

# Fighting for Ranking on Google

By Stephen E. Arnold

Search engine optimization is a booming business. Getting a site listed on the first page of Google results grows more important each day.

Look at this site on Google: TheLeasingGroup.com. Now try to find it by searching for (quotes needed, please) "The Leasing Group." This site is not on the first page of hits. What is listed is TheLeasing-Group.net. Close, but not the same.

"We paid our developer to optimize our site," company president Robert Callendar said. "I paid good money to get indexed. What do I do to fix this?"

This is a common question with many potential answers. However, there is no single fix.

One important step in improving a Web site's ranking is understanding that Google is not search.

Google is a computer. Sun Microsystems' Scott McNealy said, "The network is the computer." Google built that computer.

Like any computer, the owners tweak, upgrade and add new gizmos to it. Google is a work in progress. Anyone trying to move a site's ranking knows that the rules seem to change, usually without warning.

Look at Google Maps (<http://maps.google.com>). This service could be a yellow page killer, and it offers many opportunities for advertising revenue. For Web site owners, the first step is to ensure their business is listed in Google. Click to [www.google.com/help/faq\\_local.html](http://www.google.com/help/faq_local.html) listed and follow the directions in item 7. Then review your site so that you can at a minimum follow these easy and some not-so-easy tricks to improve your ranking.

1. **Dynamic URLs (universal resource locators, or Web addresses).**

Get rid of them. Content management systems like BroadVision do this. The fix may be to create a flat file of your site and change the dynamic URLs to static ones, reserving dynamic pages for "must have" situations.

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2. **Invisible frames.** Google uses these in Google Maps, Google Print and Google Scholar. You aren't Google. Switch to tables.

3. **Site map.** This is not a relic. Create a flat ASCII map that lets Google's spider find the important information quickly.

4. **Indexing in meta tags.** Know a

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librarian. You are halfway home. Get professional advice.

5. **Clean code.** Get a validation tool. These are built in to some editors like Namo Version 6, or spend \$200 for Web Position Gold or IBP8.

6. **Position the animations.**

Fancy interfaces coded in Flash are fine as long as there is a way for the Google spider to see binaries and decide to skip the site.

7. **Fresh is best.** Update your content. Stale content translates to ranking downchecks.

8. **Good content.** Useful, relevant, factual, related content means a straight semantic vector to Google. Unrelated content, tricks that try to fool Google, and copyright violations that

Google detects can send a site to the bottom of the results list or, worse, get it removed from the Google index.

9. **Can you say it to your mother?**

If there is anything on your site you can't say to your mother, remove it.

10. **Work to get other high-traffic sites to link to you.** Irrelevant links or links from sites already banned by Google will do you in. An example of a good link is a listing in the Yahoo or DMOZ service. A bad link is anything that has an XXX or something equally slippery.

Improving a ranking on Google is not easy. It does pay off, even though Google is work in progress. ☺