

- 1. Commit yourself to the process.** SEO isn't a one-time event. Search engine algorithms change regularly, so the tactics that worked last year may not work this year. SEO requires a long-term outlook and commitment.
- 2. Be patient.** SEO isn't about instant gratification. Results often take months to see, and this is especially true the smaller you are, and the newer you are to doing business online.
- 3. Have web analytics in place.** You should have clearly defined goals for your SEO efforts, and you'll need web analytics software in place so you can track what's working and what's not.
- 4. Build a great web site.** I'm sure you want to show up on the first page of results. Ask yourself, "Is my site *really* one of the 10 best sites in the world on this topic?" Be honest. If it's not, make it better. GallantMEDIA provides full web development solutions, from static websites to content management systems to e-commerce with online credit card processing.
- 5. Include a site map page.** Spiders can't index pages that can't be crawled. A site map will help spiders find all the important pages on your site, and help the spider understand your site's hierarchy. This is especially helpful if your site has a hard-to-crawl navigation menu.
- 6. Do keyword research.** A good free tool is Google's [AdWords Keyword Tool](#), which doesn't show exact numbers.
- 7. Open up a PPC account.** Whether it's Google's AdWords or Yahoo's Search Marketing or something else, this is a great way to get *actual search volume* for your keywords. Yes, it costs money, but if you have the budget it's worth the investment. It's also the solution if you didn't like the "Be patient" suggestion above and are looking for instant visibility. GallantMEDIA can create and manage your PPC and Adword accounts and provide weekly statistic reports.
- 8. Write for users first.** Google, Yahoo, etc., have pretty powerful bots crawling the web, but to my knowledge these bots have never bought anything online, signed up for a newsletter, or picked up the phone to call about your services. Humans do those things, so write your page copy with humans in mind. Yes, you need keywords in the text, but don't stuff each page like a Thanksgiving turkey. Keep it readable.
- 9. Create great, unique content.** This is important for everyone, but it's a particular challenge for online retailers. If you're selling the same widget that 50 other retailers are selling, and everyone is using the boilerplate descriptions from the manufacturer, this is a great opportunity. Write your own product descriptions, using the keyword research you did earlier (see #6 above) to target actual words searchers use, and make product pages that blow the competition away. Plus, retailer or not, great content is a great way to get inbound links.
- 10. Build links intelligently.** Seek links from authority sites in your industry. If local search matters to you (more on that coming up), seek links from trusted sites in your geographic area—the Chamber of Commerce, etc. Analyze the inbound links to your competitors to find links you can acquire, too. GallantMEDIA owns and operates www.theottawavalley.com Add your

business for free and advertise to the tens of thousands of people that visit our website every single month.

11. Use press releases wisely. Developing a relationship with media covering your industry or your local region can be a great source of exposure, including getting links from trusted media web sites. Distributing releases online can be an effective link building tactic, and opens the door for exposure in news search sites. *Related bonus tip:* Only issue a release when you have something newsworthy to report. Don't waste journalists' time.

12. Start a blog and participate with other related blogs. Search engines, Google especially, love blogs for the fresh content and highly-structured data. Beyond that, there's no better way to join the conversations that are already taking place about your industry and/or company. Reading and commenting on other blogs can also increase your exposure and help you acquire new links. GallantMEDIA can integrate a blog right into your current website. Log in and post new blog entries from any internet connected computer in the world.

13. Use social media marketing wisely. If your small business has a visual element, join the appropriate communities on [Flickr](#) and post high-quality photos there. If you're a service-oriented business, use [Yahoo Answers](#) to position yourself as an expert in your industry. With any social media site you use, the first rule is *don't spam!* Be an active, contributing member of the site. The idea is to interact with potential customers, not annoy them. Facebook can also be a great business tool if used properly. GallantMEDIA provides social networking account management so you don't have to constantly update your Facebook and Twitter statuses. Contact us to find out how we can help.

14. Take advantage of local search opportunities. Online research for offline buying is a growing trend. Optimize your site to catch local traffic by showing your address and local phone number prominently. Write a detailed Directions/Location page using neighborhoods and landmarks in the page text. Submit your site to the free local listings services that the major search engines offer. Make sure your site is listed in local/social directories such as CitySearch, Yelp, Local.com, etc., and encourage customers to leave reviews of your business on these sites, too. With mobile web users hitting all time highs it's also a good idea to offer mobile versions of your website for people to view on their smart phones. A mobile version of your website strips down much of the structure and images of your website so that it's quick to load and takes up less of a cell phone's data plan.

15. Diversify your traffic sources. Newsletters and other subscriber-based content can help you hold on to traffic/customers no matter what the search engines do. In fact, many of the DOs on this list—creating great content, starting a blog, using social media and local search, etc.—will help you grow an audience of loyal prospects and customers that may help you survive the whims of search engines.

Need help getting your company ranked in Google and other search engines? Call GallantMEDIA today at (613) 629-2179 or email info@gallantmedia.ca