

# Foundations—a Pedestal Group Publication

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FOUNDATIONS

## The Pedestal Group

### Search Engine Optimization

#### Special points of interest:

- *Changes to LinkedIn Searching*
- *Customer Culture*
- *1099s*
- *Foxit*
- *Using Wireless*
- *AND MORE!*

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We've talked before about search engine optimization (SEO) but never really gotten down to what techniques help move you up in the rankings. That all changes today!

Search engine companies spend a great deal of their time trying to make sure that when a user does a search, the results are truly relevant and not manipulated by people trying to guess how to get the results to the top. Because of that, there are some techniques that are good ideas and some that are very bad. In fact, if you practice enough bad techniques you can get banned from a search engine!

Good techniques center around understanding search engine's need to provide good answers. Search engines need to know that your site is important, there are real people behind it, that you stand behind what you say and do, and that other people think you are worthwhile. All of those types of activities will improve your search ranking.

The first way to make sure search engines recognize your site as real is to update it regularly. A site that is built and

then stays exactly the same for two years is obviously not as important to the company as other parts of their business. If you are a search engine, that means you aren't as important as other sites, either. If you think about the logic, a site that doesn't change by the year might be related to a company that is no longer in business and didn't cancel their hosting. So those sites are disregarded. **BEST PRACTICE: Update your site regularly, preferably daily or weekly.**

Search Engines not only want to see updates, but need to see content that reflects what you do. When we say content for search engines, that means actual text. Some websites have created graphics that include their text. A little of that is fine but the key here is to remember that a search engine can't "see" the picture. It has no way of knowing there are words in it. Therefore, the pictures will be skipped. Content, however, is scanned and updated for keywords. Keywords are very important to search engines so you want to be sure you know what keywords apply to



your business. If you think about keywords as those words or phrases someone would use to find your business, then you can build them into content so it strengthens your presence.

One way to get around the problem of search engines not seeing pictures is to be sure every image has "alt text". Alt Text, or alternative text, puts words behind the picture so search engines and people who use site readers can hear a description of what the picture shows. In this case, you don't want to use all 1,000 words your picture shows, but a short description of what the picture's purpose is. That way, you get the search engine presence. Another benefit to alt text is making your site ADA compliant so those using site readers can use your

## SEO (con't)



Only link to sites you would be proud to talk about!

website. **BEST PRACTICE: ALWAYS include alt text on images and use keywords in all content areas.**

Meta Titles and Meta Descriptions are the overall title and description of the website. For any given website you should have these filled out so that search engines understand what the site is about at a glance. The meta description should be written as sentences and clearly. This is what shows on the page when your website is found under search results. It is very sad when you can get great placement on a search engine but then can't get website traffic because no one understands what your site is about! **BEST PRACTICE: Complete the Meta Title and Meta Description fields.**

Page Titles are the individual titles that show in the bar at the top of the browser when someone goes to your website. To see your current page titles, pull up each page and look at

the bar at the top of the window (in Internet Explorer it is blue). If your home page just says, "Home" as the title, you are missing an opportunity for keywords. **BEST PRACTICE: Each page should have a page title.**

Search engines actually will look at each and every page on your site. In order to help them understand why the page exists, be sure that the title and the keywords on each page are unique. After all, if you were handed a document that had the same title and header on every page, you wouldn't know what was different in the content. If you are a busy search engine, you might skip some of that content if it appears to be duplicated! Obviously some keywords will repeat, but don't make it all of them. **BEST PRACTICE: Unique keywords and page titles on every page.**

For most people, the best way to find a product or service is to ask a friend for a referral. Your friends give you good advice and can vouch for the item. Search engines feel the same way. If another site references yours, then obviously you are more "real"

and have people willing to endorse you. Therefore, a great way to get traffic to your site is to get your website on other websites. This includes profiles like LinkedIn, Plaxo and Google, societies, associations, etc. If you have business associates that have a Links page on their site, ask to be listed and be sure to link them on your links page. Those validations can make a big difference! **NOTE: As you wouldn't want your recommendations to come from unsavory characters, be sure you are not linking to unsavory websites or having them link to you. If you wouldn't tell your mom or grandma you visited the site, don't put your website there!** **BEST PRACTICE: Anywhere you can, be sure to list your website.**

SEO can be daunting but it is incredibly frustrating to run a search and not have your site come up. With a few smart moves, you can help the search engines find your information and recommend your site to people doing searches. And those people are prospects who know they need your product or service. Just what you want!

## Changes in Searching LinkedIn Through Google

We have talked in this newsletter before about how to search LinkedIn through Google.

**CHANGES AT LINKEDIN HAVE CAUSED RESULTS TO COME BACK DIFFERENTLY THROUGH GOOGLE**

change to the way this searching works. When you do a search of

through Google. This technique gives you access to all of the public profiles on LinkedIn and not just those people who have linked to you.

Recently, there has been a

LinkedIn, the results are returned in order of first name, last name. On a general search that shouldn't be possible so it is interesting to see this happening. It seems to occur more when using an "OR" term in the search vs. the typical "AND" searches. For example, if you ran a search in Google for Controllers or CFOs in the Charlotte NC area, the search used to look like this:

site:linkedin.com (inurl:pub OR inurl:in) -intitle:directory (controller OR CFO) "Charlotte, North Carolina Area

By pasting that into LinkedIn, you will see the results are sorted by name. To fix this, just add "-intitle:dir" to the string. This will find the reference to the directory that appears in each profile's title and you will get the normal results. The string should now be:

site:linkedin.com (inurl:pub OR inurl:in) -intitle:directory -intitle:dir (controller OR CFO) "Charlotte, North Carolina Area

Searching LinkedIn through Google is a powerful way to find the people you need. Be sure to get the right results!

## Get Into Your Customer's Culture

In a recent post by Andrew J. Hoffman of the Stephen M. Ross School of Business, University of Michigan, he talked about how he learned culture in business school. He divides culture into three parts: “artifacts”, “espoused value” and “underlying values”. Finding out what a company believes is their culture is generally an easy thing to do—you can just ask and they will tell. The more difficult aspect to identify is definitely the underlying values and I believe you get to those by taking cues from the artifacts.

The artifacts are those day-to-day demonstrations including language, terminology, clothing, and daily prac-

tices that can really give you great insight into a company. And as an outsider, it is easy to find out about these things.

First, how are you greeted when you arrive or call into the company? Are people friendly, rushed, professional but cold? The way they answer can start you on understanding how they interact. When you visit, are the people casually or formally dressed? This will give you insight into how things are handled. How easy is it to get on someone's calendar? Do they pass you to a central person, pull up their calendar right there in front of you, or have to call you back when they can access

it? These kinds of organizational cues say a lot about an office.

Listen closely to their language. The way a person talks about co-workers, supervisors, budgets, and process can tell you a great deal about how the company runs.

Understanding a company culture allows you to customize your presentation to their needs. And once things are customized, a customer is more easily able to see your product or service fitting into their needs. Culture can be the key to the customer saying they are just like us!



## 1099 Contractors

According to [Entrepreneurs.com](http://Entrepreneurs.com), employment audits are on the rise. While there is debate as to why, the important thing is to be sure anyone you work with is clearly a separate company and is paying employment taxes.

The IRS uses a variety of measures to judge whether someone is a 1099 or an employee, but the big criteria include, are you the person's only client and do you dictate the work and how it is done. If the person works in your

office, comes in at a set time and leaves at a set time, and does the work you assign, the person should be classified as an employee.

An agreement with the individual to be a 1099 is often not enough to cover the situation. If the workers believe they are independent contractors but fails to pay their taxes, the IRS may investigate the relationship and make a determination. You still may need a lawyer to plead your case, which can get very expensive.

When hiring someone to help you with a project, be sure the person has other clients, has an EIN number and is a separate company.

You can get more information on this at <http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/article/0,,id=99921,00.html>

**FINES CAN INCLUDE ALL BACK EMPLOYMENT TAXES AND ADDITIONAL FINES**

## Foxit Reader—MUCH better than Adobe!

Adobe Reader has long been the standard in reading PDF files. But over the years this program has become bloated and often slow to launch. We have recently tested a new program called Foxit Reader and the test results have been impressive.

Loading PDF files from the hard drive in both Adobe Acrobat Reader and Foxit revealed Foxit loads more than

twice as fast. While the longest a file took was over 15 seconds, it was a dramatic improvement to see the file open in 7 seconds.

The other testing done was to reset browsers to use Foxit vs. Adobe. The tests opened the file so quickly it was difficult to time!

If you choose to install Foxit, we recommend going into your browser

preferences and resetting the PDF option to use Foxit. While we are only talking a few seconds, it is a vast improvement on something we do all the time.

(NOTE: Foxit does not edit PDF files.)

**Download Foxit Reader at [www.foxitsoftware.com/pdf/reader/](http://www.foxitsoftware.com/pdf/reader/)**

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Putting our clients where they belong.

The Pedestal Group was founded to answer a need we saw in small businesses to have a source for help. That could be how to find and integrate the right technology, how to better hire and manage people, how to set goals and create a strategic plan, or really attack and own your marketplace.

Our team has worked in a variety of industries including staffing, recruiting and executive search, retail, technology, healthcare software / IT, higher education and franchising and the consistent theme we have found it is very hard to see the forest for the trees. In small business, that is compounded by the number of resources available.

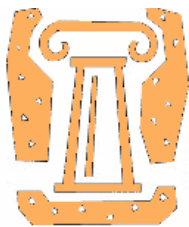
Our approach is unique in that we don't just say it is all about the customer, it really is. The Pedestal Group puts our customers on a pedestal – right where they belong. That isn't to say the customer is always right because that is an adversarial relationship – in our case, we always come to agreement. We are always in a partnership with our clients but also remember who's the most important – YOU.

The Pedestal Group - Putting our clients where they belong.

## Using Wireless Hotspots

You need to access the internet so you turn on the wireless connection on your laptop and up comes a list of wireless hotspots. Fabulous! You're on line! But wait—there may be more to the service than you bargain for.

Wireless networks are incredibly convenient and make computing completely mobile. But there are some safety precautions you should take when using wireless.



**Don't just trust wireless networks!**

Your own wireless connection at home and/or at the office should be secure meaning to access

you need a code. If you use someone's connection, you want to keep these things in mind.

If you are browsing networks in an area and find a free, open connection, it is not a good idea to use it. The owner of the network can easily get utilities off the web to watch the activity on the network so any information you send (i.e. passwords, account numbers, user names, etc.) can be captured and used. And before you say people don't know how to do that, if the owner notices a speed change in their network, the tech support people at his ISP will help him!

In addition there are some hackers that set up open wireless connections just to see what they can grab.

In addition, you are open to viruses and malware running on any of the computers on that network. Someone that has an open connection probably doesn't have much technical expertise and hasn't gotten advice. Therefore, their anti-virus and anti-spyware programs are probably not running or not up to date. Taking that risk isn't worth it.

If you are in a public place like a coffee shop, be aware that your information could be visible. Don't do online banking from a public location but you can browse the web. You can also check out the wireless network information at the companies' website as they generally post their security info at that location.