

# **Not Getting Rankings? How to Identify the Problem and Fix it Quickly.**

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This paper is an outline of various problems that could be stopping you from getting rankings. Often a minor problem can wreak major havoc with your search engine optimization campaign.

## **When You Aren't Getting the Results You Expected...**

After a thorough Search Engine Optimization (SEO) campaign has been completed, it can be incredibly frustrating to find you aren't getting any rankings on your selected keywords.

You can't ask the search engines why your site isn't ranked; they won't respond to specific questions about lack of rankings from website owners.

Whether you have handled your SEO yourself, or hired an SEO Firm, this can happen. No one controls the engines, and the results aren't always what you would expect.

The good news is the search engines are logical – they are based on a very specific algorithm, and with a little more effort and attention to the details to make sure it isn't a minor mistake holding things up – you should be able to enhance your site and fix the problems to get the results you are looking for.

## **Back to the Basics.**

The first place to start depends on whether you are handling your SEO yourself, or have outsourced it to an SEO Firm.

If you have outsourced your SEO, you need to contact the Firm and ask them to explain what they are doing to address the situation and what their theory is for the lack of results.

If you are handling your own SEO, then you need to take a step back and look at the basics – make sure you haven't left anything out - or worse still, made an error that could be preventing the results you are looking for.

## **What are the Basics?**

As with most SEO issues, it all comes down to knowledge and time. You need to have the information to ensure you are handling things correctly – and you need to have the time to implement the steps properly.

Here is a list of items to consider and some potential problems. These are all reasons your site may not be getting the rankings you are looking for. Start at the top of the list and work your way through each item, making sure that you look at the details and specifics.

**Index Time:** The amount of time before the engine indexes your site should be listed on the search engine's submission page, but these aren't always accurate or may be out of date. On average, index times range from one to eight weeks, depending on the engine.

**Already Indexed:** The major engines won't tell you if you're listed; it's up to you to find out. The method to discover if a page or domain has been indexed varies from one engine to another. Never assume you're not indexed just because you searched through keywords and you never came up in the first few pages of results. You could still be indexed and end up at the bottom of the heap.

**Roadmap from Home Page:** Some engines have been known to drop pages that cannot be traveled to from the home page. HotBot has been rumored to do this. Think of your site links as a series of roads from one page to another. If there's no road from your home page to the page you want indexed, a search engine may decide the page is unnecessary.

**TIP!** While those free sites are attractive because of their lack of wallet impact, they may end up worth even less than they cost if you can't get indexed by the engines. Domain registration and web hosting are now so inexpensive that it doesn't make sense to stick with the freebies. Take your content and get a real domain name – you'll get indexed and impress your clients at the same time.

**External Links:** Some search engines may index your home page but refuse to index any other pages unless there are links from another domain. Or, they may index you for a while but then "prune" their database later because you didn't achieve any external links after a certain period of time.

**Free Sites:** Because of all the "junk" submissions from free websites like Geocities, many engines choose not to index sites from such domains or limit the number of pages they accept.

**Frames:** Content inside of HTML frames can cause problems with submissions because the search engine may index the main content of the page, but not the surrounding menu frame. Visitors to your site find some information but miss the associated menu. It's generally better to create non-framed versions of your pages.

**Spider Blocks:** Search engine spiders cannot index sites that require a registration or password, and they can't fill out forms. This also applies to indexing of content from a searchable database. The solution is to create static pages that the engines can find and index without performing a special action on your site. Depending on your database system, there are both utility programs and companies that can assist you with this.

**Guilt through Association:** If your website shares the same IP address as other websites on your host's web server, you may find your IP quietly banned because of something someone else did. Ask your hosting service if your domain name has its own unique IP assigned to it. If not, ask them to move it to its own IP to avoid being penalized because of someone else.

**Non-Indexable Content:** Most engines cannot index text embedded in images or multimedia files (audio and video). Most engines also cannot index information that is generated by Java applets.

**Large Pages:** If your site has a slow connection or the pages are very complex and take a long time to load, it might time out before the spider finishes indexing. To avoid this, limit your page size to 50K or less. A good rule of thumb is that:

**page size + cumulative image sizes on the page ≤ 50K-70K**

If it is greater than that amount, visitors with dial-up connections will leave before the page fully loads.

**Unreliable Hosts:** It pays to have a reliable hosting service. If your website doesn't respond when the search engine spider visits, you won't be indexed. Even worse, if you are indexed and they pay a visit when your site is down, you could be removed from the database.

**Proper Directory Submissions:** When submitting to a directory site like Yahoo, Open Directory, LookSmart, and others, a live person reviews your site. They decide if the site is of sufficient "quality" before they list it. These directories can help you get listed with other engines, so make sure you give your directory submissions the attention they need.

**TIP!** While your description for directory submissions will often be changed by an editor, that doesn't mean you shouldn't spend time on it. A well-worded, polished description can mean the difference between publication and rejection.

**Spam:** If you use questionable techniques that might be considered an overt attempt at spamming (i.e., excessive repetition of keywords, same color text as background) an engine may ignore or reject your submissions.

**Redirects:** Redirects or Meta refresh tags sometimes cause the engines to have trouble indexing your site. If the engines think you are trying to "trick" them by using "cloaking" or IP redirection technology, they may not index the site at all.

**Index Times Can Fluctuate:** A major engine will not typically go more than three to four months without refreshing its index, but sometimes they'll index sites every 30 days consistently, and then suddenly stop indexing most sites for several months. It can be frustrating, but it happens.

**Page Limits:** Search engines will only spider so many pages of your Website. This could be a few dozen or three or four hundred depending on the engine. Google is one engine that tends to crawl deeper into your site. How deep they go may depend on factors like your link popularity. Sites with higher link popularity are deemed "worthier" of more thorough indexing.

**Random Errors:** Sometimes the engines simply lose submissions at random because of bugs and technical errors. Mistakes happen – remember, they're managing a database containing hundreds of millions of pages.

For questions about getting your website ranked in the top 20 (first 2 pages of results) contact Jennifer Horowitz at 562-592-5347 or [jennifer@ecombuffet.com](mailto:jennifer@ecombuffet.com). Mention this whitepaper and receive a Free Search Engine Friendliness Evaluation.