

## CHECKLIST FOR NATURAL SEARCH ENGINE RANKINGS, PART II

**A**lthough no search engine optimization company can guarantee first-page rankings outside of pay-per-click, there are strategies that can help your site have the best chance of ranking high on the search engines. Here are the remaining 10 points in my 15-point checklist to ensure that your website is built for search engine success and is competitive against others in your market. Please visit [rismedia.com](http://rismedia.com) to see last month's tips.

**1 Have an easy-to-index website navigation sitemap.** Having an index for your website's navigation through a sitemap is imperative. You are helping search engines to find what pages are available on your site, helping them to crawl and index all your site pages and content.

**2 Build alt-tags for images.** If you have pictures of the typical homes in your target market placed on your website, adding an alt-tag can help boost your website's results in terms of page ranking. Sprinkling in a few keywords in the alt-tag, but not "stuffing" them, provides an additional way to let the search engines know what your website is all about.

**3 Infuse H tags on each individual page.** Using H tags to organize the content of individual pages is telling the search engines that those keywords are important and apply to the content to follow.

**4 Include Google, Yahoo! and Bing XML sitemaps.** Considered "The Big 3" of commonly used search engine programs, Google, Yahoo! and Bing are where most potential clients will start when looking for an online real estate resource. By adding an XML sitemap to your website, you are telling the search engines what pages are available on your site, which have changed or been added, helping them to crawl your site accordingly for better ranking results.

**5 Have an integrated blogging platform to keep the site fresh.** Continually adding new content to your website is a valuable way to keep

search engines and potential clients coming back and raising your site's profile. An easy-to-use and integrated blog that you update regularly fits this need perfectly.

**6 Submit/index your website to Google, Yahoo! and Bing.** Again, these search engines are extremely important for your site's rankings and by submitting, or indexing, your site to them, you are allowing them to grab a lot of information they need in order to process and provide your site to those looking for content that it contains.

**7 Focus on a link-building strategy.** Inbound links are the search engine's equivalent of a popularity contest. The more inbound links you have, the more popular you are. A well-managed link building campaign is critical to increase the exposure and boost your search engine rankings.

**8 Include a social media strategy.** Almost everyone is doing it—posting to Twitter, updating their Facebook and MySpace pages with their current events, activities or interests. Why not you and your business? By integrating social networking outlets to your website, you are opening up additional doors so clients can find you and your services.

**9 Site statistics on the "back end" to monitor and track search engine traffic.** Gone are the days for just knowing your "hits." Having a detailed website statistic tool to monitor your site, its bounce rate and the referring URLs (what people are typing in and clicking through to you) is what will show how effective your search engine optimization strategy really is.

**10 Google Analytics reporting.** An additional tool for monitoring your website's traffic, setting up Google Analytics to work with your website tells you a great deal about who is visiting your site, what pages are the most visited and much more. **RE**

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