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Design with Google in mind

Companies still struggle with landing coveted top search engine results

Dayton Business Journal - by [Jacob Dirr](#) DBJ Staff Reporter

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The epitome of a great hot rod is something that is a beauty to behold, but also has the mechanics to perform on the street.



James E. Mahan
 Christopher James, chief executive officer of Websource LLC, said that presenting information up front isn't enough to get a page to come up in a basic search engine query like Google or Yahoo.

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Tim Hull looks at building a Web site like building a hot rod car and, on the Web, performance means showing up high on search engines like **Google** and

providing readers with just the right amount of information.

"There is a balance that has to be maintained," said Hull, chief executive officer at Dayton-based **TDH Marketing Inc.** "You have to maintain the access to search bots, but you also have to be able to keep that user friendliness to your site."

Though the Internet has become familiar to corporate America, experts said that a lot of companies are still wrangling with how to use their Web sites effectively, particularly in search engine results. In fact, the second most searched service through the **Greater Dayton IT Alliance** is web design.

Companies leaders need to make sure they make good use of descriptive title tags for their sites, target their industry and geographic market area, provide rich content and establish a base of independent Web sites that link to their home page, experts said.

Christopher James, chief executive officer of Beavercreek-based **Websource LLC**, a Web design business, seems to know a thing or two about that.

A quick Google search for "dayton web design" lists James' as the top result. Though he said he is thrilled to be at the top, just showing up on the first page of results is considered a win for companies because customers will visit different sites on the front page of a search query.

James' results is an example of "organic" results, meaning the results that come up in a basic search engine query.

To get to the top of organic results, designers favor substance over style.

For example, a common mistake companies made for years used trendy animations that welcomed visitors to a home page.

However, such animations do little more than camouflage a site when search bots -- a program that browses the Web in a methodical, automated manner -- scan the Web and frustrate customers who want to get info as quick as possible, James said.

But presenting information up front isn't enough to get a good organic search return rate, James said. From his perspective, he said he is constantly surprised that companies fail to utilize title tags, meaning the links that show up underlined and in bold print on Google searches.

"I'm amazed at how many Web sites are still called 'Untitled,'" James said. "It's kind of like driving a car at night without any headlights or a license plate."



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Instead of using your title tag to display a company name, use them to describe its location and service, James said.

Don't overdo it with 10 words, just keep it short and sweet, James said.

"If your company name is a key term you'd like to be Googled and found on, that's great," James said. "But if you're a small business like me, that's not going to do you much good."

Meta tags, or lines of text on a Web site that are invisible to all but the search bots, used to be the paramount strategy for good search returns but now come second in importance to good title tags, James said.

Companies can also attempt to circumvent organic web returns for pay-per-click marketing instead.

Pay-per-click search marketing is a competitively bid sector of the market in which companies pay search engines for their links to show up under word and phrase searches that lead people to their site. They're the results set off above or to the right of a basic search in Google, **Yahoo** and other search engines. This can cost anywhere from \$.01 to \$.50 per click.

JangoMail, founded and run by 30-year-old Ajay Goel, is Dayton's fastest growing private company, according to the Inc. 5000 Fastest-Growing Private Companies list. Goel said his primary marketing tool is pay-per-click advertising.

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