

Business Advisory Group

The Small Business Doctors

What you need to know about Search Engine Visibility—*before* you talk to your IT guy

Sooner or later, if you have a commercial web site, you will begin to worry about Search Engine Visibility, and its technical counterpart, Search Engine Optimization. In a nutshell, when a potential client types a search enquiry on a web site like Google, then you want *your* web page to come up, preferably as the first “hit” or at least on one of the first 10 – 20 items. If it does, then you have good SE visibility. If not, then you may need to change your website and this process is called SE optimisation, or SEO.

Your web site designer, or an SEO specialist, will make the changes to help this happen, but he/she can’t do it without your help. Before you meet, here are some things you should know:

- *It's tough to be number one.* As an example there are as many as 37 million responses for the search term “widgets”. Knowing that fact, what are the chances that your business you will appear as number one on the list.
- *Winning can be just temporary.* Suppose your designer creates a page that manages to mention “widgets” 3,492 times on one page, and you’re now number 1. How long will it be before Widgets “R” Us changes its page to use the term 3,500 times? Besides, most search engines realise what you’re doing and will de-list you if you use blatant tactics like that, and as well; your clients may get really bored reading it!

With that in mind, prepare for a meeting with your SEO specialist to consider presentation alternatives. Maybe your business specialises in antique widgets. A smart consumer will give up looking through 37 million results sooner or later and search for “antique widgets” (putting the words in quotes makes most search engines look for the exact phrase). Now you’re only competing with a much fewer 83 sites found on the first page. That’s a much easier task.

Consider other phrases that may describe your product. Make a list and prioritise them. Ask your clients how they found your web site. Bear in mind though, that asking clients or looking at your web site statistics will only provide data about words and phrases that actually *found* your website. You need to investigate and determine those phrases that people may have used which unfortunately *didn't* find you, because those are the ones you need to add for the search engines to find.

Although your web site advisors can do marvellous things, you alone know the business and the clients. Use that knowledge to help your specialists do a better job.

The Business Advisory Group (BAG) is an incorporated, not-for-profit organization whose members volunteer their time and expertise to provide solid business advice based on a lifetime of experience.

We operate in Oakville, Burlington and Hamilton, offering meetings in a number of convenient locations.

One of our most popular service offerings is a half-day client meeting with typically three of our members who will develop an understanding of your situation, offer suggestions, and follow-up with a written summary of the major points. The fee for this is \$150, which provides funds to cover expenses such as liability insurance for our members, who provide their skills free of charge.

Call toll-free: 1-877-381-1990, or (905) 381-1999 which is local in the Burlington area. Leave a message (name, phone number and best times to call) and one of our volunteer coordinators will get back to you.

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