

Background

Occupancy Marketing was engaged by Whitespace, a leading Scottish digital agency to work with the Scottish Government's International Projects Division in October 2006. The project involved providing consultancy on the development of a portal or "wrapper" for Scotland.

The goal of the project was to work with the International Projects Division websites (specifically Global Friends of Scotland (GFOS) and Scotland Is The Place (SITP)) on determining the potential for website integration and linking with other partner organisation websites.

The proposal was to create a "wrapper" or portal Web site with four distinct gateways:

- Work – SITP & Talent Scotland
- Visit – VisitScotland
- Learn – British Council
- Business – Scottish Enterprise

Occupancy Marketing's role was as follows:

- Devise the SEO strategy for the site and discuss / agree with partners
- Consult on the search engine friendliness of the site, avoiding risk for partners
- Advise on a domain name

Our Services

Search Engine Optimisation Strategy

A wide variety of search terms were analysed for relevance, allowing a site map to be developed with content "stored" in a suitable hierarchy, most popular keywords being at the top of the hierarchy.

The consultancy work was complicated by the fact that the existing partners had Web sites and in some cases search engine marketing companies optimising their sites. Our role was to work with the following organisations and agree a complimentary search engine marketing strategy:

- Highlands & Islands Enterprise
- Scottish Enterprise
- Scottish Government
- VisitScotland
- British Council
- Talent Scotland

Prior to meeting each agency a gap analysis was undertaken to identify relevant search terms the particular agency was not competing for. We then sought agreement to optimise for these terms and take on board any particular terms the agency did not want us to optimise for.

Following this exercise, the "wrapper" compliments rather than competes with the partner agencies.

With the site map and content agreed, the copy writer was then briefed on the project to ensure copy was developed in a systematic approach to support the keywords in each section.

Search Engine Friendliness

With the “wrapper” integrating with so many partner sites, our main concern was risk avoidance. This entailed working with Whitespace, the agency commissioned to design and build the site, to ensure the link structure did not contravene search engine guidelines.

The “wrapper” was to introduce an innovative piece of technology, termed a tag engine. In effect, this would allow partners to place adverts or links on the “wrapper” to drive traffic to specific sections of the partner Web site. The principle is similar to the Google AdSense programme, allowing Web site owners to show adverts for other related content. This process required careful evaluation to avoid risk for partner sites.

Domain Name

The Scottish Government had previously contracted Demys Corporate Services, an Internet Intellectual Property Management Company, to conduct a report on potential domain names for the project.

Occupancy Marketing was asked to review these domains from a Search Engine Visibility viewpoint. Our goal was to identify the domain name that would provide the best search results and rank them on this basis. To undertake this exercise, we evaluated content and relevance of the current domains, legacy, hosting, link structure and other relevant factors.

Concurrently, The Leith Agency was conducting a study into consumer perceptions of Top Level Domain’s TLD’s such as .org, .com, .uk, .gov.

Our recommendation was to utilise a domain owned by Scottish Enterprise, one of the partners and this recommendation was agreed on by the Scottish Government. The Scotland Wrapper, or Gateway to Scotland as it was formally known, was launched in March 2007 on the www.scotland.org domain.

Results

Following the consultancy work, Occupancy Marketing was engaged to handle the on-going search engine optimisation of the Web site.

In the first month of the launch, March 2007, the Web site attracted over 20,000 visitors. By November 2007, the site was attracting 60,000 visitors a month, with 88% of traffic coming from search engines.

The Web site currently ranks fourth in Google for the keyword “Scotland” from UK IP addresses and third in the USA.