

# The seven-step approach

So search engine optimization essentially involves making it easy for search engines to find your website and boosting your position in their rankings. I use the seven-step approach to search engine optimization with all my clients and it has been tried and tested over several years with many different campaigns. It is an all-encompassing strategy, which allocates your time and energy appropriately across a range of valid and ethical SEO activities. Most importantly, it is correctly sequenced, so you do everything in the right order for maximum benefit.

There are essentially three phases to a campaign to improve your search engine ranking: planning and preparation (which includes keyword analysis and setting up your site), the campaign itself, and ongoing monitoring and maintenance. The process is iterative, so data gathered from ongoing monitoring feeds back into future campaign planning, for example. The three phases encompass my seven steps (see the table overleaf).

Each of the three phases needs to be given the appropriate focus. However, the first phase (Steps 1 and 2 in my model) is certainly the most important. In his book on military strategy *The Art of War*, Chinese general Sun Tzu said, “The opportunity of defeating the enemy is provided by the enemy himself.” He also advised generals to “pick the right battlefield.” So it is with SEO: You need to pick the right field on which to do battle and assess up front where your competition is most exposed. If you choose the wrong keyphrases to use on your website, for example, you are likely to expend a good deal of precious time, energy, and money on activities that will bring you scant return.

Before we go into the method in detail, I’d like to give you a brief overview of each of the steps so that you can orient yourself. You may find terms in the discussion that you don’t understand, but all will become clear in the relevant chapter.