

## SEO Definition

**Search engine optimization (SEO)** is the process of improving the volume and quality of traffic to a web site from search engines via "natural" ("organic" or "algorithmic") search results. Usually, the earlier a site is presented in the search results, or the higher it "ranks", the more searchers will visit that site. SEO can also target different kinds of search, including image search, local search, and industry-specific vertical search engines.

SEO is not necessarily an appropriate strategy for every website, and other Internet marketing strategies can be much more effective, depending on the site operator's goals.<sup>[36]</sup> A successful Internet marketing campaign may drive organic search results to pages, but it also may involve the use of paid advertising on search engines and other pages, building high quality web pages to engage and persuade, addressing technical issues that may keep search engines from crawling and indexing those sites, setting up analytics programs to enable site owners to measure their successes, and improving a site's [conversion rate](#).

## SEM Definition

**Search Engine Marketing, or SEM**, is a form of Internet Marketing that seeks to promote websites by increasing their visibility in the Search Engine results pages (SERPs) and has a proven ROI (Return on Investment). According to the [Search Engine Marketing Professionals Organization](#), SEM methods include: Search Engine Optimization (or SEO), paid placement, and paid inclusion. Other sources, including the New York Times define SEM as the practice of buying paid search listings, different from SEO which seeks to obtain better free search listings.

### Industry Standards and Our Application

The search industry is always changing, updating and re-inventing itself, and as industry standards and trends change, we will update our evaluation criteria to give you the best overall information possible. Our goal is to provide reports that will allow you to see your Meta and keyword data, so that you have the information about your Website to begin evaluating your SEO needs. We urge you to learn as much about SEO as possible and apply it, therefore, we are providing basic information to act as a launch point for those who want to pursue it further.

Much SEO data is open to debate and opinion, even among respected experts in the field, therefore, we will take a safe, moderate and general approach to give our users the best possible overview for use over the greatest number of applications.

## SEO vs SEM

Search engine marketing involves click costs. Search engine optimization works through free traffic. Those two facts are the basis of a popular myth: that it's easier to get good ROI through SEO than it is to get the same ROI through SEM.

In SEM, you decide the landing page your visitors see. In SEO, a search engine spider decides on the landing page visitors see. That's a difference in control, and that difference makes all the difference.

## 3 Tags

Next we talk about 3 different tags. The Title tag, the Description tag and the Keyword tag. These 'tags' are housed in the source code and if you right click on any website and 'view source' you will see these tags towards the top of the document.

### *Title Tags*

Title tags are what the user will see at the top of the browser window above the (File Edit View, etc). For example, go to [www.rimrockauto.com](http://www.rimrockauto.com) and you will see *Rimrock Auto Group | New and Used Cars in Billings Montana*. Search engines will grab any or all of those words and index them. When a person types in 'New Cars Billings' a search engine will know that rimrockauto.com has those words indexed and it will catapult your search engine rankings towards the top based on relevance. Relevance meaning: all of those words were in the title tag. This is overly generalized, but a nice illustration.

Title tags are currently considered the most important Meta tag from a search engine perspective, the Title tag is a MUST. Getting it right can take a little time and research, but it is worth the effort. And, as with all Meta tags, place the most important keywords at the start and the lesser ones at the end of the tag.

*Recommended length* varies by search engine and directory. The average accepted length is about 70 characters (this includes letters and spaces). One major engine considers 60 the right length, where several of the other major players prefer 70 characters. Some larger and more moderate size engines and directories allow up to 130 characters.

*What if your tag is too long?* Most engines will simply truncate (or chop off) whatever characters go over their limits, which is why it is very important to place the best keywords at the front of the tag. If you submit your site to a large variety of search indexes and engines, remember that anything over 60-70 characters could be removed, and plan accordingly.

*Best way to start?* Figure out the best keywords for your Web page. Go through and list search terms you would like new visitors to use to find your page, check the search popularity of the words/terms, and look at your competitor's sites and see what their tags say, and how they rank in the search engines. This will all help you build a short list of highly relevant keywords and search phrases. Once you have the list, prioritize them by importance, whether it is your importance or by search popularity is up to you. Use the very best ones in your title tag. You no longer need to include your Website name or domain in a title tag, unless you have a highly recognizable name or domain. You want to focus on describing the page and its products in your Title tag. Write it like a title, with each word capitalized, but do not write the title in all caps. It is also not recommended to use punctuation in the Title tag.

## ***Description Tags***

Not considered as important as it used to be, the description tag still has a valid purpose. Even though it has less value to a spider or "bot" driven search engine these days, it is still highly useful for search directories and various online listings. Think of it as a short, keyword-rich "classified ad." In just a few words you want to convey your Web page's message and do it with as many rich keywords as possible. Write it in a basic sentence structure, beginning with a capital letter and ending with a period. (A couple short sentences are fine, too, as long as the character count stays good.)

*Recommended length* varies by search engine and directory. The average accepted length is about 200 characters (this includes letters and spaces). One major engine considers 170 the right length, where several of the other major players prefer 200 characters. Some larger and more moderate size engines and directories allow up to 250 characters, with one having no limits. Keep in mind that there are a growing number of search engines that do not use Description tags, and it is mostly valued by search indexes and directories.

## ***Keyword Tags***

Currently considered less important than the Title and Description Meta tags, it is debated whether Keyword tags are of much use at all anymore. However, right now it does not hurt to have them, and there are still some engines and directories that do take them into account to some degree.

*Recommended length* varies by search engine and directory. The average accepted length is approximately 800 - 900 characters (this includes letters and spaces). Some allow 1000 characters, where others prefer under 800.

It is best to use the right keywords, not over use them, and stay relevant for the page. If only two or three words fit that guideline, then use them. Do not worry about trying to fill

the Keywords tag to make it longer. The key is relevance, not length. You do not want to waste any opportunity to use relevant keywords, but if you do not need the space, you will not be penalized for it.

What is the best way to format this tag? There are two accepted ways to format the keywords. They both agree to separate each keyword and keyword phrase with a comma. Where they differ is, some advocate to use a comma and space (keyword, word, word2), and others prefer commas and no spaces (keyword,word,word2). Either format is accepted by the majority of search engines that use Keyword tags.

Why are Keyword tags losing their value? Search engines are always adjusting and changing their algorithms, methodology and criteria, always seeking to improve search technology and eliminate unfair ranking and cheating. The current trend is leaning away from a Keywords Meta tag and putting higher value on keywords used in the copywriting of a Web page's textual content. The desire of the search industry is to bring a closer match to what the site visitor sees and what a search engine uses to rank a site, all in the goal of making the search experience more precise for the Internet user.

## White hat versus black hat

SEO techniques are classified by some into two broad categories: techniques that search engines recommend as part of good design, and those techniques that search engines do not approve of and attempt to minimize the effect of, referred to as [spamdexing](#). Some industry commentators classify these methods, and the practitioners who employ them, as either white hat SEO, or black hat SEO. White hats tend to produce results that last a long time, whereas black hats anticipate that their sites will eventually be banned once the search engines discover what they are doing.

A SEO tactic, technique or method is considered white hat if it conforms to the search engines' guidelines and involves no deception. As the search engine guidelines are not written as a series of rules or commandments, this is an important distinction to note. White hat SEO is not just about following guidelines, but is about ensuring that the content a search engine indexes and subsequently ranks is the same content a user will see.

White hat advice is generally summed up as creating content for users, not for search engines, and then making that content easily accessible to the spiders, rather than attempting to game the algorithm. White hat SEO is in many ways similar to web development that promotes accessibility, although the two are not identical.

[Black hat SEO](#) attempts to improve rankings in ways that are disapproved of by the search engines, or involve deception. One black hat technique uses text that is hidden, either as text colored similar to the background, in region invisible to the user like an invisible div or positioned off screen. Another method gives a different page depending on whether the page is being requested by a human visitor or a search engine, a technique known as [cloaking](#).

Search engines may penalize sites they discover using black hat methods, either by reducing their rankings or eliminating their listings from their databases altogether. Such penalties can be applied either automatically by the search engines' algorithms, or by a manual site review.

One infamous example was the February 2006 Google removal of both BMW Germany and Ricoh Germany for use of deceptive practices. Both companies, however, quickly apologized, fixed the offending pages, and were restored to Google's list.

## Dealerspan's Strategies for SEM, SEO

1. Build our websites to meet current SEO strategies.
  - a. Strategically written Title tags on EVERY page
  - b. Strategically written Keyword tags on every page
  - c. Strategically written Descriptions on every page
  - d. Alt tags on every image
  - e. Text on every page that can be indexed. No image only pages
  - f. Static URL as much as possible
  - g. If dynamic URL's are needed, make them as recognizable as possible never going past 2 levels of directories.
  - h. Index-able inventory (non Ajax).
  - i. Standards compliant markup
  - j. Try to use links whenever possible (outbound and inbound)
  - k. Site maps
  - l. Submit site maps to search engines
2. Stay in tune with latest SEO trends and become astute to what this means.
3. Have someone monitor search engine paid placement. This is the core of SEM. This would be a full time position that simply makes sure dealerships have paid placement in major search engines. In essence we would be managing either hands on, or through tools provided to dealership their paid placements on search engine.
4. In-house monitoring SEO standards on websites. This means we do not put out under par websites.

## Sources:

<http://www.seomoz.org/>

[http://www.sempo.org/learning\\_center/](http://www.sempo.org/learning_center/)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Search\\_engine\\_optimization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Search_engine_optimization)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Search\\_Engine\\_Marketing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Search_Engine_Marketing)

<http://www.dmnews.com/cms/dm-news/search-marketing/34955.html>

## Definitions or Glossary of Terms:

### ***Paid placement:***

or **Pay per click (PPC)** is an advertising model used on search engines, advertising networks, and content websites, where advertisers only pay when a user actually clicks on an ad to visit the advertiser's website.

### ***Paid inclusion***

**Paid inclusion** is a search engine marketing product where the search engine company charges fees related to inclusion of websites in their search index. Paid inclusion products are provided by most search engine companies, the most notable exception being Google.

### ***Organic Search***

An **organic search** is a process by which World Wide Web users find web sites having unpaid search engine listings, as opposed to using the pay per click advertisement listings displayed among the search results

### ***ROI***

Return on investment. This is often used to describe in SEM how many people have visited your site from the amount of time and money invested.

### ***SERP's***

A **search engine results page**, or **SERP**, is the listing of web pages returned by a search engine in response to a keyword query. The results normally include a list of web pages with titles, a link to the page, and a short description showing where the keywords have matched content within the page. A SERP may refer to a single page of links returned, or to the set of all links returned for a search query.

### ***Spamdexing***

is any of various methods to manipulate the relevancy or prominence of resources indexed by a search engine, usually in a manner inconsistent with the purpose of the indexing system. Methods include [link farms](#) and [keyword stuffing](#).

### ***Spidering***

A **web crawler** (also known as a **Web spider** or **Web robot**) is a program or automated script which browses the World Wide Web in a methodical, automated manner to provide up-to-date data.