



# Internet Marketing Handbook of Best Practices

## Introduction

Internet Marketing is about more than just search engine marketing. Internet Marketing is about utilizing the internet to market to your customers wherever and whenever your customers are there. Internet Marketing is an extension of traditional marketing, advertising, sales, and public relations.

We must first find customer or in turn they find us, offer them a compelling message, and have them perform a desired action. Internet marketing should be a standard tool in any Marketer, Sales, PR, or Advertisers bag. Internet Marketing can take many shapes and forms. It's very flexible, offering a wide range of options to solve an issue or meet a goal.

Explore the topics below to learn more:

- [Search Engine Marketing](#)
- [Email Marketing](#)

# Introduction to Search Engine Marketing

Due to the large number of sites search engines have to index they only want relevant ones. Due to the potential business one could generate from being ranked well an entire business of fooling, tricking, misleading, and "SPAMING" the search engines has emerged.

Search Engines are not dumb and these tricks rarely last very long. When a Search Engine discovers a site that is trying to mislead the search engine the search engine puts that site on a blacklist. Being put on a search engine blacklist means that it bans that site from the site entirely: no index, no rank, no listing. Naturally once a site is blacklisted it is extremely difficult to get off that list.

Fortunately there are purely legitimate ways to get ranked. Most search engines post guidelines. Here are some of those things that we can concentrate our efforts on that influence rank:

## Page Title

### Don't Forget the Page Title

The page title tag `<title>I'm the Title of the Page</title>` is a very important part of search engine rankings and often overlooked item. The page title should include keyword rich relevant content for the page it's on. A common mistake for most sites is to use their business name as the only thing in the title tag. Unless someone is specifically searching for your business it is not necessary to even put your business name in the page title, at least not by itself.

**Example:**

Typical Mistake: `<title>Bob's Fruit Inc.,</title>`

Correct Way: `<title>FRESH organic - exotic fruit with FREE home delivery</title>`

From a search engine and user standpoint the second way simply works and looks much better. If you were doing a search which one would you prefer finding in the search results?

## Order is King/Queen

The order of the words in the title are very important. Usually the first words are more important than the last one. Try to keep them to less than 8 words (63 characters), most browsers cut off the title at a certain point anyway, so there's little point from a user standpoint.

### Example:

If we sell fruit and our keyword research shows that our potential customers are searching for specific keywords we put them into the title. Our research shows that our users in one month have searched using these words on major search engines:

Search Term	# of Searches
Fresh organic fruit	156,789
Home delivered fruit	84,050
Exotic fruits	78,567

Therefore I would write a title for the page for our fruit like this: FRESH organic - exotic fruit with FREE home delivery Capitalization is for the users benefit, calling out two features we know they are searching for "FRESH" and "FREE"

The page with this title should be relevant to the title, in this case... a fruit page. We can do further research to narrow down the keywords for each specific fruit page. The keywords that we end up with for the title should also be in the content of the page.

## Smart Images

### What the search engines can't see might be hurting you

Images on websites help break up copy and add another dimension to the user experience. Images are also very useful in helping your site with search engine rankings. Search engines don't pay attention to all the images on your site. They usually only pay attention to linked images. The thinking is, if something has a link than it has a relevance.

## Common Mistakes

A common mistake in designing a site is to use graphics where text can be used. Most people don't know they are sacrificing search rankings by using graphics in places where text can be used. In most cases the text can be styled to improve its look and still be used by the search engines. This way we have nice looking text that also is used by the search engines.

Example:

1. **Delicious Tangerines fresh from the orange groves of Florida.**

2. **Delicious Tangerines fresh from the orange groves of Florida.**

1. This is normal text and can be "read" by the search engines.
2. This is an image and although you can see that it has the same content as example number one, the search engines can't see it. It also doesn't have a link, thus this is for the users benefit only. The search engine will ignore it.

## Special Images

Search engines seek out special images on your site. Those special images are images that are linked. Linked images are images on your site that have links to other pages in the site.

Example:



1.



2.

1. This linked image is a picture of a tangerine.

- The name of the image file is "delicious-tangerine.jpg"
- The page it links to is "fruit-basket-tangerine.html"
- The ALT tag for the image is "Delicious Tangerine - FREE Shipping - Click Here"

We use several keywords in the above example: delicious tangerine, fruit basket, free shipping. For each element: file name, link file name, and alt tag the search engine pays attention to each element. We use these specific words because we did research that reveals that this is what people are searching for. Now let's look at the second example.

2. This image is not linked. Like example number 1 it is a picture of a tangerine.

- The name of the image file is "delicious-tangerine.jpg"
- There is no link
- The ALT tag we used for the image is "Delicious Tangerine - FREE Shipping"

The second example did not have a link and thus the search engines don't count it towards your ranking, it's ignored. All the other elements are the same, except for a link. The link is what makes it relevant to the search engines. We still use an ALT tag, "Delicious Tangerine - FREE Shipping," for the users benefit.

## How the Search Engines "see" your graphics

The search engines send out software programs to scan your site in order to index it. These search engine programs, called spiders or bots, can't read graphics like you or I, they just see the code. We can do something to help the search engines.

We add ALT tags to the images to provide a short description of what that image is. For example if the image is a button that reads "Fresh Fruit" we would write an ALT tag that says "Fresh Fruit". This is not only helpful to the search engines in ranking the site, but also for users of the page. Should all the images on my site have ALT tags, you might be asking yourself? The simple answer is that it's not necessary to make ALT tags for all the images on your site, but it is helpful to do so for any image that has text in it. Images with ALT tags, but aren't linked, don't really effect your site ranking. Images without links do make a difference to the usability of your site for users. It's a good practice to add ALT tags to any image with text for the users of your site.

## What do I need to do with my images?

It's important to understand what the search engines are looking for. There are two things that search engines generally pay attention to in a linked tag:

1. The link itself

- You can use keywords in the file names for the link and it certainly won't hurt as long as it's relevant

Example: link = /organic-fruit/free-shipping.html

2. The ALT tag for the image

Example: 

In both examples above the search engines will pay attention to the text for the image and the link. In both cases the search engines will find "organic fruit" and "FREE Shipping"

## Smart Links

Search Engines like links, it helps them find other content that may be worthwhile to index. Since search engines do put a certain amount of focus on links they also examine the links very closely. They look at all the words in the text for the link and the url link itself. Having the right words, relevant keywords, in your links can help your ranking.

## Common Mistakes

A common mistake with keywords is to not take the time to use proper keywords. You may see text links like: Click Here, Download Now, More, etc. In the majority of these cases the site is missing out on a opportunity to increase their site's ranking in the search engines.

Instead of using these types of words we can elaborate on them.

### Example:

1. Click Here
2. Fresh Organic Fruit

1. The first link (1) doesn't have any keywords at all.
2. The second link (2) is keyword rich "Fresh Organic Fruit" and will help our ranking.

The page that is being linked to is important as well.

1. `<a href="products.html">`
2. `<a href="/fresh-fruit/organic-fruit.html">`

Search engines read the linked to page for keywords. If we leave them out we miss an opportunity for better rankings. The first link doesn't have any keywords, while the second one manages two keywords "fresh fruit" and "organic fruit".

## Navigation

Search engines like to follow links that they find on the page. This lets them discover, in a natural way, other pages on your site. If navigation is made with JavaScript, Flash, or some types of Server Side Created code, the search engines will not be able to read it. Having the search engines naturally follow these links is very important to having the rest of your site indexed and ranked. This rule is true for other links in the body of the page as well.

### Common Mistakes

A common mistake in designing navigation for a site is to make it easy for the web developer to update later on. Most of these easy solutions rely on JavaScript and advanced coding techniques that the search engines can't decipher. Although having one navigation file to update is easy for the web developer it does not make it easy for the search engines to index the site.

Search engines like to use menu navigation systems in your site to find other pages in your site to index. They figure that if the page is important than you will put it in the menu navigation.

## Meta Tags

Meta tags is one of the most common search optimization phrases that people recognize. At one time Meta Tags could do a lot for a sites rankings in the search engines. That time thought is long past. Search engines rely on advanced algorithms and a multitude of factors to determine a sites ranking.

### Common Mistakes

A common mistake is to focus a lot of time and energy to get a "good list" of meta keywords. If that's what you're doing I can assure you that you can stop doing it now, as it won't help your search ranking one way or another. Meta keywords used to be a typical item for optimization and also an item that got abused and manipulated. Like most things that get abused search engines start relying on it less and less, until they get to a point where it is no longer necessary. That is the current state of the "meta keyword," it is no longer necessary.

## The Mighty Meta Keyword

There is a meta word that is important. The "meta description" is still rather important. The meta description will not affect your sites ranking, but it will affect the number of people who click on your search engine listing. Instead search engines use your meta description as a self description of your website. When they rank your site they may use your meta description below your link as a definition of what your site is about. Therefore it is important that it is both keyword rich and makes sense to a reader. Remember it won't affect your site ranking, but it is the description users will read about your site and that may affect if they click or don't click on your link.

## Robots.txt - Hiding files from Search Engines

Having a search engine index your site is great, but not if they are indexing pages that you don't want people to find. There are lots of reasons you might not want a particular file, file folder, or type of files to be searched. You may have sensitive data, like price lists, that you don't want competitors to find. You do have the ability to tell the search engines what pages, files, or folders to skip.

### Robots.txt

When the search engine reviews your site it looks for a particular file to see if there are any restrictions for your site. The file it seeks out is the "Robots.txt" file. It's a text file that you place in the root directory of your site. Every search engine will look for it, regardless if you have it or not. You may have even noticed in your site log an error for the file "robots.txt." That's because the search engines will always look for it.

In the robots.txt file you can indicate what files or folders are off-limits to indexing. If the file is properly written, then the search engine will skip those off-limit files.

The robots.txt file will not improve your search ranking or make the search engines visit your site more often. It's just a basic courtesy the search engines extend to you, to let them know what you don't want listed on the search engines.

## What does a robots.txt file look like?

There are basic guidelines for writing a proper robots.txt file. Be sure you pay close attention to these guidelines, as a wrong space or character here or there might make it confusing for the search engine...they may read it incorrectly.

### Example

```
User-agent: *  
Disallow: /cgi-bin/  
Disallow: fruit.html
```

This example will tell all search engines that they should not index the "/cgi-bin/" directory and not to index the "fruit.html" file.

## What do these commands mean?

Here are basic guidelines for using these commands:

- "User-agent" is the line where you could tell it what specific search engine you wish to notify.
  - You can also use an asterisk "\*" which means it applies to all search engines.
- "Disallow" is the line where you tell the search engines which files or folders you don't want it to list.
  - Each line should have one entry.
  - You can add as many disallow lines as you want, there is no limit.
- NOTE: This file should be edited in a plain text editor.
  - Notepad is a favorite choice.
  - Word or other Word Processing programs should not be used.



## Download Sample Robots.txt

[Sample Robots.txt file](#)

Instructions:

- Right Click on link and choose "Save As" or "Save Link As"
- Save it to somewhere you'll easily find it (ex: Desktop or My Documents)
- Modify the file for your own use
- Save the changes
- Upload it to the root directory on your web server

**[Visit the AgencyFour website for our FREE Robots.txt Online Generator](#)**

## Site Map

A sitemap is something every search engine searches out. It is the one document which they can use to find every other page on your site. Due to it's importance we should not forget to create keyword rich content for it. The page is full of possibilities for keyword rich links.

### Common Mistakes:

The most common mistake is to have very simple names for the links in the site map.

#### Example Site Map:

Home  
News  
Contact  
About

None of these links are keyword rich or even do a good job of describing what the content on the page is.



Don't be afraid to have a site map with four words or longer for a link.

**Example Site Map:**

Exotic organic fresh fruit

Fresh Fruit News

FREE Home Delivery on all orders: Contact Us today

## Getting Links

Search engines put a lot of weight on the fact that other people link to your site. It's a bit of a popularity contest, as they think that if someone else is linking to you then you must have something of interest. Currently it's not important to have the other site be very content relevant to your content. However, to future-proof yourself it would be better to have a site link to you that is content relevant, as this would be a logical step for the search engines to take eventually. There is only one minor search engine doing this currently, but it would provide more relevant results, and the search engines always try to find more relevant sites.

## Research! Research! Research!

There's no big secret to getting linked to. Have content people want and they will link to you. Finding out what that content is can be tricky. This is a place where good research pays off.

1. Search your site's internal search system to determine what people are searching for. You might be surprised at what you find.
2. Research content surrounding your product/services and provide it. A fruit site might have a page on blended drinks that you can make from their products. Although it's a surrounding topic, it could produce a lot of links and viewers would be interested in their fruit products.

## Increase Rankings

At some point a sites traffic levels out. You've done all you can to get your site ranked naturally. There are options for getting more traffic:

1. **Paid Rankings:**  
For a fee your ranking, for certain keywords, can show up above natural listings. There are surveys that users ignore paid (sponsored) rankings. However, the flip side to that is half of us don't know the difference between natural and paid search listings. Although they say they don't like them, half don't know how to identify



them. To us that means a paid search listing will look natural to about half of the users out there.

### 2. **Affiliate Programs:**

You can start your own program to pay sites to list your site as a link. You then pay them for each click made or product sold as a result of that click. These are programs that you manager internally, much like a sales referral system

### 3. **Email Newsletters**

This is an extremely effective and cost efficient way to increase rankings and brand/product awareness. Provide relevant copy, stick to the standard sending rules, track your delivery rates, and keep your email list clean.

If done correctly this is the cheapest direct communication you can have with a customer. The result is that the email drives users to the site and if the content is good they share that email with their friends by simply forwarding it.

Lastly, email lasts forever. If you rename or move a page keep in mind that there might be a newsletter in someone's inbox with the old page address in it. Update your links to point to the new page when you move or rename them.

# Email Marketing Campaign

## Create an Effective Email Marketing Solution

There are two big issues with creating an effective Email communication.

First, make sure it's not Spam. That may sound simple, but it's becoming harder and harder to confirm to the new Spam rules and standards everyday.

Second, build your Email so that it looks professional, legitimate, and has a clear message.

Email is a communication channel and should be respected as one. Fortunately for us, there are Best Practices for developing Email communication that doesn't show up as Spam, jumps the hurdles of Email deliverability issues, and is a clear communication tool.

### Email Address (AKA "Send To" List)

Before we send out an email to large group of people we need to look at our list of names. These names need to be organized and cleaned up. Make sure you take out any duplicate email address'. Then you can split the list into a group who wish to receive a TEXT email and those that requested an HTML email. HTML is overwhelmingly rated as receiving a higher click-through rate (84.6 percent) than is text-based e-mail (3.8 percent). Don't assume that it's okay to send an HTML message to someone who requested TEXT though. It might be that their system can't receive these messages and might even block them entirely.

### Email Content

Define the content for your email. If it's an HTML email it should have a similar look and feel to your website or traditional media. You want your email to be instantly recognizable by the person you're sending to. If they don't recognize it they will delete it. Make your content simple and straightforward. Include in the email your company contact information, as well as information for the user to remove themselves from your mailing list.



## Whitelist - Blacklist

Most large email providers like; AOL, MSN, Google GMail, use whitelists and blacklists to filter out incoming mail. This filter is put in place before the user ever sees the email. The blacklist is a list of bad senders or SPAMMERS, you do not want to be on that list...as your email will not get through. The Whitelist is a list of good names and the filter lets these emails through. If you aren't on a whitelist or blacklist you're bulk mail will most likely not get through the larger companies. It's in your best interest to be on a whitelist. Each company has it's own requirements to get on the whitelist. Check the company's websites for detailed information.

Links:

- [Yahoo! Bulk Email Guidelines](#)
- [MSN Bulk Email Guidelines](#)
- [Google Bulk Email Guidelines](#)

## Tracking the Email

This is an often overlooked step of sending out emails, finding out who actually got them. An email tracking company can help you setup your emails so that you can find out: if they got the email, when they opened it, if they clicked on any of your links inside the email. This is all important information as you want to know who got the email and who didn't. If you see for example that 100% of the email list did not even receive the email, then you know there is a definite problem.

Tracking is also great for testing small portions of your list. This will give you a success sample rate. You can try out new promotions or offers with small samples, then roll out the successful ones to the entire list.