# Search Engine Marketing and SEO

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Search Engine Marketing is a term you've probably heard many times. But what exactly does it mean? The term refers to the different ways in which companies get noticed and attract customers to their websites. Some of the related areas include pay per click, click through rates and search engine optimization.

Search Engine Marketing, or SEM, has been around for years, but it is always changing and improving in order to maximize profits. It does take some knowledge of the process in order to make it work well for you and improve business on your site.

There are several different tools involved in the Search Engine Marketing process. In this report, you will learn how to understand and use them in order to optimize your website and increase profits.

# The History of Search Engines

Let's begin with a little history on the subject. After the invention of the internet brought a world of information to our fingertips, the most important next step was to come up with a way to easily search this infinite field for specific, relevant results. Tech programmers and mathematicians worked together to develop algorithms which allowed people to locate information quickly using search engines. These search engines grouped relevant results together within the given search parameters.

It wasn't necessary for us computer users to learn these complicated algorithms. The techies made the search capabilities user-friendly by setting up a search box where all we had to do was enter words or phrases, now known as keywords. By entering these keywords for a search, suddenly the whole wealth of information available on the internet became easily accessible on the screen in front of us.

The original algorithms have changed, and continue to do so, which means they are unpredictable. However, savvy marketers stepped in and developed a way to use these search results to direct searchers to a particular site or webpage. Online businesses were eager to use these search results to boost their business. But the engineers who developed the search technology also wanted to realize some profit from the effort they put into providing this free search capability to the public.

The search engine operators realized that businesses would be willing to pay a premium to have their companies appear on search result pages, regardless of how their search engine optimization was perfected. The most popular search engines, including Google and Yahoo, began to sell advertising space on their search result pages. This was the beginning of the sponsored ads and links which are now prevalent on these pages.

This idea worked well and brought in enormous revenue for both the advertisers and the search engines. These companies now offer marketing programs which allow businesses to bid on top ad placement within search results and learn how to use specific lists of keywords to create compelling ads.

# The Basics of Search Engine Optimization

Of course, optimizing your website to appear high in the free search rankings is a very important part of maximizing your business. You will want to start this process right away. However, seeing profitable results does take some time. While you wait for the traffic from your search optimization to generate, it may be wise to invest in some paid search placement to keep your business flowing with immediate traffic.

The way in which search engines rank websites has changed a lot over the course of the past decade. While the basics remain the same, there is now more of a focus on "off page factors," as opposed to "on page factors." These are terms I will explore more in depth later in this article. The skyrocketing expansion of social media is also playing a huge role in how rankings are determined. It's important to factor this trend into consideration.

But first, I will start at the beginning, and cover the basics of what people search for.

## Keywords are the Key

The most important factor in doing and attracting business on the internet begins with words. Knowing how to use words effectively is the key to getting results. But how do you know which words to use in order to get the results you want?

We have all heard of keywords. We know that these are the words consumers enter into a search box to find what they're looking for. It's a good idea to start with words you think they would likely use. However, not all words are equal. Some are used more frequently than others; and if you choose the wrong words you could limit traffic to your site. There are programs which can analyze keywords for you, but test marketing words is the only way to know for sure which ones work the best.

As the owner of your business, you know your products and services better than anyone else. This gives you an advantage. Use this knowledge to generate the keywords that pertain best to your specific site. This will give you a good start in the search optimization process.

Next, you have to think of other words. Remember that not everyone will know exactly what they are searching for. For example, imagine a website which sells seeds. Someone who wants to plant a garden from scratch may not know exactly which seeds they want or which will grow best in their particular area. To attract traffic to your site, you will need to envision a list of general keywords which someone in this situation might use to begin their search.

An excellent way to find useful keywords is to research your competitors' sites. Which words are they using? Are they using them in different ways than you are? Studying the competition is a valuable way to mine information for your own keyword generation.

Do not overlook the powerful keyword research tools like WordTracker.com. These sites are great places to help you determine the best keywords for your products, services and market.

You should end up with a list of hundreds, maybe even thousands of keywords. You want to have plenty of options to choose from. Single keywords are fine, but it is an even better idea to combine words into unique phrases. This is known as "long tail marketing," and it is a very popular technique for achieving higher search engine rankings.

For example, consider the seeds again. "Seeds" is a well-known search term, but "seed sellers in Orange County" narrows the search to a specific group of searchers, ensuring serious customers will find your site.

## How Search Engines Relate to Content

Search engine optimization should be built into every aspect of your website. Since search engines look for keywords on unique web pages, making sure to put those keywords in all of your content, including titles, headlines, links and other elements, can help boost your rankings. However, for long-term results, a bit more is required. A website must regularly produce fresh content to make itself relevant to search engines. Continually refreshing your site's content will go a long way towards securing a high spot in the rankings for your keywords.

There are many ways in which content benefits your site in a Search Engine Marketing campaign utilizing SEO as a tool. Spend some time thinking about what you want to offer to your search traffic.  Make sure your unique content fills a need. This can be done in a variety of ways:

• Provide informational articles which demonstrate your expertise in a certain area your customers will find relevant

• Uncertain visitors can reassured via how-to articles which will convince them to buy your product

• Feature product reviews and customer testimonials to solidify your credibility and reputation as a seller

• To gain greater exposure across the Internet, be sure that your site appears in article directories

It is vital to keep your website fresh by continually updating content. Search engines crawl and rank the content on your site. It generally takes a few months, or even a bit longer, before you will have enough results to let you know whether your optimized content is working effectively. That is why this should not be the only marketing tool you use for Search Engine Marketing. Keep reading to explore other available tools.

# SEO Checklist

Traffic generated by free search engines can do wonders for your website. The many benefits generated by these free searches include traffic growth to your site, new subscribers and increased sales. However, you cannot just sit back and wait. It does take some effort to improve your search engine rankings. This checklist is a convenient guide to steps for increasing your ranking, and the traffic that follows.

# Off-Page SEO Tips

The following outside factors affect your search engine rankings. It is very important to consider these things when growing your business, as they affect the popularity of your site. Covering these areas will help you your chosen keyword phrases rank higher in the search engines.

- **It is vital to generate excellent content. This will affect all of the following:**

    - ❖ How often your content is shared on social media. Search engines use this information to evaluate the quality of your content.

    - ❖ The amount of time a search engine user remains on your site. You don't want a searcher to find your site and then click back right away. This signals the search engine that your site may not be relevant for that keyword or phrase.

    - ❖ The number of links to your content. It's important to have good content so that people will link to it. Beware of the outdated practice of self-linking. Search engines can detect quality links, so these harm, rather than help.

    - ❖ It is very important to have an active social media presence and always encourage viewers to share your content on social media. You need to be seen all over the web if you want Google to take notice in a favorable way and increase your rankings.

- **Follow these tips to make sure you have quality engaging content to attracts search engines and customers:**

    - ❖ Each page should cover only one unique topic.

    - ❖ Be sure your site is set up with clearly marked, efficient navigation, so that all content can be easily found by both visitors and search engines.

- ❖ The use of attention-grabbing headlines is the best way to let visitors know they've reached the right place and entice them to read more.

- ❖ Your content should always be easy to read. Attention spans are short, and few people will take the time to read a long block of print. Use short sentences and paragraphs and keep your words simple.

- ❖ For the same reason, it's important to use subheads and bullet points to break up your copy. Easy to scan print will keep viewers engaged.

- ❖ Images are powerful ways to attract viewers and help tell your story. Articles with photos and other images always help attract and retain attention.

- ❖ Socialize! Connecting with other website owners in your niche is beneficial to everyone, because friends are more likely to recommend and share your content with others.

## On-Page SEO Tips

In addition to making a good overall impression on the worldwide web with your content, you should also pay attention to optimizing each page on your website. The following list includes a number of things you can do to improve your rankings, but be careful not to overdo it. Make sure the optimization feels natural and makes sense. You don't want to put off your visitors, and search engines are savvy. They will catch on to any attempts to "game" the system.

- Try to make sure all content is at least 300 words long. There may be occasions when this is just not possible, but it is a good guideline to follow. Search engines are looking for a meaningful amount of content.

- Use tools like WordTracker.com for keyword research. You want to find phrases which generate considerable traffic, but don't have too much competition.

- Make sure you put this keyword phrase in both the title of your post and in the title tag. At the same time, it's important to work it in naturally so that the title reads well and appeals to visitors.

- Also put your keyword phrase in the description tag for your post. Make sure the description includes the phrase, and is also interesting enough to make people want to read more.

- Your keyword phrase should be incorporated into your site's URL. For example: best-party-themes.html.

- Use ALT tags to add the keyword phrase and any useful description to images on your page.

- Make content easier to scan by using H2 and H3 tags. These are also good places to include your keyword phrase and variations on it.

- It's a good idea to include your keyword phrase in the first paragraph of your content. Also try to sprinkle some variations on it in a few other places within the body of your content.

- Providing a link or two out to related pages on another site will mark your site as a hub of useful information.

It's important to track your rankings to see how implementing these tips affect your traffic. Inevitably, it will take some tweaking as you progress until you are happy with the results. But it does take some time before search engines update their listings, so make sure to give any changes enough time to gauge their effect before discarding them for something else.

## Improve Your Search Visibility by Getting Affiliates to Promote Your Site

Another powerful tool at your disposal is affiliate marketing. You can get affiliates to advertise for you or increase your revenue by advertising on your site for other businesses which sell related products.

There are many affiliate programs available on the Internet. Some are better than others. Before settling on one affiliate program to improve your marketing and traffic, do some research to make sure you are choosing one that is worthwhile.

When evaluating affiliate programs, these are some of the criteria you should take into consideration: its pay rate and payment schedule, its business philosophy, and above all, the credibility of its product. You should never advertise for a product you don't believe in.

The most popular affiliate programs offer incentives and training to their affiliate partners. Training may be done through the use of newsletters and informational articles addressing the important aspects of Search Engine Marketing which help increase your business. These companies are happy to share information because they

know that loyal affiliates increase profits. In return, you learn how to streamline your business marketing strategy.

Some affiliate partner options to explore include full service companies like clickbank.com and cj.com. If you prefer a do-it-yourself approach, check out 1shoppingcart.com or amember.com.

Certain affiliate partner companies will set up websites dedicated to affiliate marketing. These websites use unique SEO content to increase sales for both you and the affiliate.

# Explore Search Engine Advertising

## Pay per Click (PPC) Advertising

Pay per click advertising provides free upfront advertising (in most cases). You only pay when your ads get clicked on or other action is taken. The benefit to this type of advertising is to gain ad placement in key areas where large numbers of people will view them. Search engine advertising should include some pay per click placement as part of an all-around approach to business growth.

There are several different applications involved with pay per click advertising. You can employ it with affiliate marketing campaigns for you and your partners, in paid searches and with bidding on search engine advertising. Pay per click is a broad term which covers many different aspects. You don't necessarily get paid for every click. Let's examine these more closely for further explanation.

## Keyword-Based Pay per Click (PPC) Programs

Big search engine companies like Google and Yahoo feature pay per click programs offering wide exposure on search engine result pages (SERPs). When using these programs, choose relevant keywords for your website and/or products to create short concise ads which will grab searchers' attention.

Pay per click programs offer a field for testing out your keywords before you launch a major SEO campaign. Use different types of keywords in ads to gauge the responses. Start with broad keywords so you get an idea of the types of keywords searchers are using. Expect to get clicks, but due to the broadness of the keyword, all of those who click through may not be the kind of traffic you need to generate buying customers.

Pay per click ads are short. The exact word and character limits depend on which program you use. Here are some to try:

- Google AdWords

- Yahoo Advertising
- Bing Ads

Each ad contains a line for a title, a description, and a URL link. There is not a lot of room to make a memorable first impression. It is vital to put your targeted keywords in both the title and the description. Also, be sure to include action verbs like "open," "click," and "try", so that searchers know an action on their part is required.

The included URL link directs searchers to your landing page. This is where I will further explain the significance of landing pages, as promised earlier. As any Internet surfer knows, it can be frustrating to have to click through several links just to find the page you want to access. Ad links that lead to a homepage tend to lose potential sales and customers, because the process of getting to the specific product becomes too involved. Again, I cannot stress enough the shortness of searchers' attention spans.

A landing page is the page on your website where the product or service you are selling will appear and be explained to visitors. If you are selling seeds, the landing page for those seeds should contain pictures of the seeds you are selling. Your landing page can be from your virtual store, and should provide the per-unit price and a "buy now" button to encourage easy sales. Direct links are the best way to entice and interest searchers.

Within the pay per click advertising programs, you first choose your keywords, then complete your ads, and finally, you will bid on those chosen keywords. The price you quote will represent the most you will pay for the ad with those keywords to appear on the search results page. You will not actually pay for your advertising until your ads are clicked on the page.

You should always use a mixture of popular keywords and phrases to attract your targeted traffic.  Longer phrases work to narrow the searchers to those who are definitely interested in your particular product or service. You may not see a significant increase in traffic, but you should see sales improve.

## The Final Word on Search Engine Marketing

As you have learned in this article, Search Engine Marketing is a broad term which encompasses several Internet marketing tools for attracting traffic and increasing sales for your business. No one specific tool will bring success. In order to have a good recipe for business growth, you must include a sampling of all the different "ingredients."

Use a combination of all of the tools I have mentioned: search engine optimization, keyword research, link building, affiliate marketing and pay per click programs. These different factors all work together to bring the successful results you want from this type of marketing campaign. Search engines are essential advertising tools, since just about everyone these days uses search engines to find what they are looking for online.

Follow the advice in this article and use the tips and tools you have learned about here to devise a Search Engine Marketing plan to get your business growth started. Remember, that nothing in sales or marketing is static and no one plan will bring optimal results forever. It is a good idea to review your plan regularly and tweak it as necessary to ensure your products or services remain in high demand.

## Summary

I certainly hope this training has been helpful, and that you will spend some time implementing what was discussed here. These techniques have been proven to increase your bottom line.

To Your Massive Success!

Connie Ragen Green

P.S. You may also be interested in my bestselling book, '*Living the Internet Lifestyle*' at http://ConnieLoves.me/Lifestyle