

"The Power Of Creating And Implementing A Sitemap!"

Do you own a website? If so, then take a minute to imagine the following scenario:

You've uploaded your last set of pages to your website, and you have finally setup your new income stream, fitted with your choice of products, payment gateway and hundreds of pages of content designed to increase your search engine rankings and hopefully give you some AdSense income.

You now focus your attention towards link-building and other traffic building techniques, and pretty soon you've got search engine spiders crawling through your website.

Wait!

Have you built a sitemap?

Yes, of course.

But have you built a sitemap that is:

- Tailored to get your complete website indexed almost instantly.
- Guaranteed to improve your site rankings.
- Compliant with the new Google Sitemap format.

No? That's what I thought ;-)

However, no need to worry. I've got the perfect plan for you to prepare a sitemap that will not only guarantee website indexing and ranking almost instantly, but also tell you how to build a sitemap that complies with Google's new Sitemap feature, thus further improving search engine indexing of your website.

The Perfect Sitemap

Building a perfect sitemap is a lot like building a perfect website - you need to account for contextual grouping of your pages, hierarchical linking between your pages, and most importantly, a clean, concise format that provides search engine spiders with a super-fast blueprint for indexing your website.

So how do you go about making a perfect sitemap?

First, let's revisit the philosophy behind sitemaps. Webmasters traditionally used sitemaps to provide a 'guide to all pages on this site' in the shape of a sitemap - if a visitor is lost, or wants to browse through your website to look for information they are interested in, they would use a sitemap.

That's great. In fact, sitemaps can be **very useful** to help users navigate through your website.

But isn't your menu structure (or whatever navigational theme you have placed on your website) supposed to do that?

The sitemap is a backup - a failsafe that is activated if your first line of help - The navigational structure of your website, doesn't help your visitors.

Now I've always said that the most important factor in creating a successful user experience is to build a **foolproof menu** system, and to organize pages on your website logically and intuitively so that anyone can find what they are looking for within just a few clicks. If you did all that, would your users really need a sitemap? Not likely.

On the other hand, **a sitemap can be extremely useful to help search engines index your website completely**. In a typical scenario, when a search engine spider will visit your site for the first time it might

fully index your website, but it will take a look at all the links to your main page.

Now if one of those links points to your sitemap, then the next time the search engine spider returns to look for more web content and crawls those links, it will definitely index your site map and subsequently, gain access to all of your pages.

Remember... A site map **does not** guarantee indexing of your web site; on the other hand, it ensures that if you have done your SEO right (consistent link-building and targeted web pages), a search engine spider will be more likely to index the whole website instead of doing it partially - in fact with the right format, you can almost 'hypnotize' the spider into doing a complete crawl. This is assuming of course, that the spider finds your website important enough in the first place to have a look - something that can only happen through a persistent link-building campaign.

When creating your sitemap, keep the following points in mind:

1. **Create simple, clean HTML code.**
2. Organize your website's content into contextual categories - make simple lists and don't worry about ordering.
3. **Ensure that your site map reflects the structure of your website** - i.e., the category headings on your website should be the top level category pages on your website. This also means that you should build a sitemap at the same time that you are planning your website's structure and content.
4. Look at sitemaps of leading websites for an insight on how to organize your links - the DevShed Sitemap is a great example.
5. **While a sitemap's main purpose is to organize all pages of your website neatly on a single page**, it will be helpful to include a line or two describing the link - sort of like a links page, only that this is for internal links, and not for outside links. This will help users understand what the pages are about, and keywords in these descriptions will help with search engine algorithms which are starting to account for text surrounding the links as well.

Google Sitemap

Google has recently released a Sitemap Protocol, which will be used to 'supplement' the regular crawling process of GoogleBot, Google's search engine spider. While the technical details of generating and maintaining a Google compliant sitemap involve some serious head-scratching, here's a summary of what placing such a sitemap will do for your website.

The Google Sitemap (GS) will contain usual information such as **a list of URLs**, plus additional information about these URLs, such as **when they were last modified** (content freshness), **how frequently they are changed** (content "refresh rate") and the **importance of a particular URL** in relation to other URLs in the GS. Other tags, or pieces of information, are expected to be added in future updates.

The GS Protocol requires that your GS is in XML format. This allows you to store information about each link in a format that search engine spiders can reliably interpret and manipulate. Don't let this scare you. **I'll be sending you a video showing how to use a special, free, software program to create a Google sitemap for you :-)**

There are other concerns, such as the limit on the size of a sitemap, support for multiple sitemaps and placement of the sitemap on your website, which are discussed on the Google Sitemap page. From a webmaster's point of view, it's important to note the benefits that such a sitemap might have on search engine spider behavior regarding your website.

The central aim of the GS project is to allow webmasters to tell the search engines the importance of their pages, and about how frequently they plan to update their websites. Like all search engine technology, this is open to abuse but it is also a powerful tool for new websites to help with rapid search engine indexing.

By telling the search engine spiders exactly which pages are most important, and which pages are most like to have regularly updated fresh content, you can simplify their job and will eventually be rewarded with more "intelligent" crawling - ensuring that your most important pages get indexed rapidly after they are updated by you.

Once you've created your Google Sitemap (either through the Google Sitemap Generator or a 'simpler' tool such as Site Map Pro) and placed it on your website, you can submit your sitemap to Google. This page not only helps you manage your Google sitemaps, but also shows you when Google accesses them.

Sitemap Professional

If you have a small website, manually editing your site map may not be a problem. Heck, if you are a programmer, you can even work with Google's Sitemap Generator and generate your very own Google Sitemaps. But if you have a large website, or several websites, and if like me you don't want to waste your time dabbling with code (i.e. you want to stick to what you know best, which is running a successful online business), you need an automated site map generator.

But you don't need just *any* sitemap tool. To be effective, **a sitemap generator must have the following:**

- **Ability to group your pages into themed categories.**
- Support of templates so that you can map your site structure onto your sitemap.
- **Runs from your desktop - easier to use than having to run a script from your website.**
- And of course - generates a Google Sitemap.

Site Map Pro is one of the few tools I'm aware of that does all this (and then some) in a fraction of the time it would take you to create the sitemap yourself. If you factor in the savings in time over the period of a year (when you are busy putting up and maintaining several large websites), the cost of such a tool is just a drop in the ocean.

And as an added bonus, the tool will also generate a Google Sitemap for you. There is absolutely no knowledge of programming required; it's custom made for online business owners like you and me who don't have the time or patience to learn complex programming and technical details. If you're tight on your budget and need a Google sitemap created, don't buy this software for that purpose alone. **I'll be showing you a good, free, Google sitemap generator in a coming lesson.**

In the end, if you do your job of designing your website right, your users wouldn't need a sitemap. On the other hand, search engines have increased their interest in sitemaps as a reliable option to learn more about your website. With a properly configured sitemap **and a Google sitemap** on your website, you'll be miles ahead of your competition once the results of this cooperation with search engine spiders start to kick in.

**Stay tuned for the video on creating a Google Sitemap.
I'll be sending you this in the next few days!**

All the best,



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