



INTERNET  
MARKETING  
IDEAS FOR  
REALTORS

THE BEST OF THE WORST - HOW TO LEVERAGE A  
LITTLE-KNOWN FACT ABOUT GOOGLE TO TAKE  
AWAY TOP RANKINGS FROM COMPETITORS

Grab Some Low-Hanging Fruit at the Top of the Tree  
<http://onlinemarketingbusinessbuilder.com/>

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## Introduction

Effective website promotion is a critical to the success of virtually any business in today's digital era. And it is **especially important in the field of real estate sales** due to the fact that the Internet plays such a huge role in connecting home buyers and sellers with real estate sales professionals, as a [study published on Realtor.org](#) found:

- **87% of home buyers use the Internet** to search for properties
- **32% of home buyers first learned about the home they purchased** through the Internet – compared with only 3% who first learned about the home they purchased through a newspaper or other print ad
- **87% of home buyers who used the Internet to search for a home** ended up purchasing their home through a real estate agent

And there are a lot of people searching every month for real estate related information - both globally and at the local level. The chart below shows a snapshot of just a handful of search terms - along with number of times people search for them every month - related to "Vancouver real estate" (the figures are taken directly from [Google AdWords Keyword Selection](#) tool).

And while there is no way that all of the people searching every month for information about "Vancouver real estate" are in the market to buy or sell at that point in time, there is no doubt that **a certain percentage of them are in the market or are performing some research** (such as trying to identify a realtor to represent them) prior to entering the market

This is especially true of the more specific search terms, such as:

- **BC homes for sale**
- Homes for sale in Vancouver
- **Vancouver homes for sale**
- BC houses for sale

Keywords	May SV	GMSV
"vancouver real estate"	18,100	49,500
"bc property"	6,600	12,100
"bc homes for sale"	1,600	6,600
"homes for sale in vancouver"	2,400	4,400
"vancouver homes for sale"	880	4,400
"vancouver realtors"	210	2,400
"bc realtor"	210	1,900
"bc houses for sale"	320	1,600
"bc land for sale"	210	1,600
"bc condos for sale"	390	1,300
"bc realtors"	260	1,300
"realtors in vancouver"	260	880
"bc waterfront property"	140	480
"vancouver home for sale"	91	390
"vancouver new homes"	140	390
<b>Total</b>	<b>31,811</b>	<b>89,240</b>

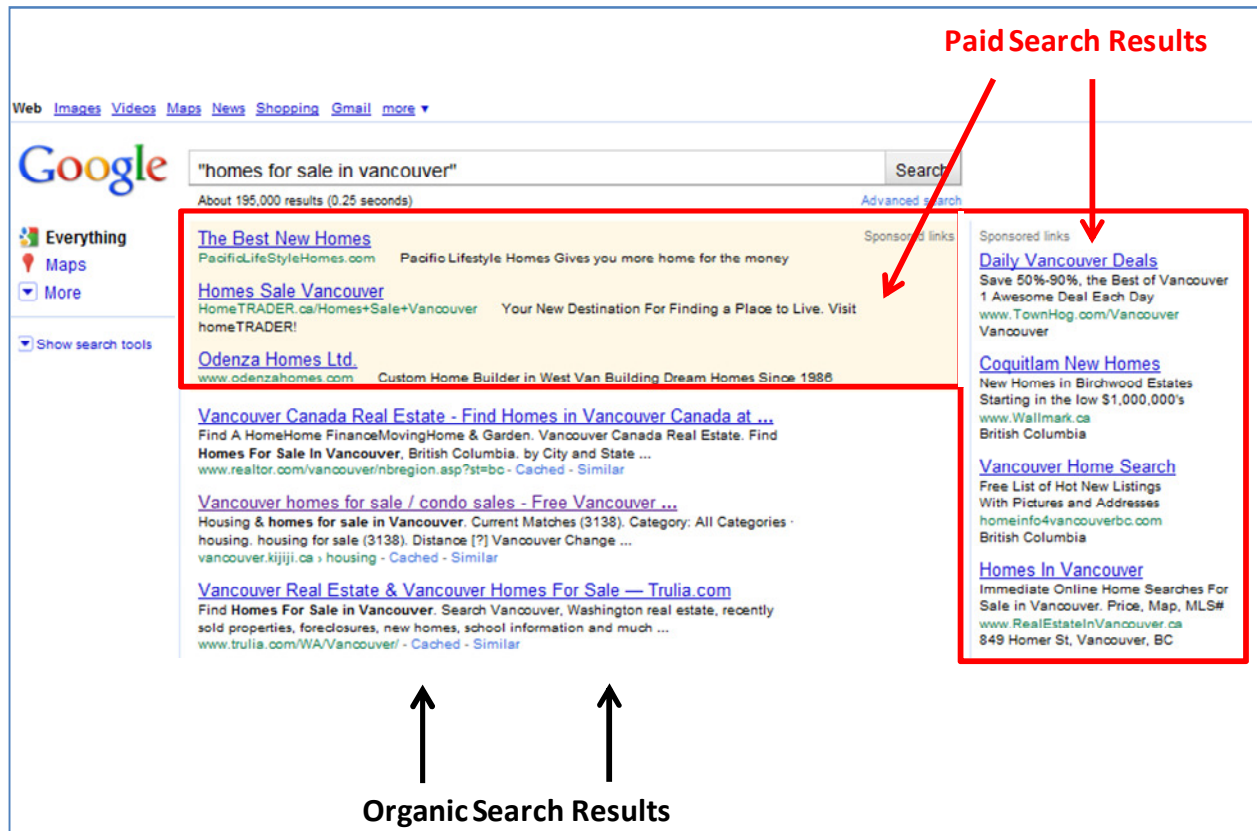
May SV = Local Search Volume for May 2010  
GMSV = Global Monthly Average Search Volume

And even though search volumes for the above-noted search terms are lower than for a more general search term like "Vancouver real estate," the fact is that they tend to convert at a much higher rate because there is a clear "buying intention" behind them.

## Where Do All the Searchers End Up?

The key question to consider is: where do most of the people searching for information related to “Vancouver real estate” end up every month?

The answer can be found simply by visiting Google.com, typing any one of the search terms into the query bar, and clicking on the search button.



The image above is from a screenshot of a search for the term “homes for sale in Vancouver<sup>1</sup>” performed on July 5, 2010. As you can see, Google’s search engine results page (SERP) displays both organic search results and paid search results.

Click on [the link to send me an email](#) if you’ve got questions or would like to learn more.

**Organic search results** are drawn from Google’s massive index of webpages - which [passed the one trillion mark](#) in July 2008 - and are ranked in descending order of relevance to the

<sup>1</sup> The search term was enclosed in quotation marks in order to return more targeted search results. Specifically, enclosing a search term in quotation marks will return results for webpages that contain the phrase “homes for sale in Vancouver” as written, as opposed to webpages that simply contain the words in any order and not necessarily adjacent to one another.

search terms. Google employs an extremely complex ranking algorithm to determine relevance (more on this later).

If you look below the query bar in the above image, you'll see that Google has found approximately **195,000 pages in its index that were relevant** to the term "homes for sale in Vancouver" That's a lot of websites competing for just one keyword.

**Paid search results** are simply targeted advertisements that are triggered in response to the search terms that are typed into the query bar. Advertisements generally only appear on the first couple of pages of search results, reflecting the fact that few **people go beyond the first or second page** of search results.

Because organic search results attract the lion's share of all of the "clicks" for any search, one answer to the question "where do most of the people end up" is that they end up on websites that appear amongst the organic search results most of the time. And the **vast majority of those people end up on websites they found on the first page of search results.**

In fact, all available data show that about **90% of all people find what they're looking for on the first page** of search results, with only about 5% visiting the second page, leaving the remaining 5% for the tens of thousands of other pages of search results (in this case, that's about 19,498 search results pages).

If we assume that all of the 2,400 searches for the term "homes for sale in Vancouver" in May 2010 resulted in clicks to websites (admittedly, not a realistic assumption), then the **websites on the first page would have shared about 2,160 clicks**, while the websites on the second page would have shared about 120 clicks, and the remaining 194,980 websites would have also shared about 120 clicks.

And of those 2,160 clicks on the first page, **more than half would go no further than the first three search results**, as figures from a [controversial search log data release in 2006 from the research arm of AOL](#) (whose search engine was then - and is now - powered by Google) attest.

The data covered more than 650,000 people over a three-month period, who carried out approximately 20 million search queries.

The table on the right - which is based on the actual AOL search log data - shows just where the majority of people searching for any search term ended up:

Rank	Click Throughs	Distribution
All	19,434,540	100%
1	8,220,278	42.30%
2	2,316,738	11.92%
3	1,640,751	8.44%
4	1,171,642	6.03%
5	943,667	4.86%
6	774,718	3.99%
7	655,914	3.37%
8	579,196	2.98%
9	549,196	2.83%
10	577,325	2.97%
11	127,688	0.66%
12	108,555	0.66%
13	101,802	0.52%
14	94,221	0.48%
15	91,020	0.47%
16	75,006	0.39%
17	70,054	0.36%
18	65,832	0.34%
19	62,141	0.32%
20	58,382	0.30%
21	55,471	0.29%
31	23,041	0.12%
41	14,024	0.07%

- **#1 search result attracted 42.3% of all clicks**
- #2 search result attracted 11.92% of all clicks
- **#3 search result attracted 8.44% of all clicks**

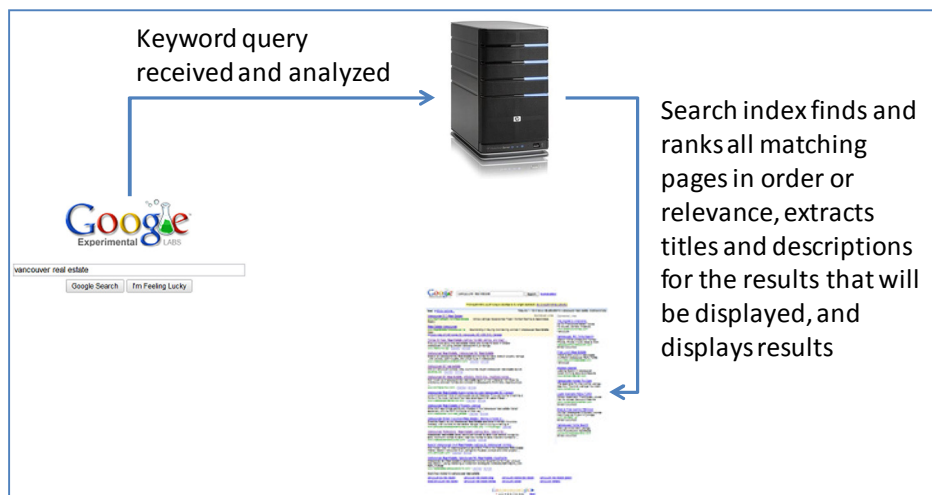
So the only answer to the question “where do they end up” that really matters is that the vast majority of searchers end up on the first, second, and third search result.

And if you can’t find your website on the first or - at worst - second page of search results after searching for any search term you think is worth targeting, your website is as good as invisible to the people who are doing the searches.

## Understanding How Google Works its Magic

The first thing to understand is that when people do a Google search, they aren’t actually searching the World Wide Web; they’re searching Google’s index of the World Wide Web. Or at least as much of it as Google has found (it’s been said that **the “known” Web represents only about 10% of the total**).

Google “finds” the web by exploring it with software programs called spiders. Spiders start by simply “fetching” a few webpages and following the links they find on those pages, and then fetching the pages those links point to, then following the links on those pages, and fetching the pages those links point to, and so on - until they’ve indexed a pretty good portion of the Web (as mentioned earlier, as of July 2008, **Google’s index contained more than one trillion pages**).



When somebody performs a search - such as “homes for sale in Vancouver” - Google’s software searches its index to find every page that includes those search terms, which, in this case, totaled about 195,000 pages.

Google’s ranking algorithm **evaluates every page against more than 200 factors** and decides on the order in which pages will be displayed on the basis of how relevant each page is to the

search terms (we'll take a closer look at some of the more important ranking factors in the next section).

Google weighs up all ranking factors to produce each page's overall "score" and sends back the search results - in descending order of relevance - usually about a half-second after a search has been submitted.

Click on [the link to send me an email](#) if you've got questions or would like to learn more.

## Getting to the Top of Google's Organic Search Results

Broadly speaking, there are two sets of factors that Google considers in determining a webpage's relevance:

- On-Page Factors
- Off-Page Factors

And while there are technical elements to both sets of factors, we're going to keep things simple in this white paper because it's **often enough to just take care of the non-technical factors to get a top ranking** in Google (provided, of course, that there's nothing glaringly wrong from a technical perspective, such as your site simply not being in Google's index).

### On-Page Factors

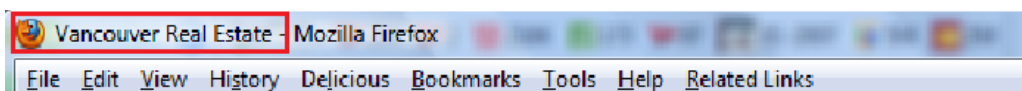
On-page factors come down, mostly, to what the majority of people think of when they consider how Google ranks webpages: **keywords**.

Keeping things simple, there are seven primary considerations when it comes to keywords.

#### Keywords in Page Title

The page title is the single most important keyword-focused on-page ranking factor because it is meant to describe to readers – and search engines – what the page is about. A page with the title Vancouver Real Estate should, logically, be about Vancouver real estate.

The page title is visible at the top of the browser window - between the "favicon" to the left and the browser name to the right - as show in the image below.



The page title also appears at the "headline" of the search results, as in the image that follows.

### [Vancouver Real Estate](#)

Browse the Vancouver MLS by area at JayBanks.ca. Your best guide to the Vancouver real estate market.  
[jaybanks.ca/](#) - Cached - Similar

### [Vancouver Real Estate West Vancouver Real Estate MLS REMAX Investments](#)

Vancouver BC Real Estate & Vancouver Condos. Experience the most UNIQUE Map Search, Listing Marketing & Investment Strategies. VANCOUVER MEDALLION REALTORS®  
[www.realestatevancouver2010.com/](#) - Cached - Similar

### [Vancouver British Columbia Real Estate | Selling a Home in ...](#)

Chandler Realty is your Vancouver Real Estate specialist in British Columbia Canada. Visit our site for real estate listings, tips on buying or selling a ...  
[www.affordablevancouverhomes.com/](#) - Cached - Similar

### [Vancouver Real Estate Agent Homes for sale Vancouver BC Canada](#)

Come K Goldman. One of Vancouver's top ten Realtors. If you are buying or selling a home in the lower mainland then take advantage of 20 years of Real ...  
[www.vancouverresidence.com/](#) - Cached - Similar

### [Vancouver BC Real Estate : Kitsilano, Point Grey, Westside homes ...](#)

Vancouver Real Estate. I specialize in buying and selling homes and condos on Vancouver's Westside. Ken/bike/470w. Monthly Market Update ...  
[www.pointgreynow.com/](#) - Cached - Similar

## Keywords in the URL

Keywords should appear in the URL of the page because that provides a further indication of what the page is about. Additionally, the URL appears in the search results and the appearance of the keywords someone has just searched for in the URL make the listing more “click-worthy.”

## Keyword Prominence

Keywords should appear **early in key positions** on the page – most importantly:

- At the beginning of the page title
- Early in the body copy (in the first or second sentence)

## Keyword Proximity

Keywords that make up a multi-word search term **should be adjacent to one another** – as in Vancouver real estate – rather than separated by other words.

## Keywords in Body Copy

Keywords should also appear in **page headers**, early in the body copy, and towards the end of the body copy (with a few occurrences in between). And if images are used, keywords should be used in the **“image alternative” text** because search engines cannot “read” images.

## Keyword Density

Keyword density is simply the number of occurrences of a keyword or search term (such as “Vancouver real estate”) as a percentage of total words on the page (**3% to 5% is generally recommended best practice** for keyword density).

## Keyword Synonyms

Google understands – and values – keyword synonyms because natural language does not follow a strict script. Because of this you can actually **boost the relevance of a page** by using synonyms for your target keywords and search terms – e.g., instead of using only “Vancouver real estate” throughout a webpage, you could also use “Lower Mainland real estate,” “Vancouver properties,” “real estate in Vancouver,” and so forth.

It's important to understand **on-page optimization is a page-by-page process**. You need to make sure that each and every page on your website ticks all the boxes.

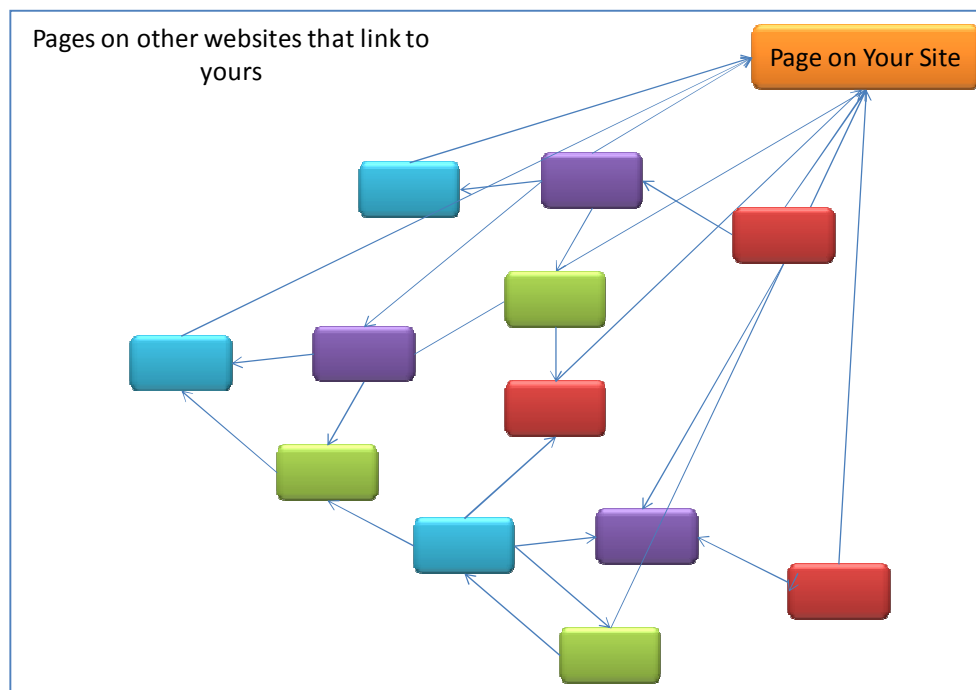
## Off-Page Factors

Off-page factors fall into three categories:

- Inbound links
- PageRank
- Directory listings

### Inbound Links

Google considers links from a page on one website to a page on another website to be, essentially, votes for the importance of the linked-to page. And in theory, **the more links pointing to a specific page, the more important that page is seen to be.**



For example, suppose there were two different websites each of which had a page whose keywords and content were focused on "Vancouver real estate." If **Website A had 50 links** pointing to its "Vancouver real estate" page and **Website B had only 5 links** pointing to its "Vancouver real estate" page, then - all other things being equal - **Website A would be seen as the more important website** on the subject of "Vancouver real estate."

All other things, however, are rarely equal. In addition to link popularity, Google also values the quality of the inbound link. Two of the most important inbound link quality factors are:

- **Keyword-rich anchor text**

The appearance of keywords in the anchor text of an inbound link is considered to be the weightiest off-page ranking factor because it tells Google that not only is it casting a vote for the page to which it is linking, but also that it is casting a vote on that page's relevance to the keywords that appear in the anchor text – e.g.,

- Click on the link to learn more about [Vancouver real estate](#) – says to Google that the linked-to page is about *Vancouver real estate*
- [Click here](#) to learn more about Vancouver real estate – says to Google that the linked-to page is about *Click here*

There's no better example of the importance of keyword-rich anchor text than to Google the term "click here." The number one search result on Google is for Adobe Reader – even though neither the individual words "click" and "here" nor the complete search term appear anywhere on the page.

It is entirely a function of the fact that there are hundreds of thousands of pages on the World Wide Web that link to the Adobe Reader page that use some variation of the sentence "[click here](#) to download the Adobe Reader for free" to link to the download page."

- **Diversity of inbound link sources**  
Many links from the same domain looks spammy to Google. Therefore, if you're campaigning to acquire links through forum and Web 2.0 profiles and commenting on blogs, it's important to cast a wide net so that you don't diminish the value of your inbound links.

So while it's true that, in many cases, you can overtake a top-ranking search result simply on the strength of gaining more inbound links, you will be able to make an even stronger run for the top – and establish a solid position once you get there – by focusing on quality as well as quantity.

### PageRank

PageRank is Google's measure of the overall importance of a website, in general, and a webpage, in particular. And although Google downplays the importance of PageRank as a search engine ranking factor, all other things being equal, **a page with a PageRank of 6** (PageRank ranges from 0 to 10) is **likely to outrank a page with a PageRank of 5** (you can click on the image to the right to visit a website where you can check the PageRank of any website).



### Directory Listings

Web directories like the [Open Directory Project](#) (DMOZ) and [Yahoo! Directory](#) are important considerations for search engines because they **will not list poor-quality or spammy sites**. Directory submissions are reviewed by experienced - and selective - human editors so a listing

in either of these two directories is considered to be a **fairly weighty “vote” for the quality and the importance of a website.**

**YAHOO!** DIRECTORY

You have to submit your website for review by DMOZ and Yahoo! editors. And while DMOZ is free, Yahoo! charges a fee.

**d m o z** open directory project

Click on [the link to send me an email](#) if you've got questions or would like to learn more.

## **It's Often Enough to Just be the Best of the Worst**

Many businesspeople - regardless of their profession or industry - outsource their website development to design firms that purport to offer expertise in website promotion. And while many of them drop the right words - keywords, ranking, traffic, backlinks, and so forth - **most do not really have a solid grasp on how to develop and execute a strategy to achieve a top ranking in Google** for a business' target keywords.

The reality is that design firms are mostly concerned with the aesthetics of a website and with indulging the paying customer's wants (“the customer may not always be right but the customer's paying the bill so shut up and take the money”) - **indulgences that, unfortunately, often come at the expense of results.**

They do not attend to the basics that have been outlined in this white paper - or they attend to some but not others - and, as a result, the vast majority of websites across the World Wide Web are far from optimal in terms of what's important to search engines like Google.

What this means is that **Google, essentially, does the best with what it's got** - which, when it comes to the websites of companies across many industries, isn't much. And, as a result, the majority **of webpages ranking at or near the top of Google for many industries rank where they do more by default than by design.**

In other words, they are the best of the worst. And this is **as true of the real estate profession as any other.**

This means two things:

- If your website currently has few or no pages ranking at or near the top of Google, it's **highly likely that you're in a great position to be able to quickly and significantly improve your rankings**
- If your website currently has a few or many pages ranking at or near the top of Google, **it's highly likely that you're in a vulnerable position** and need to take action to secure your rankings

If you decide to simply take care of the fundamentals - do the basic on-page and off-page optimization outlined earlier - you can **improve your rankings for keywords** for which you're currently not ranking well and you can **solidify your rankings for keywords** for which you are currently ranking well. And you can do this in relatively short order and minimal "heavy lifting" in most cases.

In the next section, we're going to analyze the on-page and off-page optimization levels of three top-ranking websites for a high-value keyword related to the Vancouver real estate market.

## Quick-and-Dirty Competitive Analysis of the Top Three Search Results

In the interest of protecting the commercial interests of the three websites we'll analyze, the search term will not be disclosed nor will any URLs of any of the websites. Additionally, this particular search term was left out of the table at the beginning of this document.

It is, however, a **highly targeted (five word) search term** that has healthy global and monthly search volumes – **more than 100 searches per day** – as you can see in the image below that is a screenshot from Google AdWords Keyword Selection tool (data are from March 2010).

Global Monthly Searches	Local Monthly Searches	Local Search Trends
3,600	3,600	
4,400	3,600	
2,900	2,900	
2,900	2,900	
2,900	2,900	
2,900	2,900	
2,900	2,900	
2,400	2,400	
1,900	1,900	
1,600	1,600	
1,600	1,600	
1,600	1,600	
1,600	1,600	
1,600	1,600	

Following are the quick-and-dirty - but extremely telling - analyses of the top three search results for the above-referenced search term<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> In the interest of simplicity – and because it's often enough to simply establish greater link popularity – quality factors were not part of this analysis.

## 1<sup>st</sup> Search Result

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### Summary of Key On-Page Factors

- **Page title** - search term appear in the page title, but not at the beginning
- **Page URL** - search term synonym appears in the URL for the page
- **Page header** - just two of the five keywords that make up the search term appear in the page header
- **Keyword density** - 0.0% for the search term

### Summary of Key Off-Page Factors

- **Inbound links to the page** 1
- **PageRank of the page** 4
- **DMOZ listings** 4
- **Yahoo listings** 14

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Search Result

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### Summary of On-Page Factors

- **Page title** - search term synonym appears in the page title, but not at the beginning
- **Page URL** - search term synonym appears in the URL for the page
- **Page header** - just one of the five keywords that make up the search term appear in the page header
- **Keyword density** - 0.47% for search term synonym but no occurrences of the search term itself

### Summary of Off-Page Factors

- **Inbound links to the page** 13
- **PageRank of the page** 2
- **DMOZ listings** 0
- **Yahoo listings** 0

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Search Result

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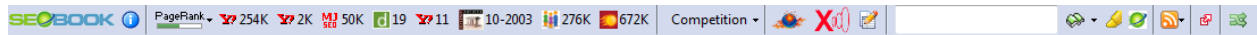
### Summary of On-Page Factors

- **Page title** - search term appears in the page title, but not at the beginning
- **Page URL** - search term does not appear in the URL for the page
- **Page header** - none of the five keywords that make up the search term appear in the page header
- **Keyword density** - 0.0% for search term

## Summary of Off-Page Factors

- **Inbound links to the page** 0
- **PageRank of the page** 2
- **DMOZ listings** 0
- **Yahoo listings** 0

*Note: While there are many paid tools on the market that you can use to carry out an analysis of a competitor's website, I've based the data from this analysis on, SEOBook's SEO Toolbar because it is free, easy to use, and provides key data that are easy to understand.*



Click on the link to visit the website and [download SEO Toolbar](#).

## Conclusion

It would be easy to beat all three top-ranking search results for on-page optimization:

- **Create a page with the search term in the title, starting at the beginning of the title (or modify an existing page)**
- Make sure that the search term - or a synonym - appears in the URL
- **Create a page header with the entire search term in it**
- Aim for a keyword density of 3% to 5%

In terms of off-page optimization, the first search result would likely be a challenge to outperform – even though it has only one link pointing to the page. This is due mostly to the page's PageRank of 4, as well as that fact that it has 4 DMOZ listings as well as 14 Yahoo! listings.

However, the second and third result would both be easy to beat:

- **The second result has only 13 links pointing to its page and the third result has none – getting more than 13 links would be extremely easy and could be accomplished safely in an hour**
- Both pages have a PageRank of 2, which would be easy overcome with a healthy number of inbound links
- **Neither the second nor third search result has any DMOZ or Yahoo! directory listings, so they obviously pose no challenge (of course, it would still be a good idea to submit your site for inclusion in the DMOZ and Yahoo! directories because they carry site-wide ranking benefits)**

As mentioned, **you could easily get more than 13 links to your site in an hour** (and link-building should be part of your regular website promotion routine anyway). Following are some

of the more popular ways to get free inbound links (and even though the quality of the links vary by site, the more links the better as long as they are not from spammy sites):

- **Link exchanges**
- Blog commenting
- **Forum and Web 2.0 profiles**
- Web directories
- **Article marketing**
- Etc, etc, etc

Ultimately, Google weighs up both sets of factors – on-page and off-page – to determine search engine rankings. And, as you can see, **all three of the top ranking search results are weak to very weak** in the area of on-page optimization and **two of the three top ranking search results are very weak** in the area of off-page optimization.

Therefore, in weighing up on-page and off-page optimization, **all it would take would be a little attention to the basics and you could easily “out-optimize”** two of the three search results for the keyword in question.

It's important to note that this is **not an anomaly**. As mentioned earlier, the vast majority of websites ranking at or near the top of Google for many industries and professions are in the same shape. But because other websites have either done little or nothing in terms of on-page and off-page optimization – or they've gotten it wrong – **Google's left with little choice but to rank the “best of the worst”** at the top of the search results.

Keep in mind, too, that we've looked only at a single search term. Your website should really be targeting all of the high-value search terms for your profession – each of which should be a **source of targeted traffic to your website**. When you consider that the search term used in this analysis is searched for slightly more than 100 times per day on average – and that the top three search results attract about 60% of the clicks – you're looking at a share of 60 clicks per day for a highly targeted term. And that is, as mentioned, just one search term. Do your homework, identify 10, 15, 20 or more additional high-value search terms and you could be looking at **exponential increase in highly targeted traffic** to your website.

Click on [the link to send me an email](#) if you've got questions or would like to learn more.

## About Dawson Barber

For 20+ years I have been developing, expanding, and sharpening my skills as a sales and marketing specialist and business leader across a wide range of industry sectors.

I've had the good fortune of having had some great successes and unforgettable experiences along the way.

I have helped skyrocket small businesses to great success, have started businesses from scratch, have bought and sold businesses, and have held key senior leadership positions within local and global corporations.



## Professional Highlights

### Drake International

Most recently, I wrapped up a 3 1/2 year stint with one of the world's largest and most enduring human capital management organizations, [Drake International](#), during which time I spent a lot of time working in various cities in different countries around the world:

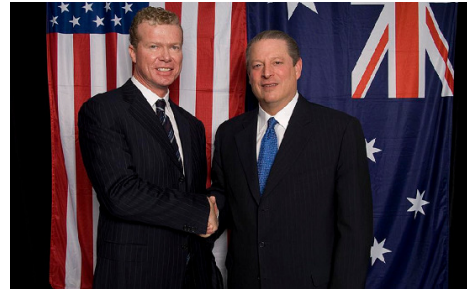
- Australia
- New Zealand
- Hong Kong SAR
- US
- Canada

During my time with Drake I had the good fortune of reporting directly to – and being mentored – by Bill Pollock, Drake's Co-founder and Chairman of the Board.

Key positions at Drake included:

- **Vice President of Sales Force Effectiveness** – responsible for training, development, and management of business development teams
- **Executive Committee Member**– responsible for operations for the largest part of the Drake Empire, Drake Australia
- **National Solutions Manager** – responsible for a team of organizational psychologists and behavioural profiling specialists
- **National Sales and Marketing Manager** – responsible for a multi-million dollar budget and leading the sales and marketing organization in the drive behind more than 25 different services and solutions – some of which included:
  - Business process outsourcing
  - Six Sigma
  - Permanent recruitment
  - Temporary staffing
  - Learning and development
  - Psychometric assessment tools
  - Performance appraisal systems

I also had the great honour of being involved in a number of exciting events – from the CEO Debate Forum to Al Gore’s Thinking Green presentations in Sydney and in Melbourne.



Drake was, by far, the greatest learning experience I ever have had. I often liken it to being chosen by Donald Trump as the Apprentice – the only difference being that, as entrepreneurs go, Pollock trumps Trump.

### Prophet Consulting Group

I started and ran my own sales/marketing performance improvement company for two years. I wrapped it up after selling the intellectual property for some of the programs I had developed to Drake International.

### Miller Heiman, Incorporated

I worked as a Certified Consulting Partner for two years for [Miller Heiman](#), one of the world’s most respected sales performance improvement organizations.

I left Miller Heiman to start Prophet Consulting Group.

### Paladin Security Group

I was Vice President of Sales and Marketing and part-owner of [Paladin Security](#) for ten years and a key driver of the company’s growth from a small, local business to what is now one of Canada’s largest privately held security companies.

I sold my interest and left the business to join Miller Heiman.

### Dawson Barber 2.0

I am now taking my extensive experience in business management, leadership, offline and online sales and marketing and putting it to work for many different kinds of businesses – from small and medium businesses that are looking to take their business to the proverbial “next level” to major corporations that are looking for an edge.

Click on [the link to send me an email](#) if you’ve got questions or would like to learn more.