

31 pages of helpful tips!

SEO for Internet Merchants in Practice

Everything you need to know to implement an effective, natural search engine optimization strategy for your e-commerce site:

- Understand the terms
- Set up a successful action plan
- Track and optimize the results



White Paper Ecommerce and SEO

The powerful options offered by PrestaShop, combined with the recognized and proved expertise of Blog-Ecommerce.com in generating qualified traffic for e-commerce sites, make this white paper a valuable source of effective practical advice to help you understand the keys to properly using SEO for your online business.

It is organized into five main chapters. First, we'll talk about your keywords, your home page and your product pages.

We'll also describe the tools that we use every day and the link strategies we set up for our clients.

We do all this with one simple goal: to make you better than your competitors.

After all, "getting ranked higher on Google" just means that you've optimized your site more effectively than the competition.

Competition on Google is pure and perfect, and only really offers visibility to the first 10 results that come up for any given keyword. This means that only sites taking advantage of e-commerce software and advanced SEO techniques can hope to achieve such visibility.

With this white paper, PrestaShop and Blog-Ecommerce.com aim to share with you the method they consider most effective.

This complimentary white paper is offered by:



Blog-Ecommerce.com: France's top expert in SEO for e-commerce, offering advice and support as you implement your strategy to boost natural traffic to your site. Free newsletter at www.blog-ecommerce.com



PrestaShop: free, open source software ranked number 1 among solutions for creating and managing e-commerce sites, offering more than 256 features and installed on more than 90,000 sites worldwide. Free download at www.prestashop.com

Boosting Your Traffic on Google: a Key Objective

Like all e-merchants, you have two ambitions: bring as many visitors as possible to your site, which is an essential prerequisite to growing your business, and control the cost of generating traffic.

Once visitors reach your site, you still need to win them over, persuade them to buy, earn their loyalty... and generate the margin you need. Your expertise in e-commerce will make sure that you achieve your profitability goals.

This white paper focuses on natural search engine optimization online, and it is designed to teach you the best practices for generating qualified traffic by bringing in visitors from search engines. If you follow the tips and recommendations offered here, plenty of internet users will reach the purchasing phase on your site.

You'll see that, in order to achieve these results, you'll need to implement a rigorous strategy and monitor it constantly, carefully following each one of the steps we describe. Once you do, you will significantly boost natural traffic to your e-commerce site.

You already have two things going for you:

- ▶ The PrestaShop solution is recognized by specialists as the most effective e-commerce solution for natural page rank. It is incredibly fast and simple to use, enabling you to successfully adopt the right techniques.
- ▶ Blog-Ecommerce.com has already guided hundreds of e-commerce companies through their own SEO strategy, helping them adopt a rigorous, practical approach that has made the firm a top name in its field.

PrestaShop and Blog-Ecommerce.com offer technological expertise and specialist knowledge accumulated over years of experience in natural search engine optimization, a winning combination that will help you grow your online business.

We hope you enjoy this paper.

...and don't forget to sign up for the PrestaShop and Blog-Ecommerce.com newsletters to keep receiving the best advice in the field of e-commerce.

Table of Contents

1. Step One: Understanding the Definition of Keywords

2. How to Choose Your Keywords: Our Process

- 2.1 Draw up an initial list of the main products you sell
- 2.2 Refine your initial list of keywords by identifying relevant keywords
- 2.3 Avoid keywords that are too general; keywords must be synonymous with purchases
- 2.4 Avoid off-topic keywords
- 2.5 Avoid local keywords outside your own region

3. The Home Page: The Key to Your SEO Strategy

- 3.1 Text content: make sure you have more than just images
 - 3.1.1 *Highlight your top sellers everywhere, including the home page*
 - 3.1.2 *Select products that spotlight your leading brands*
 - 3.1.3 *Use both horizontal and vertical navigation*
 - 3.1.4 *Structuring your home page: pay attention to the H1 tag*
 - 3.1.5 *Updating: "Do I need to update my home page regularly?"*

4. Your Product Pages: Help Google and Your Visitors at the Same Time!

- 4.1 Text content on your product pages
- 4.2 Don't parrot the content provided by your suppliers
- 4.3 Create unique content that is interesting to internet users
- 4.4 Aim for around ten lines of text in each description

4.5 Use explicit, unique product titles

4.6 Insert links to your brand pages

5. Tags, a Key Component of Natural SEO

5.1 The "Title" tag is the most important of all

5.2 The "Description" tag

5.3 The H1 tags go together

5.4 The H2 and H3 tags

6. Tools to Boost Productivity

6.1 Firefox add-ons

6.1.1 SearchStatus

6.1.2 Kgen

6.1.3 Web Developer Toolbar

6.1.4 SEO for Firefox

6.2 Google Analytics

6.2.1 Regularly tracking changes in your natural traffic with Google

6.2.2 Configuring a goal for your e-commerce site

6.2.3 A useful function: "Which of your pages sell the most?"

6.2.4 Features of the Google Webmaster Tools

6.3 External "Optimizations / Popularity / Link building

6.3.1 Regularly register your e-commerce site in directories

6.3.2 Online press release sites

6.3.3 "Do I really need a blog?"

6.3.4 Exchanging links with other sites

1. Step One: Understanding the Definition of Keywords

First, remember that a keyword is defined as a search query that the internet user types into a search engine. A keyword is usually made up of one, two, or three words (and sometimes more), which allow the user to qualify the desired results.

An internet user trying to buy flowers will very probably type "buy flowers," and to be sure they'll be delivered quickly, he'll probably type "buy flowers" followed by the name of the city where he is. An internet user who isn't looking to buy, but just wants to know how to put together a bouquet of flowers, will probably type "make bouquet of flowers." You can already see why keywords are so essential to e-merchants trying to reach internet users during the purchasing phase.

Once the keywords have been entered, the search engine determines which internet sites seem most relevant to show to the user. One of the main objectives of any search engine is to make sure the internet user is happy: if the user clicks the "Back" button, that informs the search engine that the results were not satisfactory, and it will take that information into account for the next search (this is called the bounce rate).

Here's how search engines work:

- At regular intervals, they review every site on the internet and, for each website, they analyze the main pages available to them.
- For each page they analyze, they identify the keywords that they consider most relevant, i.e. that most effectively reflect the page content.
- These identified keywords are then used to determine which internet searches correspond to the content of the page.
- When search engines identify a close match, they place the site among the first hits suggested to internet users. Otherwise, they display the site in a low position (second page or further down) and the user will be naturally inclined to visit competitor's sites.

This is why you need to make sure that the pages on your site actually contain the keywords that internet users will type in, which will bring you visitors interested in making purchases on your site.

As a result, your keyword strategy is the most important component of your natural page rank policy:

- The first phase is to define all of the keywords that will bring visitors to your site who are likely to make a purchase.
- The second is to organize your site so that it contains and highlights the keywords you have selected.

White Paper Ecommerce and SEO

If you have not effectively chosen and emphasized those keywords, search engines will have no way of sending likely prospects your way. This will have an immediate negative impact, and you will have to make up for the lack of natural traffic by paying for traffic.

2. How to Choose Your Keywords: Our Process

Again, remember that the term "keyword" actually refers to a search query typed in by internet users and general contains between 1 and 3 words. The majority of searches (approximately 60%) include 2 or 3 words, about 10% contain just one word and 30% contain more than 3 words.

Here are the 5 golden rules:

2.1 Draw up an initial list of the main products you sell

This initial list of keywords can be extremely general; it should include all the products you sell. Try to make the list relatively specific so that the keywords are effectively describing your products. Keywords like "computer," "furniture," "dress," and "table" are not specific enough, even if they do describe your products. Although there is plenty of traffic for each of these words, search engines will have no chance of putting you at the top of the list for keywords of that type. Try to follow a simple rule of thumb, except in special cases: almost all keywords (90%) should contain at least 2 words.

TIP:

Opening an AdWords account will give you easy access to features for identifying the search terms entered by internet users.

You can enter the name of the search you'd like to analyze ("Strollers," for example) and the Google Suggest function will display all queries that are similar to that keyword, along with the number of searches per month for each of them.

2.2 Refine your initial list of keywords by identifying keywords relevant to making a sale

The goal of this second step is to analyze the behavior of internet users and distinguish between those who are looking for information and those who are looking to buy. We're interested in the second category. To illustrate what we mean, we'll use the example of an e-commerce site selling baby gear; you will easily be able to extrapolate for your own field of business.

White Paper Ecommerce and SEO

Here are 5 specific examples of keywords that we recommend for this type of business:

"baby stroller"

This keyword is simple, clear, and indicates exactly what the internet user is likely to search for. As an e-merchant, do you feel that you have a good selection of baby strollers, of good quality, offered at the right price? In other words, do you consider yourself legitimate online and believe that you deserve to be on the first page of Google results for that query? If so, this is the perfect keyword for you. Add it to your list, along with any variants (plural and singular).

"chicco stroller"

Do you sell the "Chicco" brand of strollers and regularly offer the brand's latest products on your site? Then this keyword should also appear on your list. Again, don't forget to include any variants. That means not only the singular and plural, but also "chicco baby stroller," "chicco stroller for babies," etc.

"buy stroller" "cheap chicco stroller"

This might seem surprising, but many internet users add a search term like "buy" or "sales of" into their query. Even better, these queries clearly represent an upcoming purchase. So, you should add them to your list of keywords as well. And don't forget to combine the words with your brands, too (for example, "buy chicco stroller"). Another thing you'll notice about internet user behavior is that, very often, they add words like "cheap" to searches. Internet users trust Google blindly and believe that by adding "cheap" to their search query, Google will show them the most affordable products that correspond to their search, which is never the case. Take advantage of this quirk to position yourself for these queries, by including words like "cheap" in your list of keywords.

"red T51 chicco stroller"

Often, when you analyze the searches entered by internet users in even more detail, you find that the name of the item itself is included in the search. That means that the name of every one of your products is a potential keyword that should be added to your list. Of course, that will exponentially increase the number of keywords, but it will also make your list much more relevant and bring in visitors who really are interested in your products.

"double stroller"

It's very helpful to go even further and look for even more targeted keywords. The double stroller is a particularly interesting example. Don't think for a minute that an internet user looking for a stroller for his twins is going to type "stroller" into Google. In reality, he'll search for what comes to mind, which means things like "double stroller," "chicco double stroller," "cheap double stroller," etc. This is another way to add relevant items to your list of keywords.

The facts show that internet users very often type in extremely specific internet searches: they want to be sure that the results they get really match what they're looking for.

White Paper Ecommerce and SEO

2.3 Avoid overly general keywords, and concentrate instead of keywords synonymous with purchases

It's tempting to target the extremely general keywords that are most often entered by internet users and theoretically represent the most visitor traffic. You might be thinking that it's easier to get 3% of the traffic for a keyword that's searched for 100,000 times, than 20% of the traffic for a keyword with 1,000 searches. But that's not a good strategy for 3 reasons:

First reason:

Generalized keywords only very rarely lead to sales. In fact, internet users in the purchasing phase only rarely use general keywords. For example, an internet user looking for a stroller for her baby will type in the word "stroller" or "baby stroller" rather than "baby." In this particular case, the keyword "baby" is unhelpful because it's too general. Similarly, the keyword "bike" isn't appropriate for a site that sells motorcycle helmets.

Second reason:

In order to be effective, your SEO strategy needs to focus on giving a few essential keywords as much visibility (and therefore strength) as possible. From this perspective, emphasizing a generalized keyword will inevitably detract from one or more keywords that are more specific and likely to generate sales. Meanwhile, specific keywords won't necessarily bring you more traffic, but they will boost your sales.

Third reason:

Natural page rank requires an almost daily effort of tracking search engine results, improving content, generating links and monitoring the organization of pages. Since your time is limited and valuable, we don't recommend using general keywords that will demand a great deal of effort from you without producing concrete results.

2.4 Avoid off-topic keywords

It's important to avoid adding "off-topic" keywords to your list. For example, you might be tempted to list products or brands that you don't sell but that are in high demand, in the hope that once an internet user has arrived at your site, you'll be able to change her mind and convince her to make a purchase.

This strategy is not just ineffective, however, but actually harmful. You'll see both that it's very difficult to create good visibility for a brand when you don't sell any of its products, and that you'll be spreading your SEO efforts too thin and taking away from keywords that would bring you sales.

Let's take a concrete example: don't try to highlight the "Levi's" brand of jeans if you don't sell it. Of course, the brand is extremely well known and generates high traffic, but internet users will be disappointed not to find the brand on your site and you won't generate any sales.

White Paper Ecommerce and SEO

2.5 Avoid local keywords outside your own region

It is extremely tempting to target keywords associated with all the major cities in your country, in order to boost traffic to your site, with the thought that you can deliver anywhere in the country using the internet.

However, this technique has long since been disproved on the AdWords network: internet users who type local searches into Google want to buy a product that same day, and definitely from a place nearby. It has been shown that internet users who use this type of search are not at all interested in having a product delivered remotely, even within 24 hours.

CONCLUSION:

As we explained above, there is a rigorous and pragmatic method to follow in selecting your list of keywords for natural SEO.

- ▶ In general, you should ask yourself whether an internet user who types the search terms into Google will be happy to end up at your e-commerce site and will make a purchase. If the answer is yes, that keyword is important for you and should be included on your list.
- ▶ If the answer is no, then please don't waste your time highlighting that keyword, and don't add it to your list of keywords.
- ▶ As for how many keywords you should include on your list, there is a simple way to estimate how many keywords you should be managing:

KEYWORD POTENTIAL =

[Number of products + number of brands + number of product categories] x 1.5

(Restrict your list of potential keywords to the **200 or 300 most frequently requested keywords**)

If you have applied the advice in this chapter, you now have a list of effective and relevant keywords. You're ready to start the second step of your SEO strategy: highlighting those keywords by optimizing your e-commerce site itself!

3. The Home Page: The Key to Your SEO Strategy

The home page of your e-commerce site plays a key role for Google and other search engines; it is the page that will inform search engines about your site's content. Naturally, the home page is a key space for your marketing policy. It needs to capture your visitors, extol the virtues of your offering and make people want to buy. There are a few important rules to follow to make sure that the page also contributes to your SEO strategy.

3.1 Text content: make sure you have more than just images

All too often, e-commerce sites have home pages full of advertising banners, images, Flash, news about the latest releases, etc.

These features make the site visually appealing, but beware: unlike content in the form of raw text, Google can't read or interpret images! That means that any content you have included in the form of images is lost in terms of SEO. By overemphasizing images, you're depriving yourself of a major advantage for natural page rank and losing customers.

This applies equally to Flash, which is incomprehensible to search engines. That's why we don't recommend building e-commerce sites using Flash.

White Paper Ecommerce and SEO

3.1.1 Highlight your top sellers everywhere, including the home page

The best strategy for meeting Google's requirements (text content) and your visitors' expectations at the same time is to highlight your top sellers everywhere, including the home page. Your home page should include descriptive texts that make your products sound good and use the keywords you've already chosen.

Here's an example of a home page that uses this method effectively.

The products are highlighted right on the home page.

The product titles are included in text format, and just by looking at the home page, Google will be able to take the site's objective into account in its page rank algorithms.



White Paper Ecommerce and SEO

3.1.2 Select products that spotlight your leading brands

It is important to use the home page to highlight products that will help you gain a high ranking for strong brands

This is a tough choice, especially if your site offers hundreds or even thousands of products. You should start with your top sellers and newest products, but that will probably not be enough (there will almost certainly still be too many products left on your list).

To help whittle down your choices, consider which products belong to brands where you would like to be well positioned on Google.

In our example above, by emphasizing Chicco strollers right on your home page (even if you don't have any new Chicco products at the moment), you'll build a stronger position on Google. In fact, Google pays attention to the content of your home page and will consider you a relevant result for "chicco stroller" searches. In any event, you're more likely to be considered relevant for the brand than competitors who have not mentioned it on their home page.

3.1.3 Use both horizontal and vertical navigation

When formatting a home page, people often decide to choose between having a horizontal or a vertical menu. Actually, there's no need to choose, since both types of navigation are important and can exist side-by-side.

By combining both types of navigation, you'll make your visitors happy by letting them browse however they prefer, and also satisfy Google's requirements by adding more links and text to your home page.

And don't worry if the additional text adds redundant content to your home page: according to our tests, offering a dual navigation system significantly improves your natural page rank.

3.1.4 Structuring your home page: pay attention to the H1 tag

In Chapter 5, you'll find a more detailed description of the word "tag," but for now just remember that your home page must contain one, and only one, H1 tag. This H1 tag needs to include the one keyword you consider most important to your visitors.

3.1.4 Updating your home page: "Do I need to regularly update my home page?"

People often say that regularly changing and updating the text on a home page improves a site's page rank by encouraging Google to consider it more relevant...

In practice, nothing could be further from the truth, and regularly updating your home page will not improve your natural page rank in the slightest. On the contrary, even outside your product pages, you should have some permanence in the content you want Google to take into account. As a rule of thumb, it's better not to change the text content on your home page more than three or four times a year.

You should apply that same rule when choosing brands to highlight: don't change them around too often, or else Google might decide that they're not really important to your business and choose not to take them into account.

White Paper Ecommerce and SEO

The same goes for your editorial text or any news on the home page. Changing this information frequently does not seem to be an effective approach.

The next page shows an example of a home page that we consider ineffective in terms of natural SEO, because the site doesn't highlight any particular product.

Although the editorial text on this page might seem like a good idea to reassure internet users about the quality of the products on offer, in practice it's not a very effective strategy in terms of SEO for an e-commerce site:

The screenshot shows the Buy.com website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the Rakuten group logo, 'Buy.com', and links for 'all categories', 'deals', and a search bar. A promotional banner for 'Today Only! Earn 10% BACK Site-Wide' is displayed. The main content area is titled 'iPods' and features a sidebar with 'APPLE STORE' links (iPod classic, iPod nano, iPod shuffle, Apple Deals, Refurbished iPhones) and a large image of 'SOUL by Ludacris' headphones. The main text describes the new iPod nano, iPod touch, and iPod classic. A product listing for 'Apple iPod Touch 32GB 4th Generation, Refurbished' is visible at the bottom.

CONCLUSION:

In this second chapter, we have explained the importance of your home page and the main factors that will earn it a high page rank in the search engines. You need to combine excellent graphical quality with content in text format that emphasizes the keywords you have selected.

Now, we'll discuss another key component of page rank for an e-commerce site: its product catalogue.

4. Your Product Pages: Make Them Effective to Help Google and Your Visitors at the Same Time!

Naturally, a product catalogue is what sets an online store apart from a content-driven site. Your SEO strategy must take this difference into account and even take advantage of it to make the most of your product offering in Google.

The page rank techniques used are specific to the field of e-commerce. An effective strategy will need:

- ▶ The page rank features offered by PrestaShop
- ▶ Expertise from specialists like Blog-Ecommerce.com, who draw on their in-depth experience in the field and help you take advantage of the best practices.

Below, we will review the 6 key factors in page rank for a product catalogue. Although the process is meticulous and exacting, it is vitally important in securing a good page rank. You must spend whatever time is required to ensure that each of your products earns the position it deserves on Google.

Reviewing and optimizing your product catalogue may require several days, if not months, of work. It can be done by your in-house staff or by external service providers, depending on your in-house resources and the size of your catalogue. This is one of the most important components to getting a good ranking in Google, and it's where Blog-Ecommerce.com employees devote much of their effort. E-commerce software like PrestaShop offers all the tools you need to do the job very efficiently.

4.1 Text content on your product pages

As we've already explained, in order to boost your page rank, the content of your product pages needs to be in text format, with images used only to show the products to internet users. In fact, we recommend that you use as many images as possible and make them as large as possible: images are extremely effective in clinching a sale.

4.2 Don't parrot the content provided by your suppliers

It is tempting to recycle the text content provided by your suppliers, but this prepackaged content has two drawbacks.

First:

It is not effective for natural SEO. The terms used by suppliers rarely contain the same keywords entered by internet users. Generally, this text is intended for product retailers or resellers.

This is why you must modify the content, making sure never to just copy and paste it onto your product page. As you are drafting this content, keep the list of keywords entered by internet users in mind, and remember to include them as relevantly as possible. The list of keywords you selected during phase 1 of your SEO plan will serve as a reference for you in this process.

Second:

This content is dangerous because it isn't unique. If you copy your supplier's content, it's very likely that your content will be identical to the content on other sites. This has become an extremely important consideration, especially since Google updated its search algorithms in August 2011 (with a new PageRank algorithm called Panda). Google no longer wants to display duplicate content and will penalize you sharply if you use it.

We'll discuss this point in more detail later.

4.3 Create unique content that is interesting to internet users

As we've just seen, you shouldn't copy content from your competitors, especially since the Google Panda update. Google is capable of distinguishing between the original content and the copied content, since it knows the initial indexing date. This makes it easy to identify and penalize sites that picked up the same content later. You must pay very careful attention to this factor, which has become a golden rule of natural page rank on Google.

Likewise, if you decide to advertise your products on price comparison sites, it is crucial that you provide different content from what appears on your e-commerce site. We strongly recommend using price comparison sites to boost your traffic. Implementing this type of e-marketing strategy for e-commerce sites is part of PrestaShop and Blog-Ecommerce.com's expertise, and a white paper on the topic will be available soon at Prestashop.com and Blog-Ecommerce.com.

4.4 Aim for around ten lines of text in each description

In your product description, it's important to include at least 5 to 10 lines of text so that Google will use it and interpret the text as a sign of real knowledge being shared with internet users.

Too often, there are only a few words of text content, which is completely ineffective. It's not always easy to author content, and experience has shown that a brief technical description of the product is not good enough.

You need to use your imagination and salesmanship as a source of inspiration.

White Paper Ecommerce and SEO

Tips for content:

WHAT NOT TO DO:

- ✘ "Cotton t-shirt," "Teak table for your garden" (too short and not interesting!)

WHAT TO DO:

- ▶ start your sentences by setting up the context: "This teak table is perfect for...,"
"Throw on this printed cotton t-shirt for a stroll..."
- ▶ position your product: "With its crystal-clear sound and easy to use interface, this is one of our most popular..."
- ▶ include the brand name: "In keeping with its quality policy, Bose offers compact speakers with exceptional sound."
- ▶ use short sentences with simple syntax; this makes them easier to write and easier for your customers and prospects to understand.

By applying these rules, you will be able to write unique content quickly for each of your products. Eventually, you'll develop your own style and begin to show off your particular expertise. Experience shows that internet users in the purchasing phase are always interested in reading detailed content, so this approach will help you improve your natural page rank and also boost your chance of making a sale.

In any event, it's clear that product pages with too little content cause you to lose page rank on Google.

4.5 Use explicit, unique product titles

Product titles are an essential factor for Google, since that's the part of the page that the search engine analyzes first. The titles of your products shouldn't be too short; in fact, they should contain as detailed and specific a description as possible and should be unique to each product. Remember that Google can't interpret images, and the product title is the main source of information that Google uses.

To go back to the baby gear site, a product should never be called just a chair. Instead, the title should clearly specify: "Chicco Baby Chair."

Too often, e-merchants choose product titles that are too short because they think people can see exactly what type of product is in the photo.

Once again, though, Google can't "read" images. That's why you need to be explicit in the product title.

Also check that none of your products share the same title.

4.6 Insert links to your brand pages

Brand pages are important for e-commerce sites and can reassure visitors about the quality of your offering. It's a win-win scenario: the brand benefits from your distribution capacity and you benefit from its reputation. In addition, having pages like this lets you set up cross-linking within your site, which is a very good thing for Google.

White Paper Ecommerce and SEO

If a brand is mentioned in a product description, for example, take advantage of that mention to link back to the corresponding brand page. That will create a dense internal network of links within your e-commerce site.

CONCLUSION:

This chapter explained the vital importance of your product catalogue, which must contain as much (relevant and unique!) text as possible. Product titles should also be chosen carefully to help Google identify them effectively.

You should always keep your list of keywords in mind when authoring and creating content. It is important to refer back to it to make sure that Google sends you the right type of visitors.

Keep the list of keywords you compiled in Chapter 1 of this white paper close at hand as you continue to optimize your site. This is exactly how our own staff works.

We've discussed the content of product pages on your site that visitors can view. This is the "visible" part of your work. But it's equally important for you to understand and follow Google's technical rules for putting together pages on your site.

These rules for organizing pages are designed to let Google quickly scan the content and identify key paragraphs, and following the rules will determine the effectiveness of your SEO and give you the best possible chance of being assigned a good page rank in Google.

We still haven't discussed tags, but they are an essential component of your SEO strategy.

In the next chapter, we'll teach you how to work effectively with tags so that you have the best possible chance, or at least a better chance than your competitors, of improving your page rank on Google.

5. Tags, a Key Component of Natural SEO

5.1 The "Title" tag is the most important of all

Technically speaking, in HTML syntax, the title tag is not a "tag" at all, but the term is commonly used by analogy with the other key components of an HTML page.

The Title tag looks like this: `<title>Keyword</title>`, and it's the most important tag for getting a good page rank on Google:

- ▶ These tags contain the text that appears in blue on Google results pages. This means that they will be read by your future visitors who arrive from Google and other search engines. The tags need to attract the attention of those visitors and make them click.
- ▶ They must be unique and specific to each page. The same rules apply to title tags and to the text content of your products pages, which means that they absolutely must have unique content: you should never copy your competitors' Title tags or include two identical Title tags within your e-commerce site.

Of course, it's difficult to make sure no two Title tags are identical when you have hundreds of products. In the next chapter, we'll introduce the tools that are available to help.

- ▶ These tags must contain your keywords. There are two reasons for this. The first is mentioned in item (i) of this chapter, namely that it will help you attract the attention of internet users, and the second is related to the fact that Google and other search engines use the keywords contained in these "tags" to determine your page rank for those keywords. By using them, you'll improve your page rank for your selected keywords.

Don't forget to go back to that all-important list of keywords (compiled in Chapter 1) when you enter the text for all your Title tags.

You may have noticed that we keep stressing the importance of this list of keywords in each new chapter.

- ▶ Finally, keep in mind that a Title tag can't contain more than 70 characters, including spaces.

5.2 The "Description" tag

- ▶ This tag contains the text that appears in grey on Google search pages. Like the Title tag, it will be read by your future visitors on Google and must attract their attention.
- ▶ The Description tag is formatted like this:
`<meta name="description" content="Description of your page"/>`

White Paper Ecommerce and SEO

- ▶ These tags must be unique and specific to each product. They follow the same rules that apply to the content of your product pages, which means they absolutely must have content that is unique within your e-commerce site. Again, it's difficult to be sure that no two Description tags are identical when you have hundreds of products, but the next chapter will discuss the tools available to help.
- ▶ They must contain keywords that reflect the page. Unlike the Title tag, Google will not use Description tags to boost your position in its search results, but they are still a chance to publicize your sales pitch. Feel free to include practical information about sales, prices, or even a telephone number.
- ▶ The Description tags should contain between 100 and 155 characters, including spaces.

Computer - [Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Computer)

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Computer

A **computer** is a programmable machine designed to automatically carry out a sequence of arithmetic or logical operations. The particular sequence of ...

(Caption: the Title tag is in blue, the Description tag is in grey, and the URL of the corresponding page is in green)

5.3H1 tags

The H1 tags are part of a set of tags, or mark-up, that makes up the structure of HTML pages and defines their main titles and paragraphs.

In brief, tags that include the letter H followed by a number, from 1 to 5 for example, refer to content headings organized from most to least important. The H1 tag corresponds to the main page header, or title. The H2 tag represents a less important sub-title, and so on down to the H5 tag.

Each HTML page is structured somewhat like a newspaper. The H1 tag corresponds to the main headline of the newspaper, allowing readers to instantly grasp the topic of the page, its importance, and how well it matches their interests. The H2 tag corresponds to a sub-title introducing a paragraph of lesser importance.

These tags play a very important role in natural SEO, because they are used in the Google algorithm to analyze a page's content and determine its main subject.

Google pays close attention to these tags, their organization, and their content, which allows it to very quickly identify the main topics on a page in order of importance.

RULES FOR H1 TAGS:

- ▶ Each page should have only one H1 tag. One all-too-common mistake is to include more than one H1 tag on the same page. No page should contain more than one H1 tag.
- ▶ H1 tags are formatted like this: `<h1>Keyword</h1>`
- ▶ H1 tags must be placed within a text area. Specifically, in order for Google to read the tag, it must be positioned to refer to text content (as is always the case for Google).
- ▶ Each H1 tag must be unique: too frequently, e-commerce sites insert their H1 tag around their logo, making them completely useless for SEO purposes. This positioning means that they are pointing to an image (see previous point) and are also identical on all the pages of the site, since the logo is always the same.

5.4 The H2 and H3 tags

RULES FOR H2 AND H3 TAGS:

- ▶ These tags are formatted like this: `<h2>Keyword</h2>` and `<h3>Keyword</h3>`
- ▶ Just like H1 tags, H2 and H3 tags must be positioned to refer to text.
- ▶ Unlike H1 tags, it is possible and even encouraged to include multiple H2 and H3 tags on the same page. They are generally positioned around paragraphs and sub-paragraphs, and will make it easier for Google to read your pages.

(We recommend that you not worry about H4, H5 and other tags, which play no significant role in page rank.)

Finally, note that by default, version 1.4 of PrestaShop comes with effectively positioned H1, H2 and H3 tags. All you have to do is optimize their content.

CONCLUSION:

In this chapter, we emphasized the importance of structure for the pages in your e-commerce site, specifically the position of the HTML tags. This is an essential component of any SEO strategy, and as you've seen, each of these tags should be used and optimized differently.

There are several useful tools to help you apply the tags correctly, and they are especially crucial for e-commerce sites that can include hundreds of pages. Understanding these tools will help you implement a consistent and effective SEO strategy, which is why we will present the main options in the next chapter.

6. Tools to Boost Productivity

In this chapter, we discuss Firefox add-ons and the tools offered by Google.

6.1 Firefox add-ons

You will need to install these Firefox add-ons, which will help you in the everyday work of tracking your SEO policy.

6.1.2 SearchStatus

This add-on allows you to view all the tags on a web page with a single click.

The screenshot shows the Silkflowers.com website with the SearchStatus add-on open. The add-on displays a table of meta data for the page:

Name	Value	Chars
title	Order Artificial Silk Flowers, Plants & Trees Online	52
description	Easily buy quality silk flowers, artificial plants and silk trees online at discount prices from Silkflowers.com	112
keywords	silk flowers, artificial flowers, silk plants, artificial plants, silk trees, artificial trees silk centerpieces, silk arrangements, artificial centerpieces, artificial arrangements	182
google-site-verification	O2VrCqItP1CL3Wv4MrN6eisV8lGUfyFDxstGKecay0	43
google-site-verification	DenEAZbnb27JmAlX31glEEQEr_612DCzKRaxdTUfudo	43

Download SearchStatus here:

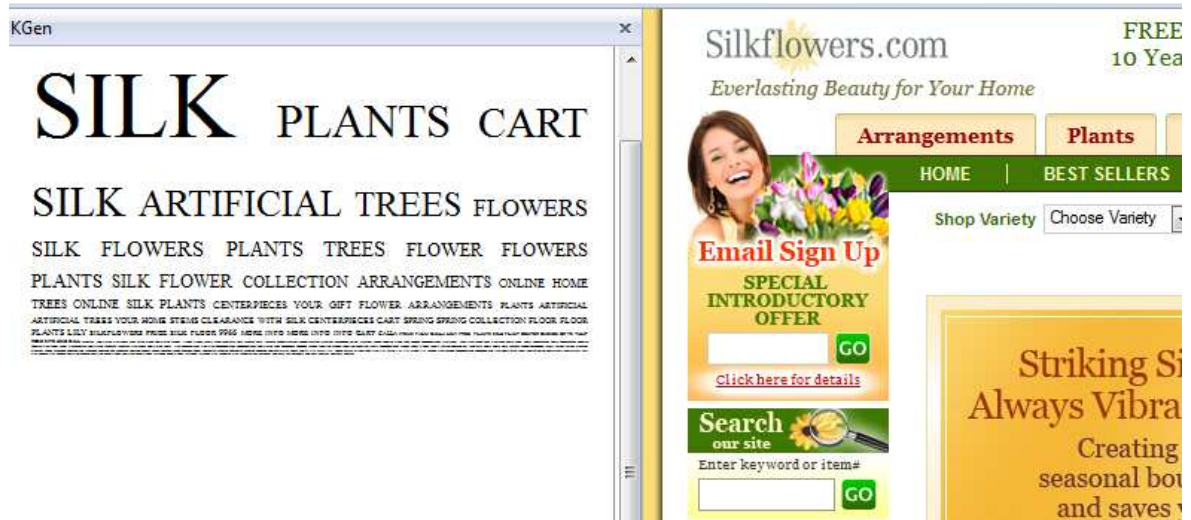
<https://addons.mozilla.org/fr/firefox/addon/searchstatus/>

6.1.2 Kgen

This Firefox module is very helpful for viewing the most frequently used keywords on a page. It shows the keywords as a tag cloud.

Consider the page below as an example; it was optimized to highlight the keyword "mattress." Using Kgen, you can very quickly visualize how the word "mattress" is used and check that it is optimal. The screen capture below shows that it is being used optimally here:

White Paper Ecommerce and SEO



Download Kgen here:

<https://addons.mozilla.org/fr/firefox/addon/kgen>

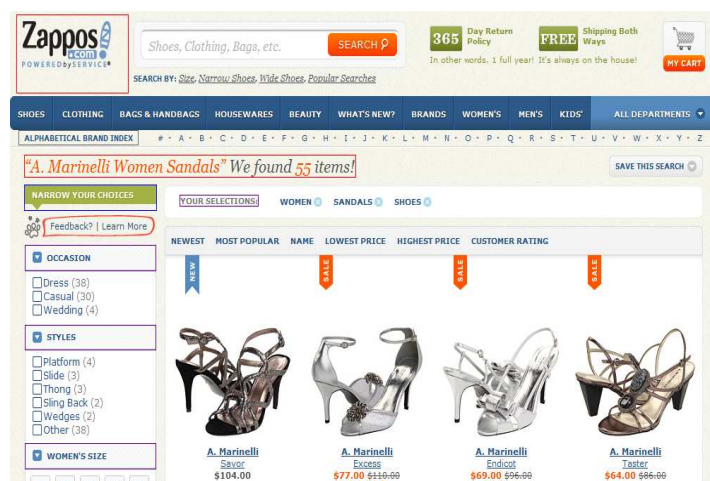
6.1.3 Web Developer Toolbar

Web Developer Toolbar is a Firefox add-on that's extremely helpful in view Hn tags and checking that they meet the desired criteria.

We'll go through two good examples to illustrate how you can use the tool and check that the pages on your website really do follow the rules that apply to Hn tags.

The Zappos site:

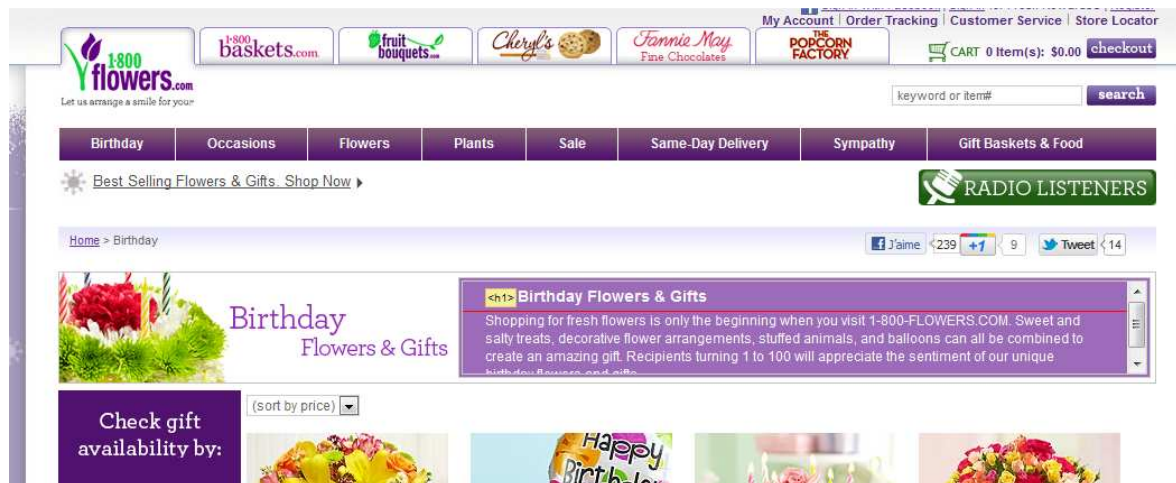
As you can see, the Zappos.com home page uses two H1 tags (circled in red), which is not a good practice:



White Paper Ecommerce and SEO

The 1800Flowers site:

In this example, you can see that the The 1800Flowers site follows best practices by using only one H1 tag.



Download the Web Developer Toolbar here:

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/web-developer/>

6.1.4 SEO for Firefox

This Firefox add-on allows you to view useful information directly from the Google search results, including the date the site was created, the number of external links, the site's PageRank, etc.

Note that it's important to turn off the add-on when you're not using it, rather than leaving it running constantly, which could get you banned from the Google servers temporarily and prevent you from performing searches on Google.com for several hours.

Here is a screen capture of the information you can view using this add-on:

Matt Cutts

Not really maintained by **Matt Cutts** This site about entomology and insects tickled my fancy.

I also like Daddy long legs spiders. ...

www.cs.unc.edu/~cutts/ - 5k - [Cached](#) - [Similar pages](#) - [Note this](#)

PR: 5 | [Aas:](#) 01-1007 | [Link:](#) 385,000 | [edu Link:](#) 190,000 | [edu Page Link:](#) 7 | [gov Link:](#) 108 | [Page Link:](#) 71 | [del.icio.us:](#) 1 | [Technorati:](#) 386 | [Alexa:](#) 3017 | [Cached:](#) 290000 | [dmoz:](#) 71 | [Bloglines:](#) 0 | [dir.yahoo.com:](#) 10 | [Whois:](#)

We've just reviewed the best add-ons to install for effectively tracking your natural page rank.

Now, let's look at tools that you need to install on or connect to your e-commerce site.

6.2 Google Analytics

It's very important to have access to traffic statistics for your site to track your audience and measure the quality of your page rank. The most often used and least expensive (free, actually) tool is offered by Google and called Google Analytics.

The price tag by no means indicates that this software is incomplete or ineffective, in fact Google Analytics is extremely powerful. Experience shows that this tool is one of the most effective on the market. Below, we summarize the functions you will probably use most frequently.

6.2.1 Regularly tracking changes in your natural traffic with Google

To do this, click on **Google** → **Traffic Sources (organic)**

The number of visits that come in naturally from Google should increase over the long term, and it definitely will if you apply the tips in this white paper.

6.2.2 Configuring a goal for your e-commerce site

Now we'll illustrate how you can configure a goal in Google Analytics for the PrestaShop solution, which is one of the best known and most complete e-commerce solutions:

1. Click on "Analytics Account Settings" in the upper left
2. Click "Edit" on the right of the screen next to the name of your online store
3. Under "Goals," click "Add a Goal" (under the first set of Goals or another one, it doesn't matter)

White Paper Ecommerce and SEO

4. Under "Goal name," put: **"How many click 'submit order'?"**
5. Next to "Active Goal," click **"On"**
6. Next to "Goal type," check **"Goal URL"**
7. For "Match type," select **"Rational expression match"**
8. For "Goal URL," enter: **/order.php** (copy and paste to avoid errors)
9. Do not check the box next to "Case sensitive"
10. For "Goal value," put: **1**
11. Click "Save goal"

Starting the next day, you should be able to go to the **Goals** section of your Analytics account to view the first results.

6.2.3 A useful function: "Which of your pages sell the most?"

This is a particularly interesting question, because it helps you better understand the behavior of internet users. Well, now that you've configured a goal in your Google Analytics account, the tool can provide you with this information.

Click **Content** → **Top content**, then look at the **"value index"** on the right-hand side.

This piece of data, the \$Index, provides very important information.

In simple terms, the higher a page's \$Index, the more attention you should focus on improving it since it is one of the most persuasive, sale-making sites, the ones that convince internet users who visit them to buy from your site.

The more times a page on your e-commerce site is viewed by internet users who have placed an order on your site (or reached a different goal that you have configured), the higher its \$Index will be.

For consistency, we should note that if the page is viewed several times by the same internet user who placed an order on your site, its \$Index will not increase. Visibility is determined based on the number of visitors, and there is no impact by a single internet user visiting the page multiple times.

White Paper Ecommerce and SEO

Also, you'll note that the "payment method" page, or any other page that is part of the checkout process, will naturally have a high index value. For this reason, you should ignore these pages when you are analyzing your \$Index figures.

This data will also be very helpful to you in improving the user friendliness of your site. Although this is outside the scope of natural SEO, it is important for you to be aware of functions like this in Google Analytics.

We have covered just a few tips and tricks about the useful features of Google Analytics. If you're interested, you can find more examples of Google Analytics statistics described on the Blog-ecommerce.com site and in the PrestaShop newsletter.

6.2.4 Features of the Google Webmaster Tools

Now, let's look at the features of the Google Webmaster Tools.

CONNECTING YOUR SITE TO GOOGLE WEBMASTER TOOLS

- To connect your site, go to www.google.com/webmasters/tools and follow the Google confirmation process (which is very simple if you're using PrestaShop).
- Now you should be able to view internal data about your site (not to be confused with the visitor statistics from Google Analytics). These should help you identify issues like technical problems that Google may have in indexing your site.

We discussed the importance of using tags consistently in Chapter 4 of this white paper. With the Google Webmaster Tools, you can very easily check whether there are any duplicates and locate them.

Click on **Diagnostics** → **HTML suggestions**. A list will appear showing all your pages with duplicate Title or Description tags!

Webmaster Tools

- Dashboard
- Messages
- Site configuration
- Your site on the web
- +1 Metrics
- ▼ Diagnostics
 - Malware
 - Crawl errors
 - Crawl stats
 - Fetch as Googlebot
 - HTML suggestions**

This is a perfect illustration of Google's powerful tools, which can generate immense quantities of data and help you take advantage of them. Again, we very strongly recommend that you make sure there are no duplicate tags on your e-commerce site.

White Paper

Ecommerce and SEO

CONCLUSION:

Now you're familiar with the main tools used to achieve a good natural page rank, and you've learned the most important ways to use them. Of course, this is not intended to be an exhaustive list. It is important for you to familiarize yourself with using these tools in your day-to-day work, which will help you master your strategy and performance in natural SEO.

We're going to move on to another crucial component of SEO, which is link building. The techniques we've been discussing up to now refer to the internal structure and organization of your e-commerce site. The techniques we're about to describe have to do with external links.

In the next chapter, we'll look at link building, which could be considered a form of external "optimization."

6.3 External "Optimizations / Popularity / Link building

We've already gone over and implemented several internal optimizations on your e-commerce site (home page, product pages, brand pages) by ensuring that the site content is relevant to the searches entered by internet users and organized according to the rules used by Google.

But there's one more important step if you want to have a good page rank on Google: **making sure that your site is popular among other website** so that Google will consider it credible. We've grouped these techniques together under the heading of external optimizations.

"External optimizations," or link building, refers to external links, meaning links on other websites that point to your e-commerce site.

You should have as many of these links as possible. In many cases, they're added spontaneously by partners, internet users themselves, or information sites. This will happen if your site is well known or if it contains original content that is cited by third parties.

Still, if neither of those is the case, it's important for you to implement an action plan to create these links yourself. In general, the more external links there are pointing to your page, the more credibility your site will have in Google, and the higher you will be positioned in search engine results.

We recommend the following approach to increasing the number of links to your site.

6.3.1 Regularly register your e-commerce site in directories

Registering your site in directories is the first way to boost the number of external links. This makes perfect sense since, although they are becoming less effective with time, they are still very influential. These directories are particularly helpful for e-commerce sites, especially those organized using good internal optimization techniques. If you have applied the optimization rules in the previous chapters, you can take full advantage of any external links you create.

We recommend that you register your site for at least ten directories each month and continue to do so regularly. This requires significant ongoing work, but it is unavoidable if you hope to achieve good results. The number of external links plays an important role for Google in determining which sites to display. If your external link results are better than the competition, you will have a head start over them in terms of page rank.

Yes, this is a lot of ongoing effort, but there's no way to avoid it. Believe us. Remember that your competitors will be making the effort regularly. Treat it like a constant race to have the most external links.

6.3.2 Online press release sites

It's important to write relevant content articles regularly, which you can send to press release sites in exchange for links that point back to your site.

Articles like this should be about ten lines long. You can use sites like www.agence-presse.net or <http://www.communique-de-presse.com>.

White Paper Ecommerce and SEO

One key element to succeeding in this area is the frequency and regularity of your press releases. Set yourself a goal of publishing at least 4 press releases each month. Keep up this pace for a few months, and you'll start to see results within several months.

The frequency with which you publish them should also be sustained, at least 4 press releases each month. That's a minimum, and you'll need to do it for several months before you see any results. The Blog-Ecommerce.com staff rarely releases more than 20 press releases per month and per client, but they do it over the long term, which is the most important thing.

6.3.3 "Do I really need a blog?"

Having a blog is a long-term, demanding effort that requires a great deal of energy. Don't jump into writing a blog if you're not absolutely sure you can keep posting relevant articles to it for a long time. If you do feel you have the makings of a writer, however, go for it! A blog will always be an effective tool for your e-commerce site.

You can cover any number of topics, like your company, your products, and any new releases, making sure to include at least one link back to your e-commerce site in each article.

If you're not able to start and maintain a blog, you can still participate in forums for your business sector. Even though forum links are often set to "nofollow" (that is, "blocked" by Google), this type of participation will always help develop your reputation.

6.3.4 Exchanging links with other sites

You undoubtedly know of other companies who, like you, have a website and would like to increase their visibility. Offer to do a link exchange, where you give them a link in your in the footer of your home page.

You can set up cross-linking with a maximum of three or four sites using this method. Don't go any further than that.



White Paper Ecommerce and SEO

CONCLUSION:

This white paper has no doubt convinced you that SEO is a challenging profession that requires three complementary skill sets:

- ▶ Technical expertise, to master the methods used in SEO and adapt them to meet the constantly changing rules of Google.
- ▶ Marketing expertise, to ensure that the selected terms, content and text really do meet the expectations of your visitors.
- ▶ Project expertise, to implement an organized, long-term approach to natural SEO, which is the only way you'll achieve the results you want.

You should also realize that SEO is constantly changing, both because there are always new techniques and because other companies, specifically your competitors, regularly adopt new practices.

The experts at Blog-Ecommerce.com are completely focused on natural SEO, and they can support and guide you to achieve the results you want.

That's why more and more companies trust Blog-Ecommerce.com to provide them with its unique expertise, constant assistance, and organized, rigorous, long-term approach.

With a powerful tool like PrestaShop, you're supporting your strategy with a successful tool that has established itself as a leader in Europe.

Online competition is fierce. You need to do everything you can to get luck on your side, which means a good method, good expertise and good tools.

Once you've done that, your products and sales ability will make your company a success!

BLOGECOMMERCE COMPANY PRESENTATION

Blog-Ecommerce.com, a company specializing in SEO for e-commerce sites, is recognized for its exclusive knowledge in optimizing natural page rank for merchant sites of all sizes.

The services offered by Blog-Ecommerce.com are known as the best in the business when it comes to e-commerce.

With more than 400 clients since 2006, this company of 15 employees strives for 100% client satisfaction, and has positioned its clients on thousands of keywords, including some of the most competitive.

Take advantage of this expertise by emailing BlogEcommerce.com (contact@blog-ecommerce.com).

www.blog-ecommerce.com

PRESTASHOP COMPANY PRESENTATION

PrestaShop is the most reliable and flexible Open-source e-commerce software. Since 2007, PrestaShop has revolutionized the industry by providing features that engage shoppers and increase online sales. The Prestateam consists of over 100 passionate individuals and more than 300 000 community members dedicated to innovated technology.

www.prestashop.com

PrestaShop, the leading open source e-commerce solution in Europe, and Blog-Ecommerce.com, a SEO agency specializing in e-commerce, have joined forces to offer this white paper on SEO for Your E-Commerce Site.