

"Are You DELIBERATELY Keeping Your Website Out Of The First page Of Google?"

Search engines are very difficult to completely understand. There are **no complete explanations** of how their ranking algorithms work. But the very fact that the average person does not intuitively know how to crack the search engine algorithms leads to all sorts of questions; Usually variations of:

"How do I get my website to the **top** of the search engine results pile?"

Now if you have been following my newsletter, you will know that search engine optimization is **not magic** or something equally difficult to understand. Instead, I learnt it as a step-by-step process and that is how I have always considered it. Nothing too fancy; in fact, I could probably summarize it all in the following points:

- An understanding of **how search engines "think"** .
- Knowing **what search engines "want"** .
- Learning **proven optimization techniques** .
- **Applying your knowledge** time and time again (experience).

Of course, SEO is not explained by those four sentences, but what they do is that they give you a structure within which you can learn and carry out SEO on your business with exceptional results. In short:

Get it right, and do it better than your competition.

But what does this have to do with today's discussion?

Basically, when you have "followed" the SEO strategies to the letter, and are still not seeing your website rank anywhere near where it "should" be on a particular keyword, then you have one of the following problems:

- Your website may have been **sandboxed** (specific only to Google).
- Your website might be **penalized** or even removed from the index by a search engine for going against a stated guideline.
- A search engine might **"think"** that you are spamming them.

In the first case, you will have to "wait it out" with Google, while consolidating on your positions in the other search engines by continuously building links and adding content. The second case will never happen if you follow the advice given in my lessons; if your website is penalized, compare what you have done with what I have told you, and you will probably find out that something has gone wrong.

However, like I said in the beginning, search engines are notoriously difficult to understand – and sometimes you can **do everything right** and still not be ranked correctly. Conspiracy theories apart, this is the part of the equation that search engines do not always get right. SEO experts usually term this as **over-optimization** , and like many SEO issues this one has a lot of debate on it in SEO forums about whether websites are actually penalized for over-optimization or simply banned for spam.

What exactly is over-optimization?

Over-optimization happens when your website is considered **"too good"** by Google – either in terms of a sudden volume of backlinks, or because of heavy on-page optimization. In other words, if Google considers that your website optimization is beyond **acceptable limits** , your website will be red-flagged and automatically restricted or penalized.

There is a fine line between over-optimization and spamming, and it is on this line that Google can appear to err. However, this is not a mistake by the search engine – in fact, Google calculates rankings by considering thousands and thousands of different factors – and a lot of importance is attached to average **"trends"** within the niche / keyword range that a website is optimizing for.

The bottom line is that over-optimization is **non-spamming** search engine optimization that is misread by Google as being beyond acceptable limits, thus leading to a penalty in search engine rankings.

What criteria does Google use?

To understand why Google can consider certain websites over-optimized, it is important to factor in the criteria that Google uses to rank websites.

When fully indexing a website, Google does not just look at the optimization of the target website; it also compares the website with all the other websites that belong to the same niche / category / keyword range. Through this comparison, Google can then figure out the following:

- Is this website “**way more**” optimized than the current top ranking websites?
- In the past, have over-optimized websites been discovered as spam websites?
- What are the trends / acceptable limits for well-optimized websites in this niche/keyword range?

Since Google is automated, it cannot do what we do – look at the webpage and determine if the purpose is spam or delivering truly useful information. Instead, the search engine uses **historical trends** to predict what the acceptable limits of over-optimization are, and **how likely** over-optimized websites are to be found out as spam.

In other words, your website may be **red flagged** as being a potential spamming website even though your only fault might be that you were “perfect” in optimizing your website while your competition was left far behind.

Google takes both on-page and off-page optimization into account when checking for over-optimization / spam, and as such it watches out for over-optimization in all ranking factors – your backlinks and your tag optimization (meta tags, title tags, header tags) being most important.

A lot of what I am talking about becomes invalid if one tries any **overt search engine spamming technique**, such as stuffing your pages with keywords, white on white text (something I talked about in the first few lessons) or backlink spamming (building too many backlinks with the same anchor text in a short period of time).

But it is also possible that you have followed advice and still have your website penalized for over-optimization. The real question then is:

How can you **avoid such penalties** ?

Avoiding the trap of over-optimization

As I mentioned at the start of this lesson, search engine optimization can be boiled down to two simple steps:

- **Getting it right** and...
- Doing it better than **everyone else** .

In the context of over-optimization and avoiding unnecessary penalties, this rings especially true. If you optimize your website within search engine guidelines and according to proven optimization practices, you have it right. While putting too little time on SEO is a serious mistake, the search for perfection within SEO is a time-wasting and fruitless effort. **Too much focus** on getting the page structure “just right” can divert attention away from the more mundane but equally more important tasks – such as adding more content or monetizing the website.

The next step is to eschew perfection and find out what your competition has done. Suppose that you are optimizing your website for the term “landscaping”. Which of the following approaches would you realistically choose?

- Go full-throttle on your search engine optimization, spending as much time as necessary to get maximum value out of each word, link and page in your website, so that you can get the highest ranking possible.
- Analyze the top 10 webpages for the term “landscaping” and understand what optimization has been performed on them (natural or artificial). Calculate the number of backlinks, check for authority inbound links – and once you have figured out what your competition is doing, and do exactly the same – **only a bit more** .

The first approach might mean that you are guaranteed a top position on the search engines, but has two problems – you will waste a lot of time and resources in this search for perfection and more importantly, your website may be flagged for over-optimization. On the other hand, the second approach does **just enough** to beat the competition – without pushing you or your budget to the limit.

Over-optimization is a phenomenon that is particularly difficult to figure out – how does a SEO expert really determine whether his new website is in the sandbox, penalized for over-optimization or just doing badly in the search engines? While trying to find out the real cause for your poor rankings may satisfy curiosity, you would be better served by following the “second approach” above.

Search engine optimization is a long-term, low-intensity process. You keep building links and adding content, so that eventually your website not only escapes the infamous sandbox but it also starts to rank really well on the search engines. And as for over-optimization – as long you follow search engine guidelines and don't go too far above your competition, you will be fine.

Keep those lesson suggestion coming. I need more topics to keep supplying you with more helpful information. Remember, you can email me at seo@seoelite.com. Include the subject: SEO TOPICS

All the best,



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