

HOW TO MAKE YOUR WEBSITE SEARCH ENGINE FRIENDLY

Unfortunately it is possible to spend a lot of time and money on your website and on search engine registrations and yet get little in return.

Could your website be the problem?

Does your website welcome search engine crawlers or is it putting up brick walls, or hiding information; perhaps it just seems completely empty. Search Engine Crawlers are pretty primitive programs, they have a lot of work to do and they like to do it fast. They don't tolerate hindrances very well.

Crawlers "see" the web very much like text browsers. Take a crawler eyed-view of your website at <http://www.delorie.com/web/lynxview.html> . Type in your web address. Is this what you want the search engines to know about your website?

(Here is an interesting web address to test. Type www.thevoid.co.uk in and see what you get. The results are true to name and provide little more than a void for the search engines. This website is built with Flash and although many of the pages have been indexed by Google and alltheweb there is not much in the way of content to be matched up with search queries.)

Hopefully when you tested your website you got a very different picture. If you're not too excited about what you found consider the points below, any one of them, or perhaps a combination of them could be standing in your path to success:

- Flash presentations provide little or no content to be indexed.
- Frames can put your navigation and therefore the rest of your website out of reach.
- Content Management Systems can put your content out of reach.
- Web crawlers do not accept forced Cookies and Session ID's and they will simply go elsewhere.
- Using the same Page Title on your web pages. Search Engines do not want to index duplicate content and may ignore pages with the same page titles.

The easiest way to find out if your website is search engine friendly is to see how many of your web pages are currently indexed on your website. Go to <http://www.google.com> and type in `allinurl:yourdomainhere.com.au` Google will return a list of all the pages it has indexed within your website.

You can do the same on "all the web". Go to <http://alltheweb.com> and type in `url.all:yourdomain.com.au`. all the web will return a list of all the pages it has indexed within your website. (all the web is gaining more and more users, list with them now if you aren't there already. You can submit your site through a free submission service that you can reach from their home page.)

Hopefully all of your pages have been indexed. If not here are some suggestions.

FLASH

If your website is built entirely from Flash you will need to get some html pages built and provide links to these pages from your home page. For more information on this see resource: ["Is a Flash Site Really That Flash?"](#)

FRAMES

If you are not sure if your website has been built using frames you can test it as follows. While viewing your website in your browser click on the "View" option of the toolbar and select "Source". If your page has been built using frames you will probably see only a few lines of text that will include the word "frame" or "frameset". E.g.

```
<html>
<head>
<meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset=windows-1252">
<title>Web Frames</title>
<meta name="GENERATOR" content="Microsoft FrontPage 5.0">
<meta name="ProgId" content="FrontPage.Editor.Document">
</head>
<Frameset Cols='90,*' BorderColor='#FF0000' Border=0 FrameBorder=0><Frame
Name='Navigation' target='Content'
src='http://www.gabriels.net/Industry/Images/Company/Comp153/Nav.htm?wId=650'>
<Frameset Rows='72,*' ><Frame Name='Logo' Scrolling=No src='Logo.asp?wId=
650'><Frame Name='Content' src='Content.asp?wId=650'></Frameset></Frameset>
</html>
```

For information on addressing the issues surrounding frames please see resource: ["About Frames"](#)

CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Small websites made with Content Management Systems are not such a big problem and there are many ways to make your content available to the web crawlers. Refer to resource ["About Content Management Systems"](#) and talk to your web developer about how best to address the problem.

COOKIES AND SESSION ID'S

Cookies and Session ID's are very useful things, but they should never be forced. If you have a password protected area in your website, or, if you track the activity of users on your website you may be using a Cookie or Session ID. Talk to your web developer and ensure that you are not making them compulsory. Apart from stopping search engine

crawlers you are probably also putting off a significant number of humans visitors to your website. For more information on cookies please see resource: "[About Cookies](#)"

PAGE TITLES

This is perhaps the easiest problem of all to fix and you should address this problem immediately. Change your Page Titles to reflect the content of each page and ensure that the Page Titles contain relevant keywords for the page. For more information on this see resource: "[Optimising Individual Web Pages](#)".

CONCLUSION

Website Optimisation starts with having web pages that are compatible with search engine crawlers or spiders. What can't be accessed, can't be indexed and what isn't indexed is not likely to be found.

Search engines are being improved all the time and some crawlers are better than others at finding and extracting information from websites that use frames and content management systems. But don't wait for the search engines to do all the work; it is not their highest priority.

Macromedia, the makers of Flash have also included facilities for web developers to make the content available to search engines, but unfortunately not all web developers know about it and so, don't use it. Likewise, not all search engine crawlers have been updated to extract this information.

For the time being the best way to present your information to the search engines is in straight html. If you really want to keep your website as it is, ensure you incorporate a html site map that is accessible from your home page and if possible all of your pages.