

"Become An Instant SEO Forum Expert!"

Today I'm going to try something different. For quite some time now I've noticed that the same questions have been asked **over and over again** in search engine forums. In this article I've tried to pick out the most frequent of those questions and then answer them. Hopefully you'll find some of your questions answered in here, and if you don't, you can always drop me a line and ask...I might put out a similar Q&A lesson soon in the future, so your questions will definitely get answered here.

So, let's get started.

What is "relevance" in SEO?

"**Relevance**" is a central concept in search engine marketing, but you will be hard pressed to find any reasonable definition for it. Most SEO experts take the term for granted, and the rest of us just nod along :-). It is not very complicated, but it does involve some very core ideas, so listen closely.

In SEO, relevance is a criteria used by search engines to determine the **importance** of a target (page, keyword, website) within a niche. Since search engines are primarily concerned with serving user queries, the role of relevance comes up most often during searches. For example, if I search for the term "search marketing" on Google, the search engine will analyse its index and provide me a list of web pages ranked by how "relevant" they are to "search marketing" – in this case the top result is www.overture.com, now known as Yahoo! Search Marketing.

Note that search engines don't explicitly deal with niches or categories of websites. Instead, an SE treats the Internet as a **loosely defined grouping of topical pages**, with those topics forming sub-groups of their own.

Search Engines and Relevance

Search engines assume that websites in general will follow the mantra of "**information-targeting**", with the ideal website in a niche being the one that is most relevant to that niche. Sounds simple, right?

Here is where it gets interesting. Search engines measure relevance on different levels, or different categories if you may. Once you understand the above definition, they all make sense by themselves. For starters, there is **content relevance** – is this page's content relevant to a search query (and that query's projected niche)? This is where on-page optimization is so important. Search engines use keywords to measure relevance, but they aren't checking for keyword density; in fact, they are checking for **keyword placement** in the page.

A second criteria is **link relevance** – whether the sites linking to you are "relevant" – i.e. in the same niche (or closely related to the niche), and whether the sites YOU link to are relevant as well. This is, in a nutshell, off-page optimization or link-building.

Relevance in search engine optimization has been the biggest stumbling block for webmasters – the concept is so important that every aspect of SEO is governed by it, but yet so obvious that many of us overlook it.

How useful is Keyword Density?

Keyword density was once the single most important criteria for judging the value of a webpage. I'm talking back in the pre-Google era (now if THAT doesn't give you a hint about how **outdated** keyword density is...). However, with Google's PageRank algorithm and the general trend towards off-page factors determining more and more of your website's rankings – the importance of keyword density as an on-page optimization tool diminished. People continued to theorize about what the ideal keyword density should be, and estimates ranged from 2% to 8%. Keyword density, in case you are wondering, is measured by the following formula:

Keyword Density Formula

$d = x / y$ where:

x = No. of times a keyword is used in a block of content (page)

y = total word count of the page
d = keyword density

The problem with keyword density is quite simple – it is very, very easy to **manipulate** and spam. Spammers used automated content generators to create highly optimized web pages with high keyword densities. As search engines started to set limits on “**acceptable**” **keyword density**, spammers got smarter and smarter and reduced their keyword density as well, making it especially hard for search engines to separate spam content from genuine, useful content.

Search Engines and Keyword Density

Since search engines could not conceivably check every page manually (As a rough estimate, Google indexes 8.1 billion pages – and pages are added daily), and they couldn't tolerate spam in their search results, search engines devalued keyword density as a ranking tool. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if keyword density did NOT affect your rankings – in fact, keyword positioning (placing the keywords in title tags and header tags) as well as **thematic keyword relevance** (a fancy term that refers to how related your core keywords are to your website's main theme or niche) is far more important in terms of on-page optimization. And that, of course, pales in comparison to how important off-page optimization, or link building, is.

So, if possible, ignore the bounds of keyword density and focus on the following:

- Good, useful, quality content
- Keyword positioning
- Keyword relevance

And once you're done with the basics, move on to the next page (or start building links).

Do web pages need a minimum number of words to be ranked well by search engines?

There's a myth going around in some search engine forums that you should have a **minimum word count** for web pages to satisfy search engine requirements.

Let's put that myth to rest – there's no minimum requirement for web pages to rank well – in fact, there are many, many web pages that rank at the top position for highly competitive terms WITHOUT having too many words on them – for example, a search for the term “**resume samples**” on Google gives a top result of a page that has ONLY links on it – no serious content. This is a highly competitive term with over 150,000 searches each month according to Yahoo Search Marketing – a figure that translates to almost a million searches each month on Google.

And a links page is on top of the pile (click on the link to see it - [resume samples](#)).

In other words, word count is not the defining criteria for high rankings – you could have 250 words, or 500, or 1000, or even just a 100 words, but that is still a small part of your on-page optimization, which in itself plays a small part in determining your website's rankings.

In practice, you will always have **different types** of pages – some will be main pages for the website or link pages (both usually lacking too much content), while others will be article or informative pages with loads of content. The key is to work on the right page structure for each type of page, and not the word count.

How often should I change the anchor text in my backlinks?

The short answer to that is: **pretty often**. The long answer?

Well, it starts with a definition.

Whenever we talk about link-building, it seems necessary to mention **organic SEO** – where other websites link to your website “by themselves” (as opposed to an “artificial” link exchange) because they genuinely find it useful. Why is this important? Because once you understand what search engines are looking for in links, you'll know how to dominate the rankings.

Relevant to the question, search engines try to measure the “**originality**” of the link – that is, the chances that this link was natural or “artificial”. Since most of the links (and almost all of the ones that you will get in the beginning) pointing to your website are artificial, you have to make them look organic to avoid any penalties from the search engines.

For example, suppose that you are setting up a website on copywriting – assuming that you have the on-page optimization done and dusted, let's talk about how you can regularly change your anchor text.

Your Anchor Link Strategy

First, we take your core list of keywords:

- Copywriting techniques
- Learn copywriting
- Copywriting seo
- Copywriting tips
- Copywriting course
- Copywriting services
- ...

And so on. Now, take each keyword, work it in an **attractive** headline and write 1-2 lines describing your website – no hype, no keyword spamming – make it attractive and **useful** to the reader. Make sure that each description is different – it cannot be totally different, but it should change a bit.

If you do that for each keyword, you have 10 or more sets of **link details** – the headline makes the anchor text and the 2 lines will act as a description. Once you have this set, start from the first combination and switch to the next one after 25-30 links.

This way you can cycle through your list and maybe get to 300 to 400 backlinks before you get through your set of anchor text and description combinations. If you have fewer core keywords (a tiny niche), you can space out the changes – say every 50 links or so.

What to do when the list is up? **Alter** the anchor text and descriptions for each keyword and do that for the whole list, then start all over.

If you follow this formula not only will you be able to regularly alter your anchor text (and thus make the link-building process look natural), but by targeting so many keywords within the list you can also end up ranking highly for all of them.

Further Questions

The field of search engine optimization is unnecessarily cluttered with incorrect or outdated advice. Often, people tend to “over-analyse” minor issues, so much so that they miss the big picture.

As always: keep it simple, **get the basics right**, use the [best SEO tools](#) and you'll get to the top of the search engine rankings in no time at all.

And if you have any questions of your own, make sure you drop me an email: seo@seoelite.com.

All the best,



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