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The Internet. Home to more than 1.5 billion websites, 2.45 billion Facebook accounts, and at least one picture of a guinea pig/lion hatcher. It is also home to your company's website; one site in the sea of all the others. You have implemented a search engine optimization strategy (SEO) strategy that you think will help your website stand out. But does it actually work? There is only one way to find out- intense quantitative SEO analysis. This may sound intimidating, but there is software that can help you at every step of the process and make it much easier than you can expect. So let's talk about what SEO analysis is, how it can benefit your business, and how to do it. We will highlight useful tools that can make your SEO analysis thoroughly, reliable and easy. What is SEO analysis? SEO analysis is when you determine if your search engine optimization plan was successful for your website. A good SEO audit offers you a roadmap for changes you can implement to your website to help you rank higher on search engine results pages (SERPs). SERPs matter a lot. If you're the first result on Google's first page, you grab about 33% of traffic for yourself. 15% if you are the second result. If your website is one of the ways people can buy your product, or if your website is your product, then that traffic is essential. Make sure you're highly mean making sure you make money. Thus, performing regular SEO analysis means that you are constantly tracking how you can improve and maintain your SERP rankings. SEO analysis can impact a lot of different facets of your marketing strategy, including brand, content, influencers, and social media, as the results of your analysis will help dictate changes to all of this. How do you properly audit for SEO? So when it comes time for you to really audit your SEO, what do you need to do, and what do you need to do? 1. See how you rank on SERPs properly knowing how to improve your position, you need to know where you are now. This means tracking where you are on SERPs for specific keywords. How software can help with what many SEO software products offer a feature called rank tracking. This will generate reports based on how well your website currently ranks for targeted keywords, and follow the results over a specific period as well. SEO software like Raven Tools helps you keep track of your position for multiple keywords (Source) 2. Analyze your content and meta content Each piece of text on your site is part of your content, and each part of your content is factored in your SERP position. Therefore, you need to make sure that each piece of text is included in your SEO strategy. Check all content to make sure it includes high-impact keywords. Text you need to check includes: URL's Meta Titles Headings Copy and Articles Alt Alt For images How software can help with that while you need to make any changes to the text itself, there is software that can help you figure out which keywords to focus in that text. SEO software and web analytics software both often offer keywords that show you which keywords you rank highly compared to your competitors, and what keywords they beat you on what you should incorporate into your content. Web optimization software has a keyword research function. It tells you which keywords get a high search volume, which has keywords a high level of competition to rank well, and possible alternatives to your keywords so that you can catch the catchment behind your users. Capturing intent means that people who visit your website will feel that you have better addressed their specific needs, so this is a useful tool to have. Web analytics software like BrightEdge identifies keywords your competitors knock you out on (Source) 3. Evaluate incoming, outgoing and internal links for quality with many links to and from your page can make search engines rank you higher because they see you as a reliable source, while links within your website can help you find the crawlers every page on your website. However, this is not only a matter of links, but quality. Quality, in this case, means some different things. For incoming links, make sure all the resources connected to your pages are of high quality. If you have dozens of links to an article on your company's blog, but they're all from websites that don't get much traffic or just work together other websites and links, search engines will see those as spam links and lower your position as a result. You can either reach out to websites that provide low-quality links and ask them to remove them, or if it doesn't work, you can file a dishes to multiple search engines that take those links from the position comparison. For outgoing links, make sure your links are not broken, as some pages may no longer be operational or some of the URLs may have changed. For internal links, as you change your own URLs and URL nomination processes to reflect the best practices above, you also need to make sure those links are still undisputed. How software can help with those Link management tools is explicitly designed for this purpose. They help you review all kinds of links that impact your page and produce a report of the quality of incoming links as well as any broken links on your website. Some alternatives that offer link-based features as part of a broader product include web analytical software, which can help you track your credential sources (i.e. incoming links), and SEO software, which sometimes offers management functions. GeniusLink, a liaison management tool, produces reports for quality and potential monetization options (Source) 4. Go to you load speed How quickly your page loads affect your SERP rankings, both directly and indirectly. Directly, search engines will crawl your speed, and if it's too slow, it can seriously hurt your rankings. Indirectly, if your visitors find your website slow to load, they are more likely to quickly leave your page and find another one, which increases your bounce rate, which also negatively affects your SERP position. How software can help with that Web site monitoring software is the way to go here. It is designed specifically to track your website's performance and warn you of any dippies or problem areas. DataDog is an example of website monitoring software that provides reports and follows your website's performance (Source) What else do you need to know about SEO? These are all useful components to a winning SEO analysis tool. While you have a good SEO analysis tool is essential for your success, you still need to make sure you have a fundamental knowledge of what to do with the information you glenn and how to build your SEO strategy. Note: The applications selected in this article are examples to show a function in context and are not intended as endorsements or recommendations. They were obtained from sources that were believed to have been reliable at the time of publication. Call it a license to steal. Software licensing agreements have always been spectacular with potholes. And the rise of virtualization, subscription-based prices, and several open source models have made the software licensing game even more complex. [In The Service and Support Tracking Game, InfoWorld contributes editor Paul Venezia mourns the bundled practices that force you to pay for more than you need.] Most enterprises are not fully aligned with their licenses, experts say. Some organizations use more software than allow their licenses legally; many pay too much for software that is under-stressed. The wrong price model, surprising maintenance fees, incomplete asset management, poorly defined terms, and failure to account for business change can cost you great over the long term. Here's how to avoid the most common license errors. Shelfware: Use it or lose it The best known license gotcha paid for software that collects dust on a shelf. Fortunately, this is less of a problem than it was. Scott Rosenberg, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF Miro Consulting, says in recent years CIOs and ISOs have become much smarter about software asset management. For the most part, shelfware is a slight concern and a low priority for most IT organizations – until a software provider asks audits or the executive management team IT to cut costs, he says. To find the time, resources and scholarise, the big hurdles are to avoid shelfware. Three out of four organizations say they buy more licenses than they according to a November 2009 recording door Flexera Software and IDC. Idc. Enterprises have so many different applications, each with its own license policies and terms, that it is difficult to keep track of what they use and what it uses. An even bigger problem? Software installed but never used, says Kris Barker, CEO of IT asset management firm Express Metrix. Among most license models, installation is the definition of a license in use, but that doesn't mean the application is actually run, he says. While taking a software stock is now a routine chore for most IT departments, tracking/measurement usage is the harder nut. Mixed stock and usage data are the only way to optimize your software purchases. The first step is to carefully stock the apps you licensed as well as how they are used and what they use. You can then trade unused licenses for new software from the same vendor, or reduce annual maintenance fees, which can cost up to 30 percent of the original purchase price. Jeff Muscarella, a partner in NPI's Telecom and IT practice, says companies negotiating a license agreement should inquire about the ability to terminate unused licenses in the road so that shelfware does not come back to bite them in the wallet. They should also negotiate the rights to use packaged or marketed versions of the same product, so they don't have to pay again for software that's just marginally different. One way to avoid the rackware problem is to opt for software as a service, says Jan Aleman, CEO of IDE provider Servoy. The difference with software as a service is that you do not pay in advance for the maximum number of licenses you might need, you only pay for what you use, he says. You can purchase 100 licenses for a CRM app in the past and find out a year later that only 30 people have used it. Today you start by using 20 seats of your Salesforce.com add more as you need. According to what Flexera survey, more than a third of software providers plan to offer a usage-based price model by 2011. Software audits: Check your rear office Just as buying software you don't use will cost you money, so that the use of software you haven't purchased can cost. If a selling authority determines that you have exceeded the limits of your license, your company risks heavy fines from the Business Software Alliance or the Software & Information Industry Association, with penalty fines for repeat offenders. For companies without robust compliance programmes, an audit letter from the BSA or SIA is often the beginning of a long march of trouble, says attorney Heather J. Meeker, head of the IP/IT transaction practice at Greenburg Traurig. And it is quite likely that all or part of your company does not have the rules in SLVs do not outlined, says Rosenberg. While most companies intend to be compliant, the reality is that the majority of them do not comply with their business seller's license, he says. Most violations stem from a lack of supervision or of the incorrect interpretation of the terms of the license – for example, installing software on two different machines when you only purchased one end user license, or using software licensed for evaluation or development in a production setting. To be compliant, organizations must set clear policy on software distribution, educate users about license terms, and perform regular audits to ensure compliance. They should also carefully look at the audit language in the license agreement and make sure it spells out what an audit can activate, which it will perform, how much time they will have to do so, and what kind of proof is needed to meet the standards set out in the license. For example, you may need to offer packaging strips or complete invoices as proof of purchase. And beware of comfortable inquiries from your sellers' sales teams, warns Rosenberg. Although it can be framed as a way to provide you with a better deal on your existing licenses, it can lead to the seller doing a formal audit down the road. We've seen a dramatic increase in informal inquiries from software seller sales, he says. By handing over information – even within the boundaries of seeking a better negotiating position before a purchase – increases the risk of a formal audit. You must make sure that you are formally audited before sending any information to the software provider. Virtual software: Avoid confusion Nothing has thrown software licensing for a loop more than the dramatic increase in desktop and server virtualization. A survey by IT solution provider F5 found that 90 percent of businesses intended to deploy a virtualized environment in 2009. Understanding the license implications of running virtualized environment lies far behind actual implementation, Lamenting Express Metrix's Barker. IT often does not understand how virtualization impacts software licensing and seller license language often does not explicitly address virtual environments. If you run the same software on your desktop within different OSes, do you need multiple licenses? How about if you stream the apps from a server? The answer depends on a number of factors, including the virtualization technology you use. For example, if you're using an app within several virtual environments on one physical machine, à la VMware or Microsoft's Hyper-V, you usually need a license for each case of that program you installed, just as if they were running on separate physical machines, says Barker. If you stream that program from a server – say via Microsoft application Virtualization – the rules are slightly different. Although only a the entire software package can be installed on a desktop, you still need an individual license for each machine on which that program is run. In situations where whole program runs on a server on behalf of various desktop customers – say, a Citrix box serving Microsoft Visio – you will still need a license for every end user machine it manages, says Barker. But here are the usual rules for simultaneous use not applicable. So if only 25 people can access the app at the same time, but 50 people in your organization use it at a time or another, you need 50 licenses. Even then, there are always exceptions, he adds. For example, Windows Server 2003/2008 Data Center allows for unlimited virtual machines running on the same physical server, such as some enterprise versions of SQL Server. The best solution? Rather than installing and hoping for your VM environment for the best, it makes sense to revisit your licenses and negotiate a new deal with your seller. The most sophisticated licensees and licensees now include specific terms over or and how a licensee can manage the software in a virtual environment, says Greenburg Traurig's Maker. For example, those terms will include whether the software can be obtained via virtualization, and whether outsourced employees can use it. Payment: Define your terms If you haven't figured out how you really use the software and carefully define the terms within your license agreements, you're probably either out of compliance or paid too much for what you have. The problem? There are almost as many ways to pay for software as there are programs. You can pay a fixed amount per seat, simultaneous user, CP cycle, logical partitions of a CPE or a combination thereof. You can pay a single price in advance, distribute your payments over time, or pay an annual subscription fee for using the apps. Larger companies can offer several ways to pay depending on the application. They can sell licenses on a per-machine basis for productivity tools while selling them per device or per user for server software. Open five instances of an Office app on a desktop and you are likely to be covered by a single user license. But if you're a CAD user, you might need a separate license for each copy of the software opened on your machine. Even seemingly simple terms such as user or employee can lead to misinterpretation and non-compliance. For example, most licenses do not include outside contractors or temps within their definitions of name or simultaneous users, says Meeker. And if you use the software for evaluation or developmental purposes, you'll probably pay much less for a license than you need it for production. Almost all sellers have license programs for internal testing and development, says Servoy's Aleman. Yet you still see buying commercial licenses for their development servers. They can save up to 90 percent by importing their sellers' development programmes. The key is to not only understand what you are using, but also how you use it and how the license terms are. Case. Companies should be cognitive of how they use these licenses, warns NPI's Muscarella. If some users only need access to an application for limited use, full professional licenses are not required, or sometimes custom user definitions may be negotiated. Sellers want to sell the highest value license available, so don't let them decide for you. Interview: Mind your wallet Even customers who play hardball at licensing costs often pay too little attention to annual fees for support and upgrades. If software vendors try to print more revenue from their existing customer base, maintenance fees can be a much bigger money. The initial licence spending will feed in the annual maintenance and support costs, which are about 22 percent a year of the total licence purchase, Says Rosenberg. Therefore, your maintenance and support will by year four or five exceed the initial purchase costs. The good news? Tough economic times have proxxened enterprise sellers to cut transactions on maintenance fees to keep their customers. Oracle announced last May that it would trim license fee on some of its older products, while SAP said it would delay price times on its annual fees. Jim Shepherd, senior vice president of AMR Research, says maintenance agreements are a major point of view for many businesses. People tend to focus more on the license price than on maintenance fees, he says. They end up spending much more on maintenance about the life of the software than they ever did on the license price. They can also negotiate less than they negotiate for. In some cases, companies pay maintenance to get product improvements, only to repack the reinforcements they want as a new product that the seller wants to sell, says Shepherd. Muscarella advises companies to negotiate the rights to use rep packaged or marketed versions of the same product so they don't have to pay for software again. Assignments: Expecting change in today's economic client, the only constant is change. Companies acquired and acquired; they reduce sections and turn off subsidiaries; they contract or expand to new markets. Don't assume that your license agreements are flexible enough to weather all the changes. We recently worked with a large US media company that decided to expand its North American online publication arm to Europe and Asia, Rosenberg says. There was no merger or acquisition. The company accepted its Oracle Unlimited License Agreement meant any use was covered by the company. However, the Terms and Conditions limited the media company's use of its Oracle products to North America. The solution? company reviewed its license agreement by adding the new regions, as well as the option to allow up to 10 new regions within a specific period of time. Page 2 Except instruction or transfers in the event of purchases or acquisitions, Muscarella proposes building more flexibility in the agreement for unforeseen circumstances – such as the ability to extend use rights to subsidiaries or new acquisitions at a discount, or a transition period where no additional costs are incurred. Money speaking The good news is that most software companies are hungry for your business and are willing to be flexible – and the greater the deal, the more flexible they get. If you are dissatisfied with your current licenses, you will have a better chance of improving them when there is new money on the table, says AMR's Shepherd. We tell our customers that every time they go back to buy more seats or services, or add more products, to think about renegotiating their license agreements because that's when you have leverage, he says. You can keep your lever strong by avoiding long-term similarities that include you, add Muscarella. It is important to make sure you do not have a far-right provider agreement, he says. Every few years look at the similarities of sellers who can afford different rights that can be more beneficial. But there is no substitute to do your homework. The most successful companies know exactly what they need to do the software – now and in the future – and are deeply familiar with all their license options. These are things you will need to know before you draw on the dotted line. Many companies believe they themselves audited by merely keeping their software deployments on a pretty detailed spreadsheet, Rosenberg says. However, this is only part of the equation. Your company's software deployments should still be reconciled to the license entitlements delined in your contract. Most organizations fail to complete this reconciliation. Simply put, you can't manage what you don't know. This article, How to win the software licensing game, was originally published at InfoWorld.com. This story, How to win the software licensing game was originally published by InfoWorld. Copyright © 2009 IDG Communication, Inc. Inc.

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