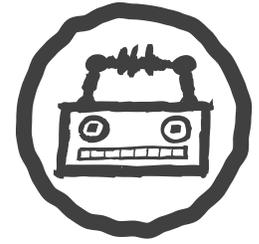


WHITEPAPER: ARCHITECTING A SUCCESSFUL SITEMAP

What you need to know about content organization before you hire a website building company



When building **anything**, it's important to have the end-goal in mind. Outside of free-form jazz, all development, whether in music, architecture or boat building, requires that the end is an understood goal. This is also true when building a website; you must know the exact outcome of the website, and must plan in the early stages for growth potentials.

Search engines regularly “crawl” websites; daily they send out digital “spiders” to check out all of the pages on a given website, and to create a list of where the pages link, their unique content, and anything of interest. This in turn gives those search engines (in this example, we'll talk about Google) an understanding of the authority of your website and it's main purpose.

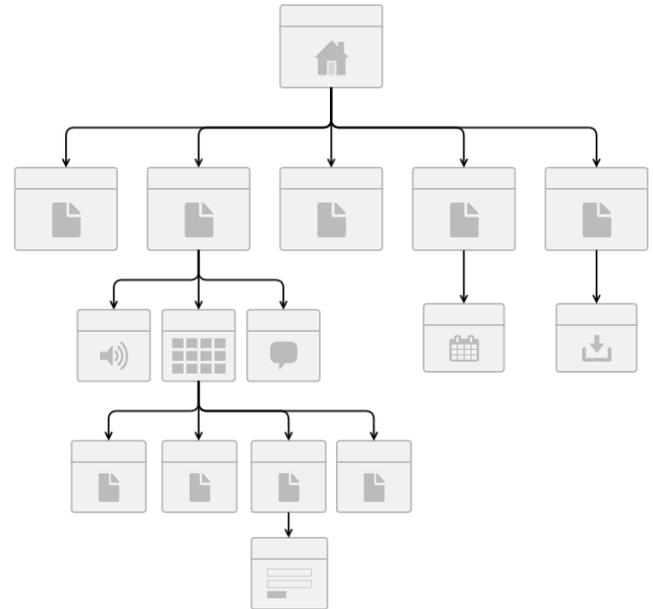
The problem arises when the search engines do not appropriately understand the purpose of your website, and in turn punish you for not being more clear. As the Animals said in 1965,

***But I'm just a soul whose intentions are good:
Oh Lord! Please don't let me be misunderstood.***

Too bad — Google doesn't know your intention. Unless you explicitly spell out exactly what you want Google and the rest of the search engines to know about your website, they're going to make a “prediction”, and it could be a bad one.

To remedy this problem, planning for success starts at the initial phases of website development. Google wants to see that your website is an authority on a specific topic, and they want to see that easily. If you have too many topics on your website that are not well organized, Google will only see the mess of blog posts and pages and try to discern a commonality between them all. This does you no favors, and in the end will only punish you for all of your hard work in producing quality content.

To give Google a clear definition of what your website is all about, you need to use permalinks and sitemaps in an educated way. The good news is, some simple planning early on will save tens of hours in the future, and you'll be rewarded quickly with more qualified traffic and lower PPC (Pay Per Click) costs, per an increased Quality Score. The secret here is to map out the basic structure of the content of your website, so you can place similar terms inside of digital “silos”.



TAKE THIS EXAMPLE:

A poorly architected website might have new blog posts in the following format:

```
MyDogsBlog.com/?post_id=203
MyDogsBlog.com/?post_id=182
MyDogsBlog.com/?post_id=352
```

« ICE COLD!

The problem here is that the URLs don't tell the search engines what the content of the page is. You can't tell the difference between "203" and "352" unless you actually go to those pages. This provides a poor experience for both the end user and for the search engines. We need to make it super simple for Google to know exactly what the page is about.

HERE'S ANOTHER EXAMPLE:

```
MyDogsBlog.com/dog-bed-review
MyDogsBlog.com/home-made-dog-treats
MyDogsBlog.com/my-favorite-dog-beds
MyDogsBlog.com/staying-at-a-hotel-with-my-dog
```

« GETTING WARMER.

These are better — you know what the pages are about, just by looking at the URL. Google likes this, but it's still not perfect. It's muddling different broad topics (dog beds, treats, hotels, etc) and it's not appropriately "siloeing" them.

HERE'S THE RIGHT WAY TO DO IT:

```
MyDogsBlog.com/dog-beds/dog-bed-review
MyDogsBlog.com/dog-beds/my-favorite-dog-beds
MyDogsBlog.com/dog-treats/home-made-dog-treats
MyDogsBlog.com/traveling-with-dogs/staying-at-a-hotel-with-my-dog
```

« YOU'RE STANDING
IN HOT, MOLTEN MAGMA!

By using categorical subfolders and arranging content that is similar into similar subfolders will tell Google exactly what to expect when crawling those pages. Any page inside the subfolder `MyDogsBlog.com/dog-beds/` should only be about dog beds.

When you're planning to build a website, make sure you take this into account. It's easy to add more categories later if you have the structure setup correctly at the beginning. (example: `MyDogsBlog.com/dog-shampoo/` -OR- `MyDogsBlog.com/flea-preventative/`) You'll be set for success if you take just a few minutes and plan out the linking structure of your website.

Finally, the last thing you need to do in regards to site structure and sitemapping is to generate and submit a sitemap file to Google's Webmaster Tools. This file is usually an XML file that is generated by the CMS that runs your website (Drupal, Wordpress, etc.), and it gives Google a "table of contents" for exactly what's inside your website. It shows categories, site structure, where all articles are, and more. By submitting a sitemap to Webmaster Tools, you're one step ahead of your competition. Sometimes, you create pages on your website that you can't find through a link (an orphan page). If that's the case, Google may never see it, unless you tell it where to find the page in the sitemap.

If you're getting ready to build a new website, or are looking to make your current website more attractive for your clients and search engines alike, call Ryan at Tech Guys Who Get Marketing to see how we can help.

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