You can have the world’s most beautiful website. You can hire an award-winning agency to create and organize the content in the most appealing way. But all these efforts do not mean “if you build it, they will come.”

I’d like to share the importance of Search Engine Optimization and some practical tips to get your website on its way to the top.

Ideally, you want to incorporate the SEO strategies when you are about to build a new website. These strategies also can be implemented after the website is complete, with a bit more headache, of course.

Some tips:

• Structure your website to make it easy for users and search engines to find your content. You will also want to submit your website’s sitemap to search engines.
• Name your new website pages with strategic keywords. For example, a page named “Vegetarian Recipes” will be more effective than just “Recipes.”

• Make the page meta description an integral part. Ensure each page on your website has a unique meta description containing strategic keywords. (The meta description is the outline that appears right below a website link in search engine results.)

• Name the pictures with descriptive and strategic words. For example, “frame.jpg” will mean a lot less to the search engines than “wood-frame-antique-finish.jpg.”

• Internal links on your website will boost search engines’ ability to find you. Using strategic keywords in the anchor text — the clickable copy in a link — is very effective. For example, “Click here” anchor text does not tell a search engine what the page is about. Keyword-rich content, such as “Summer dresses,” is necessary for optimal results.

• Create a custom “401 Page Not Found” page. This is the page your visitors will see if they attempt to access a nonexisting link on your site.

• Create 301 redirects and monitor/fix your broken links to ensure search engine performance, website traffic and positive visitor experiences are maximized.

Here also are a few great resources:

• “Search Engine Optimization” by Kristopher B. Jones; “Convert! Designing Websites to Increase Traffic and Conversion” by Ben Hunt; and “Ultimate Guide to Link Building” by Eric Ward and Garrett French

I also found usability.gov an incredibly helpful resource. Check it out, especially, the Guidelines section.

You aren’t expected to be a coding guru or a website developer to implement these ideas. Simply communicate with your web development team throughout the build process. Be an advocate for your site’s SEO. And, good luck.

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