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IDEA Newsletter

IDEA: Northeastern's Venture Accelerator

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Spring 2011 Newsletter

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The IDEA Spring Newsletter

Improving Website Performance: Understanding What SEO Can and Can't Do

By Mark Sprague

Mark Sprague is a seasoned Boston-based information and software product entrepreneur with a passion for the customer experience. His expertise is focused in search engines, information products, SEO platforms and social media. Sprague currently advises executives on how to improve website performance through his company Lexington eBusiness Consulting and blogs about various search related technologies.

So, your team has worked hard to scrub your vision and create the perfect business plan. Even though you have created a flashy new website, the traffic is not where you want it to be. You've dabbled with some keywords, but you're still not getting the numbers you think you should. The solution – call in a SEO guru, right? Not necessarily.

This is not a post about the mechanics of SEO page markup and how it can help you improve your rankings. Rather, it is an overview of where SEO fits into your total website eco-system. SEO is just one tool available to you for improving website performance.

There is no substitute for hard work – this means understanding your customers and developing high quality content that they find compelling. The best way to think about SEO is as a set of best business practices within the context of quality website development, solid information architecture and a well thought out content strategy.

Preparing website content so that it can be searched and found by customers requires an awareness and understanding of the interactions between many moving parts that include:

- A Search Engine Optimization strategy (SEO page markup)
- A robust content development strategy
- Understanding your customers search behavior
- (More)

Though these are clearly in a symbiotic relationship, all are often dealt with as if they are stand-alone disciplines. Sometimes, they are completely ignored or misunderstood. For example:

- Websites are often specified, designed and developed without SEO or search strategy

Connect with us!

IDEA Investment Forum

WHAT: The IDEA Investment Forum: A moderated question and answer presentation with a panel of successful business members, followed by an open discussion session and refreshments.
SCHEDULE: 6:30 – 7:30pm: Moderated Q&A with Investor Panel
7:30 – 8:30pm: Open discussion, networking, refreshments
WHEN: Thursday, April 14
WHERE: 10 Behrakis Hall, Northeastern University
WHO: Open to IDEA ventures, NU students and all those interested in attending

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The IDEA Venture Spotlight: Brewspy

Members of the Brewspy team

THE BREWSPY TEAM AND ROLES:
Founder/Business Relations: Tyler Smith
Lead Developer: Sami Saleh
Public Relations: Daniel Palmer
Social Media: Jackie Cahill
Account Management: Wayne Warren

INDUSTRY: Nightlife

ESTABLISHED: 2009

ROLES BREWSPY IS SEEKING: Website Developer/Designer; Social Media Guru

MISSION: To be the complete nightlife solution

FUTURE: A new social website and national expansion

ADVICE: Use the tools IDEA can

requirements. The SEO experts are brought in *after* the site is deployed to optimize the best that they can.
- Content is often developed without the understanding of how customers search for information, and where that content should be positioned within a website.
- Website developers often don't understand how their coding and application choices negatively impact search engine results.
- (More)

SEO is not a stand-alone discipline and you will get the most value from it if SEO is integrated into the entire website development experience from day one.

The above describes the moving parts that need to be considered when trying to improve website performance. The following is what SEO *can't* do for you:

- SEO will not improve poorly conceived and written content.
- SEO is not a magic bullet – knowledge of your customers and a superior content strategy will make a positive difference.
- Poor coding practices will trump your SEO efforts every time. Google applies quality metrics when deciding to index your website or not. The crawler will move on to other websites if it has trouble parsing your code.
- (More)

Before you call in your SEO expert, make sure that you have done your part. Do you have:

- A sound technical website development strategy? This includes a SEO friendly development platform, high-quality coding standards and an information architecture that supports the consumer's ability to easily navigate, and find high-quality content.
- A content creation and deployment strategy that adds new content to your website on a predictable basis? Content-poor websites rarely do well when it comes to search relevancy.
- A working understanding of SEO techniques that put you in command of on-page and off-page tactics? For example, if your company does business locally a different set of SEO rules apply.
- (More)

So, remember that SEO does not stand on its own, and that it should be integrated into your product planning from day one. If you do this, you will do a better job of developing a website with the appropriate content that mirrors what consumers are searching for.

Finally, I'll leave you with the following observations about what top-performing websites have in common.

- They understand human search behavior in provide you with, perseverance is crucial to success

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON BREWSPY, VISIT THEM AT:
Brewspy.com
Facebook
Twitter

Enhancing Venture Performance with Gap Funding

IDEA recently awarded its third quarter of Gap Funding at the end of February. This round, a grant was awarded to Athletic Performance Enhancement Systems.

Athletic Performance Enhancement Systems, started by Eli Laipson, is a company that empowers strength and conditioning coaches with an innovative training management application called APE. The application manages athletic training progress using a suite of intuitive tools that provide coaches with efficient and insight-driven decision-making capabilities.

The venture is currently in the process of recruiting a new UI/UX designer and will utilize the Gap Fund to design a landing page and system interface. The company will also direct funds toward becoming an LLC, as well as making technological purchases imperative to launching a test run with Northeastern University.

During IDEA's second quarter of Gap Funding earlier this semester, grants were awarded to Mini Pops, SnoworSand, and second time recipient Annie Mulz.

IDEA Awards Gap Funding: Second Round of Gap Funding Awarded to NU Ventures

Mini Pops, SnoworSand and Annie Mulz

Some of the Gap Funding recipients at NEXPO

IDEA Press Coverage

Recent Headlines

Not Such a Corny Idea
Northeastern Entrepreneurship:

detail.

- They have strategically invested in information architecture.
- They have a commitment to develop and deploy high-quality content on a scheduled basis.
- (More)

To view this article in its entirety, please click here.

NEXPO: Showcasing the Next Big Things in Entrepreneurship

Young, talented, entrepreneurial-minded students showcased their own businesses to their peers and industry professionals at NEXPO, Northeastern's entrepreneurship expo in February. The second NEXPO attracted Northeastern students, faculty and staff as well as those part of Boston's entrepreneurial community.

A celebration of the innovative student ventures working with IDEA, NEXPO featured exhibition-style tables set out to showcase businesses ranging from clothing lines to food distributors, travel companies to drink deal finders (a popular service for the average college student). The event was an amazing opportunity for ventures, clubs and other organizations to show off their amazing businesses or services and network with those in attendance.

"This year's NEXPO was an amazing experience. Compared to last year, the draw this time around was nearly double," said IDEA CEO Michael Hans. "After months of behind-the-scenes work and planning, it was exciting to see it all come together as the go-to event for Northeastern entrepreneurs. "

The highlight of the evening was when Ari Taube of Mini Pops gave the keynote speech. He emphasized the importance of creating your own future and taking matters into your own hands, but also the risks that one faces when starting a business.

"An entrepreneur is someone out there own their own," Taube said. "Utilize resources like IDEA at the university, because they are here to help you."

The night was another great success and proud moment for IDEA and all of the exhibiting ventures. "I'm proud of what the IDEA team put together and I'm proud of our ventures for successfully demonstrating the innovation that's coming out of Northeastern," said Hans.

9 Faces To Know
NEXPO Draws 300+

Get Involved with IDEA

Become an IDEA Venture
Join the Management Team
Coach a Venture
Become a Mentor
Work with a Venture

IDEA Friends & Resources

Northeastern Entrepreneurs Club
Northeastern School of Technical Entrepreneurship
Northeastern College of Business Administration
Greenhorn Connect
BostInnovation

IDEA Service Providers

fama PR
GENNARI ARONSON
GesmerUpdegrove LLP Attorneys at Law Boston
Lexington eBusiness Consulting
MORSE BARNES-BROWN PENDLETON PC The law firm built for business.
account talent management
GUERIN & RODRIGUEZ, LLP
launch control

Click here to see NUTV's coverage of NEXPO.

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