

The Portfolio of Anita Taide

SEO Copywriter and Web Author

April 20, 2010



Anita Taide

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Anita Taide

Bio

“The two most engaging powers of an author are to make new things familiar and familiar things new.” - Samuel Johnson

Sometimes you come across a person who writes to live – and on rare occasion, you meet someone who lives to write. Anita is one of those rare individuals. For Anita, writing is more than a task – it’s a passion.

With nearly six years of professional writing experience, Anita is well-versed in several genres. She is particularly fluent in producing online communications, including E-mail newsletters, advertising copy and product descriptions. Anita’s strongest skill lies in SEO copywriting: the process of creating optimized Web copy for the purpose of achieving higher search engine rankings. Anita’s skills show that she is both an artist and an analyst; she is able to see the forest beyond the trees and offer creative solutions to complex problems.



Anita’s writing abilities are complemented by her Internet marketing experience. As a Search Engine Marketing Account Manager at Razorfish, Anita led her team in the preparation of SEO recommendations. In this role, she expressed her knack for **making new things familiar**. Anita’s numerous deliverables reflect her ability to adapt her language and writing style to her target audience.

Anita Taide

In her current role as Internet Marketing Manager at SoldierCity, Anita manages email marketing campaigns, SEO copywriting efforts and a broad range of other marketing communications. As a successful copywriter, Anita has a talent for **making the familiar seem new**. She knows the importance of features vs. benefits and is versed in the art of empathy. As a result, Anita is able to connect with her audience on a deeper level and produce content that is fresh and inviting.

As a testament to her SEO expertise, Anita has authored several pieces for *Search Marketing Trends* and *Ad News*. She has also written many articles as part of her graduate coursework – ranging from memoirs to news stories. Anita will be receiving her Master in Professional Writing degree from Chatham University this May.

The diversity in Anita’s work shows that while she specializes in SEO copywriting, she is multi-faceted and multi-talented. She thrives in the opportunity to use this talent to your advantage.

Meta-cognitive Essay

My experiences over the past seven weeks are best summed up by this famous quote from Oliver Wendell Holmes: “The great thing in the world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving.”

I started the course with an unclear vision of what I wanted to achieve with my professional writing degree. As I sat down to prepare my proposal during the first week of class, I gave serious thought to the next step in my career.

I first thought about the work that I currently performed: I did everything from creating in-depth analytical reports to composing creative Web copy. I wanted to retain this mixture of creativity and analytics, but I also wanted to specialize in one area. That’s when I realized that SEO copywriting was perfect for me.

After establishing my niche, I started to plan the pieces in my portfolio. I decided to stray from the SEO theme for my first piece, as I felt that a personal subject would be more appropriate for my memoir. I chose to write about my experiences as an abused wife and single mother pursuing her education. While I found it difficult to put my thoughts on paper, I found that the writing process gave me a sense of closure. Even more, I cherished the idea of being able to incorporate the *so what* element and motivate thousands of women in similar situations.

In my second piece, I chose to showcase my knowledge of SEO. However, I wanted to do more than just discuss best practices: I needed a *unique selling proposition* – something that would help my article to become noticed by both publishers and readers. I decided to write about some of the common mistakes that small business owners make while incorporating SEO on their sites. I enjoyed writing in the first person and presenting material that was both objective and subjective; this was a refreshing break from the dry, concrete style in which I usually write. I especially enjoyed the process of “getting into the reader’s world,” as Bowerman puts it.

For my third piece, I chose to write about the growing popularity of social networking sites among Americans age 50 and older. I wanted to encourage my readers to achieve the same mental and social stimulation that I have experienced through using such sites. The reason I focused on older Americans is because this population constitutes the primary customer base of my employer, SoldierCity. It took me over 30 hours to research the information for this piece; however, I felt that such extensive preparation would serve as the perfect indicator of my resourcefulness for my portfolio.

In my final piece, I was eager to experiment with a different writing genre: the proposal. As with my second article, I used this assignment as an opportunity to showcase my command of SEO. In addition, this piece illustrates my “parallel writing” abilities and keen attention to detail. The proposal was a great opportunity for me to practice writing for different target audiences: The detailed explanations were targeted toward Coach’s Web development and implementation teams, while the summaries were ideal for upper management. Of all the writing I have done this semester, this has been the most influential. As I prepared my recommendations, I realized that I had built quite a bit of expertise in SEO; as a result, I have decided to offer freelance SEO copywriting services on a part-time basis.

The various works in my portfolio reflect one common theme: my desire to make a positive impact in the lives of my readers. Since my portfolio covers a variety of subjects and writing styles, it also represents my diversity and adaptability: two skills that are essential for the success of any professional writer.

Apart from the writing assignments, my creative journal writing has had the most impact on my growth as a writer. My daily introspections have allowed me to recognize my strengths and weaknesses not only as a writer, but also as an individual. My journal entries have also enabled me to appreciate my own accomplishments, allowing me to build my confidence and to recharge emotionally.

Finally, I have found the class discussions to be beneficial in my development as a writer. I enjoyed reading my classmates’ thoughts and learning from their experiences. It is this collaboration of ideas that allows us to experience the synchronicity that Natalie Goldberg and Julia Cameron discuss in their videos.

Anita Taide

Sample 1: Memoir

Never Too Late to Learn

Composed March 15, 2010



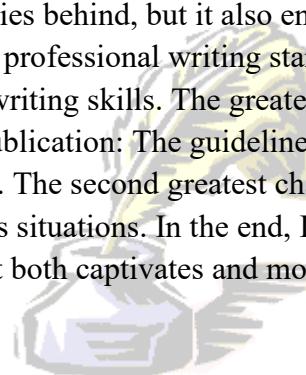
Anita Taide

Reflections

“It felt good to be back in school; I enjoyed both the intellectual and social stimulation it gave me. As I continued to excel in my classes, I began to recognize my own potential.”

My memoir shows how I overcame the challenges of an abusive marriage, single parenthood and lack of emotional and financial support to achieve my goal of getting a college education. It is more than an account of my struggles: it is a story of faith and determination that will inspire my readers to follow their dreams.

I wrote the memoir primarily as a means of gaining closure. Writing my memoir not only helped me to leave those traumatic memories behind, but it also enabled me to appreciate my own strength and achievements. From a professional writing standpoint, my memoir allowed me to practice my personal and creative writing skills. The greatest challenge I had was adhering to the length guidelines of my targeted publication: The guidelines called for a maximum of 3,000 words; my article was 2,997 words. The second greatest challenge was explaining *why* I felt and reacted the way that I did to various situations. In the end, I was able to meet both of these challenges and produce a piece that both captivates and motivates the reader.



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March 15, 2010

Julie Bain, Features Editor
Ladies' Home Journal
125 Park Ave.
20th Floor
New York, NY 10017-5516

Dear Ms. Bain:

While only in my 20's, I suffered through an abusive marriage, layoff, and lack of emotional and financial support from my parents. However, these obstacles made me even more determined to succeed academically – eventually giving me the determination I needed to earn my master's degree. Unfortunately, too many women allow such conflicts to interfere with their educational goals. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, only 29 percent of American women age 25 or older possess a bachelor's degree.

My 2,997-word memoir is entitled "Never Too Late to Learn"; it was inspired by the story "The Face of Domestic Violence," published in your March 2010 issue. Like this story, my memoir proves that we as women are capable of rising above our circumstances and making our dreams a reality.

I bring to *Ladies' Home Journal* nearly six years of professional writing experience. My writing credits include several articles in *Search Marketing Trends* as well as an article for *Ad News*. As part of my graduate coursework toward my Master of Professional Writing degree, I have also authored several pieces that focus on personal enrichment.

I would be happy to send you a full manuscript of my memoir upon your request. Enclosed is a SASE for your convenience.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Anita Taide

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Word Count: 2,997

Never Too Late to Learn

by
Anita Taide

Growing up, I dreamt about the joys of college life. I pictured myself as a sorority girl, with lots of friends and a boyfriend who visited me every night. I'd graduate with honors, find a wonderful job and live happily ever after. After finishing high school, I was ready to make those dreams come true. However, the road hasn't been easy. At a young age, I suffered through an abusive marriage, a layoff and lack of emotional and financial support from my parents. But with each challenge, I became only more determined to succeed.

Surprise Wedding

It all started in the spring of 1994. I remember how excited I was when I was accepted into the English Education program at Rutgers University. Since I had four years of studying awaiting me, I decided to take a break that summer and visit India with my mother. I hadn't been there for eight years, and I was eager to see my relatives again. So when summer came, I said my goodbyes and embarked for what I thought would be my 2-month-long journey.

During the first week of our trip, we decided to visit my mother's old friend. When his son walked into the room, my heart skipped a beat. We hit it off immediately, and started visiting each other regularly. Six weeks later, we were both sitting in his father's office.

"So what have you decided?" his father asked me. I swallowed hard, knowing what he would say next. "Your mother and I think it's best that you get married," he stated matter-of-factly. "You shouldn't waste any time."

"Waste time?" I thought. I was only 19 years old. I had my whole life ahead of me. I had a long talk with my mother that night. She told me I would be well-taken care of. After all, my husband's family was one of the richest in town. Plus, this wasn't a traditional arranged marriage where the bride and groom didn't know each other. Our families had been friends since my childhood.

"Neither of us knew this was going to happen," she said, with a genuine look of concern. "But this is the best move for you." I trusted her, although deep in my heart I knew it was the wrong decision. Two months later, I was married.

After my mother returned to the U.S., I was left to live with my husband and his family. I spent a lot of time with my sister-in-law.

"So what do you do with your time?" I asked.

"My life is here at home," she replied. "As women, it is our responsibility to serve our husbands."

I soon learned that such subservience was typical among Indian women. But I wanted something more. I wanted to go to college, just like I was planning to do before. I approached

my husband about my desire to get an education. “You don’t need college!” he stormed. “You have everything you need right here.”

Over the next few weeks, I tried to forget about my dreams of going to school – but I couldn’t. Once again, I approached my husband. Before I could finish my sentence, I felt a sharp slap across my face.

“I told you before, you don’t need an education! Am I not good enough for you?” he shouted.

I couldn’t believe what had just happened. I felt trapped and I needed to get out. I called my parents the next day.

“Bunty hit me!” I cried. “He doesn’t want me to go to college. I can’t live like this,” I exclaimed.

“You are married now,” my father told me. “You have to adjust to your husband.”

I hung up the phone, praying that things would get better. They didn’t.

It was April 1995. I’d been feeling nauseous for the past couple of weeks, and I was in bed resting. Then something hit me. I hadn’t had my period in two months. I didn’t want to be pregnant – not like this. But a pregnancy test confirmed that I was. My in-laws decided that it was best that I have the baby in the U.S. – that way, he would automatically become a U.S. citizen. I felt as though a load had been taken off of me.

Back in the U.S.

I returned to the U.S. in August 1995, three months before my due date. On November 20, I gave birth to my son Noel. I finally felt like I had something to live for. I told my parents

everything that had happened, and that I had no intention of returning to India. I also told them how I longed to go to college and make something of myself.

“There’s no way you can handle a college workload right now,” my father said.

Instead, he encouraged me to enroll in a six-month medical assistant program at a local technical institute. He not only offered to pay for my tuition, but also to take care of Noel – after all, he was retired and enjoyed spending time with his grandson.

I didn’t have my driver’s license at the time, so I walked to and from school. I remember leaving my parents’ house at 7:30 every morning. It took me 40 minutes to get to school, but I enjoyed the walk. For the first time in many months, I felt free.

In September 1996, I received my diploma in medical assisting. I wanted to file for divorce and move on with my life. However, my parents were against it. They wanted me to sponsor my husband so that he could come and live in the U.S. They told me that things would be different here. But first, they said, I should take a three-week trip to India. After all, Noel was almost a year old and had never met his father. I hesitantly obliged, since it was only fair that father and son see each other.

The Final Straw

In November 1996, I packed my suitcases and headed to India. Only a couple of days after returning, the abuse started again. “I’m only here for three weeks,” I kept reminding myself. A few days before I was ready to leave, the phone rang. It was my mother.

“Anita, I want to tell you something,” she said softly. “We sent you back so you could start a new life with Bunty.”

I wasn't surprised; I was just numb – almost as if I were expecting the call. It turns out that my parents had sent me to India not to visit, but to live. As much as I wanted to come back to the U.S., I had no choice. I had nowhere else to go.

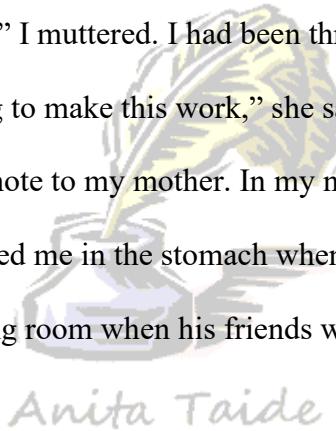
While I was in India, I wanted more than ever to put my new medical assisting skills to use. Not surprisingly, my husband allowed me neither to work nor study. I began to feel even more helpless.

In early 1998, my mother visited India. I went to her house, where she stayed during her visit.

"Mom, I'm not happy here," I muttered. I had been through this many times before.

"I don't think you're trying to make this work," she said.

That night, I wrote a long note to my mother. In my note, I described my husband's abuse in detail. Like how he punched me in the stomach when I was five months pregnant, and didn't allow me to go in the drawing room when his friends were visiting. I tucked the note under her pillow.



Anita Taide

The next morning, I awoke to my mother sitting by my bedside. She gave me a long hug. "I'm so sorry," she said, with tears in her eyes. "I thought it would get better." She said that she would send a ticket back for me, but that Noel would have to stay in India. She wasn't ready to take the responsibility of raising a grandchild. Besides, Noel seemed happy there. I was heartbroken at the thought of leaving my son, but I had to escape before it was too late.

The Start of a New Life

In February 1998, I was back in the U.S. Although I missed Noel with all my heart, my parents didn't want the burden of raising him. The good news was that I finally had the opportunity to pursue a college degree. I'd saved enough money for a community college, and applied for admission just a few days after returning. When I received my acceptance letter, I couldn't wipe the smile off my face.

I remember my first day of college. I still didn't have my license, so I took the bus to school. I was nervous, since I didn't know a single person on the bus – or at school. I had the nicest conversation with the driver that day. He told me all about his wife and children, and about his dreams of becoming an actor.

When I entered class, I felt like I was back in high school. "Can the guys get any cuter?" I thought to myself. I sat in the front row in all of my classes and participated in many of the discussions. It was good to be back in school. Although I wasn't in a sorority and didn't have a boyfriend, I felt as though my dreams had come true. After all, I had my freedom.

As I eagerly anticipated my second year of college, my mother said something that took me by surprise: "Why don't you go back to India and get Noel?" she asked. "He needs his mother."

As delighted as I was to hear her say that, a hundred questions popped into my head at once: Will my husband let him come here? Where will he stay? How will I finish my education?

Making the Decision

Running on faith alone, I packed my bags for a third time and headed to India. I stayed with my aunt and uncle, who lived in the same town as my husband. The day after I returned, I visited my husband. Although Noel recognized me, he didn't come running up to me as I had pictured. I don't blame him. It had been more than a year, and he had adjusted to living without his mother.

My husband wanted it to stay that way. He claimed that Noel didn't have the necessary paperwork to go back, and that it would take many months for the "papers to process." My uncle saw through these lies, threatening to involve the police and the American embassy. Finally, with pressure from my uncle and the premise that I would sponsor him as a permanent resident, my husband agreed to let Noel go back with me.

In May 1999, I returned to the U.S. – this time, with Noel. Since I wasn't able to support myself financially, we stayed with my parents. After returning, I thought very hard about my marriage. If my husband came to the U.S., I reasoned, he might change. After all, he would be living under *our* roof and under *our* terms. With this in mind, I followed through with my promise and filed his green card application.

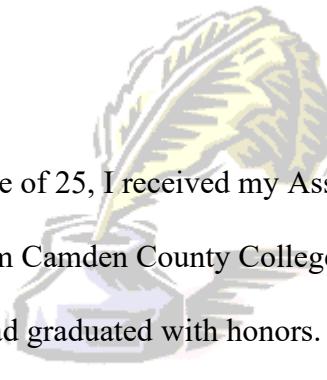
I stayed at home that summer, cherishing every minute of my time with Noel. I'd watch Sesame Street with him in the morning and go to the playground with him in the afternoon. But part of me was also aching to go back to school and finish my degree. As I looked through the course catalog, I was pleased to find that many classes were offered online. That fall, I decided to enroll in a mixture of traditional and online classes. Again, my father assumed much of the responsibility of raising Noel while I was in class.

It felt good to be back in school; I enjoyed both the intellectual and social stimulation it gave me. As I continued to excel in my classes, I began to recognize my own potential. And as I shared my story with more people, I realized how horribly I'd been treated.

"How could you give him another chance after all that?" my friends would say.

The fact was, I didn't have to give my husband another chance. I was my own person, and I deserved the respect and recognition I had been missing all my life. I decided to cancel his sponsorship and file for divorce. Over the next few months, everything seemed to fall back into place.

Picking up the Pieces



In December 2000, at the age of 25, I received my Associate of Applied Science in Computer Information Systems from Camden County College. I was elated to be wearing my golden sash, which showed that I had graduated with honors. I remember grasping my degree so tightly that I was surprised it was all in one piece.

More importantly, I was all in one piece. Despite the emotional turmoil I experienced while trying to recover from my abusive past, I had finally made it to the finish line. And to top it all off, I found a job that same month.

After a few months of working, I was able to save enough money to move out. I found an apartment that was even closer to work. Noel continued to live with my parents, since it was more convenient. The same year, I bought my first car and became officially divorced. Then, just as things began to look up, I was laid off.

When I lost my job, my confidence took a nosedive. But as I was driving home on my last day of work, it hit me. This was the perfect time to continue my education. After all, I'd always wanted a bachelor's degree – and I had enough in my savings to take at least a few classes while I worked part-time.

Back to School

In the spring of 2002, I was accepted into the Business Administration program at Rowan University. Soon after that, I applied for a scholarship through the community college I'd attended. I was awarded half the cost of my tuition.

I met with my advisor that summer. As we discussed my fall schedule, he paused and looked at me. "You know, you're bright," he said with a serious look. "There's a scholarship I think you should apply for." Later that afternoon, I mailed my application – and a month later, I was awarded my second college scholarship. Between my financial aid and my two scholarships, I wouldn't have to pay a dime for my education.

Since I had enough money to live off my savings for a couple of years, I decided to enroll for classes full-time. Initially, I hesitated – after all, money would be tight. Plus, I was seven years older than most juniors at Rowan. What would they think?

I learned to discipline myself financially. I stayed on campus between classes to save gas, avoided going out in the weekends, and temped during my breaks to earn some extra money. And even at 27, I blended right in. I joined study groups, visited my friends' dorms and became involved in campus activities. One of the things I most enjoyed was DJ'ing at the college's radio

station. When I'd sit and talk in the student lounge between classes, people would recognize my voice. I felt like a celebrity.

Before I knew it, my journey had come to an end. In May 2004, I graduated from Rowan University with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration and a 4.0 GPA. I felt like I had just won a 5000-meter race, and my parents couldn't have been prouder. Now it was just a matter of finding a job.

Third Time's a Charm

At this point, I had exhausted most of my life savings and had only a couple of thousand dollars in my bank account. Then, about a week after graduating, I stumbled upon a part-time internship on Rowan's Web site. I was called for an interview and was hired as a full-time employee the following month.

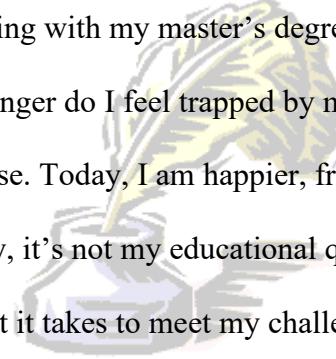
Over the next few years, I was able to build my portfolio and gain valuable experience in the world of Internet marketing. But as successful as I was on the job front, I realized that my passion lay in writing, not in marketing.

In the spring of 2008, I started researching universities that offered master's degrees in writing. My parents discouraged me, telling me that there was no way I could work full-time, pursue a master's degree, *and* have enough time to spend with Noel. I told them it could be done. That summer, I applied and was accepted into the Master of Professional Writing program at Chatham University. The program was entirely online, which was convenient due to my hectic work schedule.

I knew that the program would take a toll on me financially. After all, my rent had just increased and I was still making monthly car payments. And even though Noel lived with my parents, I was financially responsible for him. I was relieved to learn that I qualified for a student loan that would cover half my tuition.

There I was – I'd just turned 33 and I was starting grad school. It seemed that the more challenges I faced, the more resilient I became. Despite my demanding workload, I was still able to make time for my family and friends. I knew where my priorities lay – and in those two years alone, I became much more organized and disciplined in all aspects of my life.

This May, I will be graduating with my master's degree. Fifteen years ago, I wouldn't have thought it was possible. No longer do I feel trapped by my circumstances. No longer am I financially dependent on anyone else. Today, I am happier, freer and more confident than I've ever been in my life. And ironically, it's not my educational qualifications that make me feel this way – it's knowing that I have what it takes to meet my challenges head on.



Anita Taide

Sample 2: Article

What Not to Do When Optimizing Your Site: Five Common SEO Mistakes



Composed March 23, 2010

Anita Taide

Reflections

“...a large part of SEO requires coordinating usability with searchability. Think of your site like a plant: It needs to be nurtured, but takes time to grow.”

My article discusses five of the most common mistakes small business owners make while incorporating SEO (search engine optimization) on their sites. I focus on how, in their desire to achieve higher search engine rankings, these marketers neglect usability and rush the SEO implementation process. In addition to listing common mistakes, I also explain their consequences and cite examples to help my readers understand what they should and should not be doing while optimizing their Web sites. The information I present will encourage small business owners to plan their SEO strategies carefully while giving them the knowledge they need to boost their search engine rankings.

I wrote this article as a testimony of my own SEO experiences. Over the past six years, I have successfully led the optimization efforts for many companies. From a professional writing standpoint, I wrote this article to practice the “how to” style of writing. I enjoy this genre, as it allows me to use my firsthand experience to help others. The greatest challenge I faced was in presenting complex information in a simplified and succinct manner. In order to achieve this objective, I had to put myself in the shoes of someone with only a basic understanding of SEO. The process really helped me to create the necessary distance between myself and my story – a skill that is beneficial to any writer in terms of connecting with their audience.

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Anita Taide

March 23, 2010

Justin Petrucci, Technology and Online Business Editor
Entrepreneur Media, Inc.
2445 McCabe Way, Ste. 400
Irvine, CA 92614

Dear Mr. Petrucci:

According to *eMarketer*, 54 percent of small business owners have a Web site dedicated to their product or service. Most of these individuals perform their own SEO, confident that they've mastered the basics and eager to see their sites in search engine results. But as we both know, SEO takes time – at least when it's done the *right* way.

My 1,826-word article is entitled "What Not to Do When Optimizing Your Site: Five Common SEO Mistakes." My article goes beyond discussing the fundamental concepts of search engine optimization: It informs readers of the hazards of misusing and overusing SEO. I include information on a variety of subjects, including keywords, links and multimedia. I also emphasize the importance of balancing usability with searchability.

I bring to *Entrepreneur* nearly six years of Internet marketing and professional writing experience. As a Search Engine Marketing Account Manager at Razorfish, I authored several articles for *Search Marketing Trends* and an article for *Ad News*. In my current role as Internet Marketing Manager for SoldierCity.com, I produce most of the company's marketing communications – ranging from optimized product copy to email newsletters.

I would be happy to send you a full manuscript of my article upon your request. Enclosed is a SASE for your convenience.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Anita Taide

Anita Taide

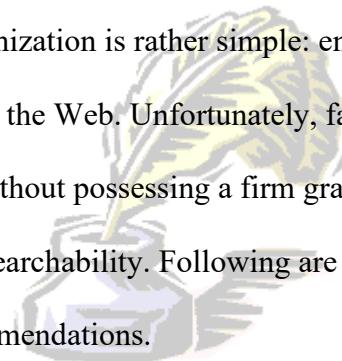
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Word Count: 1,826

What *Not* to Do When Optimizing Your Site: Five Common SEO Mistakes

by
 Anita Taide

When it comes to SEO, a lot of small business owners think they have it made. After all, the concept behind search engine optimization is rather simple: enhance the content of your site so people can find you more easily on the Web. Unfortunately, far too many people make significant changes to their sites without possessing a firm grasp of SEO principles – ultimately compromising both usability and searchability. Following are some of the most common SEO mistakes, along with related recommendations.



Anita Taide

Mistake 1: Performing Keyword Research *after* Writing Your Copy

As you may know, *keyword research* – the process of determining highly searched, relevant phrases to incorporate on your Web site – is the capstone to SEO. More often than not, marketers perform keyword research after their copy has been written. This makes it harder to include targeted terms. In fact, I've seen several companies redo their entire copy during the optimization process.

"It is always better if possible to do research before writing the copy," says Rachel Cooley, who has been working as an SEO copywriter for Edmunds.com for over six years.

Cooley stresses that if you have your keyword research ready when it's time to write, it'll be easier to develop pages around your targeted terms.

The rule of thumb is to dedicate one page of content to each keyword and its variations. For example, imagine you're a florist. Only after you build your site do you learn that hundreds of people search for "flower gift tips" everyday (strictly a random example). Rather than restructuring your entire navigation and building a new section dedicated to flower gift tips, you attempt to incorporate this phrase elsewhere on your site – say, on the "Roses" page. The problem is that this page already has a theme; by introducing a new one, you're decreasing its keyword density (the number of times a keyword appears on a page relative to other keywords).

Remember: If you know what your important keywords are from the beginning, it'll be easier to create pages around them without having to restructure your site.

Mistake 2: Using the Wrong Keywords

This is a common mistake made by SEO novices and experts alike. Too many marketers focus on choosing keywords with a high search volume, disregarding the relevance of these terms to their own Web sites. Consider the example of the florist. Suppose you sell carnations; however, these are neither your specialty nor do you make a decent margin on them. It probably wouldn't make sense to target carnation-related terms in your keyword research.

Even worse, suppose you don't offer flowers for delivery but still target terms like "flower delivery" on your site. Even if customers discover your site through these terms, they'll likely leave as soon as they find out you don't offer this service.

Remember: If you're in the planning stages of building your Web site, think about the main products and services you offer and develop keywords around those areas. If your site is already built, consider using a keyword suggestion tool like the one offered by Webconfs (<http://www.webconfs.com/website-keyword-suggestions.php>).

Mistake 3: Overoptimizing Your Site

It's easy to get caught up in optimizing your Web site – often to the point where you start focusing more on search engines than on your users. Cooley agrees. "Many people think you can just stuff content with keywords in order to get higher rankings" says Cooley. "It is never a good idea to sacrifice good copy for SEO." After all, the main purpose of copywriting – including SEO copywriting – is to appeal to the reader, not to search engines.

There is a company in the online military goods market who is the perfect testament to avoiding overoptimization. If you visit this company's site, you'll see that the entire homepage consists of text. Not the usual formatted text consisting of a few headers and advertising copy – but instead, a big glob of keywords separated by commas and arranged in no particular order.

So with all those keywords, you would think that the site performs superbly in search engine results. Not quite. The problem here is that the company is trying to do too much. Search engines are savvy to this kind of marketing – known as *black hat SEO* – and are quick to penalize spammers.

Remember: The key is to incorporate your keywords naturally. Your copy should sound like a spoken conversation, not like a dictionary. And above all, keep in mind that it's not all about your keywords – it's also about usability and visual appeal.

Mistake 4: Prioritizing the Wrong Tags

If you know a little about SEO, you may already know what meta tags are: the elements in an HTML document that specify information about the page's description, author, modification date, etc. When it comes to search engines, the two meta tags to look for are *meta description* and *meta keywords*. Many marketers erroneously base a large part of their SEO efforts on optimizing these two tags alone. In reality, on-page copy is much more important than either of these tags (especially meta keywords). Besides, because of their potential to be misused, both of these tags are on their way to becoming more or less obsolete.

With that said, a related tag that should not be underestimated (but still is) is the *title tag*. In fact, this is one of the most important factors in determining the relevancy of a Web page. Like the meta description, the title tag is shown in related search engine results. The difference is that it is always shown, regardless of the content of the page. Therefore, the title should be both search-friendly and user-friendly. Consider the example below:

Anita Taide
Buy fresh roses and bouquets for anniversaries, birthdays, etc.

This is the perfect title. Not only does it contain relevant, highly searched phrases (e.g. *buy roses*, *fresh roses* and *buy bouquets*), but it also conveys a call to action and a functional use for the roses.

Remember: When it comes to tags, the order of priority is as follows: *title*, *meta description*, *meta keywords*. Your tags should include targeted keywords, just like the copy on the corresponding Web page. And if you want your page to be found, your title should never, ever be left blank.

Mistake 5: Ignoring Offsite SEO

You could do everything right when it comes to optimizing the copy of your Web site.

But when it comes down to it, offsite optimization is just as important. This is because, in the scheme of things, SEO is a popularity contest.

There are two main components to offsite SEO: link building and multimedia marketing.

Link Building

“The biggest mistake I see businesses who are new to SEO make is over-focusing on the on-page elements of their site,” says SEO guru Esoos Bobnar. “While it’s important that your site is accessible to search engines...ranking is mostly about links.” Bobnar is president of Kua Bay Media, an SEO firm in Boston that focuses on link building and content creation services.

Link building is essentially the art of compelling other Web sites to link back to your site – thereby increasing your link popularity. In fact, the algorithms used by top search engines are primarily link-based. This means that the keyword contained in the links, as well as the quality and quantity of links, all play an important role in determining how well your site will rank in search engine results.

When it comes to link building, quality is more important than quantity. A key point to remember here is that the links must come from *authority sites*. These are reputable Web site – many of them ending with *.org*, *.gov* and *.edu* – that have many incoming links themselves. Too often, marketers are quick to sign up for services that promise to build hundreds of thousands of links for them. Many promise “reciprocal links” with the promise, “If you link to my site, I’ll link to yours.” Be wary of such services, as most of them are just out to get a quick buck. There

are several ways to gain links from authority sites, including sponsorships, donations, press releases and mutual promotions.

Remember: *In the words of Bobnar, “A handful of relevant links from established sites in your niche will provide far better results than hundreds of low-quality generic links. Networking and building relationships with credible sites related to yours is probably the most important thing you can do for SEO, as it's essential to building the kinds of links that result in higher rankings.”*

Multimedia Marketing

The types of search engine results seen these days are far different from those of four years ago. They not only include text listings, but also images, videos, embedded maps and other multimedia elements. With so many opportunities to be seen, you'd think more marketers would take advantage of these resources. But they're not – which is why you have an advantage. Here are some simple ways to get yourself seen (and heard):

- *Record and upload videos* – Youtube is ideal, as it is the most abundantly indexed and prominently listed of all video sites. Metacafe and Daily Motion are also regularly indexed by Google and worth submitting to.
- *Optimize your images* – The first step in optimizing your images is to ensure that your ALT tags, file names and surrounding copy are keyword-rich. The second step is to submit your images to sites like Flickr and Webshots – both of which are good friends with Google.
- *Get listed in local directories* – Chances are that local search drives much of your traffic. For this reason alone, it's imperative that you list your business in directories like Google

Local, Yahoo Local, Bing Local, Yelp and CitySearch. Even including your address on the footer of your Web pages can go a long way in helping search engines to recognize where you're located.

- *Submit press releases* – Did you open your business recently? Any plans to expand? Or, have you helped raise funds for a charity or town event? All of these situations are worthy of a press release. Aside from tremendously boosting your link popularity, submitting a press release can also help your site to appear in relevant news results. Both PRWeb and PRNewsWire offer “do-it-yourself” press release services. While each release can run you anywhere from \$200-\$600, they’re well worth the investment.

Remember: Making your site visible in search results takes more than writing good copy. It requires active engagement in multimedia. Ultimately, this not only creates a fun, interactive atmosphere, but it also encourages users to share this information with others.

As you can see, a large part of SEO requires coordinating usability with searchability. Think of your site like a plant: It needs to be nurtured, but takes time to grow. And if you give it too much nourishment, it'll collapse. The trick is to never lose sight of your users. After all, they're the ones who drive home the revenue.

Sample 3: Article

**Going Digital Over 50:
A New Trend in Social Networking**

Composed March 30, 2010



Anita Taide

Reflections

“...just because you’re alone doesn’t mean you’re lonely – and age has no barriers when it comes to social networking.”

The following article discusses the increasing popularity of online social networks among the 50+ crowd. I not only describe what sites this population is visiting to form these social networks, but also why they are building them. Although I write with an objective tone, my article is designed to convince older Americans of the benefits of social networking online. I integrate information from numerous sources, including experts in gerontology and older social networkers themselves. It is this firsthand information that lends the most weight to my objective and adds credibility to my article.

I mainly wrote this article as a testimony of my own positive experiences from social networking online. Sites like Facebook and Myspace have enabled me to form enriching relationships with people who were previously mere acquaintances; I wanted to do the same for my readers. I was also interested in using the material I gathered from my sources and applying it to the social media work that I do for my current employer, SoldierCity; I knew that this information would help me to market to our older customer base more effectively. In terms of my professional writing, this is one of the most challenging pieces I have written. I was not only presented with the challenge of composing an article with a minimum of 2,500 words, but also faced with the task of interviewing many people in a short period of time. While I was successful in meeting both of these challenges, I still felt that something was missing from my piece. Upon my classmates’ advice, I added both a “Precautions” and a “Summary” section. In the end, I was successful in presenting a great deal of information in an organized and succinct manner.

Anita Taide

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Sidebar of 46 words

Going Digital Over 50: A New Trend in Social Networking

by
Anita Taide

“My farms take a lot of time to care for,” says Diana Morse, a 71-year-old resident of Rathdrum, Idaho. “I have to plant my crops, harvest my crops and take care of my animals.” Despite how this may sound, Morse isn’t talking about traditional farming. She’s talking about playing Farmville, a game on Facebook that allows users to manage their own virtual farms. Like Morse, millions of older Americans have embraced online social networks not only to play games, but to share pictures, post status updates and join common interest groups. In fact, recent findings from the AARP and the Center for the Digital Future indicate that Americans over 50 log in to these networks more frequently than those under 20. But why is social networking becoming so popular among the 50+ crowd? And how is this population building these connections?

Background

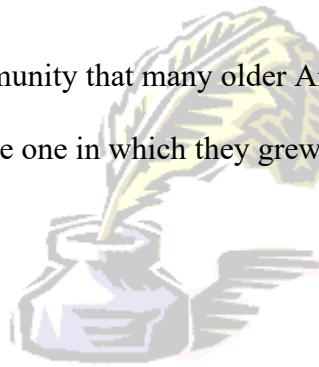
First, let’s consider the definition of the term *social networking*. According to Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, the word *social* means “marked by or passed in companionship with

one's friends or associates." *Networking*, on the other hand, implies the initiation of a relationship. It is the integration of these concepts that makes up social networking: creating relationships for the purpose of companionship.

In the past, such relationships were created exclusively through "offline" channels like community dances, book clubs and church groups. The earliest social networks not only fostered a renowned sense of community, but were geared specifically toward seniors. "Social networking did not begin with computers," says Lorber. "Social networking began with religious communities where people took care of each other. Living in isolation, you might break a leg and need someone to feed your family."

It's this same sense of community that many older Americans seek today, says Lorber -- a virtual neighborhood similar to the one in which they grew up.

Overview



Before we look more at *why* older adults are networking online, let's take a look at *where* they're going. Following are some of the most popular social networking sites among Americans age 50+, along with the features that make them so popular:

Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>)

The Nielsen Company reports that Facebook is the third most visited online destination among senior citizens in the U.S. – preceded only by Google Search and Windows Media Player. Much of this popularity is due to the "full functionality" of the site, which includes status updates, news feeds, applications, etc.

Status Updates: Share day-to-day (or even minute-to-minute) activities with your friends in real-time.

News Feed: See all of your friends' status updates in one convenient feed.

Applications: Engage in thousands of interactive games, quizzes, virtual gift-giving and more.

***Myspace* (<http://www.myspace.com>)**

Myspace is another “full-functionality” social networking site that has also enjoyed a notable growth among the 50+ crowd. Following are some of the features that make this site so popular:

Customization: Personalize your profile with your choice of wallpaper and music.

Comments: Post comments – including HTML-enabled images and videos – on your friends' profiles.

Enhanced Search: Do more than search for friends. Filter your results by body type, religious preference and even smoking habits.

***LinkedIn* (<http://www.linkedin.com>)**

LinkedIn is a professional networking site that allows users to make industry contacts and build their work reputation. More and more older Americans are logging in to this site for the following reasons:

Personal exposure: List your work experience, educational qualifications, organization memberships, etc. – thus allowing colleagues and interested employers to find you.

Job hunting: Visit the “Jobs” section (much like Monster.com and other job sites) to locate positions by keyword, geographic area, industry, etc.

Organization memberships: Browse through over 500,000 professional groups and organizations – or create your own.

Senior Friend Finder (<http://www.seniorfriendfinder.com>)

Unlike many social networking sites, Seniorfriendfinder.com focuses on making new connections rather than preserving old ones. The site appeals to older audiences for two primary reasons: 1) It is geared toward Americans age 50 and older; and 2) It acts as a dating site. Here are a few of its prominent features:

Dating: Find and invite potential love interests.

Blogging: Maintain your own blog or comment on other members’ blogs.

Chatting: Join a chat room, where you can engage in real-time conversation with multiple members at once.

Note: You must pay in order to be able to contact other members.

Eons.com (<http://www.eons.com>)

Eons.com is a lesser known but fast-growing social networking site. Like Senior Friend Finder, it is geared toward late baby boomers. Following are some of the site’s most popular features:

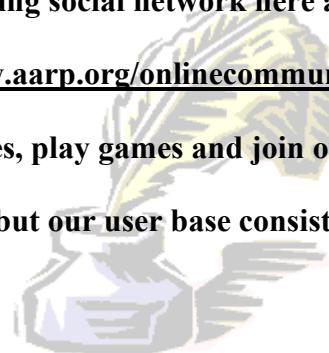
Groups: Browse through hundreds of groups, centered around themes like “Diet and Fitness” and “Home and Garden” – or start your own group.

Games: Play dozens of games, including card games, trivia and old-fashioned arcade games.

Longevity Calculator: Take the “longevity calculator.” This is a ten-minute questionnaire that assesses information on your lifestyle and calculates how certain behaviors can add years to your life. This tool is based on the notion that “having a strong network of friends, family and community is key to longevity.”

And don't forget about our growing social network here at AARP. In our “Online Community” section (<http://www.aarp.org/onlinecommunity/>), you can create your own profile, comment on other profiles, play games and join over 1,700 groups. Not only do we exclusively serve the 50+ crowd, but our user base consists of over 350,000 users.

Benefits



There are obviously many social networking resources available for older audiences – each with their own unique features and benefits. But why is the 50+ crowd so interested in using these resources? The reasons range from reconnecting with high school classmates to finding support groups for medical conditions. Following are the most common motives that older Americans have in joining online social networks.

Staying in Touch with Family

According to Pamela Shea Brown, many Americans over 50 join social networks to stay in touch with their relatives. Brown teaches gerontology courses at Miami University in Ohio. Plus, she's an avid user of online social networks herself. "One of the greatest things about these networks is that I can look at my childrens' apartments, see their friends and see their cats and dogs," says Brown. "It really makes for an excellent way to stay in touch."

She also states that although the over-70 population sometimes finds it difficult to join the social networking scene, they are motivated to do so through their children or grandchildren. For example, Brown recently created a Facebook page for her 76-year-old mother. "She said she never wanted to visit the Internet, ever," says Brown. However, she soon found that her grandmother was logging in regularly to view pictures and status updates of her grandchildren.

Dr. Kim Lorber, a professor of sociology at Ramapo College of New Jersey, agrees. Lorber adds that, in addition to geographic separation, more and more Americans are becoming separated due to divorce. She gives the example of her mother, who is divorced and no longer sees her ex-husband's nieces and nephews regularly: "She knows more about them now than she knew then," Lorber affirms.

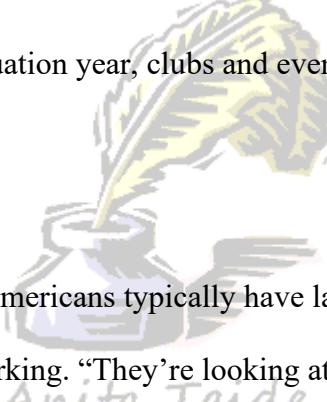
Finding Old Friends

Another reason older Americans are logging in to social networking sites is to find old friends. In particular, many people are using these sites to connect with high school classmates. Brown mentions that her mother has found several classmates through Facebook, and that they are in the process of planning their 50th high school reunion.

In fact, there are several social networking sites themed exclusively around helping classmates find each other. Classmates.com aims to reunite former acquaintances not only from high school and college, but also from the military and workplace. Because of name and address changes, as well as the difficulty in maintaining old relationships through traditional means (i.e. letters, phone calls, visits), the site has increasingly become popular among seniors.

Many older Americans are finding each other through mainstream sites as well. For example, Myspace maintains a database of school names and locations, offering recommendations to users as they complete their profiles. Members can also click on a school's name to view a list of students and alumni who have attended the same institution. They have the ability to filter their results by graduation year, clubs and even course numbers.

Meeting New People



It's ironic: While younger Americans typically have larger online social networks, older Americans are more actively networking. "They're looking at this for the purpose of trying to stay in touch with certain people or seek certain people out," says Dr. Dawn Carr, a professor of Gerontology and Sociology at Miami University. "They're not like younger users, who just focus on daily activities like changing their Facebook status." Carr stresses that this social interaction is crucial to the physiological development of older adults. "We know that having a strong social network is hugely related to life satisfaction and health," says Carr, "and that greater engagement with others has the potential to delay cognitive decline."

This need to network is further magnified by the results of a recent Pew Research report. The report shows that over 15 percent of Americans age 50-64 and over 30 percent of Americans 65 and older live alone.

But just because you're alone doesn't mean you're lonely – and age has no barriers when it comes to social networking. Carr points to her father-in-law, who in his 70's and met his current wife through a social network. "They met three years ago on Seniorfriendfinder.com," says Carr. "And he's not a person who uses computers at all."

Do social networks usually lead to such intimate connections? Ask Roger Gill, a 65-year-old ex-Army officer from Eastham, MA. Like millions of other older Americans, Gill has made friends through playing online games like Farmville. "I've made a lot of new friends that I feel close to even though I've never met them in person," says Gill. "On a recent cruise, I ran into a Farmville neighbor. We recognized each other instantly from our Facebook photographs. It was like we had been friends for a long time."

Gill has also expanded his friend network through joining various veterans' organizations and blues music groups – all of which he found through Facebook.

Receiving Moral Support

Anita Taide

Many older Americans are also finding that social networking sites are giving them an increased sense of moral support. Kim Lorber is no exception. "When my father died in October," says Lorber, "I just posted something to let everyone know what happened. The phenomenal kindness that came was really quite amazing."

Like Lorber, others are also finding that these sites are helping them to get through difficult situations like the passing of a loved one, the loss of a job or a chronic health condition. Frankie Valdez, a 50-year-old member of Eons.com, attests to the power of online networks. Valdez, who is disabled and suffers from fibromyalgia, has received a great deal of support through members of the site's Fibromyalgia group. In addition, other members have helped her

to learn more about the disease. “People can post links to informative Web sites you didn’t know about,” says Valdez. “You can share information and therefore take better care of yourself.”

Organizations like the American Diabetes Association and the American Cancer Society are especially valuable support resources and have a presence on several social networking sites.

Gaining Virtual Mobility

Frankie Valdez doesn’t just like Eons.com for the moral support and health information it provides. She also likes it because it gives her *virtual mobility* – a sense of freedom and movement through online socialization. “I’m unable to socialize much in person,” says Valdez, who is homebound because of her condition. “I enjoy the ability to interact with people frequently.”

The fact is that when it comes to socializing online, many people don’t have much of a choice. According to the AARP, one in five Americans over the age of 65 has a disability. It is often challenging for these individuals to leave their homes; social networking sites offer a convenient alternative.

Pam Shea Brown also points to the benefits of social networking as a caregiver. In this regard, the importance of social networking is particularly important for boomers – 71 percent of whom have elder care responsibilities, according to *Harvard Business Review*. “If you think about the isolation that exists with caregiving,” says Brown, “the social interaction on a networking site can minimize the feelings of loneliness or seclusion.”

Professional Networking

According to the AARP Public Policy Institute, unemployment for Americans age 55 and older surged 331 percent over the past decade. Furthermore, the average duration of unemployment for this age group has increased from 18.7 weeks to 34.7 weeks.

It's no wonder why so many older Americans are turning to professional networking sites like LinkedIn. In essence, sharing your skills and work qualifications on LinkedIn is like posting your resume where everyone can see it. Anthony Celona, a 67-year-old Casino operations consultant, has found several employees through the site.

"I'll be dealing with a situation where I'll need a hand," says Celona. "I'll reach out to the five or six people that I know have expertise in the area instead of a phone call that would take me 45 minutes to an hour."

Celona's employees recognize the power of online networking when it comes to finding employment. In fact, *Money* magazine reports that approximately 70 percent of jobs are filled through networking alone.

In addition to seeking employment, many older Americans are turning to social networks to promote their businesses. William Herd, a 51-year-old software consultant, uses Twitter – a social networking site that allows users to post or text status updates of 140 characters or less (i.e., *tweet*). "The stuff I tweet about supports my technical blog," says Herd, "and my technical blog supports my reputation of being a high-end technical person." Herd points to the "suggest friends of friends" concept as the growth mechanism behind his social network.

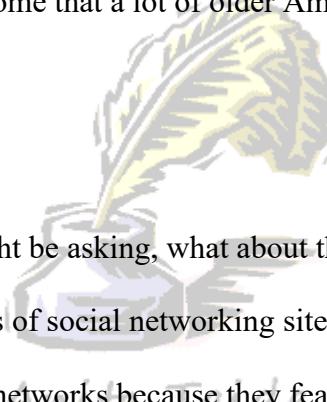
Saving Time and Money

Perhaps the most basic reason older Americans are logging in to social networking sites is the convenience. “We don’t have to write this long four-page letter telling everyone everything that has gone on in our life,” says Pam Shea Brown. “We’re in the type of society that we want everything now. We really like that immediate feedback.” This is true of the older and younger crowd alike, affirms Brown.

Apart from saving time, social networking also saves money. Communicating through an online network is virtually free, compared to the postage and long-distance telephone charges of yesterday. And with the limited income that a lot of older Americans have, that’s a huge bonus.

Precautions

With all of these positives, you might be asking, what about the negatives?



One of the biggest criticisms of social networking sites is their lack of privacy. In fact, many people hesitate to join social networks because they fear that their personal information will become exposed. Of course, it’s best not to post content that you don’t want made public. But even if you do, there’s no cause to worry: Most social networking sites allow users to adjust their privacy settings so that only select people can view their profiles. In addition, many sites use SPAM filters to minimize the number of unsolicited messages their members receive.

Apart from privacy, the other main concern is overuse. Because of their constant stream of new members and fresh content, social networking sites have turned into an obsession for many Americans. In fact, there is even a term for such an obsession among Facebook users: *Facebook Addiction Disorder (FAD)*. (Read “Confessions of a Facebook Addict,” published in

the July/August 2009 issue of *AARP: The Magazine*.) The trick is to limit the time you spend on social networking sites and to make the most of your life both online and offline. This includes making time for the “little things”: taking a walk with a friend, tending to your garden, playing with your grandchild – the simple pleasures that make the offline world so fulfilling.

Summary

While sites like Eons.com and Seniorfriendfinder.com are growing in popularity, it seems that older Americans are largely using the same social networking venues as their younger counterparts – especially Facebook and Myspace, which have a strong presence among the 50+ crowd. The difference lies in *how* they are using these sites. In general, the older population is using these networks to actively seek people and resources – as opposed to younger Americans, who are more interested in maintaining the connections they already have. As a result, older Americans tend to have smaller networks but richer connections than their younger counterparts.

There’s no question that the Internet has transformed our society into a “global village,” surpassing time, distance and age barriers alike. “There’s a myth about older Americans being afraid of technology,” states Wassel. “Quite frankly, I know tons of 70-year olds who are still doing everything younger people are.”

So next time someone tells you to “get a life,” you can tell them you already have one. After all, you just talked to your granddaughter, joined a theatre group, fed your neighbor’s cat and planned your 42nd high school reunion – all in the past hour. How much more socializing can one do?

Top 10 Social Networking Sites among Older Americans

Are you considering joining an online social network? Here are ten of the most popular social networking sites among Americans age 50+:

General Networking

Facebook.com

Myspace.com

Eons.com

Eldr.com

AARP.org



Anita Taide

Dating

Seniorfriendfinder.com

Seniormatch.com

Professional Networking

Linkedin.com

Reunions

Classmates.com

Reunion.com

Note: The following information is not included as part of my article submission; it serves only as a record of the resources I used to prepare the preceding piece.

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Sample 4: Proposal

SEO Recommendations for www.coach.com

Composed April 6, 2010



Anita Taide

Reflections

“With the incorporation of key SEO elements...the Coach site will be able to take advantage of existing competitive opportunities and gain a considerable boost in search engine rankings.”

My proposal offers SEO (search engine optimization) recommendations for the Coach Web site (www.coach.com), outlining the necessary changes the company must make in order to achieve higher search engine rankings. I examine five key SEO content areas as they relate to the Coach site and the sites of the company's two main competitors: Dooney & Bourke and Kate Spade. The information I provide is designed to help Coach recognize its competitive opportunities and threats and plan its optimization strategies accordingly.

In writing this proposal, my primary objective was to showcase my knowledge of advanced SEO principles – therefore building my credentials as an expert in the SEO community. My secondary objective was to practice the art of proposal writing. The lengthiness of the document was a definite challenge for me, especially considering the limited amount of time I had for research and composition. I was also faced with the task of maintaining a parallel writing structure. Although I was able to tackle both of these challenges successfully, I felt that I still needed some visuals to separate the narrative portion. In my revision, I added recommendation summary charts to accomplish this purpose. I also replaced the abstract with an “Executive Summary,” as the latter provided a more thorough description of the proposal's objectives and recommendations.



SEO Recommendations

Anitaforaide

www.coach.com

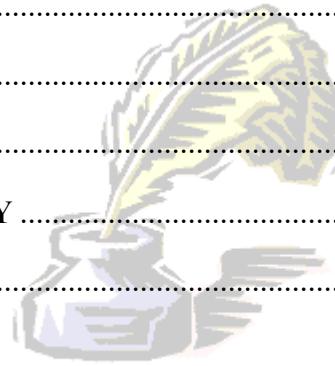
Prepared by SEO CopyRight

April 6, 2010

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This proposal contains recommendations to enhance the Coach Web site (www.coach.com) from a search engine optimization (SEO) standpoint. The proposal will enable Coach management to make the necessary changes to rank higher in relevant search engine results. In turn, this will not only drive more traffic to the site, but also result in more revenue from the site's visitors. Ultimately, the following recommendations will give Coach a competitive edge in the designer fashion market.

In this report, we focus on five key content areas: navigation; multimedia content; copy; URL structure; and titles and meta descriptions. These areas all affect how well a site ranks in search engine results. For each content area, we share best practices, perform a competitive analysis and offer recommendations. The competitors we evaluate are Dooney & Bourke (www.dooney.com) and Kate Spade (www.katespade.com) – both listed by Hoovers as top contenders in the designer fashion market.

Our findings show that neither competitor possesses a distinct advantage over www.coach.com in terms of SEO performance. In fact, all three companies lack in each of the content areas discussed. The greatest disadvantage the Coach site has is its use of Javascript for its product pages. Since search engines are not able to read Javascript content, they cannot include the information on these pages in relevant results. Another barrier is the site's multimedia content. In particular, the Flash movie on the homepage limits the content that search engines are able to *spider*, or include in their databases. Meanwhile, the strongest opportunities for www.coach.com lie in its navigation and URL structure. Unlike its competitors, Coach uses an HTML-based navigation menu and a partially static URL format – both of which make it easier for search engines to understand the theme of the site's pages.

With a few modifications in page structure and content, Coach will gain a competitive advantage in terms of SEO and be able to achieve notably higher rankings in search engine results.

INTRODUCTION

Background

In today's rapidly growing online marketplace, it's not easy to be found. Often, thousands of companies compete in the same industry, struggling to gain recognition on the Web. Many of these companies use tactics like affiliate marketing and banner advertising to increase their visibility and draw customers to their sites. As effective as these strategies are, they impose a notable reduction in a company's bottom line. One of the most potent and cost-effective means of increasing traffic to a Web site is through *search engine optimization* (SEO): the process of adjusting a site's copy and structure for the purpose of achieving higher rankings in search engine results.

Several factors affect how effectively a site is *crawled* (how many pages are picked up) by search engines. Among the most important are navigation structure, multimedia content, copy, URL structure, title tags and meta description tags.

All of these components center around one common theme: the importance of using *targeted keywords*. Essentially, targeted keywords are highly searched words and phrases relevant to the theme of a Web page. Targeted keywords utilize variations of the same term (e.g. *designer handbag*, *designer purse*, *luxury handbag*). The goal of SEO is to incorporate these variations in such a way that they will increase *keyword density* – the proportion of targeted keywords to other words on the page.

However, before targeted keywords can be determined, *keyword research* must be performed. Keyword research involves finding variations of a site's key terms and determining which variations are most frequently searched. Two of the most effective and widely used keyword research programs are WordTracker (www.wordtracker.com) and Google Adwords Keyword Tool (<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>). These tools will help you to plan your keyword implementation according to the recommendations in this document.

Problem

Despite the success of www.coach.com since its launch in 1999, there are many opportunities for improvement in terms of SEO. The site lacks several best practices in content and design, increasing the threat of competitors like Dooney & Bourke (www.dooney.com) and Kate Spade (www.katespade.com). Opportunities for optimization are most prevalent in the site's navigation structure, Flash and image content, copy, URL structure, titles and meta descriptions.

Purpose

The analysis in this proposal will allow Coach to recognize its competitive SEO strengths and weaknesses. Subsequently, the company will be able to prioritize its SEO strategies and seize opportunities for optimization. This will not only help Coach to increase the number of visitors on its site, but also to see a positive impact on its revenue, profitability and market share in the designer fashion market.

Scope and Methodology

Anita Taide

The report is divided into five main sections. In each section, we examine a key content area on the Coach site and describe related opportunities for optimization. The information is organized as follows:

- Navigation
- Multimedia Content
- Copy
- URL Structure
- Titles and Meta Descriptions

In addition, each of the above sections is divided into the following subsections:

- Overview and Best Practices
- Competitive Analysis
- Highlights
- Recommendations (including summary chart)

Our report not only reflects our firsthand knowledge, but also represents industry best practices as discussed on professional search engine marketing Web sites like SearchEngineGuide and SearchEngineWatch.

Audience

The information in this document is fairly technical and is especially suited for those with an intermediate understanding of SEO principles. However, we explain the concepts and terminology in such a way that it can be used even by those possessing basic SEO knowledge.

We have developed this document mainly for Coach's Internet Marketing department, with the e-commerce manager as the primary audience. Our secondary audience is Coach's Web development team, who will work in conjunction with the Internet Marketing team to execute our recommendations.

About Us

Based in Somerdale, New Jersey, SEO CopyRight is a full-service SEO agency with a concentration in SEO copywriting. We have nearly six years of online marketing experience, including intensive experience in SEO strategy development and Web site redesign. Our experience includes the development of SEO recommendations for Fortune 500 companies like Procter & Gamble, Schering Plough, Microsoft and Disney.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Navigation

Overview and Best Practices

The navigation is one of the most important indicators of how well a Web page is crawled by search engines. A site's navigation can be structured in several different ways. Here are some best practices regarding navigation:

- **Construct your navigation menu in HTML or CSS (Cascading Style Sheets).** This will ensure that search engines are able to read the contents of the menu text more easily. Search engines are not able to read content embedded in images, JavaScript or Flash; therefore, avoid using these in your navigation menu. If possible, use a *hover-over dropdown CSS menu*. Doing so produces a “tier” of more specific items, displayed as dropdowns when a visitor “hovers over” a link in the menu. Constructing a menu with multiple options allows more keywords and links to be utilized – therefore providing more doorways through which search engines can travel.
- **Utilize targeted keywords in your navigation menu** – The navigation menu is one of the most critical components of a Web site, as it provides links to several key pages on the same domain. However, a search engine is not effectively able to determine the theme of a linked page if does not contain relevant keywords. Therefore, “Men’s Fashion” would be a better indicator of a page’s content than would “Men.”
- **Use *breadcrumb navigation*** – Breadcrumb navigation menus provide links to parent categories as a user navigates through the site. For example, if a customer finds the Karolina Heel by clicking on “Shoes,” then “Heels,” the breadcrumb would show *Shoes > Heels > Karolina Heel*. Each component of the breadcrumb would link to its respective section on the Web site. Breadcrumb navigations not only provide search engines with additional links, but they also provide users with a more convenient way to shop.

Competitive Analysis

Coach (www.coach.com)

Structure: The navigation menu on the Coach site uses CSS, in addition to using a hover-over dropdown format.

Targeted Keywords: Few of the menu components are *keyword-rich*. In other words, they do not contain highly searched, targeted phrases that may help drive relevant traffic to www.coach.com.

Breadcrumb Navigation: The Coach site does not use breadcrumb navigation.

Dooney & Bourke (www.dooney.com)

Structure: The Dooney & Bourke site also uses CSS for its navigation menu. However, the menu is not a hover-over dropdown as it is on the Coach site. Therefore, only general components are shown. For example, the navigation menu lists only “Handbags” vs. both “Handbags” and “Leather Handbags.”

Targeted Keywords: Because of the limitation above, there are no targeted keywords included in the navigation.

Breadcrumb Navigation: The Dooney & Bourke site utilizes breadcrumb navigation.

Kate Spade (www.katespade.com)

Structure: Kate Spade uses JavaScript for its navigation menu. Since search engines are not able to read JavaScript text, the menu is not effectively indexed and displayed in search engine results.

Targeted Keywords: The navigation keywords on www.katespade.com are more targeted than those on www.dooney.com. For example, Kate Spade lists several important accessories, e.g. Shoes, Jewelry and Fragrance, while Dooney & Bourke groups these under one category. However, each navigation item on www.katespade.com is represented by only one word. Since

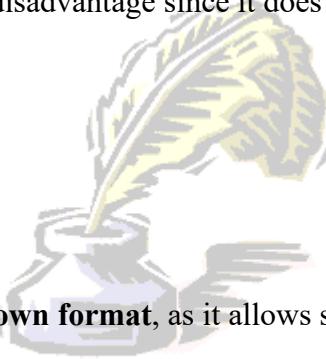
the menu is not hover-over, it does not have the advantage of displaying multiple keyword combinations like www.coach.com.

Breadcrumb Navigation: Like www.dooney.com, www.katespade.com uses breadcrumb navigation.

Highlights

The Coach site has an advantage over its competitors in terms of navigation structure: the navigation is not only constructed with CSS, but it also utilizes hover-over dropdown technology. Therefore, Coach has the opportunity to incorporate many targeted keywords.

Meanwhile, www.coach.com has a disadvantage since it does not utilize breadcrumb navigation like its competitors.



Recommendations

- **Retain a hover-over dropdown format**, as it allows search engines to index the contents of the navigation menu.
- **Rephrase the menu components to include more targeted keywords.** For example, consider changing the following:

fragrance & beauty to *perfume & beauty products*

travel to *travel accessories*

heels to *high heels*

- **Display a breadcrumb navigation;** this will provide yet another way for search engines to associate the content among your site's pages. The breadcrumb links will also provide an additional path for search engines as they travel through your site.

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For example, we recommend incorporating the following on the Peyton Leather Shoulder Bag product page:

Handbags > Shoulder Bags > Peyton Leather Shoulder Bag.

Summary of Recommendations

Task	Priority (1=Low; 5=High)	Difficulty (1=Easy; 5=Hard)
Incorporate targeted keywords in navigation menu.	4	2
Display breadcrumb navigation.	3	3



Multimedia Content

Overview and Best Practices

Multimedia content consists of images, videos, audio files and widgets placed on a Web site to make it more interactive. While such elements often engage users, they can also pose a hindrance to search engines. Following these best practices can help a site to retain both its user and search engine appeal:

- Flash
 - **Avoid having Flash load automatically on the homepage.** The homepage is the most critical page on a Web site, and the one which search engines typically crawl first. Therefore, it is important to use as many targeted keywords as possible, either in HTML or CSS form. Since search engines cannot read Flash content, having such a file on the homepage often serves as an obstacle in crawling such content. In addition, Flash content increases *pageload time* – the time it takes for a user's page to load. Like users, search engines have only a set amount of time in which they wait for a page to load – then they move on.
 - **When possible, use an image on your homepage rather than Flash.** Images consume less bandwidth and load faster. Furthermore, it is easy to provide text alternatives for images. These alternatives are known as *ALT tags*. An ALT tag is essentially an HTML tag that identifies the content of an image.
 - **Display the Flash movie as an image and provide a “Play” button.** This way, the user can control whether or not to play the movie. Furthermore, a search engine can immediately begin to index the site instead of waiting for the page to load.
 - **Create a *text-only page*** to which the browser can revert if it detects that the user does not have Flash. Like ALT tags, text-only pages allow search engines to understand the theme of multimedia content. Another option is the *SWFObject file*. This is a small Javascript file used to embed Flash content. Unlike most other forms of JavaScript, SWFObject files are search-engine friendly.

- **Keep the size of your Flash movies small.** In order to reduce pageload time and save room for keyword-rich text, keep your Flash movies 640 X 480 pixels or smaller.
- Images
 - **Limit the size and number of your images.** Like Flash, images can consume a large amount of bandwidth and increase pageload time. An important factor in SEO is *text-to-image ratio* – the proportion of text to images on a Web page. This ratio should remain 2:1 or higher.
 - **Use ALT tags for images.** Since search engines cannot read images, ALT tags provide a readable format for such files.
 - **Use standalone text.** Ensure that all of your text “stands alone” and is not embedded in a Flash or image file. Stick to HTML or CSS, since search engines cannot read embedded text.
 - **Use targeted keywords for your image filenames.** An image’s filename is still another way for search engines to understand the theme of a particular image. Since images are frequently crawled and included in “Image Search” results, it is particularly important to optimize image file names.
 - **Host images on your site.** In order to save server space and human resources, many companies use third parties to host their images; however, doing so prevents these companies from having their own sites indexed in relevant image search results. Hosting an image on your own site provides a means of entry for customers performing image searches.

Competitive Analysis

Coach (www.coach.com)

Automatic Flash Files: When a visitor arrives on the homepage of the Coach site, they are immediately greeted by a Flash movie. Depending on their connection speed, they are required to wait anywhere from a few seconds to a minute for the page to load. The same is true on other key pages of the site, like the “Heels” page.

Image Volume: The Coach site is image-heavy, with a much larger proportion of images than text on most pages.

ALT Tags: While most images use ALT tags, most image file names are not keyword-rich.

Embedded Text: Many of the site's images contain embedded text. This prevents the text from being understood by search engines.

Image File Names: The image file names are not search engine-friendly.

Image Hosting: Coach does not host its own images.

Dooney & Bourke (www.dooney.com)

Automatic Flash Files: While the Dooney & Bourke site does not use a Flash movie on the homepage, it uses Flash on its other key pages ("Handbags," "Accessories," "Gift Items").

Image Volume: This site is also image-heavy; however, the images are smaller and consume less space than those on the Coach site.

ALT Tags: Like Coach, Dooney & Bourke also employs ALT tags for its images; however, these are not keyword-rich.

Embedded Text: The use of text within images is not prevalent on the Dooney & Bourke site.

Image File Names: Dooney & Bourke does not use image-friendly file names.

Image Hosting: The site hosts its own images.

Kate Spade (www.katespade.com)

Automatic Flash Files: Kate Spade does not appear to use Flash on any of its pages.

Image Volume: As with www.coach.com, the images on Kate Spade consume much of the pages' space – especially the large category images, as shown in the "Handbags," "Shoes" and "Accessories" sections.

ALT Tags: Most images on the Kate Spade site use ALT tags. However, the large category images referenced above do not use these tags. Furthermore, the ALT tags that are used are not keyword-rich.

Embedded Text: While there are some instances of text within images on www.katespade.com, embedded text on this site is not as prevalent as that on www.coach.com.

Image File Names: Kate Spade does not use image-friendly file names.

Image Hosting: Kate Spade does not host its own images; instead, it uses the third-party provider <http://www.imageg.net>.

Highlights

Neither Dooney & Bourke site nor Kate Spade uses Flash on the homepage. Currently, these sites have an advantage in having more content indexed due to faster homepage pageload time.

However, both competitor sites use large category images. This presents an even playing field, as many oversized images are used on key pages of the Coach site as well.

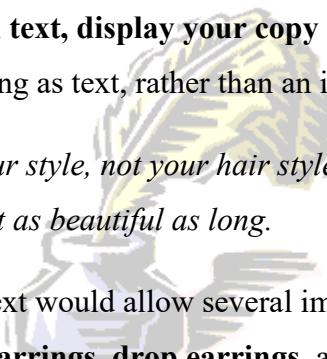
All three sites also lack keyword-rich ALT tags and file names.

Of the three Web sites, the use of embedded text is most prevalent on www.coach.com. This is preventing the site from sharing valuable keyword-rich copy with search engines.

Recommendations:

- **In order to decrease pageload time and ensure browser compatibility, use one of the following alternatives to the self-starting Flash movie displayed on the homepage (in order of priority):**
 - Use an image rather than a Flash file.
 - Display a screenshot of the Flash movie and provide a “Play” button.

- Continue to use the “automatic play” option, but reduce the size of the movie by 40% - 50%.
- Create a “text-only” page to which the browser can revert if Flash is not installed on the user’s computer.
- **Limit the number and size of the images on your pages.** Most importantly, reduce the size of the large category images. These images not only increase pageload time, but they prevent search engines from crawling more of your site’s pages.
- **Optimize ALT tags.** Continue to use ALT tags, as they alert search engines to the theme of each image. However, ensure that the tags contain targeted keywords. For example, use *Pink Patent Leather Charm Tote Bag* instead of *Patent Charm Tote \$358.00*.
- **Instead of using embedded text, display your copy outside of your images.** For instance, display the following as text, rather than an image, on the Earrings page:



Select earrings based on your style, not your hair style. Dangly stunners and drop earrings with short hair, just as beautiful as long.

Representing the above as text would allow several important keyword phrases to be indexed, including **dangly earrings**, **drop earrings**, and **earrings long**.

- **Use keyword-rich image file names**, e.g. *pink-patent-leather-charm-tote-bag.jpg* instead of *14925_svuvu0.jpg*.
- **Host your images on your own site.** Although this may require additional server space and manpower, the return on investment will prove beneficial. Currently, Coach’s images are hosted on www.scene7.com. This prevents users from discovering these images on Coach’s site, thus seizing any opportunity to for a sale on the site.

Summary of Recommendations

Task	Priority (1=Low; 5=High)	Difficulty (1=Easy; 5=Hard)
Replace Flash on homepage with image.	4	3
Decrease size of category images.	3	2
Assign keyword-friendly ALT tags.	2	1
Limit number of images.	2	2
Host images on Coach site.	2	3
Replace embedded text with HTML.	1	2
Optimize image file names.	1	2

Anita Taide

Product Copy

Overview and Best Practices

Product copy is the optimal place to insert targeted keywords. Text that is visible to users carries more weight than keywords in ALT tags, URL's and meta description combined. Following are some best practices in optimizing product copy:

- **Ensure that the copy for each product is written on its own HTML page.** Some sites use Javascript popups; since search engines cannot read Javascript content, this prevents important keywords from being indexed in relevant search results.
- **On each page, include 2 - 4 keywords that relate to the theme of the product.** This builds keyword density.
- **Write the copy naturally.** Search engines are quick to detect pages that contain too many variations of the same phrase (*keyword stuffing*) – and are also quick to penalize such sites in rankings. The rule of thumb is to place user-friendliness above search-engine friendliness. Copy should be written in a way that “talks” to the reader – preferably in complete sentences.
- **Use *header tags*.** Header tags are HTML elements that alert both users and search engines to the theme of the page. They also inform search engines of what the most important keywords are. We recommend using the *H1* tag for product titles. If possible, we also recommend using the *H2* tag for product captions.
- **Avoid *boilerplate copy*.** Many sites use boilerplate copy – text that has been copied either from other sites, or from other pages on the same site. This is common in situations where there are two or more items with the same features but different colors. Varying the copy prevents search engines from recognizing these pages as *duplicate content* – the state of having multiple Web pages with the same or similar content. Web pages with duplicate content are often penalized with lower search engine rankings.

Competitive Analysis

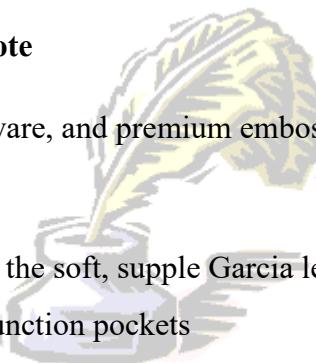
Coach (www.coach.com)

Unique Product Pages: The products on www.coach.com do not reside on their own pages. Instead, they are represented with Javascript popups. This prevents search engines from indexing product content, which is essentially the “meat” of the site.

Keyword Density: Each product sold on the Coach site is accompanied by detailed product copy. For example, the Embossed Exotic Large Charm Tote displays the following product description:

Embossed Exotic Large Charm Tote

Luxe size, elegant style, shiny hardware, and premium embossing, here with the genuine look and feel of crocodile. Be charmed.



- Faux crocodile embossing to the soft, supple Garcia leather we developed in Italy
- Inside zip, cellphone, multifunction pockets
- Zip-top closure, fabric lining
- Removable outside coin purse
- Handles with 9" drop
- Detachable shoulder strap
- 14 1/4 (L) x 11 3/4 (H) x 5 1/4 (W)

Although the product copy is detailed, the page does not make use of relevant, highly searched keywords. More importantly, there is no keyword density.

Natural Copy: The copy is written naturally; however, it is not written in complete sentences.

Header Tags: Header tags are not used.

Boilerplate Copy: The Coach site uses boilerplate copy in many instances. For example, the New Patent Charm Tote is available in both pink and green; each color has its own Javascript page and is represented with exactly the same copy.

Dooney & Bourke (www.dooney.com)

Unique Product Pages: Dooney & Bourke maintains each of its products on its own HTML page.

Keyword Density: Dooney & Bourke's site displays its copy mostly in bulleted form. For example, the description for the Dillen Pocket Tote reads as follows:

Dillen Pocket Tote

- L 12" W 6.5" H 10.75"
- One outside zip pocket
- One outside pocket
- One inside zip pocket
- Cell phone pocket
- Inside key hook
- Strap drop length: 7"
- Lined
- Zipper closure



Because of the direct, objective style in which this copy is presented, there is a lack of both targeted keywords and keyword density on the product pages.

Natural Copy: Although the copy is written naturally, it is not written in complete sentences.

Header Tags: The site does not use header tags.

Boilerplate Copy: Dooney & Bourke does not use boilerplate text. In the case where a product is available in an assortment of colors, all colors are represented on the same page via a dropdown menu.

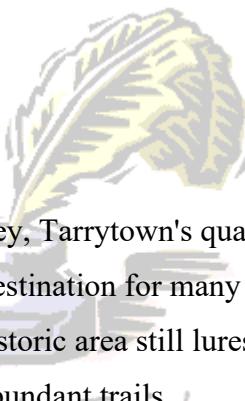
Kate Spade (www.katespade.com)

Unique Product Pages: The products on www.katespade.com are represented on their own HTML pages.

Keyword Density: The Kate Spade site provides more product information than both www.coach.com and www.dooney.com. For example, consider the product description of the Tarrytown Jossline handbag:

Tarrytown Jossline Handbag

Nestled in New York's Hudson River Valley, Tarrytown's quaint downtown is a modest advertisement for the town's history as a destination for many of the nation's wealthiest and stylish turn-of-the century families. The historic area still lures visitors and equestrians with its natural beauty, grand manor homes, and abundant trails.



- 100% boarskin embossed cowhide
- handheld bag with zipper closure
- 14-karat light gold plated hardware
- custom woven stucco noel jacquard lining
- interior double slide pockets and zip pocket
- drop length 4"
- imported
- style # PXRU1587F
- 6.6" x 10.1" x 4.8"

Although the product displays a detailed description, it is not optimized with targeted keywords.

Natural Copy: The copy on the Dooney & Bourke site is written naturally. Rather than simply using bulleted lists, the site represents its products with complete sentences.

Header Tags: Dooney & Bourke does not utilize header tags.

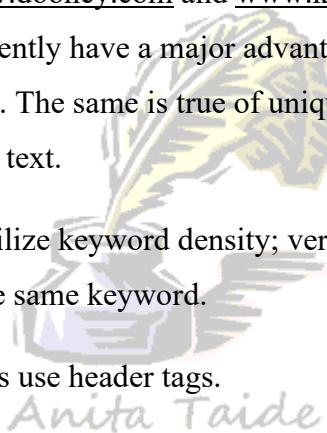
Boilerplate Copy: The site does not use boilerplate copy; in the case where a style is available in multiple colors, all colors are represented on the same page.

Highlights

Unlike www.coach.com, both www.dooney.com and www.katespade.com use HTML pages for their products. Therefore, they currently have a major advantage in terms of presenting “crawlable” copy to search engines. The same is true of unique product copy; www.coach.com is the only site which uses boilerplate text.

However, none of the three sites utilize keyword density; very few pages on any of the sites seem to contain multiple variations of the same keyword.

In the same regard, none of the sites use header tags.



Recommendations

- **Before incorporating any changes to your copy, change the structure of your product pages from Javascript popups to standalone HTML pages.** This will enable the content on these pages to be crawled by search engines.
- **After ensuring that each product has its own HTML page, incorporate keyword density on the pages.** Assign each page a “theme” and integrate keywords around that theme. This will greatly boost your chances of ranking for highly searched phrases.

For example, the copy for the Embossed Exotic Large Charm Tote could be reworded as follows:

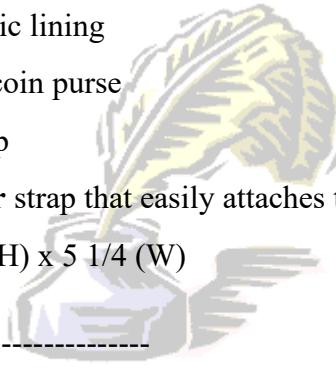
Embossed Exotic Large Charm Tote

Genuine look and feel of a **crocodile tote bag**

This **large** faux **crocodile tote bag** perfectly blends deluxe size and elegant style.

Handbag is made of **shiny leather** and features premium embossing. Genuine look and feel of **crocodile**. **Tote** contains the following features, bound to charm and delight you:

- Faux **crocodile bag** with embossing to the soft **Italian Garcia leather**
- Inside zip, cellphone, multifunction pockets
- Zip-top closure, fabric lining
- Removable outside coin purse
- Handles with 9" drop
- Detachable **shoulder** strap that easily attaches to **tote bag**
- 14 1/4 (L) x 11 3/4 (H) x 5 1/4 (W)



With just a few changes, note how many targeted keyword combinations are created.

These include **crocodile tote bag**, **crocodile bag**, **crocodile tote**, **tote bag**, **large tote**, **large bag**, **large tote bag**, **crocodile handbag**, **handbag shiny**, **shiny leather**, **crocodile bag**, **Italian leather**, **crocodile leather**, **shoulder bag**, **shoulder tote bag**, and **crocodile shoulder bag**. Not only does the copy now include many highly searched phrases, but it reflects a common theme: **crocodile tote bag**. The keyword density is apparent, with the inclusion of the terms **crocodile tote bag**, **crocodile bag**, **crocodile tote**, etc.

Also notice how the revised copy is more natural. The copy not only utilizes complete sentences, but “talks” to the reader.

- **Incorporate header tags.** This is perhaps the most simple fix. We recommend enclosing product titles within H1 tags. In addition, we recommend inserting a caption below each product title within an H2 tag.

In the above example, “Embossed Exotic Large Charm Tote” would be enclosed in an H1 tag, while “Genuine look and feel of a crocodile tote bag” would be enclosed in an H2 tag.

- **Combine similar products to avoid boilerplate text.** For example, the New Patent Charm Tote should be represented as one product, with either a dropdown menu or a color swatch reflecting the options to purchase in pink or green.

Summary of Recommendations

Task	Priority (1=Low; 5=High)	Difficulty (1=Easy; 5=Hard)
Incorporate keyword density on each page.	5	2
Change Javascript popups to standalone HTML pages.	5	4
Combine similar products into one page.	2	3
Incorporate header tags.	1	1

URL Structure

Overview and Best Practices

The URL structure of a page is an important indicator of how well it will rank in relevant search results. As a search engine follows a link from a Web page, the URL is the first component it sees. Following are some best practices in URL formation:

- **Link to the *canonical URL*.** A canonical URL is the “main” version of a URL, i.e. the version by which it is best known and receives the most incoming links from within the site. For homepages, a canonical URL is the “destination” of the redirect. For example, if a user types “<http://www.coach.com>” but is redirected to “<http://www.coach.com/online/handbags/Home-10551-10051>,” the latter is the canonical homepage. When linking to the homepage from other pages, it is important to point links to the canonical URL. Doing so prevents other pages from accumulating *link popularity* – a measure of the quality and quantity of incoming links to a Web page. Ultimately, linking to the canonical URL will prevent these pages from competing with the “main” page for better rankings.
- **Redirect *non-canonical URL*’s.** A non-canonical URL is a “less popular” version of a URL, and can potentially be a problem if it does not redirect to the “main” version. In the example above, <http://www.coach.com> would be a non-canonical URL. In order to prevent either page from being identified as duplicate content, it is a best practice to permanently redirect non-canonical URL’s to their canonical versions.
- **Use *static URL*’s.** Static URL’s are Web pages whose addresses are known ahead of time and are able to be assigned, rather than produced dynamically. They are usually shorter and contain fewer parameters (e.g. &, =, %).
- **Include targeted keywords.** Although this is easier to do in other areas of a Web page, it is important to include as many targeted keywords as possible in the URL.
- **Separate keywords with a dash (-) or underscore (_).** These characters allow search engines to understand that there is a space between the terms in the URL. For example, a

search engine would have a hard time determining that <http://www.coach.com/handbags/newleathercharmtote.html> was a page featuring the New Leather Charm Tote. A page with the URL <http://www.coach.com/handbags/new-leather-charm-tote.html>, on the other hand, would clearly indicate this.

Competitive Analysis

Coach (www.coach.com)

Canonical Linking: The Coach homepage utilizes the following canonical URL: (<http://www.coach.com/online/handbags/Home-10551-10051>). However, many other pages link to the non-canonical version: <http://www.coach.com/online/handbags/Home-10551-10051-en>.

Canonical Redirection: Both <http://coach.com> and <http://www.coach.com> are automatically redirected to the canonical URL. Meanwhile, <http://www.coach.com/online/handbags/Home-10551-10051-en> remains as a separate page with identical content.

Static Pages: The URL's on the Coach site are a combination of static and dynamic pages. For example, the first part of http://www.coach.com/online/handbags/-handbags_features_newarrivals_1-10551-10051-50000000000000015027-en?t1Id=62&t2Id=50000000000000015027&tier=2 is "clean," containing mostly letters. However, the latter part contains a mixture of computer-generated numbers and letters.

Targeted Keywords: When visiting key areas of the site, the URL's reflect category navigation. For example, the URL of *Handbags > Features > New Arrivals* reads http://www.coach.com/online/handbags/-handbags_features_newarrivals_1-10551-10051-50000000000000015027-en?t1Id=62&t2Id=50000000000000015027&tier=2.

This allows some important keywords to be included in the URL's. However, the end portion of the URL remains dynamic. Additionally, the keywords represented by the site's category URL's are targeted only to a certain extent. For example, the only term in the above URL that is both relevant and highly searched is *handbags*.

Keyword Separators: In some cases, the keywords contained within the Coach site's URL's are separated by underscores; in other cases, they are merged together (e.g. in the above example).

Dooney & Bourke (www.dooney.com)

Canonical Linking: Like the Coach site, www.dooney.com contains links to non-canonical pages. The homepage URL remains

http://www.dooney.com/OA_HTML/ibeCCtpSctDspRte.jsp?section=12681, while many pages link to http://www.dooney.com/OA_HTML/ibeCZzpHome.jsp?a=b.

Canonical Redirection: Both <http://dooney.com> and <http://www.dooney.com> automatically redirect to their canonical version. However,

http://www.dooney.com/OA_HTML/ibeCZzpHome.jsp?a=b remains as a separate page with identical content.

Static Pages: Unlike the pages on www.coach.com, the URL's on www.dooney.com do not reflect category navigation. Instead, they are purely dynamic and are represented by a mixture of letters and numbers. For example, the URL for Handbags > Leather reads http://www.dooney.com/OA_HTML/ibeCCtpSctDspRte.jsp?section=29469.

Targeted Keywords: Because of the site's dynamic pages, there are no opportunities to insert targeted keywords.

Keyword Separators: Also because of the site's dynamic pages, there are no opportunities to use keyword separators.

Kate Spade (www.katespade.com)

Canonical Linking: Unlike www.coach.com and www.dooney.com, Kate Spade does not contain any non-canonical URL's; all homepage links read "<http://www.katespade.com/home/index.jsp>."

Canonical Redirection: Both <http://katespade.com> and <http://www.katespade.com> redirect to the canonical URL. There is no non-canonical URL that needs to be redirected.

Static Pages: Like Dooney & Bourke's site, the URL's for www.katespade.com are purely dynamic. For instance, the URL for *Accessories > Cosmetic Cases* reads "<http://www.katespade.com/family/index.jsp?categoryId=1866705>."

Targeted Keywords: Because of the site's dynamic pages, there are no opportunities to insert targeted keywords.

Keyword Separators: Also because of the site's dynamic pages, there are also no opportunities to use keyword separators.

Highlights

Kate Spade currently has an advantage over both Coach and Dooney & Bourke in terms of linking and redirecting to canonical URL's.

Meanwhile, Coach is the only one of the three sites that utilizes URL's that are at least partially static. Therefore, it has the unique advantage of utilizing targeted keywords in its URL's. It also has the advantage of having these keywords optimized further through separators.

Recommendations

- In order to preserve the link popularity of the canonical homepage and prevent duplicate content, change all non-canonical links to <http://www.coach.com/online/handbags/Home-10551-10051>.
- Subsequently, redirect all non-canonical URL's (e.g. <http://www.coach.com/online/handbags/Home-10551-10051-en>) to the canonical page. This will ensure that the "true homepage" receives the most link popularity – ultimately boosting its rankings in relevant search engine results.

- **Remove the dynamic portion of the site's URL**, or replace with static text. For example, replace http://www.coach.com/online/handbags/-handbags_features_newarrivals_1-10551-10051-50000000000000015027-en?t1Id=62&t2Id=50000000000000015027&tier=2 (the URL for Handbags > Features > New Arrivals) with http://www.coach.com/online/handbags/-handbags_features_newarrivals. This would eliminate the extra parameters, which often confuse search engines.
- **If possible, use an even more optimized URL format, such as <http://www.coach.com/online/handbags/new-coach-handbags>**. This URL achieves the following:
 - Eliminates the phrases *features* and *newarrivals* – neither of which is a relevant, highly searched term.
 - Uses the phrase *new-coach-handbags*, which is both relevant and highly searched.
 - Uses hyphens – this allows search engines to parse the terms in the URL, enhancing their meaning.

Summary of Recommendations

Task	Priority (1=Low; 5=High)	Difficulty (1=Easy; 5=Hard)
Introduce static URL's for product pages.	4	4
Redirect non-canonical URL's to canonical homepage.	3	2
Incorporate targeted keywords in URL's.	3	3
Change non-canonical links so that they are directed to canonical homepage.	3	4

Titles and Meta Descriptions

Overview and Best Practices

A Web page's *title* and *meta description* tag (in order of priority) are elements placed in the HTML code that impact how well the page will rank in relevant search engine results. Both tags serve as identifiers of a page's content, and should therefore be both descriptive and unique from page to page.

Title

Of particular importance is the title. The title is a search engine's main way of determining the relevancy of a Web page. Follow these best practices relating to title optimization:

- **Include targeted keywords in the title**, making it as descriptive as possible. The reason for this is that the title is always displayed in search engine results.
- **Make the title anywhere from 50 to 65 characters long**. Shorter titles do not carry as much weight, and longer titles have a chance of being penalized by search engines.
- **Include the company name in the title**. This allows readers to recognize that this is your official site, and not somebody pretending to be you.
- **Place the title first, before the meta description**. The title carries the most weight and should therefore be seen by search engines first.

Meta Description

Like titles, meta descriptions are also displayed in search engine results – but only in situations where a Web page does not contain any copy that is relevant to a user's search. Follow these best practices relating to meta description optimization:

- **Include targeted keywords in the meta description**, along with a call to action if possible. Since the meta description is often displayed in search engine results, it should be compelling enough to lead to a click.
- **Include two to four variations of a keyword**, preferably toward the beginning of the tag. This builds keyword density.
- **Keep meta descriptions a length of 200 to 250 characters**. This length ensures that all or most of the meta description will be seen in search engine results. It also allows substantial room for the placement of targeted keywords. If a meta description is over 250 characters, there is a chance that a search engine will label it as SPAM.
- **Place the meta description after the title**. The meta description carries less weight than the title and should therefore be seen by search engines after the title tag.

Competitive Analysis

Coach (www.coach.com)

Title



The Handbags page on the Coach site contains the following title tag:

```
<title>Coach :: Handbags</title>
```

Targeted Keywords: The title does not contain targeted keywords.

Length: The length of the title is 17 characters.

Company Name: The company name is included in the title.

Placement: The title is placed before the meta description.

Meta Description

The Handbags page on the Coach site contains the following meta description tag:

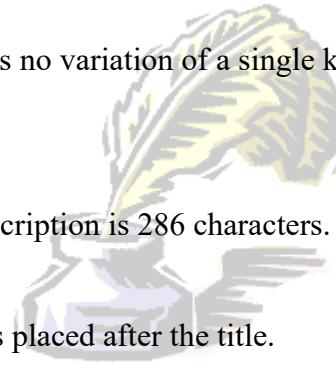
```
<meta name="description" content="Coach is a leading American designer and maker of luxury lifestyle handbags and accessories. Using a range of quality fabrics and materials, Coach's product offerings include handbags, wallets, business cases, travel bags, footwear, jewelry, watches, sunwear, outerwear and fragrance." />
```

Targeted Keywords: There are some targeted keywords in the meta description. However, these terms are very general and are mostly represented by one word.

Variation of Same Phrase: There is no variation of a single keyword phrase in the meta description.

Length: The length of the meta description is 286 characters.

Placement: The meta description is placed after the title.



Dooney & Bourke (www.dooney.com)

Title

The Handbags page on the Dooney & Bourke site contains the following title tag:

```
<TITLE>Dooney & Bourke: Handbags</TITLE>
```

Targeted Keywords: The title does not contain targeted keywords.

Length: The length of the title is 25 characters.

Company Name: The company name is included in the title.

Placement: The title is the only SEO-significant tag on the page.

Meta Description

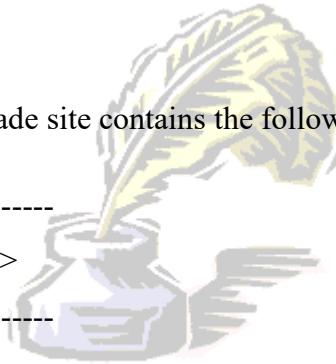
The Handbags page on the Dooney & Bourke site does not contain a meta description tag.

Kate Spade (www.katespade.com)

Title

The Handbags page on the Kate Spade site contains the following title tag:

```
<title>handbags at kate spade</title>
```



Targeted Keywords: The title does not contain targeted keywords.

Length: The length of the title is 22 characters.

Company Name: The company name is included in the title.

Placement: The title is placed before the meta description.

Meta Description

The Handbags page on the Kate Spade site contains the following meta description tag:

```
<meta name="description" content="handbags at kate spade" />
```

Targeted Keywords: The meta description does not contain targeted keywords.

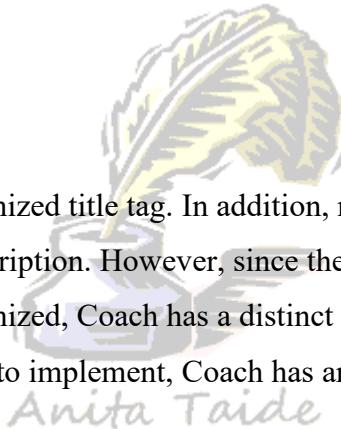
Variation of Same Phrase: There is no variation of a single keyword phrase in the meta description.

Length: The length of the meta description is 22 characters.

Placement: The meta description is placed after the title tag.

Highlights

None of the three sites use an optimized title tag. In addition, neither Dooney & Bourke nor Kate Spade uses an optimized meta description. However, since the meta description tags on www.coach.com are partially optimized, Coach has a distinct advantage. Also, since both SEO-significant tags are quick and easy to implement, Coach has an opportunity to see fast results with only limited effort.

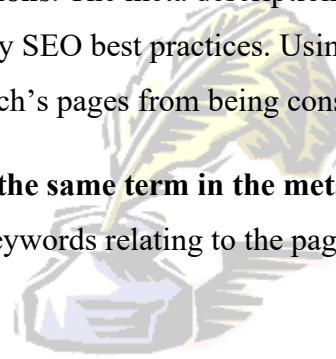


Recommendations

Revise the titles and meta descriptions of the homepage and key category pages. Use the preceding guidelines to revise these pages. Concentrate on revising the homepage tags first, since this is the page that is given the most importance by search engines. Subsequently, work on revising the category pages; these are generally visited by search engines after the homepage.

Points to remember:

- **If human resources are limited, revise only the title tags.** Overall, these are the most important elements in determining how each page on your site will rank in relevant search engine results.
- **Ensure that the tags on each page are unique.** Not only do unique tags help search engines to identify each page's theme, but they also help to prevent potential duplicate content issues. Currently, the same meta description is being used on multiple pages.
- **Use longer titles.** This will allow you to incorporate as many keywords and be as descriptive as possible. Just be careful not to exceed 65 characters.
- **Use shorter meta descriptions.** The meta descriptions on the Coach site are just over the length guidelines dictated by SEO best practices. Using meta descriptions at or under 250 characters will prevent Coach's pages from being considered SPAM.
- **Incorporate variations of the same term in the meta description tag,** reflecting at least a couple of targeted keywords relating to the page's theme. This helps to build keyword density.

**Revised Example**

Keeping the above in mind, following is the recommended revision of the title and meta description on the Coach Handbags page:

```
<title>Coach designer handbags - tote bags, leather purses & more.</title>
```

```
<meta name="description" content="Find dozens of Coach designer handbags, tote bags, leather purses, shoulder bags, business bags, travel bags, baby bags and other luxury and high end handbags. Our designer handbags are made from a range of quality fabrics and materials." />
```

The above tags follow best practices. The title page is 59 characters, while the meta description is 235 characters. Both tags utilize targeted keywords, shown in bold. The keyword density in the tags centers around the term **designer handbags**; not only is the phrase repeated a couple of times, but it is also represented by the variations *luxury handbags* and *high end handbags*.

After pages have been developed for each of the site's products, we also recommend incorporating keyword-rich titles and meta tags on product pages.

Summary of Recommendations

Task	Priority (1=Low; 5=High)	Difficulty (1=Easy; 5=Hard)
Revise titles of homepage.	5	2
Revise meta description of homepage.	4	2
Revise titles of category pages.	4	2
Revise meta descriptions of category pages.	3	2



Anita Taide

COMPREHENSIVE SUMMARY

Following is a summary of our recommendations in all content areas, along with related level of priority and difficulty in implementing:

Task	Content Area	Priority (1=Low; 5=High)	Difficulty (1=Easy; 5=Hard)
Incorporate keyword density on each page.	Copy	5	2
Revise title of homepage.	Titles and Meta Descriptions	5	2
Change Javascript popups to standalone HTML pages.	Copy	5	4
Incorporate targeted keywords in navigation menu.	Navigation	4	2
Revise meta description of homepage.	Titles and Meta Descriptions	4	2
Revise titles of category pages.	Titles and Meta Descriptions	4	2
Replace Flash on homepage with image.	Multimedia Content	4	3
Introduce static URL's for product pages.	URL Structure	4	4
Decrease size of category images.	Multimedia Content	3	2
Redirect non-canonical URL's to canonical homepage.	URL Structure	3	2
Revise meta descriptions of category pages.	Titles and Meta Descriptions	3	2
Display breadcrumb navigation.	Navigation	3	3
Incorporate targeted keywords in URL's.	URL Structure	3	3
Change non-canonical links so that they are directed to canonical homepage.	URL Structure	3	4
Assign keyword-friendly ALT tags.	Multimedia Content	2	1
Limit number of images.	Multimedia Content	2	2

Host images on Coach site.	Multimedia Content	2	3
Combine similar products into one page.	Copy	2	3
Incorporate header tags.	Copy	1	1
Replace embedded text with HTML.	Multimedia Content	1	2
Optimize image file names.	Multimedia Content	1	2



Anita Taide

CONCLUSION

In most regards, all three sites (www.coach.com, www.dooney.com and www.katespade.com) lack in all of the content areas discussed. However, Coach does have an advantage over its competitors in terms of navigation structure: The site's HTML navigation, accentuated with a CSS dropdown, presents many opportunities for the company to include relevant keywords that can easily be found by search engines.

The site also benefits from a search-friendly URL structure; while the URL's on the Coach site are dynamic like those of its competitors, they do include some targeted keywords.

The greatest setback for Coach is its use of Javascript product pages. Unlike the HTML pages used by Coach's competitors, these pages are not "crawlable"; therefore, they are generally not included in relevant search engine results.

The other major barrier is multimedia content: While the use of images is extensive on all three sites, the use of Flash is most prevalent on www.coach.com; the automatically loading movies on the homepage, in particular, force search engines to limit the content that they spider.

None of the three sites use keyword-rich copy, titles or meta tags – therefore presenting an even playing field in these areas.

Anita Taide

With the incorporation of key SEO elements – especially HTML product pages, a non-Flash homepage, keyword density and optimized titles – the Coach site will be able to take advantage of existing competitive opportunities and gain a considerable boost in search engine rankings.

We look forward to seeing www.coach.com at the top of relevant search engine results. In the mean time, please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns.

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