Search Engine Optimization

Advanced Search Engine Placement

⋄ Corporate SEO Programs

⋄ Reputation Management

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Following is a brief excerpt at performing "damage control" activities, using organic search engine optimization to offset recent bad press. This press was actually introduced by the client's #1 competitor, as was actually false. However, like many businesses in highly competitive industries, teams of lawyers would be fighting the competition's team of lawyers.

The Client initially employed their advertising agency to handle offsetting the online press. Unfortunately, they are an advertising agency, not an online strategy firm. Their recommendation three months ago was to use Social 2.0 Media sites to counter the attack.

The strategy didn't work.

We were then asked for a strategic top level plan that could offset the competitor, as well as brief explanations of the strategies and tactics to be employed.

Reputation Management

Two ways to handle;

➢ fight the bad stuff, or
➢ promote more sites with positive (or any) content on different URLs.

Pros and Cons (full disclosure)

The first version can help propagate the negative.

The second way pushes the bad comments below the fold. This is the industry standard "Correct Way" to handle the situation.

Another option would be to integrate legal assistance, if in fact false information is being disseminated. A 'cease and desist' with 'harm of business' clause can sometimes suffice, unless the competitor doesn't mind legal fees. It happens; people are funny ducks.

Part of the problem; different companies in different states also call themselves "Client Name". So what should be a very identified key phrase is actually competing for the same name placement, each with their own SEO considerations. The good news; most small firms in this industry are also owned and operated by partners think of every dime they spend as coming out of their own pocket, not as an investment. Limited sophistication in employing professional search engine optimization strategies would be seen by these companies.

Depending on the budget, we can either go for least cost 'below the fold' on the offending site, or better, push that site to the third page.

Yesterday, Client was #1, the damaging site was #4. This would require a total of 26 distinct URLs showing up before the bad site, http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&source=hp&q=phrase1+phrase2+phrase3

Today, the damaging site is #2, ripoffreport is #4 w/ a second link indented, possibly #3 at IndustrySite2 is another bad report referencing Client Name. However, the Indiana location is obviously not Client. However, a web searcher who sees a negative reference may assume it is in fact the Client. What user is going to dig that deep to note the location, five clicks deep? Positive article at #10, needs deep linking to promote IndustrySite2. Then there is a repeat of the false [National Figure issuing complaint] investigation at #18

Distinct URLs

These can be a combination of current unused or underused domains with older life, as well as pages on blogs that we can promote around the core phrase 'preferred financial services'. In descending order of effectiveness and speed to rank:

Sites will need more content to appear to be 'real', with unique file/folder structures and different spreads of content in text as well as in meta tags, to avoid duplicate content penalties. We have more control over physical domains than blogs, so this is the fastest way to start the push-down. However, it is more costly.

Blogs need less content but a more deliberate linking strategy to enable a more moderate gain in visibility. Articles that are unique are usually seen as the best way to promote rankings. Links can be built into our sitemap-g program as well as our debt consolidation network as its own directory.

Whatever is left over can be handled via directory submission of articles. More time is needed to research the most focused and highest value of these directories, but can re-use the same articles as syndicated content.

The least effective is the seeding of positive comments and testimonials on related message boards and forums, but many of these are moderated by your competition. This makes it the least desirable step, but could work in this scenario. We would probably recommend this as well, to best manage cross-links possibilities.

To arrive at a raw count and scope of work, we need to further quantify and define current assets and status.

We need a complete list of those domains Client owns as well as their age. Site designs will be plain vanilla using Client site #2, using the core logo color schemes with more corporate imagery. Each new site should be 20 pages ideally. We may need to work within Client budget to figure out how to introduce this critical mass.

Some of the pages can be built with semi-random paragraphs around key phrases, but… That is typically a landing page strategy AFTER the site is well established and indexed.

We need a complete list of what the current agency has built in terms of blogs (will need all URLs), Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, MerchantCircle, Twitter and any other Social 2.0 media.

- Key phrase strategy
- Age
- Backlinks locations
- Once we commence, we'll also require all user names and passwords, to all accounts and sites

Any new Social 2 sites that we would recommend, we would ask the client to sign up, then send us their access info. This way, the client owns the pages and work, not the agency.

What is indexed by Google that could be considered as unique and proprietary content?

- Only 16 pages showing; http://www.google.com/search?q=site.
- Bing showed 74 pages, but on re-indexing showed 15.
- Did the agency post the additional pages, then remove or stop internal linking?

We'll need new content, and kill 2 birds w/ one stone. Optimize sites around 'preferred' and the content will all be article-style landing pages built around 'real' phrases. .gov is cheaper, but has limited shelf life and no ability to also submit and use as content on blogs. So unique copywriting will need to be added. The unique pages should also start the ranking improvement phrases on the core business development phrases as well.

- ➢ Find and maintain a list of authoritative sites that are groomed for his articles from the 1,500 directories that have established PR values.
- ➢ Ditto on press release and article sites.
- ➢ Research the website's position in the search engines as well as the positions of any negative press that currently populates the organic listings.

Rather than pursuing reverse SEO methods that are unethical and thus, have only short-term results, we recommend using principled tactics that prevent bad publicity from gaining traction in the future.

It's worth emphasizing that a reverse SEO campaign takes time to gain momentum. Even though we will be leveraging authoritative sites that rank more quickly than other properties, controlling the first page of Google is not an overnight process. However, once these sites climb to the top positions, they are very difficult to remove. Their ranking ability does not guarantee immediate results, but results tend to be sustainable. That means future attempts to attack your company with negative publicity will be forced to climb a much higher wall to do so. In effect, your business will be insulated.

What else should or could be done, based on budget?

- ➢ Locate simple link partners
- ➢ Run Competition Audit to find more partners
- ➢ All positive comments links added to a financial directory, all built around the sites and blogs.
- ➢ Also should be posted to our existing financial services directory (about 90 domains/sub domains currently controlled).
- ➢ While poorly subsidized and maintained, the structure itself goes back to 2000/2001. So intrinsic value also exists.
- ➢ Page Audit around Client Name.