

## 5.3: Finishing Touches

### Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Search engine optimization is the process of making your site the best possible candidate for favorable listing placement in search engine results. The factors that weigh in on a site's scoring and ranking are constantly growing and evolving, and encompass far greater than just the correspondence between a searched word or phrase against the page content in your site.

Covering all aspects of SEO is a task in and of itself just for one search engine. Accounting for the differences between Google, Yahoo, Bing, and all the others would be a text in and of itself and would be out of date before the printer finished the first page.

True optimization is an almost daily task, involving monitoring changes in algorithms, refining the site as content changes, and using systems like Google's Ad Sense for commercial placements on search results pages. Even at that, portions of today's SEO algorithms are out of your control, in that they take into account things that are out of your control like previous traffic, outside links, and more. Start with these basics first to get a good start:

1. Make sure you are mobile optimized
2. Use meta tags and `<h>` tags to emphasize important content
3. Use those same keywords as page titles
4. Do not include too many keywords in your meta tags
5. Update your content regularly
6. Integrate with social media for exposure

### Analytics

A close cousin to the tasks of optimizing your site for search engines is optimizing it for your target audience. There is no better way to do this than to understand who your audience is, which you can find in your website logs. You can learn surprising things with analytics, which has spurred many of the extreme large data sets now in existence, and resulted in some of the more controversial features of websites like tailoring ads to your interests or recent searches.

Within your web server's logs, you might find that your visitors are coming from countries you had not anticipated—signs that may induce you to add additional language support, improving their experience. You might find that your users are trying to use mobile devices that you were not quite supporting, or that they are using a resolution higher than you thought, allowing you to redesign your site to provide more content or a smaller interface.

Tracking where a user goes, what they look at, how long they look at it. In fact, every action they take can provide insight. Aggregating this data across a volume of users over time give you the means to discover things you (and perhaps even your users) are not aware of.

You can see these data sets in use when you see features like “Other users also viewed this show” or “You recently looked at this item.” Following up on trends by interviewing users has also shown companies how to convert more leads. To address users leaving with items in their shopping cart before purchasing, some companies discovered through surveys that most of those users decided against a purchase because of shipping costs, or uncertainty over taxes and surcharges. This allowed them to make changes to their site, providing more information sooner to address concerns, and allowed for particular marketing techniques. Instead of making all shipping free, a number of companies will trigger automatic follow-up emails when digital shopping carts are abandoned, or orders are immediately canceled, by offering free shipping or additional coupons or discounts to convince the shopper to complete the sale, improving their conversion rate.

To begin with analytics, you can start by taking a look at the raw logs your server creates. Since our example throughout the book has been using a LAMP, your log location is probably in `/etc/httpd/logs`. A file search for the word logs will likely reveal the correct folder for your particular installation. Depending on your server configuration this folder may have one or more files that track things like people accessing files on your site (everything from pages to images and anything else a user can see or use) as well as errors that were encountered or reported by elements of your server involved in rendering pages.

These files by themselves are not easy to interpret in aggregate form until you have spent time working with them or are seeking answers that are small amounts of the record like the last error or searching for a particular file. Instead, most people who interact with logs prefer to use an outside program that reads the files and helps them see trends over time so they can extrapolate more information than the raw file provides by itself. A free, open source solution (for personal use) that you can use to this end is

AWStats, which compiles your logs into a variety of charts, graphs, and tables that focus on a number of aspects of your site like where visitors are coming from, what browser they used, what pages are most popular, and more.

For more specialized information, many sites create databases that track everything about their site, a user's entire experience, and apply everything else they know about a user to determine larger questions like how best to get the customer to return to the site again or what coupons to offer them like the shopping cart example above.

## Privacy Statement

You may wish to include (and abide by) a privacy statement for your users. Spell out exactly what type of information you collect about them, how long it is stored, whether or not you will share or sell their information to another party, and so on. This is also a good place to spell out or link to a location where they can request that their information be removed as well.

This type of statement will allow users to determine if they are comfortable using your site and gives transparency into how you will treat their data.

## Terms of Use

In much the same vein as a privacy statement you may also wish to include a terms of use that clarifies to the user the extent to which they are allowed to use your site and its information. We are all familiar with the epic novel terms of use documents that are frequently included with software and hardware purchases these days, but there is a growing movement to embrace a more non-lawyer friendly set of these types of documents.

Which one you decide to use is up to you, and there a great deal of examples in the wild. This is one area in which you may still want to include a lawyer, attorney, or your company's legal department before posting.

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