

Search Engine Marketing:

How to Optimize Your Website



What is Search Engine Marketing? It is one of the many buzzwords that have been created to define what companies do on the Internet to get noticed. You hear about search engine optimization, pay per click, click through rate and other terms that seem to be related to the same thing, but what is really going on?

Search Engine Marketing has been around for a few years, but is always improving upon itself to bring in more profit for small and large companies. SEM, as it is abbreviated, is not a magic bullet or a genie in a bottle. It takes knowledge and a good noggin to decipher the ins and outs of the process.

In this report you will learn how to optimize your website using Search Engine Marketing techniques. There are several tools that encompass the topic of Search Engine Marketing and their uses will be discussed here.

History of the Search Engines

For many years after the Internet became popular all anyone talked about was searching the Web. It was a place to play and see what was going on in other parts of the world. Mathematicians and techies devised a way for people to find information faster with search engines. Results could be grouped together according to search parameters.



Only the technical guys knew the algorithms that produced the results but we only wanted to get at the information they promised to give us. A search box allowed us to enter words or phrases that became known as keywords to find a vast amount of information. The entire Internet was at our fingertips.

Algorithms have changed over time which makes them unpredictable. But, marketers discovered a way to use those search results to help searchers find their particular website or webpage. This development was great for businesses and search engine engineers were glad to help but they needed a way to bring in revenue to pay for the free searches they offer to everyone.

The search engines came up with the idea to help businesses that wanted to appear on the search results page to do so regardless of how their search engine optimization was going. They could pay to advertise on the more popular search engines. That included Google and Yahoo. These are the sponsored links or sponsored ads that appear at the top and bottom of the search page.

Their experiment was a success. It was a cash cow. Now, these search engines offer marketing programs where businesses can bid on ad placement in the search engine results pages and create compelling ads from their list of keywords.

Search Engine Optimization

Optimizing your website for free rankings in the search is something you want to do right off the bat, but understand, the results may take time to come. After you've optimized your website and you're waiting for the traffic to come, paid search can bring you immediate results in the meantime.

Over the past decade, the way search engines rank websites has changed a great deal. The basics of optimization are the same, but there is more focus on "off page" factors rather than "on page" factors, which we'll explain in a bit. Add to that, social media is playing a large role in establishing rankings and that is something that should not be ignored.

But let's start with the very basics and it all starts with what people search for...

Keywords



The key to unlocking business on the Internet begins with words. Words are all around us and how we use them makes a huge difference especially in business. The million dollar question is what words you use to get the results that you want.

Everyone knows about keywords or at least they have heard of them. Keywords are entered into the search box and results are spit out. If you know what words they may use that is a start. But, all words are not used as frequently as others. Choosing the wrong words means very little traffic to your site. Programs can analyze keywords for you but the only way to know for sure is to test market them.

As a business owner you have an advantage. You know your product or service better than anyone. The keywords you want to begin with are the ones that pertain to your website. These will get the ball rolling.

Now, there are the other words. Everyone won't know what they are looking for. Let's say that you sell flower bulbs. A searcher may want to establish a garden but they aren't sure what flowers to plant or even which ones work best in their area. To attract them, you'll have to think of general keywords they might use in a search.

You can also find useful keywords on competitor sites. If competitors are using some of the same keywords, what are they doing differently than you? Paying attention to your competition can yield valuable information in your keyword search.

You should also employ the use of powerful keyword research tools like WordTracker.com to help you find the best keywords for your market and products.

Your list of keywords can stretch into the hundreds and probably thousands. This is good because you have many to choose from. Don't just stick to single keyword. Long tail marketing is a

popular technique. Combine keywords to create unique phrases to gain higher search engine rankings.

Here's an example of that. Let's go back to the flower bulbs. "Flower bulbs" is a popular search entry but "flower bulbs sellers in DeKalb County" narrows your search to a select group of people who are serious about finding flower bulbs and buying them.

Content and Search Engines

Search engine optimization should permeate every character on your website. Search engines crawl unique web pages. Using those keywords in your titles, headlines, content, links and other elements can help you rank well, but long-term ranking requires more than that. By consistently producing plenty of fresh content, you're showing yourself as relevant to search engines and you're more likely to enjoy a sweet place in the rankings for your many keywords.

Content has many benefits in a Search Engine Marketing campaign that utilizes SEO as a tool. Think about what you would like to offer to your search traffic. Your content can fill a need by:

- Demonstrating your expertise in a particular area with informational articles for customers
- How-to articles that will address the needs of those uncertain visitors and convince them to use your product
- Provide product reviews and testimonials that solidify your product credibility
- Appearing in article directories for greater exposure across the Internet

Continually update your content to keep the website fresh. Content is crawled on your website and ranked in search engines. It takes a few months or longer to see if optimized content is working so it's a good thing that that is not the only marketing tool you will employ in the name of Search Engine Marketing.

SEO Checklist

Free search engine traffic is an amazing thing. It can grow your targeted traffic, bring you new subscribers and, best of all, increase your sales. But the thing is, you have to work at it. If you want to improve your search engine rankings, keep this checklist handy to steadily growing traffic.

For Your Off-Page SEO

These are things that will affect your search engine rankings from outside of your web page. These are very important for growing the overall popularity of your site and make it easier for you to rank well for your chosen keyword phrases.

- **Create excellent content because it affects the following:**
 - How much your content is shared on social media...this provides important clues to search engines about the quality of your content.
 - How long a search engine user stays on your site. If searches on a search engine and finds your site, but clicks back right away, it will tell the search engine that you may not be very relevant for that phrase.

- How often your content is linked to. If you have good stuff, people will link to it...but beware, search engines can detect quality links, so old self-linking practices are dead.
- Make sure you have a social media presence and you readily encourage your visitors to share your content on social media. It's important that you're being seen all over the web, if you want Google to give you favor.
- **Ways to ensure you've got quality engaging content that attracts users and search engines:**
 - Each page should be on one unique topic.
 - Your navigation is clear and all your content is easily found by humans and search engines.
 - Use attention-getting headlines to grab your visitors' attention and so they know they're in the right place.
 - Make your content easy to read by using short sentences and paragraphs. Keep your words simple.
 - Break up your copy with subheads and bullet points, so viewers can scan it easily...instead of having them click away.
 - Use images to draw the eye in and tell a story with your content. Humans are visual creatures and photos and other images can help retain their attention.
 - Don't forget to connect with other website owners in your niche. Friends tend to share the content of others, so this is just a win-win for all of you.

For Your On-Page SEO

In addition to the big overall picture of creating great content that makes its way around the web, there things you can do on each page you post to your website. Here is a list of quite a few things that can affect your rankings, but remember...don't overdo it. Keep your optimization natural and make sure it makes sense. Otherwise you might alienate your visitors and search engines can sniff out attempts to game the system.

- Make sure your content is at least 300 words long. This is not a hard and fast rule, but certainly a good guideline. Search engines want to see there is some meat to your content.
- Conduct keyword research to find a highly targeted phrase that gets decent traffic, but doesn't have too much competition. Try a tool like WordTracker.com.
- Use your keyword phrase in the title of your post and in the title tag, but make sure it will be appealing to website visitors.

- Use your keyword phrase in the description tag for your post. Make sure the description not only includes the keyword phrase, but is interesting enough to make people want to click.
- Incorporate the keyword phrase into the URL of your page. For example: fun-family-vacations.html
- Add the keyword phrase and other useful description to your images with the use of ALT tags.
- Employ the use of H2 and H3 tags. They make your content easier to scan and are also a good place to include your keyword phrase and variations of it.
- Include the keyword phrase and variations of it in a few places in the body of your content. Try to include it in the first paragraph as well.
- Show you are a hub of useful information and link out to a related page on another website.

Keep track of your rankings and tweak things as you go along. Just remember, it can take a bit of time before search engines update their listings, so give your changes time to come into effect.

Get Affiliates to Promote You and Improve Your Search Visibility

Affiliate marketing is another arrow in the quiver. Get others to advertise for you or make more revenue advertising for businesses with similar products.

Let's talk about becoming an affiliate partner. There are several affiliate programs on the Internet, but all are not created equal. Before choosing an affiliate program to enhance your marketing be sure that it is worth your while.



Some criteria to consider are: payment schedule, pay rate, credibility of the product and business philosophy. If you can't believe in the product, there is no reason to advertise for it.

Popular affiliate programs are the ones that offer incentives and training to their affiliate partners. Training can come in the way of newsletters and informative articles that address aspects of Search Engine Marketing to help you increase your business. Sharing the wealth begins with sharing information. The company gets a loyal affiliate who knows their stuff and you get help streamlining your business marketing strategy.

You may want to try a full service like clickbank.com, cj.com or do it yourself with 1shoppingcart.com or amember.com.

Some affiliates set up websites just for affiliate marketing. The website employs unique SEO content that increases sales for your both of you.

Search Engine Advertising

Pay per Click (PPC)

Pay per click is an advertising formula that gives free upfront advertising (in most cases) and you only have to pay when your ads are clicked or some action is taken. The strategy here is to have your ads placed in key areas where they will get seen by a large number of people. Search engine advertising needs to include this little gem for an all-around approach to growing your business.

Pay per click has several different applications. It can be used in affiliate marketing campaigns for you and your partners, paid searches and bidding on search engine advertising. Pay per click is a broad term but that doesn't necessarily mean that you will get paid on every click. We'll explain.

Pay per Click (PPC) programs based on keywords

Search engines like Google and Yahoo have pay per click programs where you can gain exposure on search engine result pages (SERPs). With these programs, you use relevant keywords for your website products to create short concise ads that gain the attention of searchers.

Pay per click programs are a way to test out your keywords before mounting a major SEO campaign. Different types of keywords can be used in ads and the response gauged. Beginning with broad keywords allows you to get an idea of what types of keywords searchers are using. You will get clicks but because it is such a broad keyword, all of the clicking visitors may not be the right kind of traffic that goes from sales lead to buying customer.

Pay per click ads are short and there is a word or character limit depending on the program. Check out these programs:

- Google AdWords
- Yahoo Advertising
- Bing Ads

Each ad has a line for a title, a description, and a URL link. You don't have much space to make a terrific first impression. One must is to use your targeted keywords in the title and the description.

AdWords

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Be sure to add action verbs like “click, try, and open” to let searchers know an action on their part is required.

The URL link will direct searchers to your landing page. We alluded to landing pages earlier but here is where you get the explanation. As an Internet surfer, you know how frustrating it can be to go through several links just to find where you want to go. Links in ads that lead to a homepage lose potential sales leads and customers because the process becomes laborious.

A landing page is a website page where the product or service will appear and be explained to visitors. If you are selling flower bulbs, the landing page for those bulbs will contain pictures of the bulbs you have for sale. Your landing page can be from your virtual store providing per unit price and a “buy now” button for a hopefully easy sale. Direct links are best to interest the searcher.

Within these programs, you will choose your keywords, complete your ads, and then bid on those keywords. The price you quote represents the most you will pay for the ad using those keywords to be shown on the search results page. Still, you don’t pay for your advertising until the ads are clicked on the page.

Use a mixture of popular keywords and keyword phrases to gain targeted traffic. Longer phrases narrow the searchers to those who are definitely interested in the product or service you have to offer. The traffic rate may not increase significantly but your sales can.

Search Engine Marketing Wrap Up

Search Engine Marketing is a catch-all term that comprises several Internet marketing tools for drawing traffic and making sales with your business. There is not one specific tool that will bring success. In fact, if you put all of your eggs in one basket, you can end up with a gooey mess.

It takes a combination of search engine optimization, link building, pay per click programs, affiliate marketing and keyword research to bring about the overall results you are looking for with this type of marketing campaign. Search engines have upped the ante for advertising since just about everyone will use a search engine to find what they are looking for instead of just aimlessly surfing.

Use what you have learned here to devise a Search Engine Marketing plan to get you started. Nothing is set in stone however. It is always best to review your plan on a regular basis and tweak as needed to keep your products or services in demand.