

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of improving the volume or quality of traffic to a web site from search engines via "natural" or un-paid ("organic" or "algorithmic") search results as opposed to search engine marketing (SEM) which deals with paid inclusion. Typically, the earlier (or higher) a site appears in the search results list, the more visitors it will receive from the search engine. SEO may target different kinds of search, including image search, local search, video search and industry-specific vertical search engines. This gives a web site web presence.

As an Internet marketing strategy, SEO considers how search engines work and what people search for. Optimizing a website primarily involves editing its content and HTML and associated coding to both increase its relevance to specific keywords and to remove barriers to the indexing activities of search engines.

The acronym "SEO" can refer to "search engine optimizers," a term adopted by an industry of consultants who carry out optimization projects on behalf of clients, and by employees who perform SEO services in-house. Search engine optimizers may offer SEO as a stand-alone service or as a part of a broader marketing campaign. Because effective SEO may require changes to the HTML source code of a site, SEO tactics may be incorporated into web site development and design. The term "search engine friendly" may be used to describe web site designs, menus, content management systems, images, videos, shopping carts, and other elements that have been optimized for the purpose of search engine exposure.

Another class of techniques, known as black hat SEO or spamdexing, use methods such as link farms, keyword stuffing and article spinning that degrade both the relevance of search results and the user-experience of search engines. Search engines look for sites that employ these techniques in order to remove them from their indices.