

Optimizing Your Catalog Copy

For today's catalog marketers, selling online is the most cost-effective way to reach thousands of potential customers located all over the world.

Unfortunately, providing an online presence to consumers doesn't mean that they'll automatically shop with you. Unlike *Field of Dreams*, just because you build it, doesn't mean they'll come.

No, to get all those potential sales to *your* catalog Web site, you need to SEO it...**search engine optimize** it.

I know what you're thinking: "Yeah, I've heard all about SEO and I'm taking care of it." Maybe you have staff that handles it or you've hired a consultant. Regardless of who's doing what, do *you* understand the basics of SEO?

For example, **keywords** are the backbone of any SEO plan. It's in your best interest to be diligent in your keyword research and analysis prior to optimizing your site. Why is this so? Because keywords bring prospects to *you*. They are the words that Web surfers type into the search engine's search box.

There are tools available to help you with keyword research, some you can subscribe to, like [Wordtracker](#), and others are free, such as Google's [keyword tool](#).

Placement of your keywords is key, too. It's well known that keywords should be sprinkled liberally throughout your Web site copy, but they should be placed in other strategic locations as well. For instance, in the title of the Web page.

The Web page title displays at the very top of your browser screen in the "title bar." For example, open Internet Explorer and go to the Home page of your Web site. Look at the title bar. What do you see? Only your company name or major keywords that represent the products you sell?

If you look at your site's page titles and don't see keywords, you should probably investigate why. The search engine spiders and robots review page titles along with all the other text on a page and consider them when calculating the page's relevancy. A lack of keywords tells them to rank a particular page lower than another similar page (most likely a competitor's!)

Another tidbit about search engine optimization is that it is an ongoing process. Yes, it would be wonderful if you only had to optimize your site once and be done with it, but it doesn't work that way.

Maintaining a high ranking with search engines requires regular review of analytic reports (usually obtainable from your Web server host whether internal or external). These reports will tell you a wealth of information about activity on your site that you

can use as a guide for future SEO. For instance, keywords users searched with to arrive at your site. (Sometimes, it's terms you may not have thought of.) Or what page they entered the site through – it's not always the Home page.

Obviously, SEO plays an enormous role in your success as an online cataloger. Although *you* may not handle your Web site's SEO duties, it helps to be aware of just what it involves. In that spirit, I'll continue this topic next month and provide you with some more basic, good-to-know, SEO information.