



SEO *Best Practices Guide*

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Introduction

Welcome to the Search Engine Optimization (SEO) starter guide written exclusively for Herbalife Distributors.

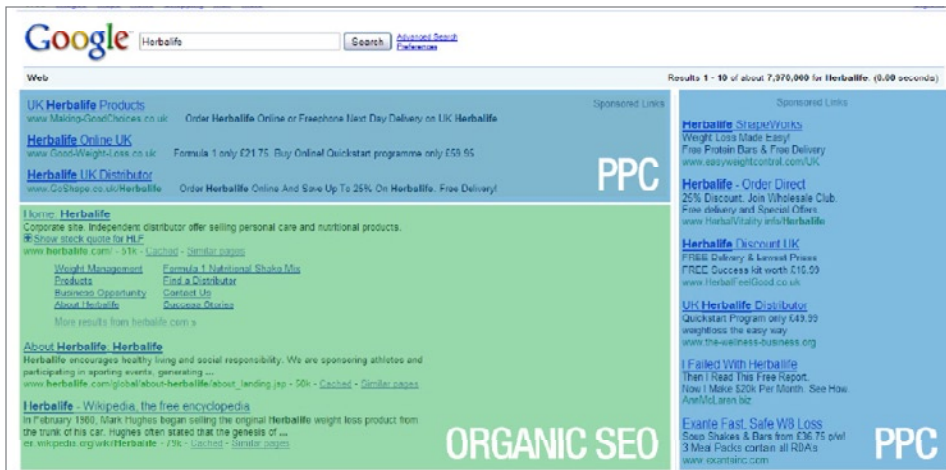
Discover how to optimize your website for higher search engine rankings, increase your online visibility, and ultimately drive more sales through your website.

The information on this website is split into three sections: 1) keywords, 2) on the page and 3) off the page. All of these are critical parts of the SEO process and none should be neglected if you're serious about SEO success.

What is SEO?

Organic SEO vs Pay Per Click (PPC)

Organic SEO is the on-going process of optimizing your website so that it ranks highly on search engine results pages. When someone uses a search term that is relevant to your website, you want



SEO affects organic results only, not pay per click ads as shown on top and on the right.

it to appear high on the first page.

There is no fixed or magic formula for SEO success and search engines use increasingly complex algorithms that decide how to (or not to) rank a website for any given query.

Pay-Per-Click (PPC) is an advertising model where you create a campaign with the search engine i.e. Google Adwords for keywords you wish to target. An amount is set per click at a rate agreed upon with the search engines. PPC ads will appear above the organic search results for the keyword terms you target.

Organic SEO will be the focus of this guide.

Why do you need Organic SEO?

The majority of web traffic is driven by search engines like Google and Yahoo. In fact, over 80% of all internet usage sessions begin at a search engine. Google serves over 250 million (and growing) searches per day. If your site cannot be found by search engines, you are missing out on an incredible opportunity to connect with people who are already interested in what you offer.

The difference between search and other forms of marketing is that you are 'pulling' in pre-qualified leads, rather than 'pushing' a message out to an untargeted audience and hoping that some percentage will be interested at that moment in time. Think of the difference between a radio ad and somebody looking up a listing in the Yellow pages. It's no wonder that search marketing is often described as direct marketing on steroids!

By following these best practice guidelines, you will benefit from a steady increase in traffic and referrals from search engines. Provided your website is easy to use and well laid out with quality content, this should result in the goals established for your website, for example education, recruiting or increased sales.

Keywords

Keywords are the bread and butter of SEO. Choosing the right keywords is fundamental to the success of your campaign. Keywords are the queries that millions of people type into search engines everyday in order to find products and information. Once you create your list of keywords, start developing the content of your web pages around these keywords.

How to Choose Your Target Keywords:

[Google's free keyword research](#) tool is a good starting point. Type in a list of keywords you think users might search when they are interested in something relevant to your business. Look at the data on how many people searched for these keywords and use the additional suggestions to expand and refine your research list.

[Wordtracker](#) is another useful tool (paid service).

Some Keyword Tips

- Each page on your website should target 1 or 2 unique keywords.
- Think about the competition before choosing a keyword. Use highly competitive keywords on your home page or category pages.
- During keyword research, think about your content. Create relevant content to support your keywords.
- Specific long tail keywords should be used deeper within your site.
- Using a competitor's brand or product name as a keyword is not recommended.

'Weight loss' is searched for in over 9 million times per month in the US alone. But that doesn't necessarily make it the best target keyword. Why? Because sites currently ranking on page one for this keyword have most likely spent lots of time and money on getting there. As a starting point, 'protein weight loss product' would be a much smarter choice. Another good reason to target 'long tail' keywords such as the one just mentioned is that a higher proportion of visitors tend to convert into customers compared to those using broader keywords.

The big idea for small business and website owners is to spread the risk, and get lots of small streams of traffic from lots of keywords, instead of depending on a few large ones. That way, if the search engine suddenly decides to change its algorithm in a way that drops your rankings, you're much less likely to be affected.

Store your target keywords into a spreadsheet, and organize them into related groups. You might have one group for weight loss keywords and another for skin care keywords. Or if your whole website is focused on one particular niche topic (which can be a very effective strategy) all your keywords might have one common theme. And remember, no more than 1 or 2 target keywords for every page of your website.

If you decide to target the long tail keyword "protein weight loss product", create unique and relevant content pertaining to it. Follow the other recommendations in this guide as you build your pages.

On The Page SEO...

...is all about making it easy for people and search engines to understand your content and showing a high (but not excessive) degree of relevance to your target keywords. There are several ways to achieve this.

Title Tags

Title tags are used to describe the topic of a website or page. Search engine algorithms use them to understand the subject of a page and decide what keywords to rank the site for. They appear underlined and hyperlinked in search result listings:



If the user decides to visit the page, the title appears at the top of the user's browser:



Title tags are placed within the <head> tag of the html document:

```
<html xmlns="http://www.w3.org/1999/xhtml" xml:lang="en" lang="en">
<!-- NEW PROPOSED DOCTYPE - xhtml 1.0 transitional -->
<head>
<title>Home: Herbalife</title>
```

Top Title Tips

- Each page on your website should have a unique title tag and include one or two of your target keywords
- Keep it brief and descriptive – no more than a handful of words
- Your homepage's title tag could list your business name along with keywords that reflect your main focus areas
- Consider how enticing your title tag is from the perspective of a user seeing your listing on a search results page

Description Tags

Description tags are summaries about a website and its pages. They should not exceed two or three short sentences. Description tags are important because they appear as search result list-ings, directly underneath your title tag:



Like title tags, description tags are placed within the <head section> of the html document.

Description Tag Tips

- Use your target keywords for the page once or twice within your description
- Keep them short and informative - no more than a few sentences
- Use a unique description on each page
- Write descriptions with potential visitors in mind

Headline Tags

Heading tags are used to structure and organize page content. Text placed within them appears larger on the page and should be used to visually help users understand how the information is laid out. There are six sizes of heading tags, starting with <h1>, the most important, and ending with <h6>, the least important.

- Use heading tags sparingly – don't over do it
- Use text that helps define the structure of your page – for example a subtitle or section heading
- Include one instance of your target keywords for the page within the headings

Keyword Density

The main body content on each of your pages should include a few instances of your target keywords in a natural manner. Ideally, use one instance of the keyword near the beginning of the text and another near the end. Use a [keyword density tool](#) to keep the overall use of keywords on the page to less than 3%. Any more than this, and search engines could penalize your website for 'keyword stuffing'. Not to mention excessive keyword use doesn't read naturally, and won't impress your visitors. The golden rules of keyword density are simple – don't over do it – and don't obsess over it. Keep the focus on the quality and readability of your content.

Other Content Considerations

High quality and useful content will gain positive exposure for your website more than any SEO campaign can. When somebody finds a good piece of content, it's likely they will direct others to it through blog posts, email, forums, and other means.

- Stay focused on your topic and write interesting, engaging text
- Keep it easy to read and avoid grammatical errors
- Avoid duplicating content across different pages on your site
- Never plagiarize text from other websites
- Update and refresh your content regularly

Image ALT Attributes

Image “alt” attributes allow you to display alternative text in the user’s browser, if the image can’t be displayed for some reason. Search engines use the “alt” attribute as a source of information about the image so it’s worth optimizing them with your target keywords for the page.

- Use your target keyword for the page once within the filename or alt text
- Don’t over do it with stuffing keywords into the alt text
- Keep it short and informative – no more than a few words

Code Quality

The html programming that sits behind your website should be kept clean and organized. Doing so helps search engines to index your pages, keeps your download times low, and shows that you’ve taken time to think about quality, standards and accessibility.

Ask your web programmer about:

- W3C validation
- Externalizing all styling into CSS files
- Externalizing JavaScript’s
- Tableless layouts
- Search engine friendly URL’s

Off The Page SEO

Off the page SEO, or link building, is a general term used to describe anything you do to build links to a website. There are two primary reasons to build links; direct click through from the link itself, and to boost your organic rankings. It is important to realize that just because a link generates traffic; it doesn't necessarily mean that it's good for your rankings.

Link building is one of the most important steps in search engine optimization. Without it, your site will struggle to rank highly for your chosen target keywords.

Search engines consider a link from page A to page B as a vote, by page A, for page B. But, search engines look at more than the sheer volume of votes, or links a page receives; they also analyze the page that casts the vote. Votes cast by pages that are themselves 'important' carry more weight than lesser pages.

While links are significant in the process of obtaining higher rankings, Google, as an example, regularly checks that its results are not manipulated. As part of this control system, it checks 1) that all the links are not from the same site or IP address, 2) that a large volume of links doesn't appear at once and 3) that most of the links aren't from low quality link farms or link networks.

Anchor Text

The anchor text of your inbound links should match the target keywords of the page you're linking to. In the link examples below, the latter would be more effective at getting search engines to see that the target page is about Herbalife, than the first would.

[Click here](#) for more info about Herbalife.

Here is more info about [Herbalife](#).

Now imagine tens or even hundreds of links pointing to the Herbalife website, with 'Herbalife' used as the anchor text for most of them. It will be clear to search engines that the target page really is all about Herbalife, and therefore deserves to rank highly when somebody searches for the keyword 'Herbalife'.

If building a large number of links to one page (for example your homepage) be sure to vary the anchor tags. If your main target keyword for the page is 'natural weight loss product' you might use the following variations of anchor text:

- Natural weight loss product
- Weight loss product
- Herbal weight loss product

Quality Control

Obtaining links from poor quality and irrelevant website can do more harm than good for your rankings. So if you're website is all about weight loss, getting links from gambling websites would not be advisable as search engines will think that you're trying to manipulate their results by building useless inbound links. It just isn't natural, and won't help your rankings. If the website you're thinking of getting a link from consists of nothing but a bunch of outbound links, that won't help either. Check to see that every link you obtain is from a quality and relevant website. Focus on quality, not quantity, and over time you will experience a rise in organic rankings.

Another point is that links should be built at a steady pace. 1000 links appearing at once is not natural, and could get your site penalized.

Blogs / Forums

By participating in blog and forum discussions you can increase the online visibility of a website as well as obtain quality inbound links. Participate in the conversation and where possible include a link back to your website.

Directories

Submit your website to quality directories. Some are free whilst others require a small submission fee to be paid. Be wary of services that:

1. Let anyone and everyone list their site
2. Promise to submit your site to 10,000 directories
3. Guarantee first page rankings

Articles

Write good quality articles related to your website content and distribute them through article directories and syndication services such as [Article City](#) and [EZine Articles](#). Be sure to include a link back to your site in the article footer, or within the main body.

Text Ads

Purchase text link ads through brokers or by dealing directly with website owners. Stay away from purchasing global site wide links that appear on more than one page.

Link Bait

Publish high quality content that's likely to generate buzz. Spread the word about your content through social bookmarking services such as [Digg](#) and [Delicious](#) and personally contacting webmasters and bloggers. Sit back and watch the links flow in naturally.

Analyze The Competition

Search for your target keywords and analyze the back links to sites that are currently ranking on the first page to find inspiration for new sources of links. Copy the URL of sites linking to your competitors and type the following command into Google:

link:www.yourcompetitorsurl.com

And the following into Yahoo:

Link:domain:www.yourcompetitorsurl.com

Remember, link building is all about quality and relevancy, not quantity. Avoid links from low quality and irrelevant websites under all circumstances. Manage your linking campaign so that it appears natural as possible.

Analytics

Use a free web analytics software such as [Google Analytics](#) to:

- Understand where your traffic is coming from
- Measure the impact of your SEO work
- Identify areas for improvement

Keep a record of how your organic rankings are evolving over time in a spreadsheet. In one column record your page URL, the target keyword in the next, and the search ranking in the third.

Install Google Analytics's ecommerce tracking features. These enable you to map your transactions back to the keyword that your customer first used to find your website. Use the data to refine and focus your SEO efforts on effective keywords.

Resources

- SEMPO
- Search engine watch
- Digital point forums and tools
- SEO chat
- Google webmaster central
- IAB
- IDM
- Matt Cutt's Blog

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