

## CHAPTER 1

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# ANATOMY OF A SEARCH ENGINE

*The difference between organic and paid searches and where you should focus your time and resources.*





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### **In this chapter, you will learn:**

How a search engine operates.

The definition of sponsored ads and organic searches and the differences between them.

Which search engines you should focus on.

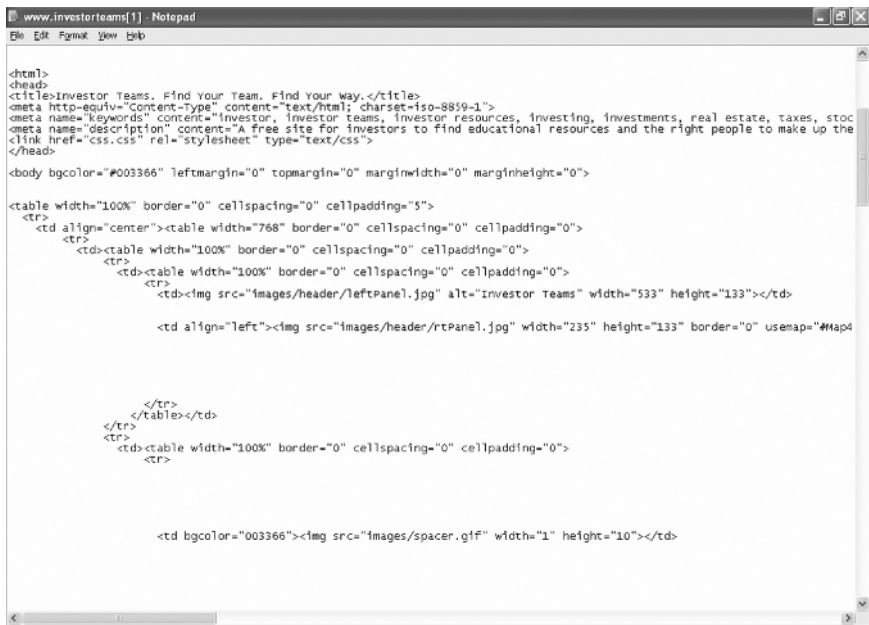
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Before we delve into how to win the search engine game, let's first go over the basics of what search engines are, how they work, and who the major players are.

Search engines are tools that inventory content on the Web based on criteria that the searcher is looking for. That content can be in the form of a web page, video, picture, or other online resource. When search engines evaluate a web page, they may take into account many aspects, including the domain name (also known as the web site address), the web site's content and its meta tags. Meta tags are content you create specifically for search engines to help them decipher what your web site is about and where to place your site in their search results. Meta tags are located in the source code (programming language) of your web site. The components that make up your meta tags will be discussed in detail later in this book.

To view any web site's meta tags, you just need to look in the source code of that web site. To do this in Internet Explorer, simply click on "View" from the top navigation bar and then click on "Source" in the drop-down box. I like to review the top Google results in my industry and take a look at their web site's meta

Example of a web site's source code.



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www.investorteams[1] - Notepad
File Edit Format View Help

<html>
<head>
<title>Investor Teams. Find Your Team. Find Your Way.</title>
<meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset=iso-8859-1">
<meta name="keywords" content="investor, investor teams, investor resources, investing, investments, real estate, taxes, stock">
<meta name="description" content="A free site for investors to find educational resources and the right people to make up the team">
<link href="css.css" rel="stylesheet" type="text/css">
</head>
<body bgcolor="#003366" leftmargin="0" topmargin="0" marginwidth="0" marginheight="0">

<table width="100%" border="0" cellspacing="0" cellpadding="5">
<tr>
<td align="center"><table width="768" border="0" cellspacing="0" cellpadding="0">
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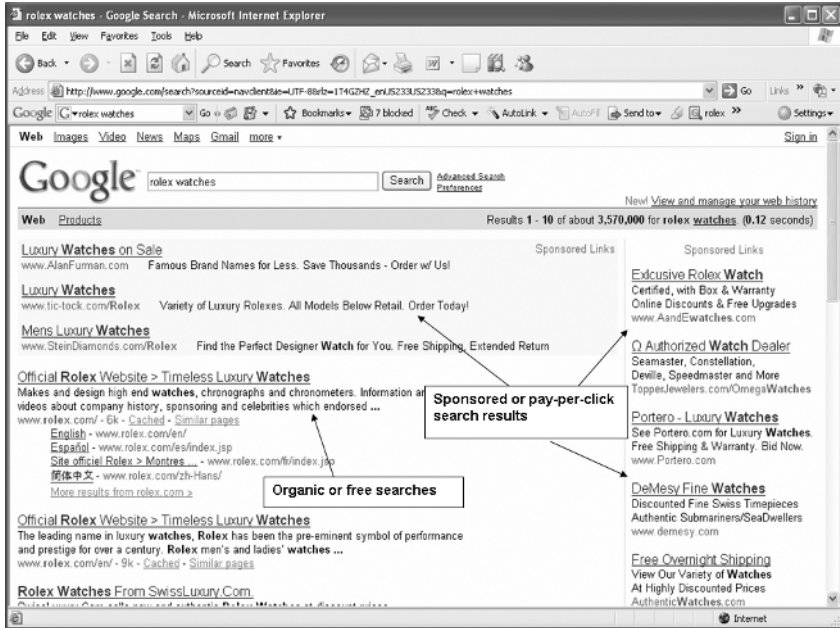
<td align="left">
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tags. If they are at the top, they most likely have an excellent set of meta tags.

There are three types of search engines: crawlers (or spiders), human powered, and a hybrid of the two. Google.com is an example of a crawler, and ChaCha.com is a human-powered search engine. The difference between these engines is simply how they evaluate web sites for placement. The crawlers use software to perform searches, and human-powered engines use actual people to evaluate the web sites. MSN.com is an example of a hybrid search engine that uses both spiders and humans to evaluate web sites.

As explained in the introduction, there are two types of search engine results, paid and organic. The organic are the free searches that come up on the left side of a search engine, and paid searches (also known as sponsored links) show up on the right side, and sometimes even above the organic searches. I'll dive deeper into paid searches in the next chapter.



I'm often asked which type of search I prefer: organic or sponsored links. I spend most of my time working on my organic results, although I do not discount the importance of using sponsored links as part of your Internet marketing campaign. Research proves that people still focus their attention primarily on the top organic searches before they review the sponsored results. Part of the reason for this is search engine users are concerned about the substance of the sites that came up on the sponsored results. With sponsored searches, people pay to have their web site show up in the search results as opposed to organic, where results are displayed purely by the relevance to the words that were typed in the search box.

Take a look at the following picture. It's a heat map that tracks where people's eyes go as soon as they arrive at google.com. The brighter colors indicate where the majority of the searchers are looking. As you can see, the vast majority of the colors are over the organic search results and not on the sponsored links on the right side of the page. Also note the vast difference in coming up on the top of Google versus the bottom.



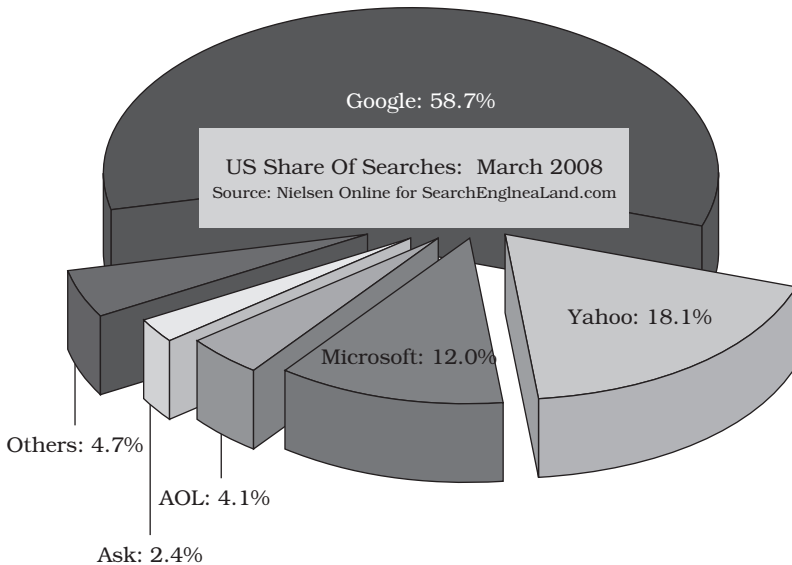
Source: Google Heat Map provided by eyetools.com

With organic results, people are more likely to gain the information they're looking for. More importantly, the organic searches are free, so you can win the search engine game the old-fashioned way, and put those marketing dollars back into your pocket.

With all that said, I have many friends who are making a great living by solely using sponsored links to sell their products and services. Although the majority of the first section of this book will focus on organic searches, I'll give you everything you need to effectively use sponsored links in the next chapter.

There are hundreds of search engines on the Internet, but only a few dominate the search landscape. The graphic below displays the U.S. market share of the top search engines in the world in March 2008. Those are the ones you want to focus on when implementing the strategies outlined in this section. The good news is if you are seeing positive results on the largest search engines, it's highly probable you will see similar results on the smaller ones.

Here are the major search engines that you'll want to focus your efforts on:



Google (the proverbial 800-pound gorilla)

Yahoo

MSN

AOL

Ask

As a review, here are the different types of search engines along with an example of each:

- Crawler-powered: Automated software that visits a web site and looks for keywords and meta tags, such as Google.
- Human-powered: People submit information that is indexed and cataloged, such as ChaCha.
- Hybrid: Uses both automated software and human interaction to create search results, such as MSN.

### Tips for Success

**No. 1.** Make sure your web designer has a firm grasp on the importance of making your web site search engine friendly. The litmus test question is “How important is it

to create meta tags for my web site?" If they don't say "very important," then I'd consider finding another web designer.

**No. 2.** Review web sites that you always see at the top of Google.

As you learn more about how search engines rank web sites, you'll begin to see patterns that each of these web sites use.

**No. 3.** When updates are made to your web site, you should alert each of the major search engines to reevaluate your site. When you've completed this book, you'll want to perform this task. See the exercise below for instructions on how to do this on google.com.



### Walkthrough

Step 1. Open your browser and go to eBootCampbook.com.

Step 2. Click on "View" from the navigation bar at the top of your page.

Step 3. Click on "Source" if using Internet Explorer or click on "Page Source" if using Mozilla Firefox.

Step 4. Find the site's meta tags, which include the keywords, title tag, and meta description tag.

You now know where to look when evaluating other web sites' meta tags, and this can come in handy as you start to develop your own meta tags.



### Exercise (To be performed once you've finished reading this book)

Step 1. Go to google.com/addurl.

Step 2. Add your web site so that Google will know you're ready for them to evaluate your site. (This is a free service.)

Step 3. Repeat this process at Yahoo!, MSN, AOL and Ask.com.



### **Resources**

Searchenginewatch.com provides the latest news on search engines.

Google.com/support/webmasters/bin/answer.py?answer=35291 is Google's take on search-engine optimization companies.

Highrankings.com/forum/ is a forum for people to discuss search-engine optimization strategies.

Seochat.com provides more articles and information about search engine optimization.



### **Cocktail Information**

Dogpile.com is a meta search engine. It searches other engines, such as Google, Yahoo, MSN and Ask, and so on, and comes up with results based on the ranking of web sites across all the other search engines. This unique process can provide a higher frequency of relevant results during a targeted search. Give it a try!

