

SEO Analysis

The Encore Theatre
theencoretheatre.org

John Green
SEO Analyst
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Executive Summary

The Encore Theatre contracted with INP Associates to conduct an SEO analysis of their current website (<http://www.theencoretheatre.org>). The goals of this analysis are to find ways for the Encore Theatre to rank better in search engines for queries related to their industry as well as to attract more organic search engine traffic to their website.

This report is organized into three major sections. The sections are:

Recommended Keyphrases

- A list of recommended keyphrases is presented, as well as the methodology behind their selection.

On-Site SEO Issues & Recommendations

- The current website's content and coding is evaluated for any potential problems or issues that might impede search engine placement, followed by recommendations to correct or improve these areas.

Off-Site SEO Issues & Recommendations

- The current website's relationship with other websites, via inbound and outbound links, is evaluated for any potential problems or issues that might hinder search engine placement, followed by recommendations to correct or address these concerns.

The analysis of the website determined the following major issues:

- The home page proper is not located at the root domain, which can divide PageRank among multiple URLs
- With the exception of the homepage, the title of each page is a direct copy of the page's filename.
- Description <meta> tags are not utilized anywhere on the site.
- Heading tags are not utilized anywhere on the site.
- Second-level pages in the Media section utilize images without alt attributes instead of text for most links.
- Page content is located after navigation in each page's code.
- There is no sitemap file present on the site.
- Inbound links rarely use anything other than the site address for link text.
- The pages found in the Local sections of popular search engines are underutilized.
- Outbound links are very limited in number.

Additional issues of lesser but not negligible importance are also listed.

Recommended Keyphrases

The following are recommended keyphrases that should be targeted by the Encore Theatre website to boost organic search results as well as the average number of global and local searches according to the Google AdWords Keyword Tool:

Keyphrase	Global Monthly Searches	Local Monthly Searches
encore theatre dexter	590	590
encore theater dexter	590	590
encore musical theatre	210	140
modern musical theatre	170	91
musical theatre company	2,400	390
musical theatre michigan	1,000	880
michigan musical theatre	720	720
non profit theatre	1,900	1,600
best musical theatre	1,600	800
musical performances	3,600	2,400
musical theatre auditions	12,100	8,100
broadway in michigan	720	720
activities in michigan	5,400	5,400
auditions in michigan	3,600	3,600
tax deductible donations	12,100	9,900

Use of the organization's name is a given, but the common misuse of the spelling "theater" instead of "theatre" should also be targeted to ensure maximum exposure.

Including geographically relevant keywords is also important in order to attract local searches. Terms such as "Dexter" and "Michigan" are recommended.

All of the keyphrases suggested above show low to medium competition according to the Google AdWords Keyword Tool, with some showing very limited competition. Targeting keyphrases with lower competition can result in a better return on investment.

In addition to the keyphrases listed above, joining the word "auditions" with the name of upcoming performances could be beneficial.

On-Site SEO Issues & Recommendations

Site URL(s)

Websites should have a single canonical URL to reach the homepage. Ideally, the URL should be focus on keywords and/or keyphrases and ultimately be both meaningful and memorable for users. On the current site:

- The main homepage of the site is located at http://www.theencoretheatre.org/Encore/The_Encore_Theatre_Dexter_Ml.html.
- The page located at <http://www.theencoretheatre.org> contains no content. Instead, it contains a meta tag that calls a zero second redirect to the actual homepage located at http://www.theencoretheatre.org/Encore/The_Encore_Theatre_Dexter_Ml.html.
- <http://www.theencoretheatre.org/Encore/> also contains a meta tag that calls a zero second redirect to the actual homepage.
- <http://theencoretheatre.org/> and <http://theencoretheatre.org/Encore/> also redirect to the actual homepage.

By having two separate domains (with and without the *www* prefix) and 5 different web addresses pointing to the single homepage, search engines may count each separately instead of as one. With Google, this can result in a site's overall PageRank being split between multiple pages.

Utilizing keywords and keyphrases in URLs can be very influential toward placement on SERPs. URLs should be kept to a length that conveys meaning via keywords and keyphrases but does not become unnecessarily long and therefore less appealing to search engine users.

- Much like the homepage, all first level pages are located in the *Encore* folder.
- Second level pages which are children of the Media page are located in the *Pages* folder which is itself a subfolder of the *photos* folder which is a subfolder of the main *Encore* folder. While there are two pages located in the *photos* folder, neither appear to be currently linked to any other page on the site.
- The second level pages previously mentioned feature photos of specific performances. The URLs of these pages fall into four categories, each of which has issues:
 - Some pages spell out the entire name of the performance in the URL, using underscores as word separators (e.g., [Little_Shop_of_Horrors.html](#), [Guys_And_Dolls.html](#))
 - Some pages spell out the entire name of the performance in the URL, eliminating spaces in the titles (e.g., [sweeneytodd.html](#), [Annie.html](#))
 - Some pages include only a single word in the name of the performance in the URL (e.g., [Wonderful.html](#), [Yankee.html](#))
 - One page includes a single word in the name of the performance followed by the word "photos" (e.g. [spellingphotos.html](#))

Recommendations for correcting these issues are as follows:

- Utilize the URL <http://www.theencoretheatre.org/> (hereinafter referred to as the "base URL") for the actual homepage.

- Replace all other paths to the homepage with 301 Permanent Redirects from the old page to the new page to preserve any off-site inbound links.
- Move all first level pages to the root folder. Utilize 301 Permanent Redirects when doing so.
- Place second level pages that are children of the Media page in a *Past-Performances* subfolder. Utilize 301 Permanent Redirects from the old to new addresses when doing so. This will create a cleaner and more meaningful URL and will cut down on its length.
- Utilize a consistent naming scheme for performance photo pages that fully takes advantage of searches. Spell out the entire name of the show and utilize hyphens rather than underscores as word separators (e.g., *the-sound-of-music.html*) as search engines do not interpret underscores as such.

<title> Tags

The content of the <title> tag has two key uses: it is the linked text on a SERP and it is the default text when a user bookmarks a page in their browser. On the current site:

- Each page has a unique title.
- The title of the homepage is “The Encore Theatre Dexter MI”
- The title of every other page is the filename of said page, with capitalization and spacing (or lack thereof) to match. For clarity, the first level pages, their URLs, and the content of their <title> tags are documented below:

Page Name in Global Navigation	URL of page	Current contents of <title> tag	Suggested contents of <title> tag
Now Playing	littlewomen.html	littlewomen	Now Playing at the Encore Theatre
Tickets	Tickets.html	Tickets	Purchase Tickets for the Encore Theatre
Media	Media.html	Media	Event Photos from the Encore Theatre
On The Edge	edge.html	Edge	Encore on the Edge at the Encore Theatre
Concert Series	Concert.html	Concert	Concert Series at the Encore Theatre
Donate	Donate.html	Donate	Donate to the Encore Theatre
Membership	membership.html	membership	Encore 100 Members at the Encore Theatre
Auditions	plaid.html	plaid	Auditions for the Encore Theatre
Contact Us	Contactus.html	contactus	Contact the Encore Theatre

Recommendations for correcting these issues are as follows:

- Give each page a unique <title> tag that is not simply based on the URL of the page.
- Make each page title descriptive of the content of the page. For example, utilize the link text used for the page in the Global Navigation.
- Utilize keyphrases in the title (e.g., “Little Women – Musical Performance – The Encore Theatre”)

Heading Tags

Spiders utilize headings to determine the overall structure of the site and are a popular location for keywords and keyphrases on the page. Currently, heading tags are not utilized on any page on this site.

Recommendations for correcting this issue are as follows:

- Use an image-replacement technique to markup the masthead of “The Encore Musical Theatre Company” as a first-level heading (<h1>).
- Most pages on the site already included headings and subheadings, however they are currently marked up as paragraphs. When applicable, create an appropriate page hierarchy and replace <p> tags with the appropriate heading tags.
 - For example, on the homepage, “Enhancing the performing arts in Washtenaw County” and “Professional arts performances in a perfectly intimate setting” could both be second-level headings (<h2>).
- Some pages utilize graphics instead of headings. Utilizing proper semantic XHTML as well as an image replacement technique will resolve this issue.
 - For example, on the “Encore on the Edge” page, an image-replacement technique can be used to markup the “Encore on the Edge” graphic as a second-level headings (<h2>). Following that, upcoming event sub-headings (such as “Nevermore, March 10 – 20” could be third-level headings (<h3>)).

Description <meta> Tag

The Description <meta> tag is often used as the brief summary shown on SERPs. A summary of each page up to 250 characters long can be utilized and should include appropriate keywords and keyphrases. Currently, the Description <meta> tag is not utilized on any page on this site.

The recommendation for correcting this issue is as follows:

- Add a unique Description <meta> tag to each page on the site summarizing the contents of the page utilizing applicable keywords and keyphrases.
 - For example, on the “Encore on the Edge” page, an appropriate Description <meta> tag might include a content value of “Experience musical theatre like never before with our Encore on the Edge series which offers a look at modern musical theatre.”

Keywords <meta> Tag

Despite having a bad reputation due to overuse by spamdexers and linkfarms, the Keywords <meta> tag can still be a factor that can affect placement in search results with some search engines. Currently, the keywords <meta> tag is not utilized on any page on this site.

Recommendations for correcting this issue are as follows:

- Add a Keywords <meta> tag to each page that includes keywords and keyphrases that are appropriate for the page in question.
- The Keywords <meta> tag can be a good place for synonyms for terms that are used on the page.

- The Keywords <meta> tag is also a good place to include the alternate misspelling “theater” to ensure that search engine users can still find the site with the misspelling while still utilizing only the proper “theatre” throughout the content of the site.
- For example, on the “Donate” page, an appropriate Keywords <meta> tag might include a content value of “Encore Theater, tax-deductable donations, plays”

Page Content

The first two to three sentences inside of the <body> tag are important in search engine optimization. When a page lacks a Descriptions <meta> tag, this preliminary text may appear as the brief summary shown on SERPs. On the current site:

- The general order of content in the code of each page is as follows: image-based masthead, text-based global navigation, page content, footer.
- Some but not all pages feature an introduction paragraph explaining the page’s content.
- Second-level pages found in the Media section contain very little body text.

Even though it is unlikely, because the text-based global navigation on each page comes before the actual page content it is possible that the navigation itself will show up as the page’s summary on a SERP (i.e. “Home Now Playing Tickets Media On The Edge Concert Series Donate Membership Auditions Contact Us”).

Recommendations for correcting these issues are as follows:

- Rearrange the code of the page so that the page’s content comes before the global navigation. Use CSS positioning to accomplish the same desired appearance.
- Ensure that each page is given a semantically coded introduction paragraph that utilizes keywords and keyphrases specific to the page in question.
- Ensure that each page contains at least 200-300 words of content, as some search engines (most notably, Bing) favor longer pages.

Link Text

Text within anchor tags serve as keywords and/or keyphrases for the destination page as they serve as a summary for said page. On the current site:

- Link texts throughout the site contain keywords and keyphrases appropriate to their destination pages.
- Second level pages which are linked from the Media page are represented by images without defined alt attributes and with title attributes which are the relative URL to the page in question.

Utilizing an image instead of text is less than ideal because it only provides keywords in the form of the URL and the alt attribute. While utilizing the title attribute can partially make up for this, using the URL of the destination page adds no value.

Recommendations for correcting these issues are as follows:

- Avoid using images as the sole child of an anchor tag. If using an image is desired, offer link text along with the image inside of the anchor.

- For example, wrap both the image of “It’s a Wonderful Life” and the text “It’s a Wonderful Life” in the same anchor tag.
- If opting to use the title attribute on a link or linked image, use an appropriate description that utilizes appropriate keywords and keyphrases (such as the title of the destination page).

Additional Semantic Text Markup

Additional semantic markup such as emphasis tags, abbreviation-related tags, and additional table markup can be beneficial to search engine optimization. On the current site:

- Emphasis tags such as ``, ``, `<i>`, and `` are not utilized on any page on this site.
- Abbreviation-related tags such as `<abbr>` and `<acronym>` are not utilized on any page on this site.
- There are no data tables on the site that can utilize tags such as `<th>` and `<caption>`.

Recommendation for improvement:

- Be aware of additional semantic tags and utilize when possible to take advantage of keywords and keyphrases.
 - For example, on the page for the upcoming play “Little Women,” the director has opted to use ALL CAPS to single out the title of the play. Utilizing an emphasis tag (and possibly styling with CSS) would be preferable.

Keyword Density

Keyword density is a ratio of the use of a keyword or keyphrase against all other text in the code of a given page and should not exceed 7%. On the current site:

- According to the Keyword Density Analyzer at Ranks.nl, the current maximum keyword density percentage for any particular keyword or keyphrase is 4.4%.
- Inline CSS and lengthy class attribute values are used throughout the site.

Recommendations for improvement:

- Take advantage of acceptable methods of increasing keyword density, such as pull quotes from performance reviews as well as patron testimonials.
- Place all CSS in external stylesheets instead of inline in the XHTML code. This will quickly reduce the “noise” that search engine spiders encounter.
- Use descriptive but concise class names instead of the currently lengthy ones (e.g. “graphic_shape_layout_style_default” and “paragraph_style_5”)

sitemap.xml

sitemap.xml provides a roadmap to search engine spiders to all the pages found on a site. This ensures that all pages are spidered and added to search engine databases. There is currently no sitemap.xml file present on the site.

Recommendations for correcting this issue are as follows:

- Create a sitemap.xml file for the site and place in the main root folder. This can either be done by hand or via various free tools found throughout the internet.
- Create webmaster tools accounts with each of the major search engines (Google, Yahoo!, and Bing) and submit the new sitemap.xml file.:

robots.txt

robots.txt files are usually utilized only to instruct spiders to avoid certain areas of the site. However, some search engines utilize it as a pointer to the sitemap.xml file. There is currently no robots.txt file present on the site.

Recommendation for correcting this issue is as follows:

- Create a robots.txt file that contains a link to the site's sitemap.xml file. Utilize the following text in said file:
 - Sitemap: <http://www.theencoretheatre.org/sitemap.xml>

Additional Spidering Issues

- Non-text-based file types were found on the site:
 - http://www.theencoretheatre.org/Encore/Media_files/encore_brochure.pdf
 - http://www.theencoretheatre.org/Encore/Media_files/encore_brochure_1.pdf
 - http://www.theencoretheatre.org/Encore/contactus_files/encoretheatremap.pdf

PDF files require additional processing by search engine spiders. Fortunately, most of the content found in each of these PDFs can be found elsewhere on the site.

Recommendation for correcting this issue is as follows:

- When at all possible, avoid the use of PDFs and other non-text-based files and instead place all pertinent information within the appropriate pages. While modern search engine spiders can crawl PDFs, placing the content directly into the XHTML code allows for better use of semantic markup and tagging that can help search engine placement.

Off-Site SEO Issues & Recommendations

Inbound Links

- A total of 261 unique webpages were found containing inbound links to the site.
- Inbound links were found on the following types of websites:
 - News and Events, including *www.annarbor.com* and *www.herritage.com*
 - Blogs, including one (*roguecritic.blogspot.com*) that features a link in its global sidebar navigation
 - Educational, including *www.library.unlv.edu*
 - Organizations, both for-profit and non-profit, including local Chambers of Commerce and Convention and Visitor Bureaus
 - Personal websites of people who have worked on or performed in past performances
- Inbound links were not found on any discussion boards and there was no directory entry found for the Encore Theatre in the Open Directory Project.
- The inbound links on the external pages overwhelmingly linked to the root URL of *http://www.theencoretheatre.org* as shown below:

Inbound Link URL	Number of Occurrences
http://www.theencoretheatre.org/	255
http://theencoretheatre.org/	3
http://www.theencoretheatre.org/Encore/The_Encore_Theatre_Dexter_MI.html	2
www.theencoretheatre.org	1

It should be noted that the homepage and not a subpage is the page linked in all instances, including cases where the page containing the link is discussing a particular performance.

- Inbound links on external pages also overwhelmingly used the base URL (*www.theencoretheatre.org*) as the link text. There was, however, a greater variety in the less commonly used link phrases, as shown below:

Inbound Link Text	Number of Occurrences
www.theencoretheatre.org	205
http://www.theencoretheatre.org/	13
click here	11
Encore Musical Theatre Company	4
The Encore Musical Theatre Company	3
theencoretheatre.org	3
 Musical Theatre Company	2
Encore Musical Theatre	2
Encore Theatre web site	2

Inbound Link Text	Number of Occurrences
The Encore Theatre	2
	1
Encore Music Theatre	1
Encore Theater	1
Event Website	1
Guys and Dolls	1
http://theencoretheatre.org/	1
The Encore	1
The Encore Muscial Theatre Company	1
The Encore Musical Theatre	1
The Encore Musical Theatre Company Website	1
Venue Website	1
visit website	1
website	1
William Stutts, Jr.	1

- Local listings were found in Google Maps, Yahoo! Local, and Bing Local, but they are not associated with or maintained by the owner or any employee of the Encore Theatre.

Links to reputable websites can benefit overall SERP placement. When linking to external sites, use descriptive text. It is also beneficial to use the targeted keywords and keyphrases in the link text when applicable.

Recommendations for improvement:

- When upcoming events occur, speak with local news outlets to ensure articles and reviews are written. When doing so, encourage them to link to the website using keywords and keyphrases.
- When upcoming events occur, issue press releases that summarize the event as well as the mission of the theatre. Utilize appropriate keywords and keyphrases.
- Work with local organizations such as Chambers of Commerce and Convention and Visitor Bureaus to modify links to the website to include keywords and keyphrases.
- Encourage current performers and staff to write about the Encore Theatre on their personal websites and blogs. Offer to link back to them in return, if they are interested.
- Strike up conversations on upcoming events on discussion boards related to the performing arts.
- Submit an entry for the site to the Open Directory Project.
- Create accounts with Google, Yahoo! and Bing in order to manage and maintain local listings on their sites.

Outbound Links

- Outbound links were found to the Encore Theatre’s Twitter feed and Facebook group page.

- A single additional outbound link was found on the homepage which links to a “Theater Preview” on *www.annarbor.com*. The link text is “Click to read more”.

Links to reputable websites can benefit overall SERP placement. When linking to external sites, use descriptive text. It is also beneficial to use the targeted keywords and keyphrases in the link text when applicable.

Recommendations for improvement:

- Whenever possible, create links to external websites which can benefit the site (i.e., positive reviews, previews of upcoming performances).
- When doing so, provide descriptive text and utilize appropriate keywords and keyphrases in the link text.