

Internet Marketing For Irish Businesses

This guide is targeted at SME's in Ireland who are interested in carrying out SEO on their own website. It is aimed at micro niches.



Using Google to increase the amount of business that you can find on the internet can be fairly easy for most small businesses, especially when the business is trading in a micro niche.

Being in the front page of Google's search results, hopefully the top half, is the only place to be, (always aiming for no1). Being here means that you are in front of customers that are looking for your product or service – this is what makes search engines like Google so powerful.

Using internet marketing can cut waste from your marketing campaign. Unlike newspaper or magazine advertising the returns from being in the front page of Google can be measured exactly, and measured on an hour by hour basis.

It is worth noting the difference it will make if you can move your website higher in the Google rankings. If you can capture the number 1 position it is worth approximately 40% of the entire search volume for that term, number 2 position will get about 12%, number 5 about 5% and no 10 will get less than 3%, the differences are huge and worth doing a bit of work for.

These figure however are dependant on Google local search, (not in Ireland at present), and how many Google ads are directly above the first organic result.

There are two other issues that can affect this click through percentage – if the first result has site wide links it will receive a higher percentage and lastly the description can affect the click through rate.

For a full list of the click through percentages see [Richard Hearne's blog](#), Richard is one of the best SEO consultants in Ireland and his blog is well worth reading.

Most Irish businesses could quite easily rank somewhere on the front page for their main key search terms by following this short simple guide.

Hosting & Domain Names

If your primary market is Ireland make sure your web hosting is in Ireland. Same for the UK and the US, if they are your main market host your website there. This will make a big difference if you are not using a country domain, e.g.

a .com or .net. If you are using a .ie or .co.uk the difference will be less noticeable – but it still makes a difference in Google’s search results.

A .ie or .co.uk domain name will in some ways restrict the future growth of your web presence. Therefore it is worthwhile to invest in the .co.uk and .com names if they are available.

Flash

Flash looks great, wonderful things can be done in flash that cannot be done any other way – however Google will not list your site well in the search results pages, if at all. Therefore don’t use flash for your whole site, it is fine as a header.

Don’t use flash for a splash page or even have a splash page; this is an intro page that shows how good your web designer is but your visitors have to either wait through or skip past to get to the rest of your site. This might have been cool in 2004 – but no more.

Images

I have come across some websites where the text on the page is an image; therefore it has been created in something like Photoshop. All search engines love text, so it is best not to hide your text in an image – this again will reduce your chances of ranking well in the search results.

Keyword Research

The ideal situation almost never happens. Before a website or page is written details of the product or service should inform the base keywords. From this the rest of the keyword research can be undertaken.

The aim of keyword research is to find the keywords that your customers are using to find your products or service. If the area is very competitive it can be used to find an area where you can compete. Keyword research will provide a reasonable indication of the numbers searching for the keyword terms.

Keyword research is VERY important. If this area is incomplete or mistakes are made it can be costly in time and money to repair the damage, as this is going to inform much of the later work on the site.

[Google external keyword tool](#) – take note of the three settings at the top right of the results for broad match, phrase match, and exact match. Use them all for keyword mining but only exact match for an indication of the search traffic.

[Wordtracker](#) – This is the free version, there are also paid versions.

[Wordze](#) – No free version, but this is my favourite.

[Microsoft Plugin](#) – Nice free word suggest tool from Microsoft that plugs into excel.

[SEO Book keyword tool](#) – Another free tool from SEO Book, very good, it pulls information from various sources.

This is an area that is so important that it is worth your while to have an expert generate your keyword list for you or invest in some training.

On Page Optimisation

This area can have almost overnight results, (well within a week or so usually), and in the internet where you can wait months for results this is great.

There are three tags in the webpage that the search engine reads: the title, description, and keywords tags. The keywords tag was so abused that it is now ignored by search engines, if you do add your keywords here keep the list short – 10 or 12 words or a few short phrases at most.



The title tag is the line in the search results that you click on to visit the web site.

The title tag is the most important element that you have complete control over in SEO. Your main words or phrases from the keyword research will make up your title. Unless your company is a well known brand leave your company name either to the end of the title tag or use it in your description.

Example of a good title tag:

Tax Accountant – Small Business Accountant – Tax Adviser

Bad:

Accountant, Ireland, Dublin, Tax, Advisor, Accountant, Taxation

The title tag should be no more than 70 characters. The title tags on each page should be different and themed to that page and the information contained within it. You are always looking for congruence between the title and the content written on the page.

The description tag is the small snippet of text that appears under the search result for each listing. The description tag is contained in the html code of the page and not visible when viewing the web page. Ctrl + U will show the html code, at the top you can see this code: `<meta name="description" content="` and then the description.

Until recently Google only showed up to 170 characters in the description, however for longer search terms they are now showing up to 350 characters in the description. I still write a description of 170 characters as often Google will pull the description it wants to use from the page text for the longer search terms.

Images

All images on the page should have an alt tag with a good description of the image; I am presuming the images are relevant to your product or service.

Text

The keywords from your keyword list should be used through out the text, often having them at the start of paragraphs helps and bolding or italics can also help – however it has to be remembered that the text is written for the consumption of your customers primarily and using these methods can look ugly on the page.

The best text for the page is exactly what you do or sell, written well, with calls to actions. Give your customers what they are looking for, don't make them think, make them contact you or buy from you.

It is advisable to have a couple of hundred words on the page – this I know can be difficult sometimes on business sites.

Firefox and Plugins

Before moving on to competition research you will need some tools, these ones are free. Download [Firefox](#) this is a browser similar to Internet Explorer.

Once it is downloaded and installed go again to Aaron walls site and download these two plugins and install them: [Rank Checker](#) – [SEO for FireFox](#) read the instruction for usage and setup for SEO for Firefox.

Next go to Red Fly and download [Google Global](#) Dave of Red Fly is also one of the best SEO Consultants in Ireland and writes his blog [here](#)

Take all of your keywords and load them into the Rank Checker, save the settings and run it for the first time. This will give you a base to measure progress from.

Competition Research

There are combinations of different items that will make your competition rank higher in the search engines than you.

The first item, and you can do little about it, is the age of your site and the age of their site. If you are competing for a competitive search term and your site is on a new domain then this is a major drawback. Search engines, Google especially, will not rank your new site well for competitive search terms. There is little you can do about this in the organic listings except set your site up well and build good, respected, strong links – if this is done your site will eventually rank.

To find out how competitive your main search term is click on the SEO for Firefox logo so that it is coloured. Greyed out means it is off. Enter your search in Google. You will see the following results below each search result.

#1 | PR: 4 | Google Cache Date: Apr 1 2009 | Traffic Value: ? | Age: ? | del.ido.us: ? | del.ido.us Page Bookmarks: ? | Digg: ? | Digg's Popular Stories: ? | Stumbleupon: ? | Twitter: ? | Y! Links: 2,590 | Y! .edu Links: 9 | Y! .gov Links: 0 | Y! Page Links: 3,350 | Y! .edu Page Links: 7 | Technorati: ? | Alexa: ? | Compete.com Rank: 2 | Compete.com Uniques: 2 | Trends | Cached: 2 | dmoz: 2 | Bloglines: 2 | Page blog links: 2 | dir.yahoo.com: 2 | Bote: 2 | Whois | Sitool | Yahoo position: 2 | Majestic SEO linkdomain: 2

The two results that you are interested in first are the Yahoo! Links and Yahoo! Page links.

The first are the links to the whole site and the second are the links to the page that is displayed. Switch off SEO for Firefox and then click on each result, this will take you to Yahoo! and list the links to that site and that page.

This is an easy simple way to see where your competition is getting their links from and how many links they have. This will tell you how competitive the search result is and will indicate how many links you will need in order to rank higher.

Download [Back Link Analyzer](#) – this is another free tool from Aaron Wall at the SEO Book. Read the instructions on how to use, it is fairly simple. This great free software will also list the links that your competitor has, but not only that it will also list the link text they are using. Link text is very important for ranking for the keywords that are in the link anchor text.

Off Page Optimisation – Links

Links are the currency of the internet. Google currently uses this as one of their main measures on how respected a web site is. NOT all links are equal though.

There is a huge temptation when working on your site to build as many links as possible from anywhere you can get a link. It can be daunting to sit looking at a browser window and wonder where to get a link when you are doing this for the first time, however many are fairly easy.

It has to be borne in mind that quite often the easier the link to get the lower the quality it will be.

There is a list of [Irish Directories here](#) with some comments on them – some of them are very worthwhile.

When first building links to a website it is much better to get some very good quality links. Do not submit your site to hundreds or thousands of free directories – this might be okay for stronger sites to do over time but not for a web site that is just starting to build links. You can find your site treated as the company it keeps and most of these free directories are simply spam.

In a recent link building experiment two sites were built in different areas but with the same level of competition. One site was submitted to 720 free directories and the other was submitted to 5 good paid directories. After six months the first site had a PR of 1 and was receiving no traffic from Google. The other had a PR of 4 and was getting traffic. Be careful in the beginning where you get your links from.

Know how many links you need and build them over 3 to 6 months, unless you only need 10 or 20 – in that case I would build them over a shorter period of time.

The anatomy of a link:

```
<a href="http://www.cubeonlinemarketing.ie/" title="Online Marketing">Cube  
Online Marketing</a>
```

This is the one part of html that you need to learn. Between the first " " is the domain name. The full domain name should always be used, include the www and make sure that is how your web site displays. The next part is the title; this is the text that displays when someone hovers their mouse over the link. The last part is called the anchor text. This indicates to Google what the page is about – this is very important.

For example: when building links to my Camino de Santiago website I wanted links that had – Camino de Santiago – as the anchor text. However I also wanted the site to rank for various other phrases, Santiago de Compostela, Camino Frances, and more – all of these are used as anchor text in various links.

Where to get links:

- Web directories
- Article directories
- Press Releases
- Web 2.0 sites, bookmarking sites
- Your web designer or SEO Consultant
- Business Associates, Suppliers, Customers
- Link Baiting, hard on most business sites
- Local Chambers, Trade Bodies, etc
- Yahoo! Answers, Google Groups, Squidoo, Forums
- Write a blog, Comment on blogs, (don't spam), Blog Directories
- Have a beautiful design in CSS - CSS directories like CSS Vault
- Reciprocal Links - it is preferable to have the link inside content, but this method is still okay if not over used - less than 25% of over all links.
- Buying / Renting Links - Google hates this and will penalise any site it finds selling links, therefore if you buy from places like pay per post you will eventually lose the equity from that link.

There are directories for everything, if you send out a newsletter add it to the newsletter directories. Do you give something of value away for free? Use that to promote your business.

Before any link building is started be sure of your keywords, the words you want your website to rank for.

Google Analytics

It is important to know how many people visit your website. What search phrases they use to find the website, what pages are the most important, how long do people spend on your site, what page do they your from, what countries are they coming from. This is some of the basic information that is required for analysis.

Google provide the best free reporting tools in the internet. This is a simple piece of code that you add to the bottom of each page on your website; it will give you all the above information and much more.

Go here to [Analytics](#); this is the link for Analytics only – another and better option is to sign up using [Google Adwords](#). If you sign up using Adwords it is then possible to integrate the information between Google's Pay Per Click Adwords and Analytics. You might not need this in the beginning, but it is better to have the option.

Google Webmaster Tools

Go [here and sign up for Google's Webmaster Tools](#), again it is free. It is easy to add the code to your website, there is the choice of uploading an HTML page or add a piece of code to the head area of your site. If you have an ftp program it is a 5 minute job.

There are some basic uses for webmaster tools:

- Submitting a sitemap to Google
- Listings of keywords you rank for but do not get visitors from
- Google will display problems it has accessing you pages or site

These are the basics and again there is much more available, but these basics are important.

Within webmaster tools is the only place Google will list all the links it finds for your website – this information is important if you are employing someone to build links for your site – you can easily see if the figures they give you are correct.

Google are adding functionality to webmaster tools – recently they added some widgets. Some are good if and others not so as they give your content off site to Google servers – never a good idea.

Tools

[Firefox](#) – browser

[Rank Checker](#) – free Firefox plugin

[SEO for FireFox](#) – Free Firefox plugin

[Google Global](#) – to see results and Adwords ads in other countries

[TouchGraph](#) – Graphical representation of sites linking to each other, this gives an idea of how easily Google can see where your links come from.

[SubmitEaze](#) – Directory Submission software – this program costs \$78.95. I still own a copy and use it to submit mostly to article directories rather than the many free directories. The one great advantage is its ability to import lists of custom directories, therefore saving time when submitting to these.

I would be wary of buying or paying for many SEO tools in the beginning, it is too easy to think the tools will do the work for you – they don't. Building good links can take a while.

[Google Webmaster Tools](#) – a must and free.

[Google Adwords](#) – This is Google's Pay Per Click advertising platform. If you ever intend to advertise on Google use this area to sign up for analytics as the functionality is much better long run.

[Google Analytics](#) – Analytics only.

[BackLink Watch](#) – Another good back link analyser.

[Whois](#) – Sometimes websites don't have contact details or you want to know more information about the website or domain. Here you can see where the site is hosted and quite often find contact emails.

[Key Word Spy](#) – This has some free options for checking your own and your competitions keywords. With tools like this you are getting into more in-depth search engine optimisation and paid tools. Interesting none the less.

If you require more SEO software than is listed above you are passed the stage of small Business and micro niches. I would suggest if you are starting this from scratch to attend a one day training course – these courses are great for a fast start.

I currently offer a one day training course at your office. Check out my site for more details. [Cube Training](#).

Resources

As mentioned already three good Irish SEO blogs, and a few of the many others worldwide that are worth reading.

[Cube Online Marketing](#)

[RedFly Marketing](#)

[Red Cardinal](#)

[Irish Webmasters Forum](#) – Good community of Irish Webmasters willing to help and answer questions.

[SEO Book](#) – This is the best SEO Book available on SEO, it is not cheap at \$100. However it depends on how much you want to get out of your SEO and how much you are doing yourself. There is also a great blog here and a private forum.

[Sugar Rae](#) – Great Marketing blog cover many areas

[The Link Spiel](#) – I have learned more from Debra about link building and emailing than I care to admit, her blog is a wealth of information.

[Matt Cutts](#) – part of Google's web spam team, worth reading.

[Conversation Marketing](#) – Ian Lurie writes about all online marketing areas

The easiest way to filter information from many blogs is to subscribe to the blog using an RSS reader – this is Google's <http://www.google.com/reader>

Beware of the main problem for link building and SEO in general – too much reading and learning and not enough action...

That said I would recommend these two books:

[Purple Cow](#) – Although a few years old this book can still be bought in most bookstores in Ireland. If this book does not turn you on you should consider out-sourcing your online marketing activities.

[4 Hour Work Week](#) – I resisted buying this book due to the title and the book cover. Eventually I did on a recommendation, the book is more about out-sourcing and automation and a great introduction to this area.

I hope this guide has helped you in some way, if you need further help or training with your internet marketing call me Leslie Gilmour on 01 443 4900 or email leslie@cubeonlinemarketing.ie