



## MEETING TIME AND LOCATION

April 13, 2006, network at 6:30, dinner (optional) at 7:00 PM, presentation at 8:00 PM.

Denny's Restaurant  
3315 N. Scottsdale Rd.  
Scottsdale, AZ

### Program abstract:

Dr. Steven Stralser will speak about the importance of an effective business plan when launching a business. He is the author of the book "MBA In A Day : What You Would Learn At Top-Tier Business Schools (If You Only Had The Time!)", published by John Wiley & Sons. For a look at this book, copy and paste the following web address into your web browser:

[http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0471680540/qid=1094145960/sr=1-4/ref=sr\\_1\\_4/104-5612972-4331905?v=glance&s=books](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0471680540/qid=1094145960/sr=1-4/ref=sr_1_4/104-5612972-4331905?v=glance&s=books)

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Vaughn Treude

*Web Marketing for Consultants, part Two - Search Engine Optimization*

Last month I wrote about general principles of web marketing. This month I'll discuss the important aspect of being found by search engines. This is a big business. There are hundreds of companies now which have the sole aim of improving your site's search engine results. I've been getting spam and telemarketing calls from some of them. I talked to one of them long enough to get a ballpark idea of a price, which was around \$3000 – I'm not sure if this was a one-time deal or if it had any follow-up work involved. One company whose website I visited (searchenginewatch.com) actually gives multi-day conferences on this topic. You could spend a lot of money on this. Consequently, many of us that are independent consultants will want to first try the "do it yourself" method.

The first thing to remember is that a business's web site is advertising, and advertising is just a form of communication. In this case, you don't just need to reach the customer, you must also

tell the search engine it's there, and what your page is about. There are simple rules that can increase your web site's chances of appearing at or near the beginning of a search for your kind of services. This involves knowing a bit about the underlying structure of web pages and the HTML code they're based on.

A website has information that search engines will consider, and information that they don't or can't process even though it's visible to humans. Some of the items that are most important to search engines (meta-descriptions and meta-tags) are normally invisible to humans. These are important places to have a good description of your site, and to store key-phrases that are associated with your business. (In my case, pertinent phrases would be "software design and development" and "embedded software consulting".) The descriptions and tags should not be excessively long, and must relate to the content of your site, if you want the search engines to give your page a good rating.

Many modern websites have a lot of information that search engines can't process. The list includes flash animations, javascript code, and images. For this reason, these should be used sparingly, and only when needed. Images should have accompanying text descriptions. This not only helps people with accessibility problems or text-only browsers, but improves your search engine ratings.

Most of a web page's textual information is important to both humans and search engines, especially the page's title. The first few words of the title should be most meaningful to humans. This can be

followed by a limited number of keywords (no more than about 20 words maximum) to help the search engine categorize the page. Uniqueness is important, so use words and descriptions that are specific and distinguish your site from those of your competitors.

There are structural issues as well. The most important information should be near the top of a page. Some experts say that certain designs, such as frames, are hard for search engines and should be avoided. (The PACN website has these, maybe we should change it!) Others say that frames are OK if the tags are done properly.

The most important advice is not to try to fool the search engines. The companies know many of the tricks people play and are constantly updating the software to keep from being "spammed" by unscrupulous site owners. People who do this risk having their sites blacklisted and not seen at all. One example: using too many meta-tags, or tags unrelated to your site (porno sites are often major offenders against this rule.) Another "cheat" is cramming in extra keywords in text that's invisible because it's the same color as the page background. The engines can detect this one, too.

Although search engines have programs that "crawl" the Web to find pages, you still need to submit your page to assure that it will be found. Unfortunately, I don't have space to even touch on the issue of search engine submission. The major search engines all provide information on how to do it manually. There are also services that will submit your pages for you. The price and thoroughness of these services vary greatly.

If you have a website you use to promote your practice, you definitely need to consider the issue of search engine optimization. There's a lot of free information available to help you get started. Some sites I used to research this article include [www.submit-it.com](http://www.submit-it.com), [selfpromotion.com](http://selfpromotion.com), [www.sookeharbour.com](http://www.sookeharbour.com), and [searchenginewatch.com](http://searchenginewatch.com).

On to a totally different topic: WE have a really good speaker at the April PACN meeting- Professor Steven Stralser of Thunderbird Graduate School. I heard him speak last year at a meeting of The Indus Entrepreneurs, and I think we can all benefit from his business expertise. Hope to see you there!

Vaughn Treude

## EDITOR'S MESSAGE

by Clark Jones

It's hard to believe that another month has already gone by. I certainly seem to have been busy, though there few "major accomplishments" in the past month. I did show off the "ping-pong ball launcher" at a ham radio meeting, and it got as good a reception as it did at last month's PACN meeting. A small amount of progress has been made on version 2.0, though that has pretty low priority.

On a personal note, I found out that my need to learn Italian has transmuted to a need to learn Japanese: my friend in Naples, Italy is going to be transferred to just outside Tokyo for next school year.

Clark Jones

## Contact Info

Editor: Clark Jones (480)641-7801 [cjPACNeditor@cox.net](mailto:cjPACNeditor@cox.net)

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