Search Engine Optimization

Many people looking to buy items online use search engines like Google and Yahoo! to search for the best deals. With the boom in online shopping in recent years, buyers have many choices in their online shopping destinations. A typical search for items online results in dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of choices for potential buyers. If you have an eBay Store, you would naturally want all these potential buyers to find your Store near the top of their search engine results. You can attract more buyers to your eBay Store by increasing your Store's visibility on Internet search engine results.

How Search Engines Work

Before going into what you can do to attract buyers to your Store through Internet search engines, you may find it useful to learn the basics of how search engines like Google work.

Most search engines rank your pages based on the relevance to a user's search. How do search engines determine relevance? One of the most important factors is the selection of keywords used on the page that the search engine is ranking. A search engine sends software programs known as "spiders" around the Internet. While "crawling" around the Internet, these spiders encounter millions of web pages, reading the content on each page to determine the keywords that can be associated with that page. The search engine then ranks the page by associating it with words that a user enters into the search box.

So now you know why it's very important to include the most relevant keywords on your eBay Store pages – because when users type in related words into a search engine, your Store has a greater chance of being ranked higher in the results. For example, if a user searches for "blue widgets" on Google, and your Store is all about blue widgets, your Store is considered relevant to the search and has the opportunity to be ranked.

Here are some tips, tricks, and guidelines to help you understand how you can add important keywords to your Store pages.

Customizing & Selecting Keywords

- **Choose a Store name that describes your products well.***
  Let's say you sell vintage jewelry and jewelry boxes. The Store name "Katie's Vintage Jewelry and Jewelry Boxes" is much more effective than "Katie's Vintage Finds" because the words "jewelry and jewelry boxes" are more specific and easier to rank.

    __Note:__ Do not use the word "eBay" or any alteration of that word (for example, WeBay, eZay, etc.) in your Store name or in any domain name, as such use would be a trademark infringement.

- **Choose custom category names that include product keywords that buyers will search on.**
  Even if it is rather repetitive, this will help increase the exposure your Store gets in search engines. Continuing the example above, using "Vintage Brooches" and "Vintage Bracelets" rather than just "Brooches" and "Bracelets" is more effective.

- **Include keywords that describe the content of your Store in your Store description.**
  You could include some of the names of your Custom Categories and top selling products. For instance, your Store description could include:

    Welcome to Katie's Vintage Jewelry and Jewelry Boxes, the best place to look for vintage brooches, vintage bracelets, ethnic jewelry boxes, and many other types of period jewelry. Whether you're looking for handmade carved jewelry boxes, or elegant earrings, bracelets or brooches from the early 20th century, you'll probably find something of interest in our Store.

You can see that this description includes several search terms that potential buyers are likely to enter into search engines. These include: "period jewelry", "vintage bracelets", and "20th century jewelry."

The description appears in the top of your Store and is meant to be user-friendly to your buyers, so write one that clearly represents what you sell. Too many repetitive keywords in the description could look awkward and "forced." Balance the description to be appealing to buyers as well as effective from a search engine perspective. Please also read our keyword spamming policy to make sure that your description is not considered "search manipulation."

- **Customize the keywords used in your Title and Meta Tags.**
  Titles and Meta Tags are components of a web page. They are important because the content you enter in these areas helps search engines rank the page.

  What are Title and Meta Tags, you ask? You can see your Store page's Title on the top blue bar of your browser window.

  Unlike the Title, Meta Tags (also known as Meta Description and Meta Keywords) are invisible to most users. You can view Meta Tags for your Store page by right-clicking your mouse on the page and then choosing the View Source option. You will then see your eBay Store page's Title and Meta Tags in the HTML source code. Here's what they look like:

  ```
  <HTML>
  <HEAD>
  <TITLE>Title Tag Goes Here</TITLE>
  < META name="description" content="Meta Description Tag Goes Here">
  < META name="keywords" content="Meta Keywords Tag Goes Here">
  </HEAD>
  ```

  If Meta Tags are invisible to users, why are they important? The simple answer is that Google and other search engines use both Title and Meta Tags to help determine the rank of the page. If your Title and Meta Tags have relevant keywords, your page will be more likely to rank well.

  Customizing the keywords for your Store pages takes only minutes. Here's how you can do it:

  1. Go to My eBay
  2. Go to the "Manage Your Store" page
  3. Select the "Customize Keywords for Search Engines" link
  4. You will see a tool in which you can edit the default keywords for your Storefront, Custom Categories, and custom pages. These keywords will then be used to generate the Meta Tags for your pages.

  For more information on using the keyword tool, check out a thread on Customizing Keywords for Search Engines on the eBay Stores discussion board.

- **Guidelines for selecting keywords**

  It is important to select keywords that people are actually searching for in search engines. When selecting keywords for your eBay Stores pages, please keep the following in mind:

  - **Think like a buyer!**
    Choose keywords a buyer would use (for example, you can expect that a buyer would typically search for one "treadmill" and not multiple "treadmills"). If you are undecided, use the singular form of the word. If you think the keyword is important enough, use both the singular and plural forms as keywords.

  - **Follow eBay's keyword spamming policies.**
    All of your product keywords must accurately reflect what you are selling in your Store. It is a violation of eBay policy to use brand names or other inappropriate keywords to gain attention or divert users to a listing. Such Search manipulation is unfair to members who may be searching for a specific item and receive inaccurate search results. Users often are confused and frustrated by such tactics.

    Please read eBay's keyword spamming policy before choosing keywords for your Store.

Internet Resources

There are several free resources on the Internet that can help you identify the most effective keywords for the specific products you are selling in your Store. Just enter a keyword into these resources and evaluate the list of other recommended keywords that the software generates.

1. **Overture's Search Term Suggestion Tool**
   - o **Potential advantages**: This tool shows you the number of searches for related keywords for the previous month on Yahoo!'s search engine. This can give you a good indication of how many people could potentially see your eBay Store listing on Internet search engines.

   - o **Potential disadvantages**: This tool does not differentiate between singular and plural versions of a keyword, which could affect the ranking of your Store pages.

2. **Google's AdWords Keyword Suggestion Tool**
   - o **Potential advantages**: This tool has an easy to use interface, not only displaying more specific keywords on the left hand side, but also similar keywords on the right hand side.

   - o **Potential disadvantages**: This tool does not rank the keywords in terms of number of searches, so you don't know which keywords are more popular.

We recommend that you evaluate several methods to identify the best keywords that would be effective for increasing the visibility of your eBay Store in Internet search engines.