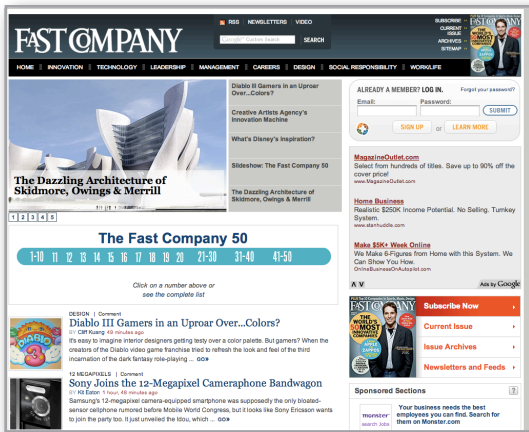




Case Study: Volacci SEO for FastCompany.com

About Fast Company

Mansueto Ventures is parent to both Inc. and Fast Company magazines. Through its best-in-class publication and online presence, Fast Company informs and inspires with unique coverage of economic conditions, best and “next” business practices, and the movers and shakers in today’s marketplace. They challenge convention and encourage leadership and innovation. With over 140,000 members, FastCompany.com is a global community portal for business leaders to connect.



Problem

FastCompany.com completely relaunched their website in February of 2008. By September of that year, they were looking to increase their search traffic. Executives at Mansueto reasoned that to pay for visitors they could get for “free” organically was a flawed investment. Thus, in lieu of a PPC campaign, they sought to partner with a company who could offer counsel on organic Search Engine Optimization (SEO).

Solution

Fast Company turned to Volacci.com, an Austin-based Search Engine Marketing firm, for expert consultation. Volacci was chosen for two reasons: credibility and specialization. First, it was essential that the high-profile Fast Company partner with a firm with a proven track record who utilized only “white hat” or (Google-approved) SEO techniques. Secondly, Volacci has specialized knowledge and experience optimizing websites built on the Drupal platform.

Drupal is a popular open-source social publishing system changing the way businesses present themselves online. An advanced content management system, Drupal allows users to develop complex, interactive websites with social features such as blogs, forums, wikis, and more. Fast Company, Forbes, The Onion, SonyBMG, Harvard University, and countless others have taken advantage of Drupal’s capabilities.

Initially created for internal use, Volacci CEO Ben Finklea and team funded, developed, and maintain the SEO checklist module for Drupal users.

Volacci’s scope of work included:

- Review FastCompany.com analytics and traffic reports to determine trends and establish benchmarks.
- Systematic evaluation of over 200 SEO elements (including Drupal-specific items).
- Examine website code prior to February relaunch to determine if any changes were made that had a detrimental effect on rankings.
- Complete on-page analysis including review of site-wide title and description tags for relevance and click-through goals.

Results

Volacci completed their comprehensive analysis within two weeks, and provided an executive summary along with a prioritized list of specific action items. The executive summary identified three primary challenges negatively impacting FastCompany.com's search engine rankings: weak content linking, poor technical communication with Google, and site-wide design flaws. A "top ten" list of recommended changes was provided with the reason behind each change explained, and the solution clearly outlined.

For example, coming in at #6, was the recommendation to fix theme coding issues to improve technical communication with Google:

- Two H1 tags were present on each page, which was confusing the search engines; only one is necessary around the title of each article.
- Images needed keyword rich ALT text to help Google identify and index the content.
- Links were missing keyword-rich title attributes which communicate to Google what the link is about. The Pathauto module in Drupal was recommended to automate this process.
- With almost 18,000 crawl errors on the website, including multiple broken links, it was difficult for the spiders to index the site. A link checker was suggested to identify all broken links that needed repair.

Fast Company was able to implement the recommended changes, and as Google began to reindex the newly optimized website, the impact was obvious:

As a result of engagement with Volacci, search engine referrals to FastCompany.com climbed 200%, and now make up a significant percentage of monthly traffic. According to Mansueto executive Paul Maiorana, "As an advertising-supported business, our page views are hugely important to what we do. Thus, the results of this project had a direct and significant effect on our bottom line."

Conclusion

Organic Search Engine Optimization should be considered in the development of any website; this method of Search Engine Marketing has a lasting effect long after the initial investment of time and money. The Drupal platform by nature can enhance your SEO efforts, and a partner such as Volacci can provide expert guidance.



"Working with Volacci on our Search Engine Marketing was an absolute pleasure. They delivered results within an aggressive time frame and budget, and I wouldn't think twice about working with them again, or recommending them to my colleagues."

- Paul Maiorana, Chief Technology Officer, Mansueto Ventures