

SEO FOR SITECORE CONTENT EDITORS

A quick guide for
the Sitecore editor aiming to come out on top



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So, now you have your finely tuned website and potent Sitecore CMS in place. It's more than just a great website, it is an awesome online presence, encouraging your potential customers and partners to browse through the content.

But the visitors won't come all by themselves, and they might not even find your website when they Google the relevant search words. So how does your website find its way to the top of the search engines?

The professionals' term is Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) and covers the "science" of making your website visible to search engines such as Google, Yahoo, Jibii and AltaVista. So how to make sure your site has the best chance of appearing on their first results page.

SEO is somewhat of a black art dealing with both coding and content but Sitecore CMS actually has some useful functionality helping your site towards the top of the search engines results lists. This guide has been made to help you make your site content more visible to the search engines. Use it and you give your site a chance to start climbing the rankings.

1 Content & Consistency

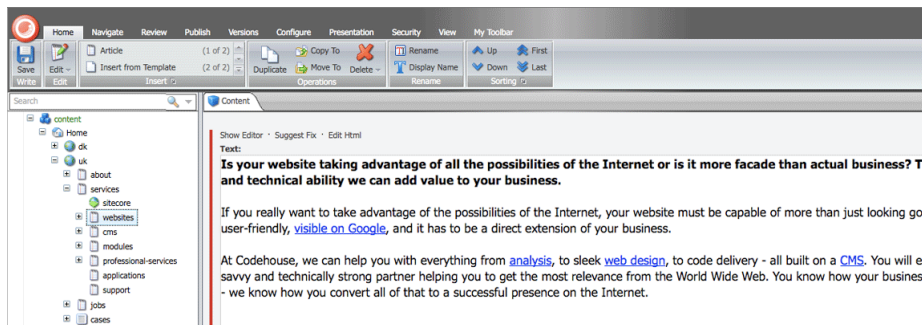


illustration content copy

The website content should be relevant and precise. It may sound banal – but in real life banalities are seldom insignificant. The content on your website should be relevant to your potential visitors and contain the most significant and relevant keywords. Additionally, the content should be related to the browser title and the menu title (and the other way around).

The **browser title** (the title displayed in the web browser when on the current page, also known as the page title) and the **menu title**

(the title displayed in your website's menu) are usually found under the **Navigation** section in your Sitecore solution. This means if the content topic is ping pong balls you should not name any of the titles basketballs.

The search engine robots look for consistency between content and titles. The best result is obtained by mixing the relevant keywords into your browser title, menu title, page headings, and the first paragraph of your copy. Your headings within the page>>

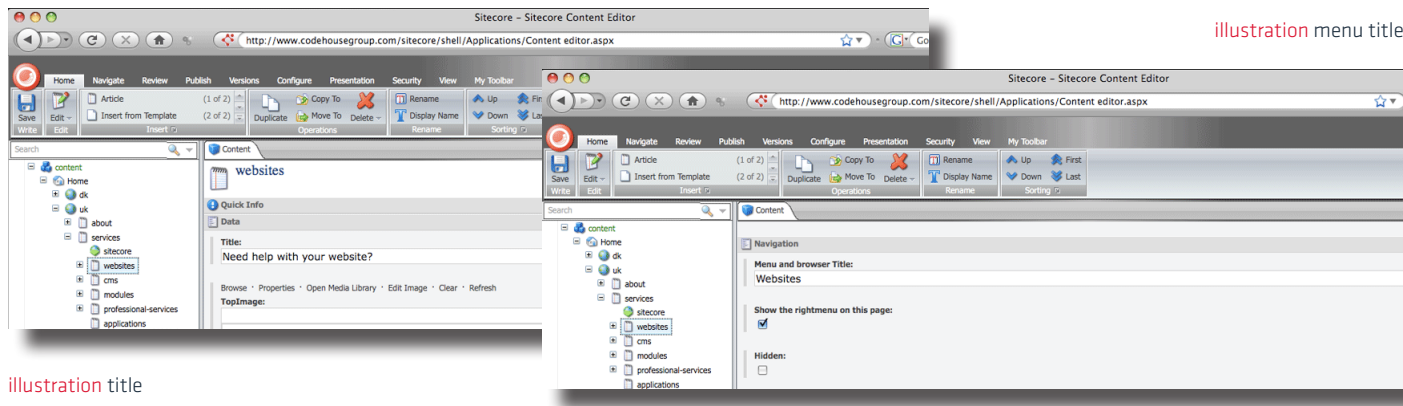


illustration title

content should use acceptable heading tags (h1, h2, etc) and keywords.

Also, you should be cautious not just to list all your keywords as content as the search engines may regard this as unnatural “clustering” and thus refuse to index the page.

The search engine robots read from left to right so you might consider placing your keywords early in the paragraphs. Additionally, the robots pay more attention

to both **bold** and *italic* words enabling you to take advantage of putting emphasis on your keywords. Also, create concise and relevant titles and headers with keywords included because the robots pay more attention to them than to the body copy.

In order to lift the user experience – for humans as well as robots – you should create a very tight topical structure with only one main topic or theme for every page. For instance, if you want to share the wonders of the eating habits of White’s Tree

Frog then you should not describe the Killer Snails digestive problems or the scenting system of the Cobra on the same page and expect people interested in only one of the three subjects to be able to find the page ranked highly using a search engine.

If you regularly add updates to the site’s content (e.g. in the form of news articles and/or case stories) then the site will keep the search engines attention and the robots should come back recurrently to look for new content.

2

Meta Tags

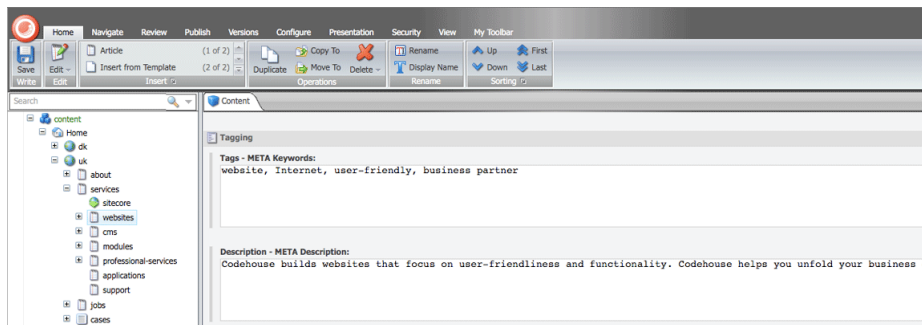


illustration tags and descriptions

Be accurate and specific with the use of meta tags and meta descriptions. By using the right meta tags (keywords) you can help the search engines pinpoint your content using only a few words. Choose your tags carefully by trying to get insight into the typical search words and phrases of your potential search customers. Be concise and keep it to a few precise keywords.

Meta descriptions work the same way but give you the opportunity to describe the content with easy to read paragraphs of 15 to 20 words. The meta descriptions are used in the search engines results listings or SERPs (Search Engine Results Page).

Again, the key is to use the same words and phrases keeping consistency between meta descriptions, meta tags, content, titles and headings.

3 URL's

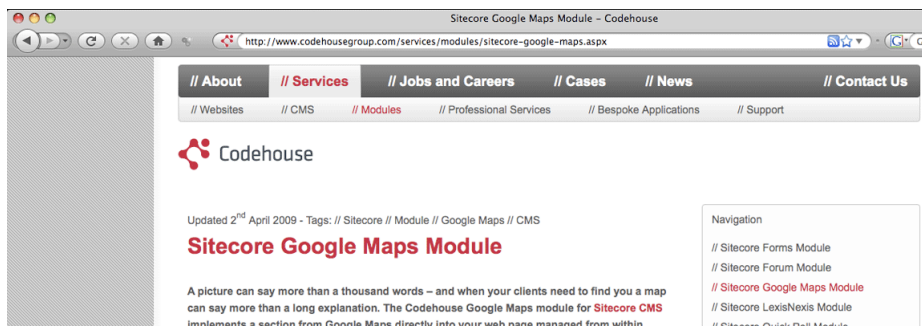


illustration the URL in the browser

Let your URL's take aim. The URL is the entire address line for the current page shown in your browser. In Sitecore the URL is named based on the names you give your items.

The key factor is to make the URL coherent with the page's content by placing one or more of the keywords in your URL. Again, if the page content is about dolphins, you shouldn't name your item animals.

Another idea to make your URL's more readable is to stick to small letters and tie words together with hyphens (-) instead of spaces: "the-life-of-a-dolphin" and not "The Life of a Dolphin".

Remember, the URL is typically derived from the name you give the item in Sitecore, spaces are turned into "%20" in the URL, and no-one likes to read "The%20Life%20of%20a%20Dolphin".

4 Structure

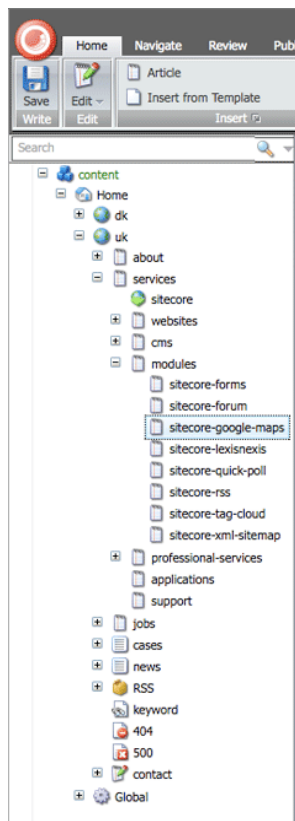


illustration structure

Keep the structure as flat as possible.

The more levels in the content hierarchy the search engines have to work their way through to find the relevant content, the harder it is for them to actually find it.

The same goes for your visitors. Try to focus on an as-few-clicks-as-possible policy when you structure your website. Do this for the sake of your visitors as well as the search engines.

5 Internal & External Links

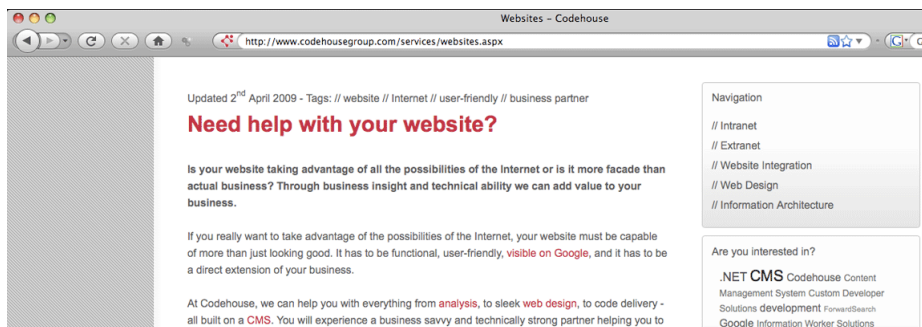


illustration hyperlinks

Boost the interest with internal and external links. As the search engine robots, amongst other things, pay attention to the number of links pointing to a site, you can prosper from having your business partners link to your site. Even better if they also link to content within the site (referred to as “deep linking”).

The same thing goes when it comes to internal links, thus making it beneficial to create an internal network of links between different pages on your website. Using

internal links to point to a few key pages in your site may help them get indexed in preference to the others. You may want to research the topics “page rank” and “internal link sculpting” at a later date.

Here you might want to keep in mind that it isn't considered good Internet practice to write “click on the link” when the medium enables you to use the relevant keywords as links, for example “...to be **visible on Google** just...” known as the anchor text.

6 Tag Cloud

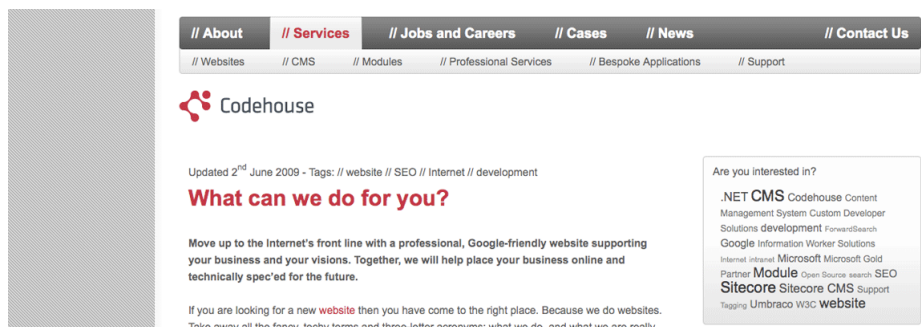


illustration tag cloud

Make your keywords soar with the clouds.

Another way to make navigation easier on your website is by implementing a tag cloud, typically a box on a page or pages containing your keywords as links.

The more common the keyword the bigger it is displayed and when you click on one of the keywords, you will be shown a listing of all the pages tagged with that keyword on your website.

This results list, for pages found containing the tag, can be sorted by the priority you set for your pages within your XML sitemap (see next page).

It may also be worth considering the use of "Footer Linking", though some thought has to go into the number of links (and their anchor text) to present to get maximum SEO value.

7

XML Sitemap

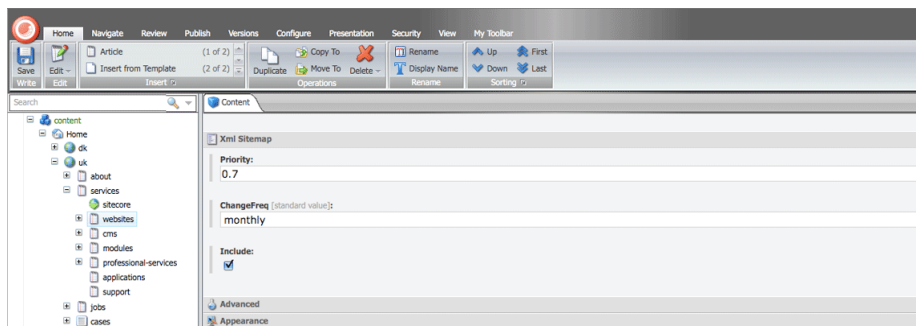


illustration XML sitemap

Help some search engines crawl and find the content through your sitemap. Yet another option to enhance your chances with the search engines is by implementing an XML sitemap (using a tool such as the Codehouse XML Sitemap Module).

The XML sitemap module enables you to choose first of all whether a page is to be included in the sitemap, and secondly to control how the pages should be prioritised in relation to each other with regards to indexing by the search engine.

The pages can be prioritised on a scale from 0.0 to 1.0 which has to do entirely with the internal relationship between the pages on your website.

Sitecore will automatically generate an updated sitemap enabling the search engine robots to crawl your website and always find the newest content.

8

301 Redirects

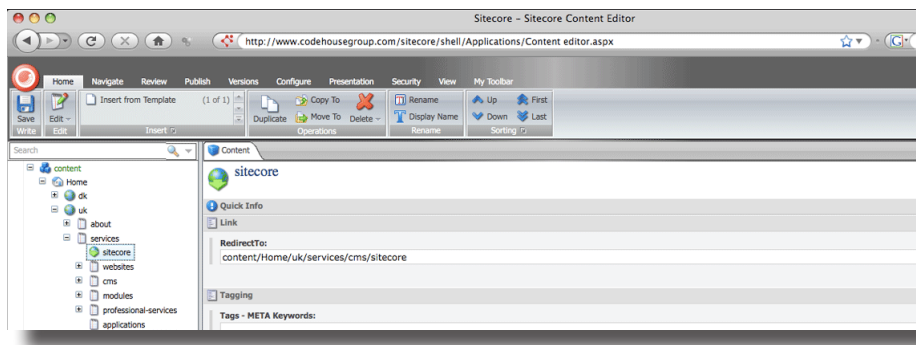


illustration 301 redirects

Hold on to your position within the search engines even when you make changes to your website. With 301 redirects you can make changes to both the structure and the names in your website without losing your Google rankings for the pages already indexed.

The search engines will interpret your 301 redirect as a permanent relocation whereby traffic from, e.g. Google searches, will be redirected to the new location of the page.

For Sitecore you can implement modules such as the Codehouse Redirects Module enabling you to configure 301 redirects directly within the Sitecore CMS. All you then have to do is choose which page to redirect to when a page is deleted or moved.

9 Pictures

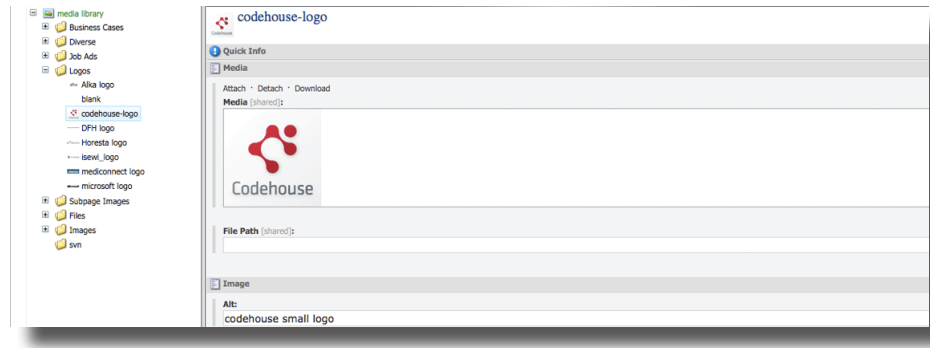


illustration pictures

Give your pictures descriptive titles.

Pictures can also be read. The search engines make use of the titles and descriptions of pictures – especially when they function as links.

Therefore it is a good idea to name your pictures with appropriate titles and alternative text titles (“alt text”).

10 Robots

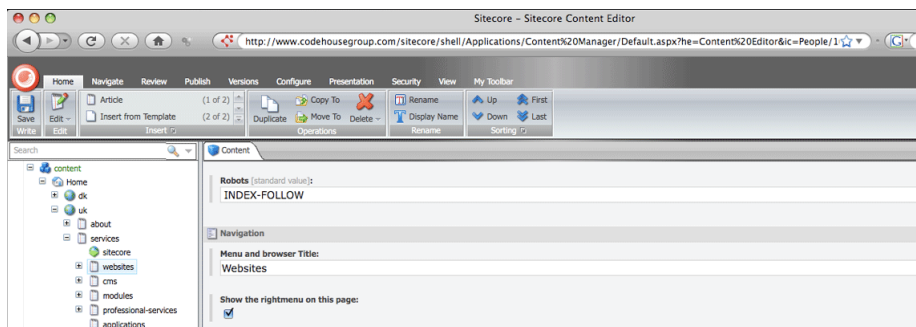


illustration robots

Enable the search engine robots to find the relevant pages. If you have pages on your website that you want the search engines to find but other pages that they shouldn't find, you can change the settings for the individual pages. This can be done using the **robots** field usually found in the **tagging** section in the Sitecore content editor.

When you want the search engines to find and index a page as well as follow the links on the page you should choose INDEX and FOLLOW. If you don't want them to follow the links you should choose NOFOLLOW.

If you don't want the search engines to index the page, you should choose either NOINDEX-FOLLOW or NOINDEX-NOFOLLOW depending on whether you want them to follow links or not.

11

Evaluation

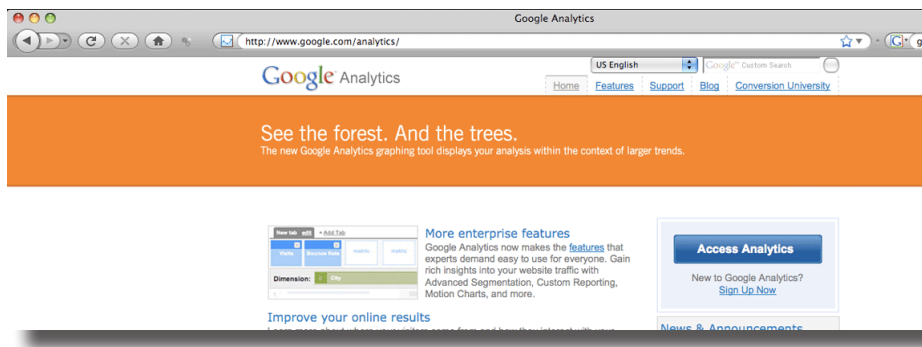


illustration Google Analytics

Create an account on Google Analytics and Google Webmaster Tools and keep track of your website traffic. For measuring and evaluating your website traffic you have to step outside your Sitecore solution and create an account on Google Analytics enabling you to, amongst other things, get insight into which keywords are leading your visitors onto your site.

Google Webmaster Tools evaluates how well Google “likes” your website and whether there are any issues with, for example duplicated titles, on your website. Used together with Google Analytics you can determine how your keywords are working and where you could improve your website.

When using Google Analytics make sure to filter out all of your own internal visitor traffic.



Enjoy



Codehouse

By following the guidelines outlined above you will improve your website's chances of reaching the top of the search engines results lists. Given the tough competition and the small amount of links possible on the first page of the SERPs, the key is to invest in keeping your website relevant and interesting – for both search engines and humans.

In return, the reward for a both Google and user friendly website is invaluable. Consider this document a primer to get

you started. Use the Internet to read up and learn more. It's a complex story and sometimes there is no definitive right answer.

However, if you find that your Sitecore solution is missing some of the functionality described above or if you are left feeling that you could do with some help, then you are always welcome contact us.

Enjoy.

PS
Welcome to contact us



Codehouse

If you have any questions or wish to gain further info, you are always **welcome to contact Codehouse:**

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