

ITC 298, SPRING 2011, EXTRA CREDIT**Chocolati site, SEO improvements to Chocolate-Dipped Fortune Cookie section**

<https://www.chocolati.com/new/Chocolate-Dipped-Fortune-Cookies-custom/>

For extra credit, I embarked on a number of SEO improvements to a client site, Chocolati, based on ideas learned in class. I chose the Chocolate-Dipped Fortune Cookies for my experiment because, according to the owner, this is a niche item for him and he would like to boost online sales. The project took about 10 hours, mostly because the X-Cart Shopping Cart CMS is incredibly dense and difficult to customize. The extent of my SEO efforts before this point only included stocking the meta keywords and including a few oversized meta descriptions.

The following is a list of my SEO improvements:

- **KEYWORDS:** I already had an extensive list of keywords for Chocolati, but I took the opportunity to create a focused list for the fortune cookie pages and add a few choice terms extrapolated from a search of competitors, and from AdWords and SeoBooks keyword tool. Here's the list I ended up with (new words in red):
 - fortune cookie, fortune cookies, Chocolati, chocolate, chocolate-dipped, chocolate-covered, Milk Chocolate, White Chocolate, Dark Chocolate, gourmet, handmade, online, personalized, custom, bulk, **cheap, affordable**, gift, gift box, **hand-dipped**, dipped, **Message, wisdom, phrase, logo, unique, fun**, novelty, business, wedding, birthday, party, event, hospitality, **Fundraiser, baby shower, wedding shower, promotional, giveaway, favors, tradeshow, conference, celebration, graduation, anniversaries, where to buy, order, Chinese**, takeout box, **baked fresh, custom-made, individually-wrapped, customize, custom-printed**, delivery, pick-up, Seattle, Wallingford, Greenwood, Greenlake, Green Lake, Downtown Seattle, Downtown Library, Puget Sound, Western Washington, Northwest, Pacific Northwest, Washington
- **URL's:** Most importantly, I figured out how to enable "clean URL's" on X-Cart, which replaced the auto-generated (and meaningless, in terms of SEO) URL's for every page in favor of addresses with plenty of keywords. X-Cart saves up to 8 unique static URL's for each page and redirects them appropriately, so I made 8 for the category page using what appeared to be the most valuable keywords. I made sure to keep each under 74 characters. The new extensions include:
 - cheap-custom-fortune-cookies
 - Chocolate-Covered-Fortune-Cookies-custom
 - Custom-Fortune-Cookies-in-bulk
 - Personalized-Fortune-Cookies
 - Fortune-Cookies-with-custom-messages
 - Fortune-Cookies-with-custom-fortunes
 - Chocolate-Dipped-Fortune-Cookies-custom
 - Chocolate-Dipped-Fortune-Cookies
- **TITLE TAGS:** I wanted to get some keyword-heavy title tags going, but X-Cart limits the title tags to the exact name of the category. For this product, the category name is already a little long, and I felt something like "Chocolate-Dipped Fortune Cookies with Custom Fortunes" or something would start to detract from UX and give people a reason to skip over it. I settled for "Chocolate-Dipped, Custom Fortune Cookies."
- **ALT TAGS:** Unfortunately, X-Cart does not offer the option to customize alt tags, and to get under the hood of the CMS and customize this would be way too time-consuming. However, I do have direct control over the alt tags in the Home Page Spotlight images (since I created this custom), and I verified that those were set with appropriate keywords.
- **META DESCRIPTIONS:** Previously, the meta descriptions were over 400 characters and included relatively few keywords. I pared them down to 155 characters exactly, and stocked them full of useful keywords. Here's what I ended up with:
 - Chocolati's Chocolate-Dipped Custom Fortune Cookies include personalized messages, and are delivered in bulk individually-wrapped or in takeout gift boxes.
- **HEADLINES:** One of the articles I read for class suggested writing "compelling" headlines like "#1 BEST SELLER!" for all target products. I felt this was overselling a bit, so I only added "BEST SELLER:" to the fortune cookie singles header.

- **CONTENT/COPY:** The copy was previously low on important keywords, and a bit dry on calls to action and selling points that demonstrated the benefit to the buyer. I rewrote the copy for the category page and all the product pages to include as many keywords as possible, and still use natural language and include all pertinent information for someone making a purchase. Please see the site for all new copy.
- **INTERNAL LINKS:** I added a new news item that appears on every page, and links directly to the fortune cookie category page.
- **UX IMPROVEMENTS:** I ran several of the older fortune cookie images through Photoshop to clean them up substantially, and fixed a width problem on the drop-down menu for the flavor of chocolate desired (it was previously falling off the page). **Still to do:** I need to make some improvements to overall site speed and functioning, which is especially an issue in IE. At this point, everything works, so I will have to tackle this rather large project later.
- **ANALYTICS ANALYSIS:** Surprisingly, I had yet to register the site for Google Analytics! The reason was that the host, GoDaddy, offers their own analytics, so I thought this was good enough. I noticed though that GoDaddy does not specify the traffic patterns for *exact* product pages, only for all product pages in general. Google Analytics works directly with X-Cart, so hopefully it will provide some more useful statistics about the fortune cookie pages.
- **EXTERNAL LINKS:** I added incoming links from Twitter (on the Chicolati page and both of my pages) and Facebook (on Chicolati's page and my page), and requested fans retweet or share the links. I also added a blog post to my business site, and used the category name in the link's anchor text there.