

# SEO and “Marketing” Web Sites

Internet Best Practices for  
Human Resource Vendors



## Executive Summary

This is part 1 of our 3-part series on how to effectively use your web site, original content, and ongoing marketing activities like search-optimized press releases and direct email marketing to achieve the measurable results of publicity, traffic and leads. The focus of this article is on your web site and search engine optimization (SEO)—precursors to any effective lead generating campaign. Future articles will include how to use original content to generate visibility traffic and leads, strategies to maximize your online visibility and leverage the investment you made in SEO and content. You can also download our eBook [\*How to Reach and Engage Human Resource Buyers and Convert Them to Leads.\*](#)

The Web has dramatically changed how HR decision makers research products and services. Companies used to rely on consultants, trade shows and print magazines for information. But now, equal to peers, the Web is the primary resource where buyers go to find and research human resource and employee benefit products and services. Even if a buyer learns about your company offline, they will likely go online to find out more about your company. Because of this shift, you must have:

- A "marketing" Web site that is search-optimized and clearly and quickly tells the buyer who you are.
- A Web site that engages visitors (your sales prospects) and converts them to sales leads.

## Introduction

The first impression a potential customer has of your company is often formed while viewing your web site. For this reason alone, you need a great web site and a strong online presence. In today's wired world, your web site is your primary lead acquisition source. It should invite prospects in, engage them and give them a reason to give you their contact information (lead acquisition) in exchange for something of value (white paper, research report, newsletter sign-up, demo request, etc.).

In the human resource marketplace, a company's online visibility has quickly gained considerable significance in the minds of prospects. In fact, equal to peers, the Web is the primary resource where buyers go to find and research HR products and services.

## The “Marketing” Web Site—It Starts Here

Many web sites in the human resource marketplace are ‘brochureware’—web sites that are infrequently updated, contain little content (e.g., articles, white papers) and consist of copy that is a direct translation of existing printed promotional materials. The result? Even if you drive traffic to your web site, the abandonment rate is high, few leads are acquired and visitors are left with a poor impression of your company (a common phrase we hear is “it’s amateurish looking”).

Most people visit a web site to solve one or more of these four problems:

- They want/need information
- They want/need to make a purchase/donation.
- They want/need to be entertained.
- They want/need to be part of a community.

*Source: Vincent Flander*

The rule we like to adhere to is this: A visitor to your Web site should be able to understand what you do and how you are unique without leaving the first page. Furthermore, visitors to your Web site should also be able to subscribe to your newsletter, request a demo, sign up to receive news updates (preferably via RSS) or request more information directly from your welcome page. And these calls-to-action should also be clearly visible on every page of your Web site because you never know where people will come into your site (hint: it’s not always on your welcome page). And finally, the web site’s design and layout should be professional. Under no circumstances do you want someone to think—even for a second—that your site is amateurish looking.

Make sure your “marketing” web site has the following:

1. **Prominent branding/messaging.** This does not mean a picture of your logo or other stock imagery occupying half your welcome page. This is valuable real estate. If you owned a retail store would you place irrelevant pictures on the walls of your most valuable space? Use this space wisely to quickly and clearly explain who you are, why you are unique, what you do (the “pain points” you solve for your customer) and why you are a credible solution.
2. **Intuitive and inviting GUI (graphical user interface):** Your site should be easy to navigate. Don’t make people have to think about where to click for information.
3. **Description of your services and tables that clearly list your features:** This is especially important if you have multiple products within a similar product line—make it easy for the customer to compare each side-by-side.

4. **Management team with bios:** This brings a personality and a face to the business—and helps with credibility. You can even go one step further and provide profiles of employees.
5. **Company news:** Post your press releases online. However, if the last press release you did was four months ago, you are probably better off not showing any releases (and you need to start writing at least one release per month to increase your visibility and improve your SEO – more on this later) —buyers may think something is wrong or the company is on shaky ground. And if you do show press releases, don't have them in PDF (can hurt your SEO).
6. **Information-based content:** Developing content (articles, white papers, research reports, etc.) is among the most important organizational capabilities your company needs to master (whether in-house or out-sourced). You should make content development and distribution an organizational habit and should occur with regularity on at least a quarterly basis. Aside from positioning your company as a thought leader and providing your customers valuable information that addresses their pain points, content is the foundation for your SEO and lead generation. The more content on your site, the more likely your web site will show up on search results for related keywords. Content can also be used in your direct email marketing to acquire leads. Our second article in this series *How to use original content to generate visibility, traffic and leads* is dedicated to this topic.
7. **Calls-to-Action:** This goes hand-in-hand with your content (e.g., Click here to Download). Having lead-capturing landing pages (integrated with your CRM) for your content offers and if applicable, demo requests.
8. **Customer testimonials and case studies/ success stories:** Another way to enhance your credibility.
9. **Flash demos and screenshot tours:** If you offer a technology solution, consider having flash demos or HTML screen tours (less expensive option).
10. **Pricing:** So many companies make the prospect call for pricing information. Put yourself in their shoes—when you search the Internet for products don't you like to see the prices without having to call someone? Make the buying experience easy for your prospect and include pricing. Showing pricing also qualifies prospects, which saves your sales team time.
11. **Contact Us page:** On every page of your site include complete contact information including a phone number. And avoid contact information in images or some other format where prospects cannot cut and paste it into their CRM, Outlook, etc. It's an inconvenience for buyers. If you are worried about SPAM, then

show your email as sales (at) mycompany.com. Same thing goes for copy on your web sites—avoid putting it in images as you will lose search value. And as far as the email goes, spend the money to get an email associated with your domain (e.g., john@mycompany.com). Nothing kills your credibility more than an email address with a Yahoo!, Google or Hotmail extension.

12. **Finally, hire an HTML designer:** Don't use your kid brother or nephew who is in high school. Trust me, it will be worth the money to get a quality web site.

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### Is Your Web Site Bad? A Sample Checklist:

- ✓ We've designed our site to meet our organization's needs rather than meeting the needs of our visitors.
- ✓ Our site tries to tell you how wonderful we are as a company, but not how we're going to solve your problems.
- ✓ It takes longer than four seconds for the man from Mars to understand what our site is about and find what they are looking for.
- ✓ Our site doesn't make us look like credible professionals.
- ✓ Our site doesn't make visitors feel they can trust us.
- ✓ Our home page — or any page — takes more than four seconds to load.
- ✓ Quickly scanning the page doesn't tell our visitors much about its purpose.
- ✓ Our SITE USES LOTS OF WORDS IN ALL-CAPS.
- ✓ Our site uses scrolling, blinking, fading, underlined, or moving text.
- ✓ Our site mixes and matches text sizes and types on the page.
- ✓ Our site mixes text colors on the page.
- ✓ Our logo does not look like it was professionally made (e.g., a bad scan of a business card.)
- ✓ Logo is not on the top of every page and clicking it doesn't lead to the home page.
- ✓ Our site uses cheap clip art instead of high-quality web graphics.
- ✓ Our site uses divider bars.
- ✓ Our site uses graphics for text.
- ✓ A site's navigation should tell you where you are, where you're going to go, and how to get back to the home page. Our site's navigation doesn't.
- ✓ Our site uses Flash navigation.
- ✓ Our site doesn't use style sheets
- ✓ We don't know if our site works on IE, Safari and Firefox browsers.

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**Source:** Vincent Flanders – Owner of the popular web site [www.webpagethatsuck.com](http://www.webpagethatsuck.com).

## Sample Web Site – Done the Right Way

The image shows a screenshot of the HRmarketer.com website with several callout boxes and arrows pointing to specific features:

- Clear Messaging:** Points to the main headline "Targeting Human Resource Decision Makers? We can help." and the "Our Customers" section.
- Credibility:** Points to a testimonial from Chad Hayward of Hire Insight Consulting Group.
- Content:** Points to the "Free White Papers & Research" section.
- Lead Acquisition:** Points to the "Member Login" form, the "HRmarketer Newsletter" subscription form, and the "Download Rate Card" link.
- Personable:** Points to the "Meet The Team" section featuring photos of staff members.

Once your "marketing" Web site is developed, you must search engine-optimize (SEO) the site. Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of improving the volume and quality of traffic to a Web site from search engines via natural ("organic") search results.

**Fact:** Organic search results drive a higher percent of traffic and revenue than paid searches.

**Fact:** Approximately 80 percent of clicks on search engines are clicks on organic search results; of those, 90 per cent occur on the first page of the results.

## Search-Optimizing A Web site: The Basics

Search engines like Google "index" the world wide web by sending "spiders" out to web sites. These spiders look at page content, layout, HTML code, and links to determine the relative importance and meaning of a particular web page. The primary relevancy driver for most competitive keywords is link text. There are some basic things every company should do to search-optimize their web site. While these alone do not guarantee high organic search results rankings, they are pre-requisites for your lead generating marketing and PR campaigns, online visibility, increased web site traffic and more sales leads. These include:

### Five Major Determinants of Site Ranking

(That You Can Control)

1. Page Titles and META tags
2. Use of Keywords in URLs (e.g. "emergency\_alert\_systems.html" versus "services.html")
3. Frequency and Placement of Keywords
4. Page and Site Content
5. Links to Your Site from Other reputable Sites

1. Good SEO starts with **selecting the right keywords**. It is the most important component to your SEO efforts. But don't settle on just the obvious keywords. Adding keywords beyond the most popular ones taps into search marketing's "long tail,"—the thousands of low-cost keywords that generate few searches independently, but collectively represent a large audience.

In addition to keyword selection tools like Keyword Discovery or Wordtracker and studying your own Web site analytics, remember that paid search (e.g., Google Adwords) is an excellent means of selecting and testing keywords and their effectiveness. Once you identify your keywords, do the following:

2. **Update your Page Titles and META Tags:** Search engines use title tags to gather information about your web site. The use of relevant keywords in the title tag was rated as the most important search engine-ranking tactic by a panel of 37 SEO experts. A lot of web sites have the same title for every page. This is a mistake. Each page needs a unique title, description and keywords—and make sure the keywords are well-represented in the body copy of the respective page. Title tags should be about 5 to 10 words in length and include your company's name and keyword phrases that relate to the respective page. Description tags (the most important meta tag) provides a summary of the page in fewer than 200 characters while keyword tags include 7 to 10 relevant keywords and phrases.

3. **Use Keywords in URLs:** Instead of having generic names for your Web pages (e.g. "services.html") use names that reinforce your keywords and clearly explain what the page content includes (e.g., "MyCity\_executive\_coaching.html").

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### Cool SEO Tools:

**Keyword Research Tools:** These are the foundation of any SEO work, as knowing what keywords are being searched on will help your visibility. Examples include Keyword Discovery, Wordtracker and BlogPulse (common terms used on blogs).

**Analytics:** Analytics can help you discover what is working and what isn't on your Web site and provide valuable information to help drive marketing and business decisions. Examples include Google Analytics (free) and VisiStat. Also check out Google Web site Optimizer, which allows you to easily test what combination of site content will be most effective at achieving your Web site's goals.

**WebPosition Software:** These are tools to monitor keyword ranking and links and monitor keyword ranking over time, all of which help to identify strengths and weaknesses in your SEO program. [HRmarketer.com](http://HRmarketer.com) has a built in program to monitor your keyword rankings as well as products and services to help companies improve their rankings.

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4. **Page and Site Content:** Integrate your keyword phrases into the visible text copy for each Web page. The more relevant content the better (more chances of search engines and buyers finding your site), which is why we like glossaries, eNewsletter archives, blogs, white papers, case studies, etc. By the way, never use the hyperlink "click here." It's a wasted opportunity. Always use your keywords as hyperlinks.
5. **Internal Links:** Link your keywords to other relevant pages on your own site. Make sure to link to all pages on your web site via text links (or image links) which search engine spiders can follow.
6. **Don't use Images in Place of Text:** And avoid an all-Flash site. The copy in your image is not indexed by search engines and most Flash is ignored. Also make sure your "dynamic pages" are indexable by removing session IDs and other problems. When you do have images on your site, use "alternate text" to describe what the image is. This is not only good from an accessibility and usability standpoint, it also provides opportunities to use important keywords.



- 7. Include a Site Map:** When creating a site map (a critical part of your SEO), make sure to adhere to the site map protocol supported by Google, Yahoo! and other search engines.
  
- 8. Links to Your Site from Other Sites:** Links to your web site from other web sites is probably the single most important component to effective long term SEO. Ideally, these links should use variations of the primary keyword phrases from your web site – specifically, from the page the link points to. This is the only component to SEO that you have less than 100% control over and you can waste a lot of time attempting link exchanges that achieve marginal results – or are short lived. The best way to get reciprocal links is through your ongoing marketing and public relations campaigns. At a minimum, the following must be a part of your ongoing marketing and PR:
  - a. Creating quality, unique content that will be of interest to your visitors and which will add value to your site (e.g., white papers, articles, research, etc.). Search engines love web site's that get updated frequently with content that supports your keywords. The more content-rich your site, the more valuable it will appear to the search engines (and human visitors such as other webmasters who will be more inclined to link to your website). Creating good content can be very time-consuming but it will be well worth the effort in the long run.
  - b. Sending one or two "search optimized" press releases per month. These are releases that contain relevant keyword links back to your web site.
  - c. Participating in social networking such as blogs (your own and commenting on other key blogs in your industry), Facebook and other relevant communities in your space.

By the way, links from bad sites (what search engines consider link spammers) hurt your rankings.

## "Black Hat" SEO: What Not to Do with Your SEO.

Whether you are doing your SEO in-house or outsourcing it, there are some very bad SEO practices that you must avoid! If your SEO consultant is doing any of the following you risk being penalized by the search engines with lower rankings, and in some cases, your site may be altogether removed from the search engine's index. Here is a quick list of what not to do with SEO:

- Using hidden or barely visible text.
- "Keyword stuffing" your meta and alt tags. The meta description tag should be a sentence or two about the page's content that reads well to the human eye. Don't be overly repetitive.
- Using tiny images on pages and hiding links under them
- Creating [doorway pages](#). These are "fake" pages that the user will never see intended purely to trick a search engine into indexing the site higher.
- Using comments tags (e.g., <!--Comments-->) to hide keywords in your source code. The purpose of comment tags is to allow coders to know what the different page elements are.
- Excessive use of **bold copy** on your web pages – especially your keywords.
- Doing link exchanges with sites that have nothing to do with your industry or worse, websites that are clearly spam sites.
- Excessive use of links on one page, especially if those links are formatted in a way as to not be obvious that they are links (they are not underlined and appear as a different text color than the main text color).

## Conclusion

If nothing else, I hope this article convinces you that your online visibility is a critical component to your marketing efforts. And if you agree with this fact, then this article lays the foundation for how to build your marketing web site. Remember the basics:

- A "marketing" Web site should be search-optimized and clearly and quickly tells the buyer who you are.
- A Web site that engages visitors (your sales prospects) and converts visitors to sales leads.

Once you do this (and create a bunch of content) you'll be ready for our second article in this series: *How to use original content to generate visibility traffic and leads*. Look for it here: [http://www.hrmarketer.com/home/whitepaper\\_main2.htm](http://www.hrmarketer.com/home/whitepaper_main2.htm).

## HRmarketer: Who We Are. How We Can Help You Grow Your Business.

HRmarketer.com, a service of [Fisher Vista LLC](#), is the premier Internet marketing and media visibility service in the human resources industry. Since 2000, over six hundred human resource and employee benefit suppliers have used HRmarketer to generate publicity, Web site traffic, sales leads and improved search engine rankings.

Below are details on our products and services. For more information visit the [What We Do](#) section of our web site, email [info@hrmarketer.com](mailto:info@hrmarketer.com) or call 831-685-9700. If your company sells to the healthcare marketplace we invite you to learn more about HRmarketer's sister product, [SeniorCareMarketer.com](#), for companies targeting Boomers and/or selling products that relate to the aging population.

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<http://www.seniorcaremarketer.com/>  
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### HR Advertising and Lead Referral Program

We have an exclusive advertising and lead-generation program that includes (1) a full-page color ad and side-by-side editorial option in the HR Vendor Directory, published bi-annually and distributed to thousands of HR decision makers; (2) 500 "welcome aboard" leads; (3) An additional 1,000 leads, distributed 3X week over a 12 month period; (4) a complimentary email blast to 10,000 opt-in HR decision makers; (5) display banner ads in our monthly News for HR e-newsletter. Prices start at \$450 per month.



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