SSW Rules to Better Google Rankings

What People Are Saying:

" I've been putting together Development Guidelines for my employer and in the process have reviewed many published " standards (in the .Net arena) from around the world. In each category, the suggestions at SSW are always among the best.

  - Leon Bambrick,

Google is, by a country mile, the most popular search engine in the world. It's popular because it seems to rank pages so accurately and quickly, time and time again. The secret to its success is its top secret Page Rank Algorithm. Google developed its page ranking system in an effort to increase the quality of search results and has left all of its competitors for dead. As a result, search engine optimization (SEO) gurus are always looking to find new ways to increase their Google rankings. As we all know, a website is a pretty nifty thing to have for a myriad of different reasons. But the truth is that it's worth is derived from the people that surf it, and if no one is surfing it, then it becomes useless. So who's the biggest website referrer? The answer is Google in almost every case.

The Google Page Rank is based on how many links you have to and from your pages, and their respective page rank. The problem for many SEO guru's has been a lack of understanding regarding where page rank comes from, and how internal and external links distribute page rank between pages. I have spoken to many webmasters who don't know that there is more to increasing page rank than simply getting reciprocal links.

So whats your position for Google rankings? Our SEO consultants have brought together some common strategies to influence your Google rankings and improve your websites Google Friendliness. You can improve your placement by following this expert guide we have collaborated together, which will result in the promotion of your website. There is a plethora of information out there and we've brought it all together to show you some common strategies to influence your Google rankings and improve your website's "Google Friendliness".

Do you agree with them all? Are we missing some? Email us your tips, thoughts or arguments. Let us know what you think.

Rules to Better Google Rankings

1. Do you know how Google ranks pages?
2. Do you know if Google has indexed your page?
3. Do you know your Page Rank?
4. Do you create new page rank for yourself?
5. Do you conserve your page rank?
6. Do you concentrate your page rank where it will do the most good?
7. How many inbound links do you have?
8. Do you use enough keywords?
9. Do you monitor the progress of your keywords?
10. Are your <title>, <h1>, and <h2> tags descriptive?
11. Do you use META keywords and description tags?
12. Is your URL consistently in the same case?
13. Do your links have relevancy to the page you're linking to?
14. Do you make your data-driven pages easier to find?
15. Do your inbound picture links use attributes?
16. Do you avoid the temptation of link farms?
17. ~~Are you listed with DMOZ.org?~~
18. Do you avoid using frames on your website?
19. Does your Flash website have an alternate HTML site?
20. Do you use include files for your JavaScript?
21. Do you submit all your software to download sites?
22. Are your webpages less than 101k?
23. Do you use your Robots.txt file effectively?
24. Do you redirect pages correctly to make your website search engine friendly?

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1. **Do you know how Google ranks pages?**

What makes Google so successful? The answer to that is Google's Page Rank Algorithm. You can read about the early days of the page rank algorithm here: *The Anatomy of a Large-Scale Hypertextual Web Search Engine*   .

The actual Page Rank algorithm looks like this: **PR(U) = (1-d) + d * sum$\sqrt{}$(PR(V)/N(V)).** Here PR = Page Rank, U is the page we're looking at, d is a constant damping factor and V is a page that links to our page.

The basic premise that comes from this algorithm is:

When I link to your page, I'm casting a vote that your page is good and the more links (votes) that

are received the better the page is.

This statement alone sent shockwaves through the webmaster community and sent many webmasters on a endless quest for links. All pages begin with an equal page rank, which is then moved around based on the internal and external links to and from that page.

It's important not to forget that Page Rank is not the only factor involved in a search. Essentially Google completes the following steps when you perform a search:

1. Finds all pages matching the keywords of the search
2. Rank accordingly using "on the page" factors (proximity between words, frequency, repetition etc)
3. Calculate the relevancy of inbound anchor text
4. Uses the page rank to decide what order to display the results in

So looking for people to link to your site will only become important if you've got the first three discriminating factors nailed.

2. **Do you know if Google has indexed your page?**

First things first, you should check if your web page has been indexed by Google. Don't be surprised if Google is already one step ahead of you - its Googlebots could have already crawled your site without you knowing. So what's the best way to find out if Google has indexed your web page? Use the Google toolbar.

When one of Google's spiders indexes your site, it takes a snap shot of what each page looks like and stores it in its cache.

Note: The default settings of the Google Toolbar do NOT include this very useful button. To turn it on, you have to press Options on the toolbar, go to the "More" tab, and check the "Page Info menu" option.

Hot Tip: "How can I know which pages in my website are not indexed by Google?". We have a solution - see SSW Link Auditor Googe RageRank Report and then clean up all the red cross in the report and your Google coverage will be maximized.

**Hot Tip!**

Figure: Use the Google Toolbar to check your pages in Google cache

3. **Do you know your Page Rank?**

The first step to increase your Google ranking is to know what you're current Page Rank is, that way you can keep track of whether your changes are working.

The only way to find out the page rank of a page is to download the Google toolbar. Page Rank is actually a measure of how likely it is that your page will be found relative to all others during a random search. Google calculates this as an integer between 1 and 2 million. This scale is then mapped to give the page rank of between 1 and 10. This means that it's not entirely accurate. Imagine that your website has a 'real' page rank of 1,000,001, and one of your competitors' page has a page rank of 1,000,000. All other things being equal, he will beat you, although both page ranks will show up as the same when scored out of 10.
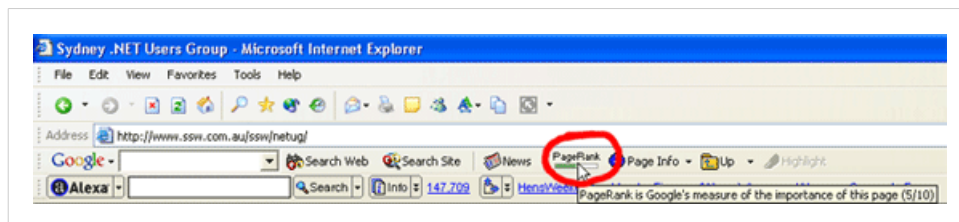
4. **Figure: The page rank of the Sydney .NET User Group is 5**

5. **Do you create more page rank for yourself?**

Creating more pages is the only way to create page rank from nothing, as every page on your site starts it's life with the same base page rank as did every other page on the web. It follows from this that having more pages is better, and having excessively long pages is a waste - you would end up with more page rank to distribute if you split it into two pages instead. Three other ways of increasing page rank are using automatic directories like DMOZ, by writing Blogs, and by having other websites with good page rank link to you.
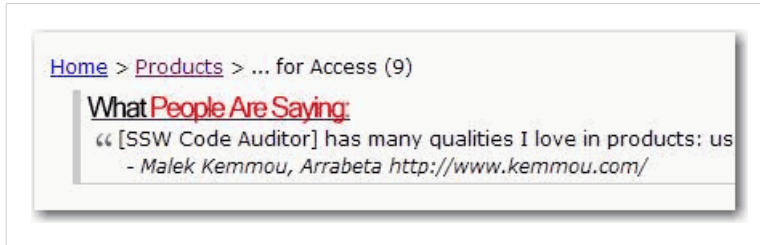
6. **Do you conserve your page rank?**

Links cannot create page rank for you, but they can certainly move it around, including moving it to pages on other peoples websites. Be aware: the Google algorithm looks at pages not domains, so there is nothing to stop your valuable page rank being distributed around the web. The reciprocal is true also, you 'bleed' page rank *from* the pages that link to you. If these links are coming from another domain then that's probably good, but if the extra page rank is coming at the expense of other pages on your site, it may be bad. So you see that page rank bleed makes it vital how you handle your external links, as each one can lower the page rank of your page. There is a way to link to pages without bleeding rank. You do this by putting the 'nofollow' attribute in your link. This looks like this: Some Text. It is probably a good idea to make all your external links nofollow, thus conserving your

page rank within your site. Another possible method is to display external links as text instead of a hyper links.
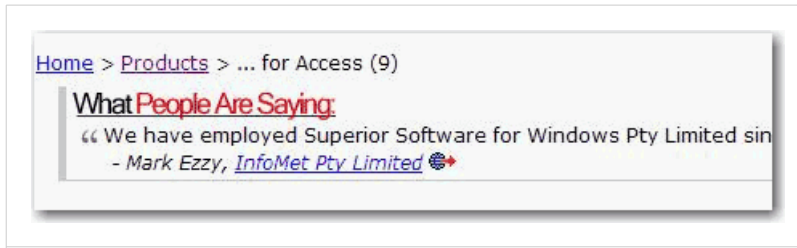

9. **Figure: Bad example of conserving PageRank**

10. **Figure: Good example of conserving PageRank**

11. **Do you concentrate your page rank where it will do the most good?**

Given that you have a certain amount of page rank to work with, the challenge becomes to decide which pages on your site are the most important, and distribute your page rank to these pages so that they turn up in search results. A simple rule to follow here is to have lot's of links to and not many links from your important pages.
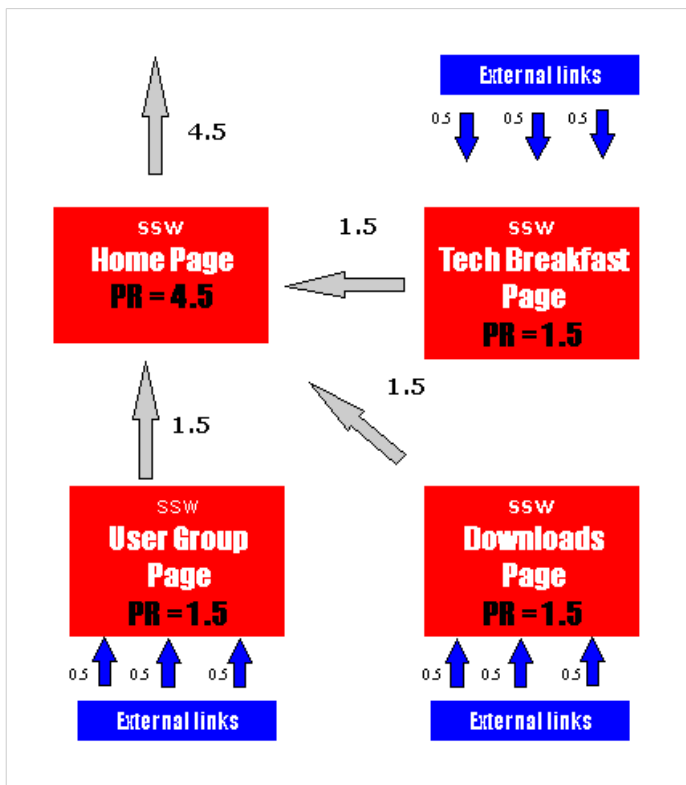
12. **Figure: The main page gets a 4.5 page rank from the 3 internal pages linking to it with 1.5 page rank.**

13. **How many inbound links do you have?**

Now that you have page rank sorted, it's time to concentrate on the other important things to worry about. Who's linking to me is an important question, and one that can be easily answered. To find out how many inbound links you have and where they're coming from, go to www.Google.com and type in "link:" then the URL of your page. Click on this link and see who is linking to SSW
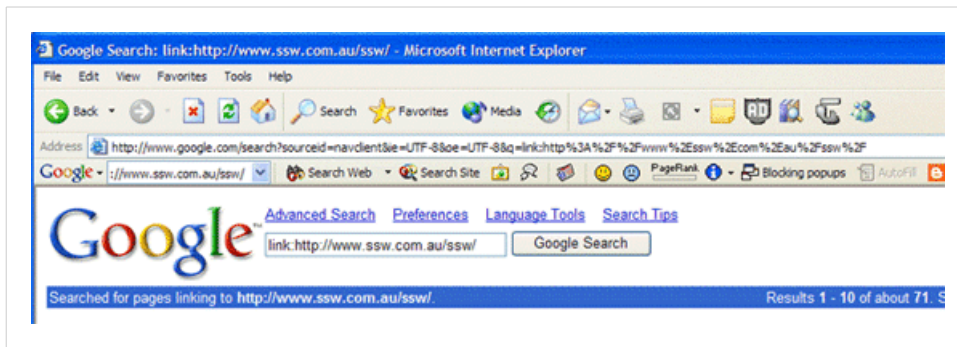
15. **Figure: The backward links for SSW is 71**

A limitation to the "link" functionality on Google is that it doesn't list all of the links that Google knows about, it only lists those that contribute over a certain level of Page Rank. In other words if you're getting a link from a webpage with thousands of links on it you're probably not gaining much Page Rank from them if any at all. And there's a good chance that it won't be shown using the link to functionality on Google. See our distribution rule for details on how Page Rank is split and distributed amongst webpages.

Odds are you'll notice that a majority of links that are coming to that page are from your own website. This highlights the notion that Page Rank is calculated on a page by page basis. Websites don't accumulate Page Rank, webpages do.

16. **Do you use enough keywords?**

If you're sick to death of begging people for reciprocal links a quick and easy fix is to make sure you have enough of the right keywords on your page. As a general rule of thumb we try to get all the great keywords in the first few paragraphs of every page so that spiders can't miss it.

Lets use this page as an example. Before I wrote this page I sat down and thought about some keywords people would use if looking for some Google tips and tricks on how to increase your rankings. The words I used for the URL were chosen with search engine optimization in mind and here are a few more of my keywords I hoped to rank well with:

- Increase Google Friendliness
- Better/Increase Google Ranking
- Page Rank
- Search Engine Optimization (Note: In Australia we spell optimization with an "s" [optimisation] but I'm willing to bet that most people searching online would use the American way of spelling it. So I had to take this into consideration)

This page is testimony to the fact that keywords and content are the key to better Google rankings. You can find all of the above mentioned words several times in the first couple of paragraphs and this is why my page ranks really well. See for yourself   try this search   , or   this one   and even   this one   Notice the extraordinary rankings for the keywords. You can even try the same thing in Yahoo and we still ranking very well. As you can see we're on the first page simply because strategic choice and placement of keywords.
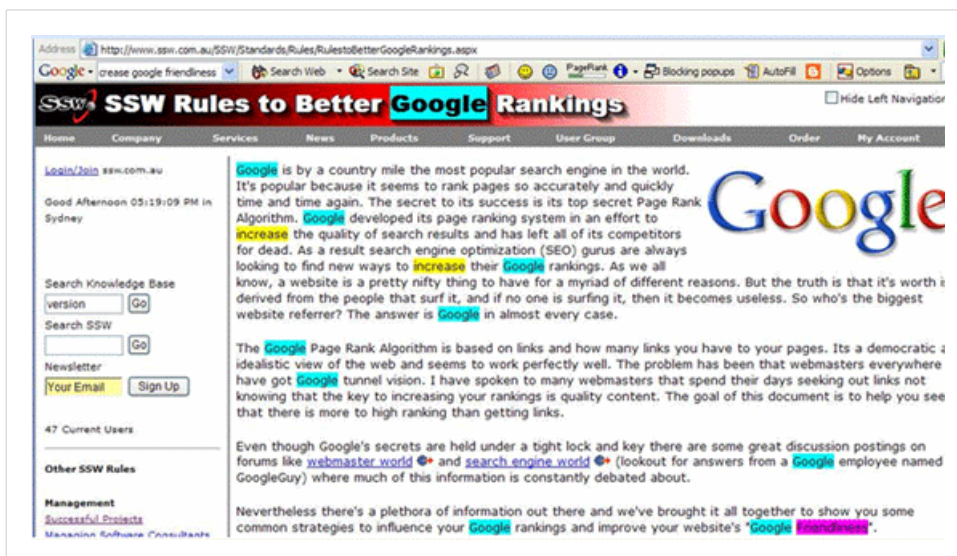
17. **Figure: Notice the abundance of keywords in the first few paragraphs**

18. **Do you monitor the progress of your keywords?**

Every month when the Googlebots start reindexing your website looking for new content and keywords, it's a good idea to keep track of how your Google rankings are going.

At SSW we use   Web CEO   to check our Google Rankings. Web CEO checks the search engine results for our keywords on a schedule, allowing us to continually monitor our Google rankings.

We've listed some of our product related keywords that we care about on our Google Keywords page. By clicking on any of the links on our keywords column it shows you what the search engine results pages are for those keywords.

19. **Are your <title>, <h1>, and <h2> tags descriptive?**

The <title>, <h1>, and <h2> tags need to be descriptive. They should briefly describe the purpose or content of the page. Have a look at the following two images. The first image is a bad example as the title bar and page heading are not very descriptive. The second image is a better example as title bar and page heading are more informative.
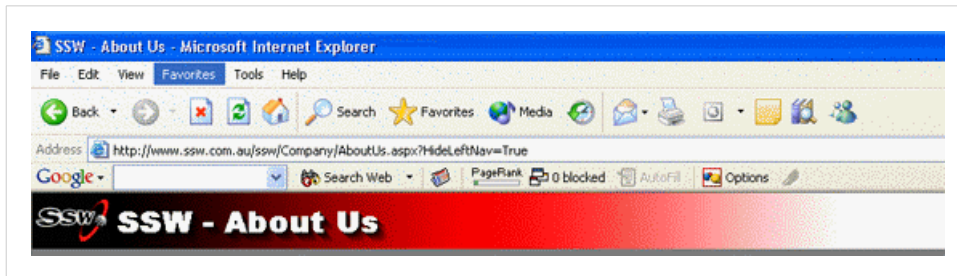
20.   Figure: Bad Example - a non-descriptive <h1>
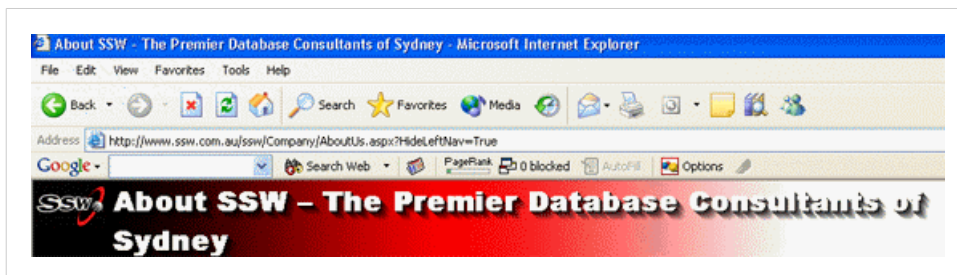
21.   Figure: Good Example - a descriptive <h1>

Technical Information
The following code segment shows the areas that should be changed. The code in **green** is the text that should be changed to something more descriptive. It should give the reader a good idea of the page content or the section it is describing.

```
<!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC"-//W3C//DTD
            HTML 4.0 Transitional//EN">
 <html> <head>
   <title>About Us</title>
          <meta
       content="http://schemas.microsoft.com/intellisense/ie5" name="vs_targetSchema">
     <link
 href="http://www.ssw.com.au/ssw/Include/ssw.css" type= "text/css" rel="stylesheet">
     <link
 href= "http://www.ssw.com.au/ssw/Images/icoSsw.ico" rel= "shortcut icon">
  </head>
  <h1>About Us</h1>
```

We have a program called SSW Code Auditor to check for this rule.

We have a program called SSW Link Auditor to check for this rule.

22. **Do you use META keywords and description tags?**

One of the easiest ways to get the ball rolling with your web pages and being noticed by search engines is to use META tags. Search engines use META tags to categorise your website's content. Many webmasters took this as a opportunity to abuse the META tags and the earlier less sophisticated search engines found that the quality of search results were suffering. Luckily today's search engines like Google don't give the META tags so much weight when determining search engine results pages. In any case we know that search engines do consider them so we think it would be silly to overlook such a quick and easy task to complete.

There are two kinds of META tags you should use:

META-Description tag: Search engines will often use the information in the META Description tag as well as the Title to describe your site in the short description that goes along with the link in your search engine rankings.

Meta-KEYWORDS tag: The META keywords hold words that you can use to help search engines classify your content. The keywords you use must be relevant and must appear in the body text.

Trying starting with 3 to 5 'key' words from your Title. Where possible combine the words into logical phrases and we recommend using all lower case letters (and NO LEADING SPACES) when specifying keywords!

We have a program called SSW Code Auditor to check for this rule.

NOTE: what you really want is a report that lists every single page on your website and their relative page rank so that you can ensure that no unimportant pages are receiving a high page rank.

23. **Is your URL consistently the same case?**

The URL text behind your domain URL (i.e. after the .com or .com.au) should be spelt using a consistent case (upper or lower). We know that Google is case sensitive when it comes to URLs and treats webpages with the URL "www.ssw.com.au/ssw/" as different to "www.ssw.com.au/SSW/". This has some pretty big implications on making sure people link to you in a consistent manner.

At SSW we use SSW Link Auditor to check that all of our URLs display consistently.

Here's an example to illustrate this point. Here's all the pages linking to "www.ssw.com.au/ssw/" and then all the pages linking to "www.ssw.com.au/SSW/" . As we can see Google is thinking that these two pages are different, also assigning both pages a different Page Rank when they are actually the same page. Please note whilst Google is case sensitive when it comes to URLs it isn't when it comes to the keywords you put into the search box. i.e. a search for "UPSIZING PRO" and "upsizing pro" will still return the same results.

In SSW we recommend following naming conventions:

1. The root should in lower case, e.g. "www.ssw.com.au/ssw/".
2. If there is only 1 word, it's not necessary to have the 1st char to be upper case, e.g. index, images.
3. Otherwise, use Initial Caps on each word, e.g. /ProductDetails/CategoryListing.aspx
4. Follow the proper noun naming convention, such as SQL, SSW eXtremeEmails, SSW TimePRONET.

24. **Do your links have relevancy to the page you're linking to?**

We know that the way your inbound links are worded do make a difference, they play a crucial factor when Google searches are made by search engine users. Google uses the words between your <a href> tags to decide which websites are the most relevant to the search terms.

For example if we had a million inbound links that described SSW like this:

```
<a href="http://www.ssw.com.au">Movies for Free</a>
```

When someone searches for free movies on Google, Google would point to us.

So what does this mean? All those that are pointing to pages on your website that are displayed as 'More', 'Link', 'This' or 'Click Here' aren't doing you any favours when it comes to increasing your Google rankings.

"For tips and tricks to increase your Google Ranking Click here"

25. **Figure: Bad Example #1 - Link does not increase your rankings**

"For tips and tricks to increase your Google Ranking Click Here"

26. **Figure: Bad Example #2 - Link does not increase your rankings**

"Link for tips and tricks to increase your Google Ranking"

27. **Figure: Bad Example #3 - Link does not increase your rankings**

"For tips and tricks to increase your Google Ranking read this"

28. **Figure: Bad Example #4 - Link does not increase your rankings**

"For tips and tricks to increase your Google Ranking Click Here"

29. **Figure: Bad Example #5 - better then the ones above (scroll and hold over link to see the difference)**

ID	Name	Application	Pack Size	
1LIN004-BChickens	LincoMed™ Soluble Powder (Brand of Lincomycin hydrochloride soluble powder)	Each 40 gm packet contains 16.0 gm lincomycin	40 gm pouch	more>>

30. **Figure: Bad Example #6 - Link does not increase your rankings**

"For tips and tricks to increase your Google Rankings go to our Rules to Better Google Rankings"

32. **Figure: Good Example**

This rule also has relevance for easier website navigation.

We have a program called SSW Code Auditor to check for this rule.

We have a program called SSW Link Auditor to check for this rule.

33. **Do you make your data-driven pages easier to find?**

Google crawls data-driven websites. There are a few considerations when it comes to optimizing a data-driven website. The best way to get your database driven website crawled by Google is to have an index of your dynamic pages so that the Googlebots have a singular point of reference to your dynamic pages. It's a slow process, but it will be well worth it.

Take a look at how we tackle this issue. We have a knowledge base with hundreds of pages and we list them all here on our kbindex page. We know that Google has crawled our kbindex page because it shows up on the Google cache, which means that all of our articles will be indexed. We've also applied this same principle with our site map.
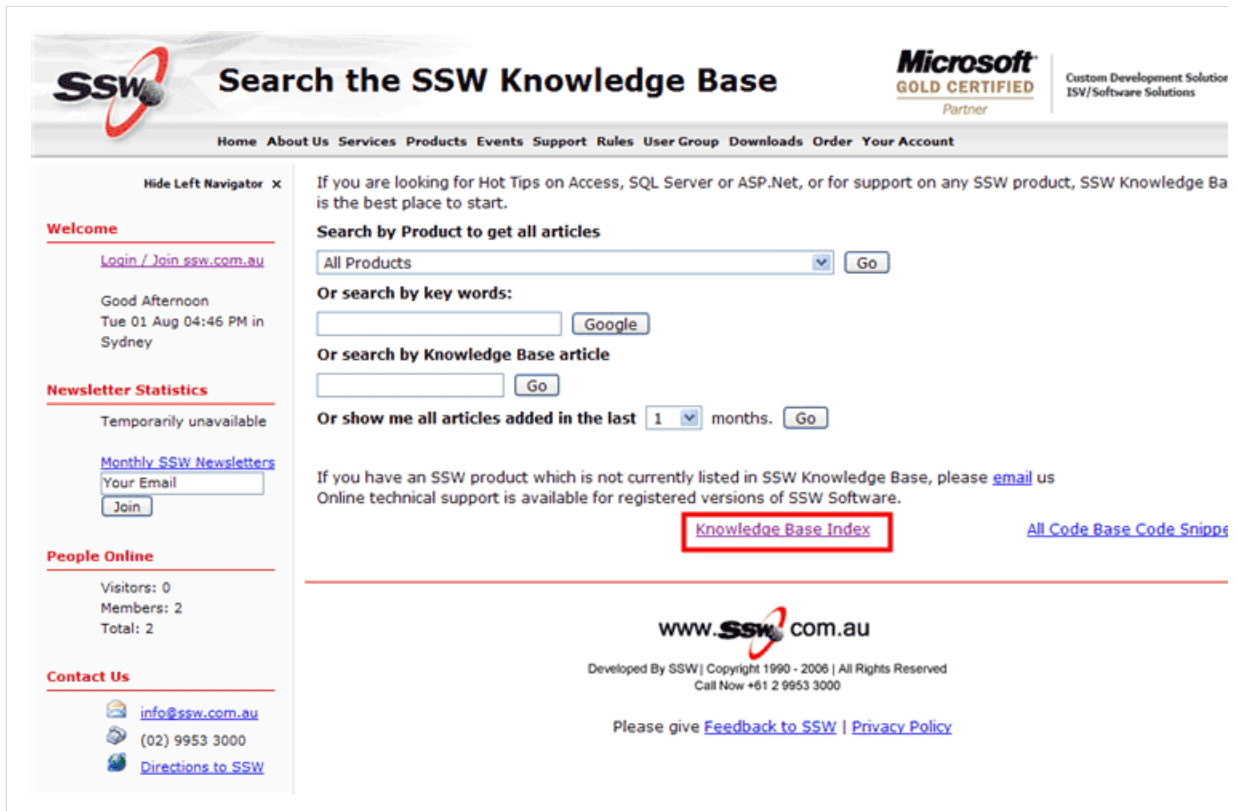
34. **Figure: It is hard for search engines to know which option from the drop down field they should go into. Here we add a link to our Knowledge Base Index.**
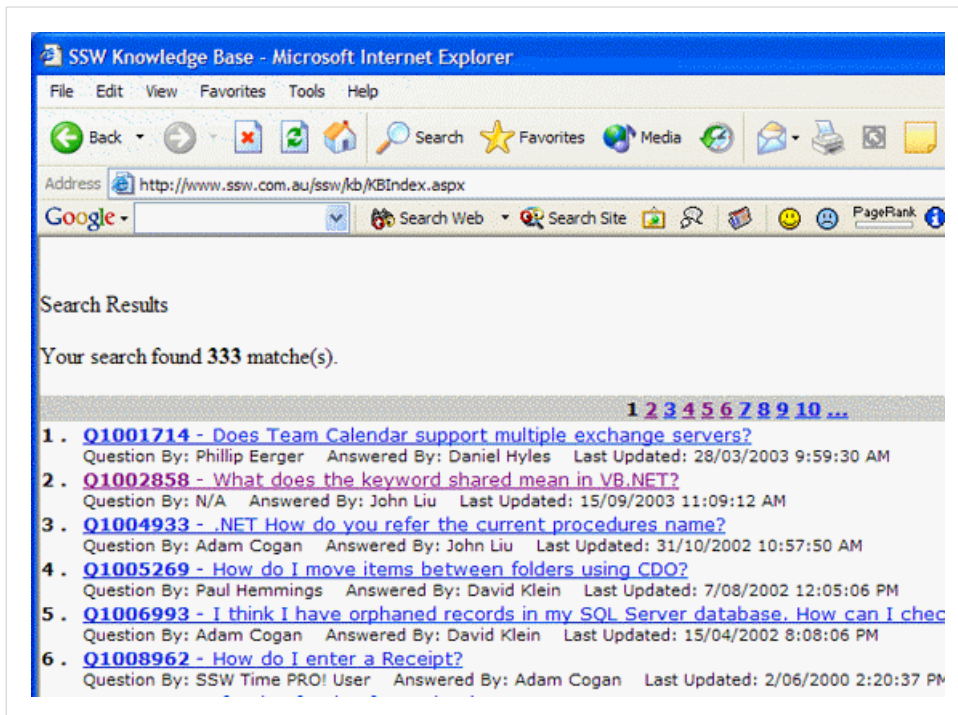
36. **Figure: By default the dynamic pages behind this page would be invisible to google. You need to provide a link that will make them visible to google.**

37. **Do your inbound picture links use attributes?**

What do you do when you want images to link to your site? In the case of images Google will look for the alt text and factor this into the search results. So when you ask someone else to link to your site with an image you should always add attributes like "alt" and "title" into the code. Here's an example. Hold the cursor over the image below and see what happens.


```
<a href="/ssw/Default.aspx">
    <img src="/ssw/Images/SSWLogo/SSWLogo_NoText_NoShadow.gif" width="169" height="132">
</a>
```

38. **Figure: BAD EXAMPLE (scroll over - you will see nothing)**


```
<a href="/ssw/Default.aspx">
    <img src="/ssw/Images/SSWLogo/SSWLogo_NoText_NoShadow.gif"
        alt="SSW Logo [Search engines will index this text]"

        title="SSW Logo [Search engines will index this text]" width="169" height="132">
</a>
```

39. **Figure: GOOD EXAMPLE (scroll over)**

See how this image is indexed by Google

For images that isn't a link consider using <dl> tag for captions. This way google will index your image more accurately.

We have a program called SSW Code Auditor to check for this rule.

40. Do you avoid the temptation of link farms?

There are many search engine optimization techniques that are quick and easy fixes, like being in a link farm. To join a link farm people pay to be part of a collection of webpages where their sole purpose is to provide interconnecting links and harvest Page Rank amongst members. Many of these "get ranked quick" methods have some serious repercussions. If you are caught in a link farm, or have hidden text in your pages, you'll eventually get caught and sentenced with the Google "death penalty". So after all is said and done a safe and sure fire way to increase your website's Page Rank is to provide useful information that other websites will want to link to. Google's ideal of the internet is that it should be filled with webpages that have high quality information and based on this ideal it rewards high quality content and penalises crud.

Many of these link farms and websites that subscribe to them have been identified and banned by Google so you should never be lured into the temptation of quick easy solution to search engine optimization. Employing dodgey optimization techniques is a gamble, you're gambling that the smart people over at Google aren't as smart as you.

41. ~~Are you listed with DMOZ.org?~~

This tip for improving your ranking does not work anymore. It was a very 5 years ago tip :-)

Many webmasters have written articles proclaiming that being listed with DMOZ.org and Yahoo automatically gets you an artificially high Page Rank. They think this because DMOZ and Yahoo use Google technologies. This may not be entirely correct. What we do know is that the data that DMOZ collects is used by hundreds of sites. With many of these sites linking to you, the Page Rank benefits are probably too weak to be listed in a link search, but we know that the Googlebots do crawl them, and the links do count. So what you get is heaps of lightly weighted links coming from sites that you may not be aware of adding to your Page Rank. All things considered, its free to list with DMOZ and you might as well take the 10 minutes to fill out the form. Here's a link to DMOZ

The DMOZ Open Directory Project is the largest, most comprehensive human-edited directory of the Web. It is constructed and maintained by a vast, global community of volunteer editors. It's primary objective is to organize a small portion of the web and present it back to the rest of the population, culling out the bad and useless and keeping only the best content.

42. Figure: What DMOZ Project is

43. Do you avoid using frames on your website?

Websites that use frames often don't get crawled by search engine spiders. The web was designed in such a way that every URL is supposed to correspond to a webpage, and with framed websites this is not the case. We recommend that you avoid frames altogether.

However, there is a solution for those that have already taken the plunge. You can use Meta Tags in your code, but considering that some search engines don't rely on these, you also need to use the no frames tag in your code. Many webmasters use those tags to leave messages for people that don't have frames enabled, however this is the only part of the site the search engines will be able to search. So we recommend a summary of your site and its purpose with a link back to home on every page of your site. Here's a link to some code that you may use.

44. Does your flash website have an alternate HTML site?

Whilst the use of Flash is becoming increasingly common as companies seek more visually enticing websites, the truth is that Flash remains invisible to most search engines. The solution to this is to have a HTML option available with the same content as the Flash site. This also helps with users that don't have Flash installed or don't want to wait for long periods of time for the page to load up.

45. Do you use include files for your JavaScript?

Many websites use JavaScript for fancy menus, drop downs or scroll overs. Many search engines don't recognise JavaScript and even for those that do, if the web spiders are spending most of their time sifting through JavaScript instead of content, you risk your content not being indexed at all. At SSW we use include files in all of our pages. This keeps the code clean and helps search engines index pages.

46. Do you submit all your software to download sites?

As suggested a great way to increase your websites search engine rankings is to get inbound links towards your website. Being a software vendor we do this by submitting our products to freeware/shareware download sites like Shareware River and Tucows. So if you find a site that accepts software submissions make sure you submit your entire product range, not just one.

47. **Are your webpages less than 101k?**

As a general rule of thumb we think that its a good idea to keep your websites down to 101k in size. As well as the premise that more smaller pages will give you more page rank that fewer longer pages, the Google cache never goes higher than 101k. The Google cache is a snapshot of what the webpage looked like the last time the Googlebots crawled your site. Click on the link to take a look at this page's Google cache. The snapshot may not be the same as how it looks now simply because that's how it looked the last time the Googlebots were in town.

48. **Do you use your Robots.txt file effectively?**

If you decide to you use the redirect method when linking to external pages from your site, it's a good idea to have a robots.txt file in your root directory. In the robots.txt file you specify that the robot (or spider as they're sometimes known) should not look in the redirects folder. This will avoid the problem that can sometimes occur where put a Google search will sometimes incorrectly display content from another site as if it was from your site. Also, this avoids incorrect hits on your redirects, mucking up your statistics which is one of the main reasons you would use redirects in the first place!

49. **Do you redirect pages correctly to make your website search engine friendly?**

You dont want to give your websites Google ranking away to the redirect page when it can all go to the destination page. To avoid this, as well as make sure the spider can follow the redirect, you should:

1. Have the correct redirecting code

```
<script runat="server">
    private void Page_Load(object sender, System.EventArgs e)
    {
        Response.Status = "301 Moved Permanently";
        Response.AddHeader("Location","http://www.new-url.com");
    }
</script>
```

2. **Figure: Example of a correct method of redirection for websites using ASP .NET**

   For examples of correct redirecting code in other languages visit How to redirect a Web Page

3. Check that your page redirect is search engine friendly with the Search Engine Friendly Redirect Checker
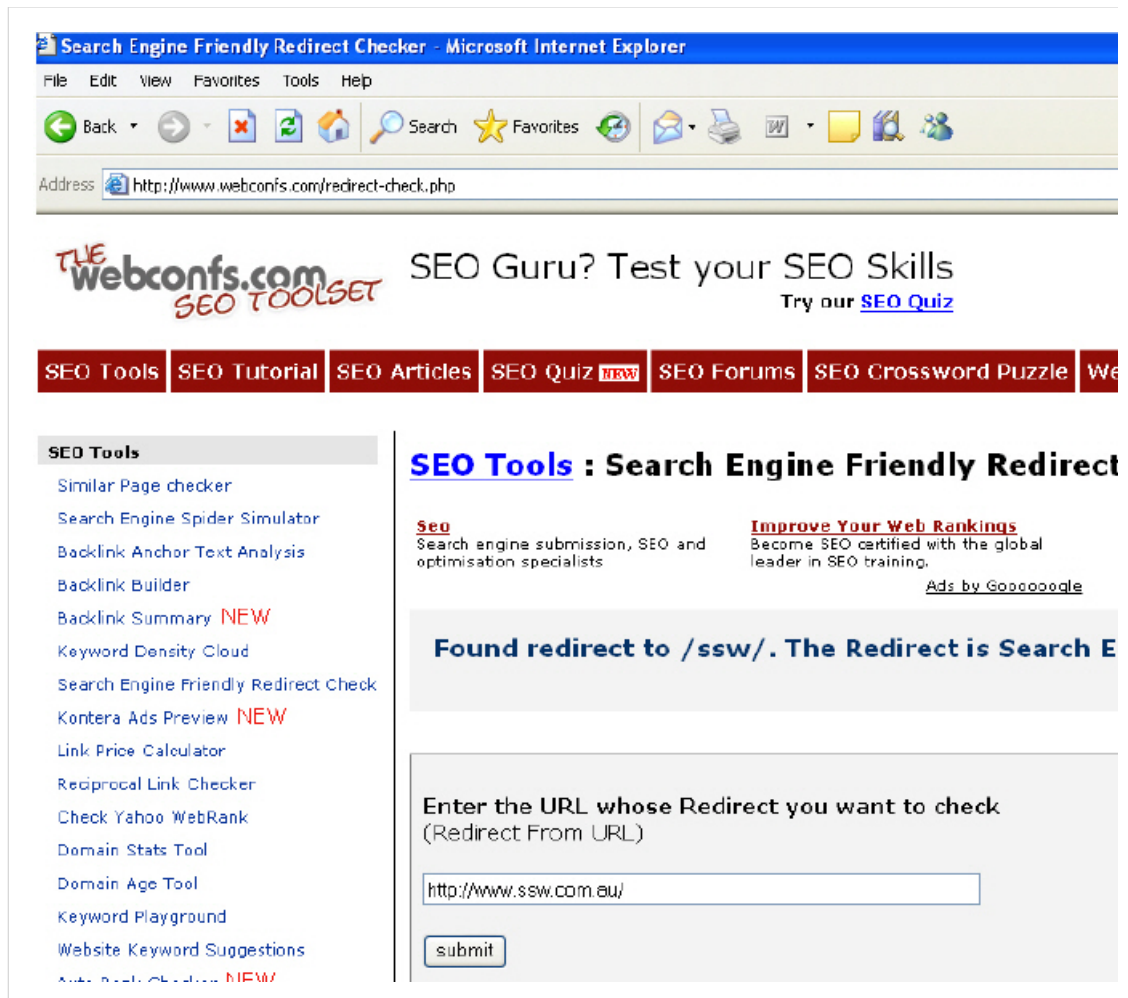
4. Figure: SSW's homepage redirect is Search Engine friendly.

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