FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Why SEO is not the be-all and end-all of everything

The buzzword on everyone’s lips – for a while already – has been SEO. And it doesn’t matter where you turn or who you speak to, every agency is telling you that if they do your website and SEO, you’ll rank number one on all Google searches and your success is assured.

But how realistic is this really?

# 1. Is your product something that people will search for?

I can’t tell you how often I’ve seen this one – and really wanted to turn around and say, okay well when did you last go on to the Internet searching for air freshener or toilet rolls?

The truth is that there are just some things that people aren’t looking for – or wouldn’t even think to insert into a search request.

It doesn’t mean to say that SEO is not important at all – it just means that you aren’t necessarily going to see the kind of traffic volumes that you have pictured from your sometimes incredibly expensive SEO exercise.

It also means that you have to take the initiative and push people towards your website, using other marketing means and collateral.

# 2. There can be only one …. number one

It doesn’t matter how much you vie and jostle and change your keywords and copy, there is still only one number one spot on the page, and the company with the best SEO is going to win.

But that doesn’t mean that they are going to get all the business either - it just means that, for today anyway, they’re at the top of the page. Until Google changes their algorithm, or the company that did your website does a website for one of your competitors, and uses the knowledge they gained working on your site to push your competitor into the top spot.

The companies that are promising the number one spot to you are offering it to everyone – and when the project is done, their loyalty has moved on to the next paying client. And in a digital world where things change at the drop of a hat – and usually with no notice at all – being number one today is no guarantee that you will even feature on page one tomorrow.

The only way to consistently stay in the number one spot is to have ongoing, almost daily search engine optimisation happening on your site. And that costs money – a lot of it actually – and that’s usually outside the budgetary reach of the average South African business.

# 3. Google is not the only search engine

Google is pretty much the only search engine most people know about though, and it’s the one all the agencies push and optimise for.

And while Google is undoubtedly powerful, and has great market penetration, forgetting about all the other hundreds of search engines is a surefire way to keep your traffic halved.

# 4. Everybody is an SEO expert

This one is really a killer – and when I see a client coming towards me with a book they downloaded from the Internet that claims to have all the answers, I cringe in my seat – and I know exactly what doctors feel like when dealing with people who have self-diagnosed themselves on a medical website.

I can work with numbers, and I understand them well, but that doesn’t mean I should take a role as a financial director.

Downloading a free guide from the Internet is about understanding the basics from an expert’s point-of-view – and most of these guides are done as free giveaways to gain marketing traction and subscribers to your site. It’s a marketing tool – not a definitive guide to being number one.

Another key thing about these kinds of guides is that they are specifically designed to give you great readable content – without overwhelming you with the hectic – and usually important – information.

So they’re designed for beginners. Is the beginner level of SEO what you really want for your site?

# 5. Copywriting and content generation

SEO, at its core, is a marketing function – and it should be treated as such. This means it has to start from the copywriting up – and the people who write the best copy are copywriters.

If your copy isn’t great and informative, and doesn’t have enough meat to draw the reader in, and keep them there, then the people who land on your site will bounce, i.e. leave immediately after landing on the page.

In addition, the words and keywords and structure you use in your copy are just as important to SEO as the keyword stuffing and page display tags. In fact, you could even go as far as to say they are more important, because if your keywords and AdWords redirects don’t tie up to the content on your page, then it will be kicked out of search results anyway.

So, the only safe way to really make your copy work is to identify your keyword tags before you even start writing the copy, and then hope that the copywriter who is tackling your work has enough knowledge about your industry, and general business savvy, to be able to craft those keywords into juicy, readable content that will speak to both the beginners and experts in your field.

# 6. Keyword stuffing

Did you know that the best amount of keywords per page is probably around four? So, how many keywords do you have stuffed into the metadata on your page?

Even scarier – has your agency pulled a fast one on you and just done global keywords? Did you know that this means that all the pages on your site will be read as the same page – and they’ll all be kicked out as duplications?

I’ve opened so many sites where the global tags are just stuffed with whatever words the graphic designer could figure out from the copy, and just randomly typed - and OMG the spelling errors! And the reason agencies get away with this is because most clients don’t even have the start of an idea of how to go a check on these things for themselves.

And of course it gets really interesting now that Google has announced that they aren’t really searching keywords anymore because of overstuffing, and what the bots are reading now is the actual content and copywriting.

Does your copywriting contain enough meat for you to return well in search results?

# We do need SEO

Search Engine Optimisation can go a long way towards increasing your public profile, but it should be supported by a strong, content-rich website that really delivers on what it promises, and is not just a hash designed to get you onto Google’s number on spot.

In fact, more than supported, a great website should really be your first goal in marketing strategy, because it becomes your 24-hour storefront window. And with the plethora of options available to you today on the content-managed website front, a great, regularly updated website is really well within every business’s reach.

**Words: 1157**

**A note to the editor:**

Chemory Gunko is the managing director and creative director of Dsignhaus, a B2B marketing services agency with in-depth and specialist knowledge in the field of digital marketing. Contact Chemory on [chemory@dsignhaus.co.za](mailto:chemory@dsignhaus.co.za), visit [www.dsignhaus.co.za](http://www.dsignhaus.co.za" \t "_blank), follow [@dsignhaus](http://www.twitter.com/dsignhaus" \t "_blank) on Twitter or join the [Facebook page](http://www.facebook.com/Dsignhaus" \t "_blank) on www.facebook.com/Dsignhaus.

**Submission & Enquiries**

Chemory Gunko

MD & Creative Director

Dsignhaus (Pty) Ltd

Tel: 011 025 4165

Cell: 082 224 2357

Email: [chemory@dsignhaus.co.za](mailto:chemory@dsignhaus.co.za)

Web: [www.dsignhaus.co.za](http://www.dsignhaus.co.za)

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