Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

From the September 2012 Issue

Recently, accounting firms gained a variety of ways to change the display of their listings on search engines. While search engines were once solely a list of uniform links, the evolving Internet has forced Google, Bing, and other search engines to create richer media experiences. These richer media experiences can help accountants to grab the eyes of those searching, even if they're not the #1 result. On-

page techniques tend to be easier to implement, but integration with local search

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

Meta Descriptions

The meta description, though not a ranking factor, is the accountant's first weapon for grabbing a searcher's attention. If they are too unrelated to the query, meta descriptions are often overwritten by the search engine, but following these best practices is the main way to ensure that your handcrafted description is left as-is. Though the number is a bit fuzzy, search engines tend to cut off around 150 characters. Creating eye-catching content in around 30 words can be tough, but a CPA can find luck if they include three things: a keyword to display in bold, a call to action to drive the visitor to a goal, and unique facts that set your firm apart from your competitors. Descriptions should answer the search query, summarizing the answer on the page. Below is an example of an unoptimized description.

The other meta tag that displays prominently in the snippet is the title. The title, showing the title bar of the browser when you visit the page, is the number one on-page ranking factor, and its value for organic click-through is imperative. The title is also the introduction to the site for a visitor, letting them know if the page will answer their query at first glance. For most pages, simply having the keyword should suffice, but some pages are better led with a more inventive, clickable title. In all, revamping the metadata of your page can double organic traffic week-over-week.

As social networks have become ubiquitous, metadata for their sites have become important as well. While social media sites will usually find your standard metadata, often that copy is not friendly for sharing. Keywords are less important, but calls to action become even more important, as your audience is more passively viewing your content.

Pictures in Less than 5 words

Image search is a powerfully visual change of pace from the purely text world of

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

CPAs, stock photos should be avoided. Though many businesses use these images, they can be too formulaic, too similar to competing sites, or too unrealistic to connect with a searcher. Keep in mind that a potential customer searching for your practice's name can be shown a cohesive brand image. Ensure that as many images as logical are tagged with these attributes. Focus on the keyword, but accurately describe the photo. Image seekers tend to be looking for something specific.

Describing the image is key on photo sharing sites. Many image sites put much of their ranking weight on the title and description of the image, and the same lessons from page metadata apply to images – test them using a different tone to better resonate with users. On these sites, however, traffic is generated by searching as well, making keywords a safe bet for either title copy. On these social sites, be sure to add your url to the description so that searchers can easily visit your site.

Seeing Dots Everywhere

Joining Google or Bing Places lets you show up in the coveted local search areas of the universal search page. Local results are prominently displayed on some queries, showing reviews, address, phone number, sometimes images, and most importantly, a map to your doorstep. Local and organic search reinforce each other on the page, but an accountant can be confident that their Places listing best represents their business only if the page is claimed and actively maintained. Furthermore, local results power a variety of other engines, such as Facebook Places, that can help provide contact information and additional traffic for your location. Maps listings provide rich results, if you know how to utilize them. See the below example.

Maps pages themselves provide the opportunity to continue catching eyes with relevant imagery and information on the Place page. Continuing your branding, maintaining accurate information, and actively responding both publicly and

privately to unhappy customers can increase trust and ensure that your site shows in

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

Short of taking on the world of local search, accounting firms can easily replicate one of the most striking search features of those Places listings by including and correctly marking up testimonials on their site. This effectively makes the site seem like an authoritative source on the business. Google, especially, and Bing, to a lesser degree, support "rich snippets," on-page code that can radically alter your search listing. For accountants, the most valuable snippet displays stars and other information to show reviews about their business, which can be seen in search listings by using microformats. See the below example.

While following local industry guidelines, accountants should already have testimonials on their site, especially as "drop-quotes" on their page, that strive to make the potential customer feel at ease about the upcoming transaction. Marking up the code using Schema or microformats will display stars and information about the review to a searcher, drawing eyes to your listing.

Three guiding principles should be pervasive in any use of reviews, especially ones showing on search pages and not your own website.

- First, be transparent. If your review shows 5 stars on January 15 from someone named CP (often names are anonymous to protect the privacy of others), then your page should show all of that information clearly.
- Secondly, provide meaningful but organic copy. No one likes to see overly edited copy, especially the person who provided the review.
- Lastly, try to get a numerical or star rating from your customers. This avoids the conundrum of assigning simultaneously accurate, promotional, and visually striking results on your page and on Google.

Review code is not terribly hard to implement, but there are too many elements and tags to share it here. Ideally, you should have 5 elements: a name, a date, a 5-star

rating, a summary, and a review, all referencing your practice. These five elements

Hello. It looks like you're using an ad blocker that may prevent our website from working properly. To receive the best experience possible, please make sure any blockers are switched off and refresh the page.

If you have any questions or need help you can email us

accountant would fill a tome on its own, but the effort of doing so utterly outweighs the costs. Bing and Google have similar social strategies based on joining social networks. See the following example.

Bing and Google will display what your contacts have shared higher in the results, but there are benefits for larger clients. Eventually, Google will "verify" your Google+ business page, showing you prominently on the right-hand side of the search results page. This allows you to grab eyes, while once again reinforcing your brand in the results pages.

These five strategies are varied in difficulty and time to implement. However, if you are experiencing ranking difficulties for whatever reason, they can radically change the landscape and traffic generation of your organic online marketing. These techniques are some of the best and most striking ways to change your organic search listings and capture more traffic from other related sources. If they seem too time-consuming for you or your team, consider finding a website promotion company in your area to help you with your online marketing needs.

Marketing

CPA Practice Advisor is registered with the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA) as a sponsor of continuing professional education on the National Registry of CPE Sponsors.

© 2024 Firmworks, LLC. All rights reserved