Search engine friendly
web design, development

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L ike most people, I have been searching online since search began. First on Yahoo then on AltaVista and then finally on the search engine of all search engines, Google. I fell in love with Google because of its simplistic design and user friendly interface that focused on one thing and one thing only – search.

When creating/developing or even choosing a template for web design and specifically for commercial websites, it is imperative that you put yourself in your user's shoes.

Here are a few questions you will want to consider. Will users:
• be able to navigate seamlessly?
• find what they are looking for in less than two clicks from a given landing page?
• source relevant and timely information on your website?
• revisit your website?

Also, will your website be convincing enough for users to perform an action? (Whether it be clicking on to another page, submission of an email inquiry, or other actions which clearly define the effectiveness of a given website on Google the action performed is when keywords are entered into the search field).

Below are vital guidelines in search engine friendly web development. These guidelines have been cross-referenced from official web sources namely the W3C and other trusted bodies and institutions.

Guidelines for coding a search engine friendly website:

1. CSS should be used for both appearance and layout.
2. Designs should be optimised for a screen resolution of 1024X768, but keep in mind that 20 per cent of internet users still use the screen resolution of 800X600. Depending on target market, screen resolution should be optimised to meet user needs.
3. Use XHTML version 1 transitional and validate it using the W3C online mark-up validator.
4. Each page should include a doctype statement
5. Ensure that the website looks the same across all browsers (Firefox, Explorer, Safari).
6. Avoid using frames.
7. Allow search engines to index your site properly using appropriate keywords in your title, header, meta tags and body.
8. The web page should be functional without using java, JavaScript, flash or browser specific tags. Use these elements for navigational purposes only.
9. Include a meta description tag, at all times, to allow the search engines to index and present your website in the search engine results page.
10. All tags and attributes should be in lower case to comply with the doctype standard of XHTML version 1.

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