

Website Promotion for Voice Actors:

How to get the Search Engines to give you Top Billing!

By Jodi Krangle – <http://www.voiceoversandvocals.com>

Why have a website?

If you're busier than you'd like to be and all your business is local, then that's great! What are you doing here? 😊

If you're like the rest of us, you want to reach a larger audience and it doesn't matter where in the world they are. You want your business to be **GLOBAL**.

Having a website, is the best way to do that. Even social media needs a place to *send* people. And social media is necessarily split up into small, easily digestible chunks. It can't get into the nitty gritty of who you are, and why anyone should care. It also isn't always the best place to demonstrate your skills – ie: show off your demos. Not that this isn't possible, but it's just not the *ideal* environment, with all the "noise" competing for people's attention.

So how do you cut through the noise? You create a website that reflects your unique personality – and you make sure it can be found in the search engines.

Here are some reasons why the search engines are the best way to get your site noticed:

1. 100 billion searches were made each month in 2009 (source: comScore).
2. Around \$160 billion was spent online in 2009 (source: eMarketer). – People do their research **online**.
3. 89% of consumers research online before making offline purchases (source: comScore). Voice seekers who aren't receiving their auditions from agencies or casting directors – and there are *many* of those! – will do the same.
4. The mobile phone market also includes search engines. People are increasingly searching from any medium they have available.

Social media sites are great for helping your site's ranking in the search engines – but they just **can't** replace having a website of your own.

What IS Search Engine Optimization, anyway?

There are a lot of definitions – the one I like is this from the [wiki page](#):

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of improving the visibility of a web site or a web page in search engines via the "natural" or un-paid ("organic" or "algorithmic") search results.

Search engine MARKETING involves targeting paying options also – like Google AdWords and other paid advertising methods online.

So where do you start?

In a word? Keywords.

One of the best keyword research tools is an online service called WordTracker. You can get yourself a free 7 day trial here: <http://www.wordtracker.com/trial> .

This tool will help you estimate the likely amount of people searching for a particular keyword in a month.

When you make a search, save the relevant keywords to a list (within WordTracker), then ask for “additional metrics” and it will tell you things like The Keyword Effectiveness Index (KEI). Basically, the lower this number, the more competition there is for that keyword.

Ideally, what you’re looking for is keyword phrases that have more searches, but a higher KEI – meaning there’s less competition for them and it will be easier to get a higher ranking in the search engines for that term.

How do you choose the keyword phrases to look up in the first place? It’s all about “voice over” right?

Yes – and no. ☺ Yes, “voice over” will be a keyword phrase you should use – but you need to qualify it with other phrases too. The more specific you can get with these keyword phrases, the easier it will be for you to place with them. Think about how you’re unique and put it into your keywords.

- Are you a singer too?
- Do you do impressions and impersonate particular individuals? (This can be a great way to get attention in the search engines as people search for celebrity names all the time!)
- Do you do production also?
- What does your voice remind people of? (moods, particular foods, items of clothing, etc.)
- What roles are you typically cast in?
- What categories of voice over do you find yourself doing more often than not? (commercials, corporate narration, telephony, animation, etc.)

All of these can help to generate unique keywords that are specific to YOU.

The reason you're looking up likely keywords?

For your site's meta tags. Make sure it has them! What you really need is a title and description meta tag. The rest are kind of extraneous – though you can put a keyword meta tag in there if you'd really like to. Just don't make it half a page long.

In the code of each of your web pages, the meta tags go in between the <head> and </head> tags. For our purposes, you really don't need to know anything other than where to put the code. To **generate** the code, visit <http://www.addme.com/meta.htm> . When you fill in the blanks and press the "get tags" button, it'll give you text to copy and place in between your <head> and </head> code at the top of your web page. You can do this for each page of your site, or you can just generate it once and change the things that need to be changed – like having a different title and description for each page. And though they can follow certain naming conventions, *they should be different*.

Will your Website Designer know about Search Engine Optimization?

Actually, that's not really part of their job description. It's always a good idea to speak with a designer who is *aware* of SEO and doesn't make you a website that is completely invisible to the search engines – but SEO and web design are two completely separate things. There are some design services that also offer some SEO – and that's great – but it will cost you extra. In short – don't expect your web designer to also be your search engine specialist. That's VERY unlikely to happen. Or if it does, that person will command premium prices (with good reason)!

Here are some things to keep in mind when you're building a website that you want to see do well in the search engines:

- Don't have an "entry" or "splash" page. Get to the meat of your site when people type in your url.
- Don't build a website that's entirely flash. That will make it all but invisible to the search engines.
- Don't have audio start when someone first lands on your site. (Actually, that's more of a courtesy than a search engine thing.)
- Make sure there are meta tags in your site (at least a title and description) – even if you add them yourself (as mentioned above) – and make sure they're different for every page. I know I mention this above too – but it's important enough to mention twice.
- Make sure your site actually has some text on it. The search engines grab on to text specifically because that's where most of the keywords are located. Without text, they can find very little to use. That makes it very difficult for your site to rank anywhere.

For more information on the details behind each of these suggestions, visit my article: [Search Engine Optimization Tips for Voice Actors](#) .

Make sure your website's main page is actually accessible by your main url.

So if your website is <http://www.mywebsite.com> – don't put the first page of your site at <http://www.mywebsite.com/mywebsite/home.html> . Put it *right off of your main url* - usually, that's an "index.html" file – so that when someone types www.mywebsite.com into a search engine, they *immediately* get to the first page of your site. No redirect. They're just there. It's a simple thing, but the more you make the search engines work for it, the harder it'll be to get them to pay attention. And if your page isn't accessible directly from your main url, the search engines are inclined to believe that the page isn't all that important – definitely an erroneous assumption!

When you decide to make a website, buy your own domain name.

You'd be surprised at how many don't bother to do this. Search engines don't rank free services very highly because it's too easy for junk sites to be generated through them. So do yourself a favor and choose a domain name that's *all your own*. It's great for branding (you can even include keywords), and in the end, it'll work a lot better for you as far as promotion is concerned. It looks far more professional to your potential clients, too! (And it really doesn't cost all that much. Visit Dotster or GoDaddy and you'll see what I mean.)

Use Google Analytics

It's simple. If you want to know what's right and what's wrong with your site, you need to find a way to measure your visitors – how many you get, where they come from, what browsers they use, how long they stay on each page in your site, etc. Google Analytics - <http://www.google.com/analytics/> - can give you that information. Essentially, you copy a bit of code that they give you, on to each of the pages of your site. I won't go into too much detail here since you can just read up on it at the website – but if you have questions, I'm happy to answer them.

If you're building your website yourself, build this in (it won't show up in your design at all – it's only code that allows this free service to track your site's stats). If you're getting your site designed by someone else, ask them to include this code in their design before they "hand you the keys". Most designers, even if they know next to nothing about how to promote your site, are aware of Google Analytics and how it works. Or at the very least, have heard of it and can add the code for you.

Once you have a website with some content in it, get other sites linking to yours!

When you have good content on your site – or at the very least, enough information there so that potential clients can make an educated decision, you're ready to start promoting the site to the web at large.

The more links you have pointing to your website (that are received in a natural way (ie: not too quickly or from sites that have absolutely nothing to do with yours in any way) using keywords in the link that are descriptive of what keywords you'd like to be found for, the more likely the search engines will feel your website is worth paying more attention to for those terms.

The search engines give higher priority to sites they believe to be authorities in their field. It isn't *you* that says you're an authority – it's *other people*. That's why those links to your website are so important. The search engines are, after all, trying to give preference to the websites that will most fit the criteria of a person's search.

Some other suggestions for promoting your website are:

- Blogging
- Participating in online discussion groups and message boards (always with a signature!)
- Sending out press releases (and posting them online – or at least on your own website!)
- writing articles for other sites (with a link to your site at the top or bottom)
- Getting listed in various voice over directories, social communities and online services
- Participating in social media (LinkedIn, Facebook & Twitter)

These things can make sure that links to your site increase at a gradual, natural pace.

In Summary:

If you *start your website off from a position of strength*, the search engines won't just add your site to their listings, they'll actually give you the top billing you deserve. But like everything worth having, ***it takes time***. None of this stuff happens overnight. In fact, good search engine standings for popular keywords can take *years*.

But think about it. So does getting a voice over career off the ground. If you start your website off right, as your skill and your business grows, so will your website's standings in the search engines.

Start NOW.

You'll reap lots of benefits from this kind of promotion later!