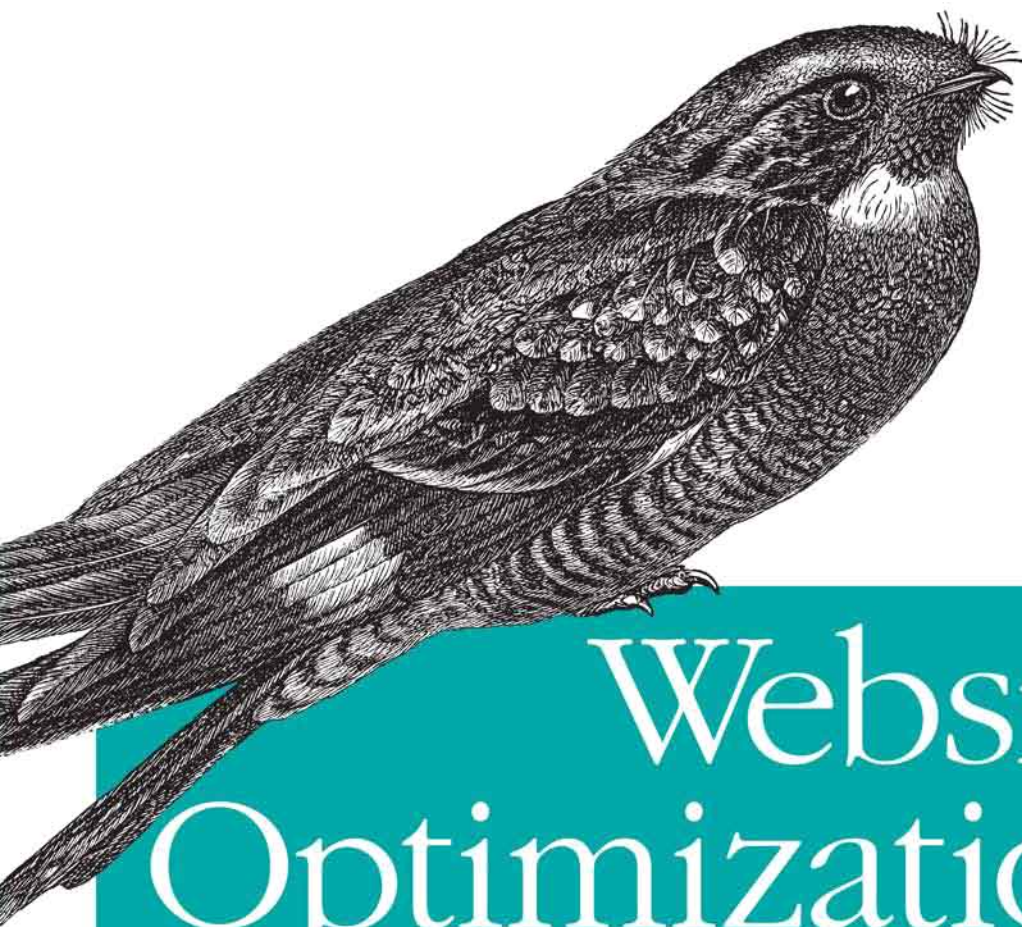


Speed, Search Engine & Conversion Rate Secrets



Website Optimization

O'REILLY®

Andrew B. King

Website Optimization

by Andrew B. King

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CHAPTER 2

SEO Case Study: PhillyDentistry.com

In this chapter, we'll show you how to put into action the optimization techniques that you learned in Chapter 1 and the conversion techniques you'll learn in Chapter 5. To do so, we feature a case study that shows the benefits of natural search engine optimization (SEO).

Original Site

Dr. Ken Cirka, DMD, contacted us in mid-2004 seeking to boost the number of patient leads he was getting from his website. The original website had a simple, graphically rich design using stock images (see Figure 2-1).

Although it was visually appealing to humans, it was not appealing to search engines.

Through the lens of a Lynx viewer, the site looked like this:

```
Title=Dr. Ken Cirka, DMD
```

```
<alt text>
```

```
Dr. Ken Cirka Center City Philadelphia dentist 1601 Walnut Street,  
Suite 1302 Philadelphia, PA 19102 215.568.6222
```

```
</alt text>
```

```
[1]drcirka@phillydentistry.com Center City Philadelphia dentist
```

```
[2][USEMAP:menu.gif]
```

```
<alt text>
```

```
Center City Philadelphia dentist Center City Philadelphia dentist  
Center City Philadelphia dentist Center City Philadelphia dentist  
Dental Care for your lifestyle
```

```
</alt text>
```

```
[3]Meet the Doctor | [4]Hours & Location | [5]Services
```

```
[6]drcirka@phillydentistry.com
```

[3] <http://www.phillydentistry.com/doctor.html> (meet the doctor)
[4] <http://www.phillydentistry.com/hours.html> (hours & location)
[5] <http://www.phillydentistry.com/services.html> (services)

Meta description=Five star service in dental care is abundant in Dr. Cirka's cosmetic and general dentistry office in Center City Philadelphia.

Meta keywords=Dr. Ken Cirka, Ken Cirka Dentist, Philadelphia Dentist, Philadelphia area dentist, Center City Philadelphia dentist, cosmetic dentistry, gentle dentistry, Philadelphia dentistry, philly, bleaching, dentist, dentistry, Philadelphia, dental, Walnut Street, cosmetic, best, DDS, DMD, Dr., doctor, general, center city, pennsylvania, veneers, porcelain, PA, good, Penn, spa, evening, weekend



Figure 2-1. PhillyDentistry.com, circa June 2004

The site used keyword-rich image alt tags, but search engines give more weight to visible text such as headlines and body copy than they do to invisible text. In Dr. Cirka's original site, search engines could detect no body copy or headlines. They saw only alt and link text. The site was also opening up the business to spam; note that publishing a plain-text email address in your page will increase the amount of spam emails that you receive. It is best to use a contact form instead to avoid spam from spambots.

Simulating Search Engines with Lynx

The Lynx browser is a free, open source, text-mode browser that sees web pages like search engine crawlers do; that is, it sees only the textual portion of the page. A *Lynx viewer* is a web-based service designed to view web pages using the Lynx browser. Lynx notation is largely self-explanatory, but note that Lynx indicates a link by using a bracket around the number of the link on the page; for example, [2] signifies the second link on a page. For more information on Lynx see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lynx_\(web_browser\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lynx_(web_browser)) and <http://www.yellowpipe.com/yis/tools/> (includes a Lynx viewer).

As a comparison to the earlier view, the HTML for the old home page began like this:

```
<HTML>
<HEAD>
<TITLE>Dr. Ken Cirka, DMD</TITLE>
<LINK REL="StyleSheet" HREF="/style.css" TYPE="text/css">
<meta name="Description" content="Five star service in dental care is abundant in Dr.
Cirka's cosmetic and general dentistry office in Center City Philadelphia.">
<meta name="Keywords" content="Dr. Ken Cirka, Ken Cirka Dentist, Philadelphia
Dentist,
Philadelphia area dentist, Center City Philadelphia dentist,
cosmetic dentistry, gentle dentistry, Philadelphia dentistry, philly, bleaching,
dentist, dentistry, Philadelphia, dental, Walnut Street, cosmetic, best, DDS, DMD,
Dr., doctor, general, center city, pennsylvania, veneers, porcelain, PA, good,
Penn, spa, evening, weekend">
</HEAD>

<BODY BGCOLOR="#006699" MARGINWIDTH=0 LEFTMARGIN=0 RIGHTMARGIN=0>
<center>
<table border=0 cellspacing=0 cellpadding=2 bgcolor=FFFFFF width=610>
<tr>
<td>
<table border=0 cellspacing=0 cellpadding=2 bgcolor=#006699 width=610>
<tr>
<td>
<table bgcolor="#ffffff" border="0" cellpadding="0" cellspacing="0" width=610>
<tr>
<td align="center" colspan=2>
<table border="0" cellpadding="0" cellspacing="0" width=610>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><br>
```

```
<span class=arial><a href="mailto:drcirka@phillydentistry.com">
drcirka@phillydentistry.com</a></span></td>
<td align=right></td>...
```

Few Indexable Keywords

The title tag, body copy, and headers are the most important factors in search engine rankings for on-site optimization. The description meta tag is of secondary importance for SEO rankings. The keywords meta tag and alternative text have little effect on rankings, but alt attributes do affect image searches.

You can see from Figure 2-1 and from the results of the search engine simulator that the original home page, which was made up almost entirely of graphics, offered little visible text to index. The title tag, “Dr. Ken Cirka, DMD,” had no targeted keywords. There was no visible keyword text to index in the main body of the page. The only applicable keywords were in the description meta tag, the keywords meta tag, and the alt text for graphics.

First Redesign: Mid-2004

Dr. Cirka’s primary goals were to increase appointment requests and to target more lucrative cosmetic dentistry services. Based on these goals, we developed a search engine strategy to optimize Dr. Cirka’s site for higher visibility. An analysis of keyword queries in search engines revealed that most of Dr. Cirka’s target audience searched for dentist philadelphia and cosmetic dentist philadelphia (see Table 2-1).

Table 2-1. Top keyword search demand for Philadelphia dentist

Frequency	Keyword query
1,125	dentist philadelphia
378	cosmetic dentist philadelphia
107	dentist implant philadelphia
105	dentist in philadelphia
73	dentist pa philadelphia

We also found that the site had few inbound links. As you learned in Chapter 1, off-site SEO such as inlinks is weighed more heavily than on-site SEO for high rankings. Based on our research, we advised the doctor to incorporate search-friendly best practices into his site. Dr. Cirka agreed. We launched the redesign of the site in June 2004 (see Figure 2-2).



Figure 2-2. PhillyDentistry.com first redesign, circa July 2004

Search Engine Optimization

Upon indexing Dr. Cirka's new home page, search engines saw the following:

Title=Cosmetic Dentist & Tooth Whitening in Philadelphia Pennsylvania PA

[1]Philadelphia Dentistry Dr Ken Cirka Logo
 1601 Walnut Street, Philadelphia PA [2]request appointment | [3]easy
 financing | [4]guarantee | [5]location
 [6]PHILADELPHIA DENTISTRY HOME | [7]DENTAL SERVICES | [8]SMILE GALLERY
 | [9]ABOUT DR CIRKA | [10]CONTACT

Dr. Ken Cirka DMD, Philadelphia Dentistry

Where dental care goes beyond your expectations

Are you looking for a Philadelphia Dentist? Dr. Ken Cirka, DMD, can
 make you look younger... boost your confidence... and help you enjoy
 pain-free chewing again!

Nothing conveys good health and enhances your smile more than clean, white teeth. So, take advantage of HUGE SAVINGS with our [11]Get Acquainted Specials including our [12]Free New Client Exam. [13]Click here »

COSMETIC DENTISTRY SERVICES

...

The redesigned site was much more search-friendly. It used text-based menus with keywords in the anchor text and in the URIs. The new site included service-specific pages optimized for one or two keywords, and prominently used his primary keyphrases (cosmetic dentist Philadelphia and Philadelphia dentist[ry]). The new title element targeted the phrase cosmetic dentist Philadelphia and tooth whitening Philadelphia:

<title>Cosmetic Dentist & Tooth Whitening in Philadelphia Pennsylvania PA</title>

Conversion Rate Optimization

In addition to SEO, the redesigned website also makes use of conversion rate optimization (CRO). For instance, you can also see the “baked-in” persuasive copywriting and SEO in action. Instead of “Home,” the main navigation bar says “Philadelphia Dentistry Home” to squeeze in his primary keyphrase. The main header contains his primary keyphrase as well as his name, which people now search on:

<h1>Dr. Ken Cirka DMD, Philadelphia Dentistry</h1>

The tagline entices visitors to continue reading for more information:

Where dental care goes beyond your expectations

To grab your attention, the opening paragraph starts with a question and then moves right to the benefits of healthy, straight, and gleaming white teeth:

Are you looking for a Philadelphia Dentist? Dr. Ken Cirka, DMD, can make you look younger... boost your confidence... and help you enjoy pain-free chewing again!

The second paragraph and the rest of the page contain more services, benefits, and calls to action:

Nothing conveys good health and enhances your smile more than clean, white teeth. So, take advantage of HUGE SAVINGS with our [11]Get Acquainted Specials including our [12]Free New Client Exam. [13]Click here »

Free exams, discounts, specials, referral incentives, and even the directive “Click here” all work together to entice visitors to explore more of the site and to contact the office. The URIs are also keyword-optimized, with addresses such as *http://www.phillydentistry.com/cosmetic-dentistry.html*.

Results

After eight months of promotion, Dr. Cirka's site rankings increased from nonexistent to number one on Google for both natural and pay-per-click (PPC) rankings for his primary keyphrase, *philadelphia dentist* (see Figure 2-3). Note that he was also second in Google local results for the same term.



Figure 2-3. Google rankings for *PhillyDentistry.com* after website optimization

In eight months, Dr. Cirka went from gaining one new client per week from his website to gaining an average of nine new clients per week from his website. This nearly tenfold improvement was caused by three factors:

- Keyword optimization of his site
- A monthly promotion campaign to build inbound links
- Minimal PPC advertising

In the nine months after we first worked on his site, Dr. Cirka hired another dentist, added new staff members, and moved to a larger office to accommodate the influx of new patients.

Second Redesign: Late 2007

Dr. Cirka contacted us three years later to give his site a new look and to focus it on different services. Our new design for him incorporated best practices from Chapters 1, 5, and 6 (see Figure 2-4).

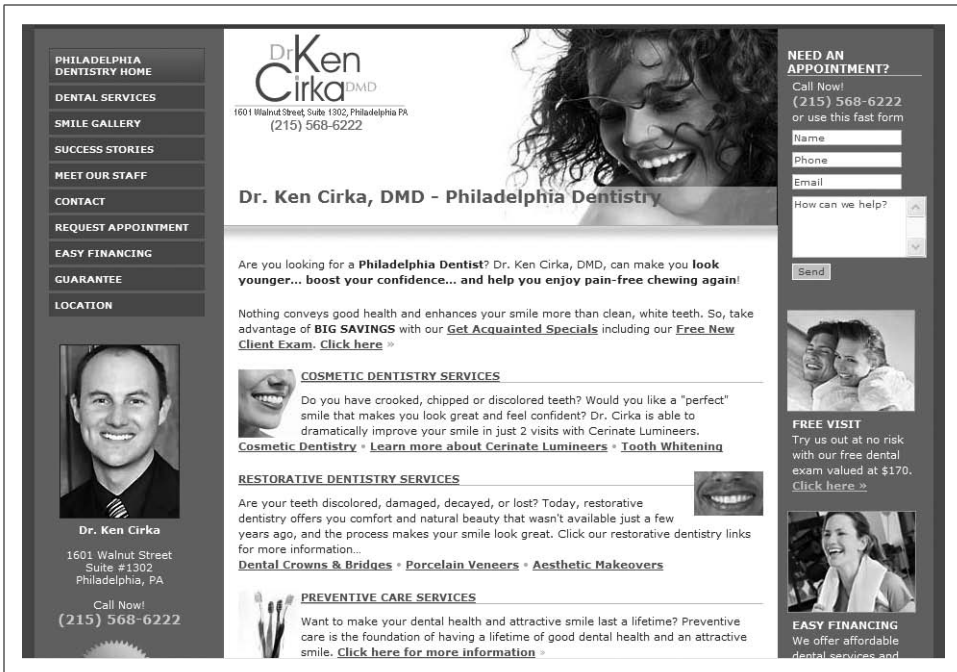


Figure 2-4. Second redesign of PhillyDentistry.com

Search engines saw the new home page like this:

Title=Philadelphia Dentistry by Dr. Ken Cirka - Cosmetic Dentist

```
* [1]philadelphia dentistry home
  * [2]dental services
    + [3]Tooth Whitening
    + [4]Zoom Whitening
    + [5]Porcelain Veneers
    + [6]Dental Crowns/Bridges
    + [7]InvisAlign
    + [8]Cerinate Lumineers
    + [9]NTI Tension Suppression
    + [10]Aesthetic Dentistry
    + [11]Cosmetic Dentistry
    + [12]Preventive Care
    + [13]Free Visit
  * [14]smile gallery
  * [15]success stories
  * [16]meet our staff
  * [17]contact
  * [18]request appointment
  * [19]easy financing
  * [20]guarantee
  * [21]location
```

[22]Dr Ken Cirka, Philadelphia Dentistry

Dr. Ken Cirka

1601 Walnut Street

Suite #1302

Philadelphia, PA

Call Now!

(215) 568-6222

Philadelphia Dentist Awards

Best Dentist...

2007: Dr. Cirka was awarded "Top Dentist" by the Consumers Research Council ...

Dr Ken Cirka Logo

Dr. Ken Cirka, DMD - Philadelphia Dentistry
Healthy teeth and gums for life

Are you looking for a Philadelphia Dentist? Dr. Ken Cirka, DMD, can make you look younger... boost your confidence... and help you enjoy pain-free chewing again!

Nothing conveys good health and enhances your smile more than clean, white teeth. So, take advantage of BIG SAVINGS with our [23]Get Acquainted Specials including our [24]Free New Client Exam. [25]Click here »

[26]Philadelphia Dentist Cosmetic Dentistry Cosmetic Dentistry Services

Do you have crooked, chipped or discolored teeth? Would you like a "perfect" smile that makes you look great and feel confident? Dr. Cirka is able to dramatically improve your smile in just 2 visits with Cerinate Lumineers.

[27]Cosmetic Dentistry o [28]Learn more about Cerinate Lumineers o

[29]Tooth Whitening ...

To increase the number of phone calls we added two conversion builders: just below the menu in the left column is an image of Dr. Cirka, above his address and phone number. Studies have shown that people tend to click more on human faces.

We also placed Dr. Cirka's phone number along with a call to action in the upper-right corner of the screen and integrated into the new logo.

It is important to avoid requiring your customers to make too many clicks. At WebReference.com, we found that with each click a user is forced to make, about 50% of your traffic is lost. To help avoid this, we added a quick contact form on the upper right to encourage more appointment requests.

Let Keywords Do the Work

For higher keyword prominence, the newest home page is ordered to place dental service links high up in the visible body code. The vertical menu on the left appears at the point where most users first begin to scan web pages. To boost credibility we placed Dr. Cirka's awards in the left column, and we included "Success Stories" in the left navigation menu to highlight testimonials from satisfied clients.

Also, note the new title tag optimized for Dr. Cirka's primary keyphrase:

```
<title>Philadelphia Dentistry by Dr. Ken Cirka - Cosmetic Dentist</title>
```

Naming your business with your primary keyphrase is a best practice that allows you to put your business name up front. This automatically front-loads your primary keyphrase to maximize the prominence of keywords.

The description meta tag does three things. It begins with Dr. Cirka's current primary keyphrase, philadelphia dentist; highlights his target services; and ends with a call to action:

```
<meta name="description" content="Philadelphia dentist Dr. Ken Cirka, D.M.D. is an exceptional general and cosmetic dentist specializing in cosmetic dentistry, porcelain veneers, dental crowns and implants, tooth whitening, restorative dentistry and preventive care for healthy teeth and gums. We are currently accepting new patients and referrals. Call for a free consultation.">
```

The top-level heading tag is similar to the previous iteration:

```
<h1>Dr. Ken Cirka, DMD - Philadelphia Dentistry</h1>
```

The second-level header now targets Dr. Cirka's second target phrase, cosmetic dentist[ry]:

```
<h2><a href="cosmetic-dentistry.html">Cosmetic Dentistry Services </a></h2>
```

Links are underlined and colored blue to improve usability and conversion rates. The text includes new persuasive copy for key pages to emphasize the services that Dr. Cirka wanted to target (cerinate lumineers and porcelain veneers).

Results

After the November 2007 redesign, PhillyDentistry.com referred an average of 47 new clients per week to the doctor's office, using a combination of natural SEO promotion and increased PPC advertising. This is an increase of more than 5.2 times over the previous design and an improvement of 47 times over the original site.

The traffic on PhillyDentistry.com went from tens to hundreds of visitors per day after the first redesign. Dr. Cirka was pleased with the results:

The patient response from the website has been absolutely incredible! We are looking to expand our practice, including hiring more staff. Much gratitude and appreciation go to you and everyone from WSO who has helped us.

Summary

This case study shows how search-friendly design, CRO, and steady promotion to build inbound links can boost your visibility and significantly increase the number of new customers to your business. When we started this campaign, Dr. Cirka attracted most of his new clients from traditional offline advertising. After two website redesigns and monthly promotion, Dr. Cirka's practice is thriving due in large part to his website. This case study also shows the value of redesigning your site every few years. As your business changes with new products and services, upgrading your site will keep it current for your users' increasing demands.

To purchase the book go to <http://oreilly.com/catalog/9780596515089/index.html>



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