

Optimizing Your Catalog Copy, Part 2

Last month, I wrote about some basic SEO techniques that you should be aware of. Basics like selecting keywords and strategically placing them throughout your copy. Liberal use of keywords is one practice you can apply throughout your site to achieve high page rankings with search engines.

I also touched upon how search engine optimization is an ongoing process. Once you've achieved great results, it's no time to rest on your laurels. Maintaining your hard-earned status requires continuous review of what's working and what isn't. As mentioned in the last issue, this is where reliance on your web analytics becomes important.

But what can you do to get prospects to click onto your Web site once they've found you in their search? Give them a strong call to action.

On the search engine results page (SERP), every Web site link that appears has a blurb of text just beneath it. This is where you want to include your call to action. Tell the prospect why he or she should visit your site instead of the others. Maybe you have a sale on the product the shopper searched for. Maybe you have a free shipping offer. Maybe you have a two-for-one offer. Whatever it is that makes you stand head and shoulders above the rest...tell them about it!

Wondering how this text appears on the SERP? It happens behind the scenes in the Web page's HTML code, specifically, in the "meta description tag." Whoever maintains your site enters text in this HTML tag. When search engine spiders and bots crawl your pages, they read what's in it, and often use it as the descriptive blurb beneath the clickable link. If you leave this tag blank in your code, the search engines create their own description, and you may not like what they come up with.

You don't have to be a technical wizard to read your HTML code. To view it, start Internet Explorer and go to your Web site. With a page displayed on your screen, click on View on the Menu bar (located near the top of the screen.) From the dropdown menu, click on Source. In Internet Explorer, another window will open. You'll see text surrounded by symbols that look like these: < >, =, /. That's your HTML code.

For an example of what meta description text looks like, I've copied and pasted below what I wrote for one of my Web site's pages:

```
<meta name="description" content="Catalog Copywriter for print and online catalogs. Want convincing catalog copy that increases sales? Call today! 508-277-4929"/>
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When you search on the keywords "catalog copywriter," the text in the quotes above appears beneath the clickable link.

And by the way, adding keywords to your meta description also helps increase your page rank.

As an online cataloger with a Web site comprised of hundreds of pages, customizing each meta description could involve a lot of work. But if you've optimized to the point that you're coming in on page one, what good is it if prospects aren't entering your site? Give them a reason to make that next click and watch your sales grow.