search phrases, and then compare yours to their top 10. You may see new phrases that you did not consider. Add them to your list or copy and paste their top 10. Continue with each keyword or phrase and when done you may want to consider revising your list and the order of importance based on what you learned about what people really put in search boxes to find someone like you.

Keyword Density and Analysis

Let's review the definition of keyword density. Keyword density is a ratio expressed as a percentage from the number of times a keyword or phrase appears on a page compared to the total number of words on that page. If a page has 200 words and one key word appears on that page 10 times, the keyword density is 5%. To assist readers of the PDF ebook, a page outline is included in Appendix A. Podcast listeners will have to download the ebook to view illustrations and the attachments.

Knowing how often you can put a keyword or phrase on a page without being penalized by the search engines for trying to take advantage of them is like finding a magic formula. Insert too few key words and your competition will be on page one instead of you. I recommend using free software for the analysis.

The free software is DupeFree Pro at www.dupefreepro.com/#download and a link to the download is in the show notes, also.

When asked for their recommended safe keyword density range to use, their advice would be 1.5% to 6.5% and I recommend 4% as the target number. By now you're probably wondering, how you can easily count the total number of words on a page and then get the proper ratio or percentage without spending long hours counting words and key words. Fortunately, DupeFreePro does just that instantly using copy and paste and just a couple of clicks. To do this properly, expect analysis and rewrite of each page to take as much as 2-3 hours, not 2-3 minutes.

While the target density is 4% to 6.5% on the high end, which would be for the single word or phrase that best represents the theme of your overall website. The second and still very important keyword for a given page should be included a like number of times, yet in your extended list of key words in descending order they can be used nearer the 1.5% low end to maintain readability. After all, a web page should be designed for visitors first, and search engines will reward pages that read naturally.

Note: ALL keywords in your keyword META should appear somewhere on that page! Do NOT try to stuff every keyword or phrase for the full 6.5% on every page. Some web designers over-optimize and place excessive key words and while the limits are not published, the experts know your site can be banned for keyword stuffing.

Free SEO Analysis Software

Once you download and install DupeFreePro, here is how to use their software to instantly learn word count and test keyword density. Use the outline in Appendix A to create your META and page text content in a word processor like NotePad. Once the text file is ready to copy and paste, open DupeFreePro to begin analyzing your first page.

DupeFreePro Screenshot (smaller than actual size)
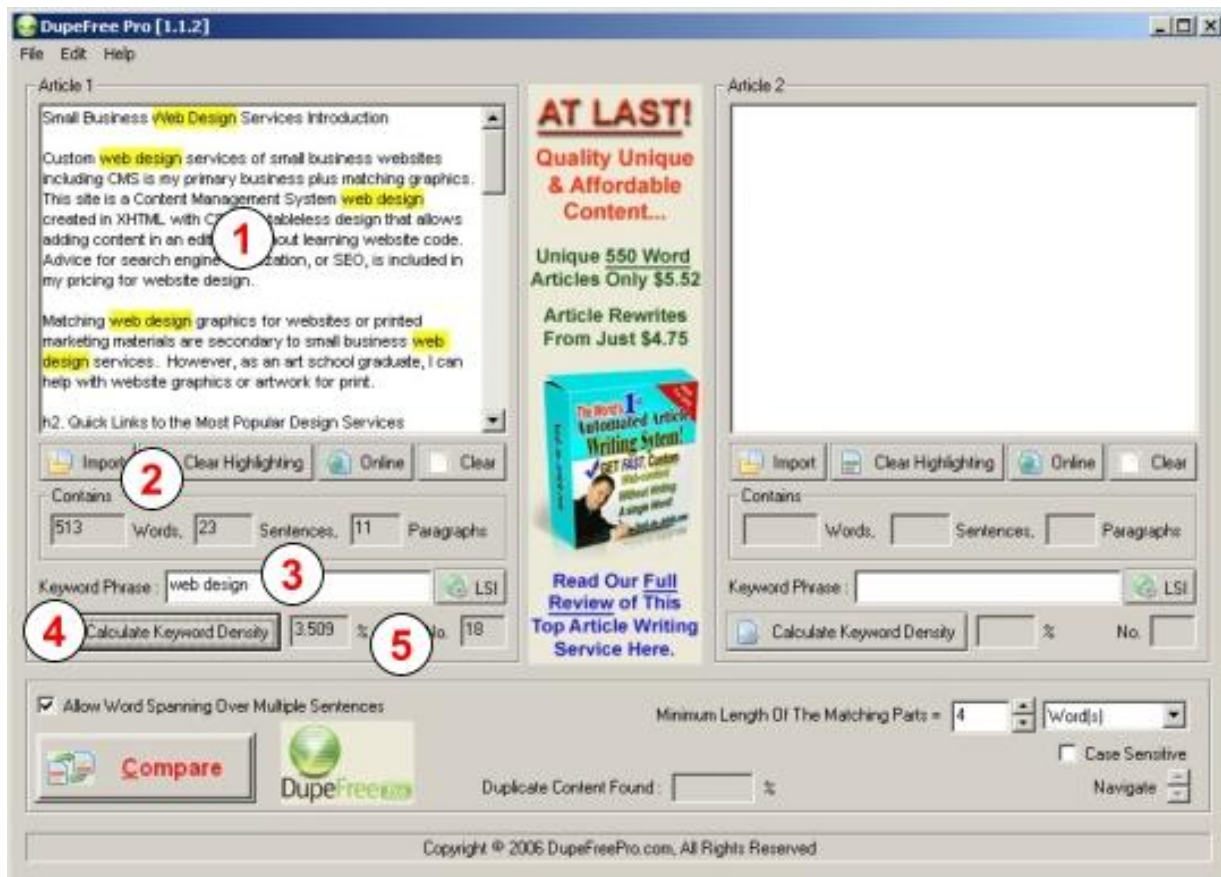
Using my home page as an example, I copy and paste the (1) on page text content that will appear to visitors (not the META) in the large open edit box at the top left. You may now see (2) the summary of 513 words in 23 sentences and 11 paragraphs, below that I copy and paste my most important (3) key phrase "web design" in the keyword phrase box, and then below that I (4) click the "Calculate Keyword Density" button. The (5) keyword density for "web design" is 3.509% and it appears a total of 18 times. The key phrase will also be highlighted in yellow throughout the text content.

In testing each keyword or phrase from your list against your content, you may find the density is way too low, or too high. You can edit right in the DupeFreePro edit box to

make adjustments and recalculate as you go. Be sure to have your content readable for people. My example just given is done and online. It took several hours to get to that point. As noted, the density is slightly lower than the optimum 4%, but at 3.5 percent that's okay, too.

When it comes to inserting key words into your site content, and using my 4% recommendation, a key word should appear about 20 times on a 500 word page. Shoot for that target to begin, and be prepared to test increases or decreases over extended periods of time as you track site performance and search engine position. Continue this process to analyze, test, and adjust the density of each of your pages.

Backup your work!

Once a page is done and especially if you edit within DupeFreePro, make sure to copy and paste ALL your changes from the edit box back into your NotePad file before you save it for adding to your website later. It would be a nightmare to spend hours on an edit just to exit DupeFreePro and realize everything was lost.

Note: The blank box to the right in DupeFreePro is for testing for duplicate content. If you have two pages on your site with similar content, you can copy paste each in a separate box to test that each is sufficiently unique to avoid duplicate content penalties.

The DupeFreePro software has other options, also. Read the help files or visit their website to learn additional features like searching for websites stealing your content.

Web Design and Implementing SEO

At this point you may be in shock over the complex methods of web design and implementing SEO, search engine optimization. From experience with clients and advising the step by step analysis and testing necessary to properly optimize a page, SEO is necessary, yet no one said it would be easy. This is hard work, and explains why good consultants who truly know how to implement proper SEO are very well paid.

Furthermore, while I never guarantee any client Google page one; my designs are optimized for search engines with code and content evaluation and very basic implementation. The fee for long hours necessary to fully optimize a website is impractical for most small business owners. Many would be in shock if they were quoted full SEO of their site and find consultants get anywhere from $5000 to $20,000 for just one site.

This tutorial is your opportunity to add value by investing your time, and enhancing the search optimization for your site without paying large fees to a consultant. For my clients contracting for a cms web design where they can add, edit, or delete pages, understanding the SEO buzz words and tasks needed are necessary for do-it-yourself web design.

Tip of the Day - Ongoing Web Design and Optimization

Now that you have a 10 page website and you spent 3 hours on each page doing SEO testing and content analysis, most site owners would think they are done. For optimum value, SEO is an ongoing web design and optimization activity. Over weeks, or perhaps months, you can track your site performance for key phrases to see your position in search engines. Find the starting point and know your ranking as you begin the process, and then check progress giving sufficient time to improve in ranking.

Be prepared to tweak your META tag code and page content by testing online search results for your key words and phrases, and make changes as necessary. Do not make drastic changes. Unlike some consultants, I believe that consistency from month to month and year to year is very important to show stability in what you offer and how it is presented. It's better to be done right up front to minimize ongoing SEO work later.

Keep in mind Google updates their rankings 4 times a year, yet improved search results can happen sooner. You can do quarterly searches on your key phrases in Google to see who is #1 through #10, and then view their META code for clues how they got there. Perhaps their site is 10 years old. Age of a site is an important factor in ranking, so for a new small business website, you may never make #1 or even page one against sites that are established longer.

The real test is evaluating traffic and new business from your site by always asking new customers how they found you. You may be surprised just as several of my clients have reported, and they were contacted after being found on page one in as little as two months after their site launched. I don't guarantee it, but it can happen.

Bonus Tip Not in the Podcast Episode

SEO has more than one meaning and stands for "Search Engine Optimizer", also, which means a consultant offering search engine optimization services. The true experts get anywhere from $5000 to $20,000 for optimizing a single website.

In addition, there are unscrupulous people who know the buzz words contained in this report, and they razzle dazzle clients into paying thousands in recurring monthly or annual fees with zero results. New clients have contacted me and reported ongoing SEO service payments for years without results, yet they accept lame excuses and just keep paying. Here's one way they are deceived.

Search engines do not reveal their algorithms for serving up search results, so this secrecy is one weapon the unscrupulous SEO snake oil salespersons use to explain away poor results. Be very wary of anyone who promises page one. It is a lie.

There are good SEO practices and poor methods. For evidence that my methods are safe and effective, view the screenshot on the next page.

Search Engine Optimization Step by Step Guide
Another Free Small Business Resource Center Report *written by Jim Degerstrom*

My primary business is web design for small business owners, yet I also provide graphic art design services. One of the first requirements starting a new business is acquiring a business card design. For this reason, I have business card artwork as a target keyword for my graphic art design services which in turn attracts web design business.

Here is a screenshot taken in June 2008 on the day this report and podcast episode were released, and it shows my site as #1 on Google page one with the very first listing after paid ads for "business card artwork".

At the time the total results were over 13 million, so out of that many web pages that offer business card artwork, my site was first. New startups need business cards, and often our conversation turns to web design, my real business, and countless times my clients for graphic art end up becoming web design clients, too.

As a sole proprietor working out of my home without any staff, these results prove that there is a chance for the little guy to make #1 on Google page one, and compete successfully against much larger corporations.

Finally, will I stay at #1 forever? I doubt it. I don't guarantee page one, even for me!

Appendix A - Sample NotePad Format for Creating Text Content

Blank Version for Reference Creating Page Content (for you to copy and paste)

TITLE: (70 characters maximum, key words near beginning)
DESC: (155 characters maximum, a complete sentence with key words near beginning)
KEYWORDS: (200 characters maximum, key words in descending order of importance)

H1 (Heading or Headline for the page... only use H1 one time and include key words)

Text content (paragraphs, with key words especially near beginning of first sentence in first paragraph and your last closing paragraph of the page, and elsewhere in between)

H2 (Subheading or Headline for secondary content paragraphs, and include key words)

Text content (more paragraphs of text to the end of the page)

*Note that for all H tags, the words that appear in the headline should also be used somewhere in the text paragraphs that follow, and all META keywords in your keyword list MUST be somewhere on that page.

Actual Original Version of My Home Page (portion only of text content draft copy)

TITLE: Small Business Web Design Services
DESC: Custom web design services of small business websites including CMS is my primary business plus matching graphics.
KEYWORDS: web design, small business, website, blog, cms, website design, blogger, custom web design, graphic art, small business website, search engine optimization, seo

Small Business Web Design Services Introduction

Custom web design services of small business websites including CMS is my primary business plus matching graphics. This site is a Content Management System web design created in XHTML with CSS in a tableless design that allows adding content in an edit box without learning website code. Advice for search engine optimization, or SEO, is included in my pricing for website design.

Matching web design graphics for websites or printed marketing materials are secondary to small business web design services. However, as an art school graduate, I can help with website graphics or artwork for print.

h2. Quick Links to the Most Popular Design Services

Depending on your custom web design or graphic needs, follow these icon links to quickly find more information. Look for these Quick Links throughout this site to our most popular web design related services.