Search Engine Marketing Overview

Presented by

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Why are Search Engines important?

"81 percent of internet users find the web sites they're looking for through search engines. And 54 percent of experienced online shoppers primarily rely on a search engine when trying to find a product to purchase online."
- Jupiter Communications: Consumer Survey Data

"Search engines have created more awareness for websites than all other advertising combined including banners, newspapers, television, and radio."
- IMT Strategies

"Over 80% of search engine users find what they are looking for within the first three pages. Sales leads made from keyword and phrase searches are the most qualified and have the highest purchase probability."
- Forrester Reports

An effective online marketing campaign begins with solid search engine marketing. For driving new sales to your website nothing else is as effective. Search engines have a number of advantages.

1. **National and International audience**
   You have people visit your site from all over the country and all over the world. There is no other method for targeting such a diverse group.
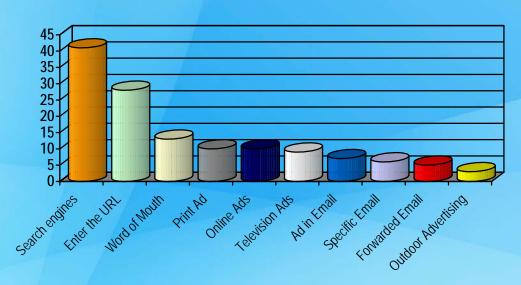2. **Inexpensive**
   Cost per visitor and cost per sales it a fraction of offline print ads and lower than any other online alternative including banner ads and email.
3. **Highly Targeted**
   In order to find you through a search engine a searcher must enter a keyword that's on website's pages. They can enter your site directly to product pages. This is as targeted as you can get.

Main methods of accessing websites

3 types of Search Engines

1. **Spiders**
   The search engine sends out a 'spider' or 'robot' that records all the text on your website. That text is then indexed in a database, categorized by keyword, and given a relevancy ranking. A higher relevancy ranking makes your pages appear higher when the search engine returns results to a visitor.
   a. **Main Engines** – Google, Yahoo, MSN
   b. **Benefits** – These are the Big Three and they cover 95% of all search engine traffic. Concentrate your efforts here and forget about the little guys.

2. **Directories**
   Directories have websites submitted to them for review. The best directories are reviewed by hand and disallow affiliate sites or sites with little or no content. Most directories get very little traffic but, since the included websites are reviewed for quality, the Big Three consider them a good source to find new websites. Getting listed in directories is the most common way to build link popularity.
   a. **Main Engines** – Business.com, DMOZ.org, GoGuides.com, JoeAnt.com, Gimpsy.org
   b. **Benefits** – While these engines don't get a lot of traffic other search engines use their results. Spider engines like Google consider directories to have high quality content and often index the directory's additions.
   c. **Cons** – These engines have been depreciated by the Spidering search engines. They are probably not worth the money anymore.

3. **PPC** – Pay-per-click search engines sell ranking by keyword in an auction format. If you want to have a high ranking you simply bid more for that particular word. These results appear at the top or side of the regular listings.
   a. **Main Engines** – Yahoo Search Solutions and Google Adwords. Shopping PPCs or price comparison engines, include Shopping.com, Nextag.com, and Shopzilla.com.
   b. **Benefits** – Getting listed in a Directory or Spider engine can take weeks or months and getting a good ranking can take up to a year of trial and error. With a PPC listing you're up and running in under a week and you can get exactly the keyword and ranking you want.

What is SEO?

SEO (search engine optimization) is the process of altering a page's text and HTML coding to be relevant for specific, targeted keyword phrases. A keyword phrase must be present on the page in various places for that page to rank in the search engine for that particular keyword. A page may be ranked for several different keywords.

A keywords search in a search engine may product 30,000 results, but visitors rarely go beyond the first two result pages. It's very important that you rank high enough to appear in the top 20 results. Search engines use a formula to decide which pages best fit for a particular search and therefore where your pages will rank.

Search engines look at both on-site and off-site factors when determining your page rank. SEO deals with improving the on-site factors. Building a search engine friendly site begins by choosing the right keywords to incorporate into the website. Second, you need to structure your HTML to make it inviting to the search engines so they can find your keywords. Third, create keyword rich content for the search engines to index.

SEO is an ongoing process. It may take 3-6 months to get ranked for certain keywords and then even longer to get a top 20 listing. You may have to experiment with different combinations of keywords to get the rankings your want. Also, search engines often change their relevancy formulas and you may need to adjust your website just to maintain your current rankings.

Unethical SEO

Marketers are constantly trying to fool the search engines into giving them a better ranking. Search engines constantly change their ranking formula to increase relevancy and eliminate marketers looking for shortcuts. Some of these techniques will work for a time, but rarely long term. If search engines catch you using these methods they can lower your rankings, drop your pages from their index, and in extreme cases, ban your website. Here are some of the techniques that you'll see advertised.

1. **Cloaking** – Each search engine sends out a robot to spider your website. A cloaker records the IP address of the robot and then feeds the robot a different page than what a regular viewer sees.
2. **Doorway pages** –Also known as gateway, doorway, frame pages, or poor man's cloaking. You create a page with very specific keyword density and submit it with a redirect to your regular site. These pages are generally very ugly and would never pass human scrutiny.
3. **Resubmit your site every month** – Once a site has been listed you do not need or want to resubmit. Repeated submissions can be considered spam and actually reduce your rankings.
4. **Submit to 30,000 search engines for $29.99 a month –** 10 search engines account for 99% of all search traffic, where are all these other engines? You'll be listed on foreign engines, specialty engines, FFA lists, vortals, and most likely your email address will be sold to email spammers. Don't waste your money.
5. **Link Farms/ FFA (free-for-all) links –** Every since link popularity became a factor people have tried to inflate their link numbers. What people don't realize is that the *quality* of the link counts more than the *quantity*. Sites were set up to trade links between sites and the search engines very quickly penalized sites participating in this activity.

Link Popularity

What is link popularity?

Search engines use a formula to decide which pages appear in their search results and how high they appear in those results. About 30% of that formula is decided by your link popularity. Search engines perceive website with lots of incoming links to be 'popular' and deserving of higher rankings. They believe that if a lot of people have chosen to link to you then you must have good content that other people will want to find.

Link Popularity is described by Search Engine Google like this:

"Google interprets a link from page A to page B as a vote, by page A, for page B. But, Google looks at more than the sheer volume of votes, or links a page receives; it also analyzes the page that casts the vote. Votes cast by pages that are themselves "important" weigh more heavily and help to make other pages "important."

"Important, high-quality sites receive a higher PageRank, which Google remembers each time it conducts a search. Of course, important pages mean nothing to you if they don't match your query. So, Google combines PageRank with sophisticated text-matching techniques to find pages that are both important and relevant to your search."

Link Popularity is described by Search Engine Teoma like this:

"Instead of ranking results based upon the sites with the most links leading to them, Teoma analyzes the Web as it is organically organized—in naturally occurring communities that are about or related to the same subject—to determine which sites are most relevant. To determine the authority—and thus the overall quality and relevance—of a site's content, Teoma uses Subject-Specific PopularitySM ranks a site based on the number of same-subject pages that reference it, not just general popularity."

How do I increase my link popularity?

The basic concept of link popularity is simple. If someone links to your site, you get a point. If you link to another site they get a point. But not all sites are equal and therefore not all links are equal. A link from a high traffic industry portal is worth infinitely more than a link from a low-traffic free-for-all site.

Links are judged by their theme, page rank, context and popularity. That means that you want links from website within your industry, that rank well themselves, are surrounded by relevant text and are considered popular for your industry. So swapping 200 links with random websites won't due much to increase your score.

Link value has many attributes including:

1. **Theme Association -** Is this link source site related by theme to the destination site?
2. **Construction –** Is the link a text link or an image? Is there anchor text?
3. **Source Page –** Is the site that is producing the inbound link a ranked site?
4. **Destination Page –** Is the inbound link going to a page about a particular keyword? Is this a dominant page about that topic or does a better page exist?
5. **Relationship –** Are they on the same c-block? Are these two sites owned by the same company? IP Address/Who Is.
6. **Quantity –** Having one theme-associated link is good. However, having 100 theme-associated links is definitely better.

The ideal link would be an outbound link from an older site with good Pagerank and comes from a page with lots of text discussing your theme and incorporates your link in the body of the text. The pages should have fewer than 20 outbound links so it doesn't look like a links page. The best example would be a well written article about your industry that links to your website.

How to attract links
Why would someone want to link to your website? Is your content relevant and of value to their customers? While some sites will link to you because of who you are (a member of their organization) most people will only link to you if you have good content. I suggest reading the article *What makes my site link worthy?* By Eric Ward.

http://www.ericward.com/articles/linkworthy03-03.html

Where to ask for Links
Once you have link-worthy content you need to ask for people to add it too their websites. There are a lot of theme related websites that will be glad to add your link.

> **Industry Websites/Associations/Magazines** – Find out if any organizations or business groups that you belong to offers links to its members. This is an excellent source of links within your theme.
>
> **Vendors** – Ask all you vendors to link to your website. They may already have a page that let's people find resellers in their area.
>
> **Directories** – Human reviewed directories are often spidered by other search engines as a source of high quality links. Paid directories like Business.com, JoeAnt.com, and Gimpsy.org are often indexed by Google and others. Costs range anywhere from $20 - $100 per submission. This has become standard practice for all link building programs.
>
> **Press Releases** – If you plan on doing offline press releases, plan on using online as well. Beyond their branding and advertising value, sites that pick up the release will provide a link back to your website. Be sure to use the name and URL of the website somewhere in the article to insure a link. Press release links are generally temporary, but these sites do get re-indexed almost daily by the search engines to keep content up-to-date.
>
> **Online Articles** – There are thousands of websites that offer newsletters and articles to there visitors. They are always looking for new writers to provide content. By submitting articles you are setting yourself up as an expert, providing good information, and creating a link that search engines and people will follow. All the articles will have a small bio at the end with a link to your website.
>
> **Content link** – The best links are from other websites who feel that your content is worth sharing with other people. If you have good information about your topic then people will link to you as a reference. Not only will you increase link popularity but you'll have a good chance of attracting people interested in your products.

Reciprocal Links – Reciprocal links used to be the best way to build up link popularity. Recently however, they have been demoted due to reciprocal link campaigns that involved hundreds of websites, but none of which were relevant to each other. It's much harder to get links to quality websites because webmasters have been inundated with requests. Google has stopped counting most reciprocal links.

With that said, if you have relationships with other website owners you should definitely set up links to each other. Not only are you building link popularity but you may pass visitors on to people who deserve the business.

Bad Links
Link popularity programs generally focus on quality or quantity, but not both. Quality link building can be a time consuming process. Low quality links are much easier to get but can actually hurt your page rankings. Search engines are smart enough to recognize deceptive linking strategies and will actually penalize you if you're linked to link farms or have hundreds of reciprocal links to random websites.

Resources
www.ericward.com – The grand daddy of all link strategists.
www.linkmatters.com/downloadpdf.html - If you want to do link building yourself then I recommend download their Linking Matters Report and worksheet. It will take you step-by-step through a link campaign.

Pay-Per-Click (PPC)

Pay-Per-Click (also known as Pay-Per-Placement or Pay-Per-Performance) search engines sell ranking by keyword in an auction format. If you want to have a high ranking you simply bid more for that particular word. These results appear as Sponsored Listings at the top or side of the regular listings. Whenever someone clicks on your link you get charged.

The advantage is you can get the exact ranking you want for the exact keyword you want all in about 24 hours. Traditional SEO can take months to take effect and even then can not guarantee specific keywords. PPC ensures you are found for your most important keywords and helps to deliver a steady stream of traffic to your website.

The main disadvantage is cost. Most search engines only display the top 3 or 4 positions, so those rankings are very competitive. Costs can range anywhere from $0.10 to $10 or more per keyword. Keyword choice and careful monitoring are very important to maintain a positive return-on-investment (ROI).

Just like picking keywords for SEO, you need to carefully select keywords for your PPC campaign. More generally keywords are more expensive and will result in higher clicks, but generally lower ROI. Niche keywords have a lower price and lower traffic but generally a higher ROI. It's important to track your results and to find a balance.

There are three big players that cover 95% of the market – Google Adwords, Yahoo Search Marketing, and MSN Live. Many other search engines use their search results to augment their own listings.

> Google Adwords – http://adwords.google.com
> Yahoo Search Marketing – http://searchmarketing.yahoo.com
> MSN Adwords - http://advertising.msn.com/home/home

Shopping PPCs

General PPC listings appear in the major search engines like Yahoo, Google, and MSN. Shopping PPCs or Price Comparison Engines have their own websites. People come to these websites to compare products and pricing. They collect data from websites about products through a datafeed which supplies photos, descriptions, and pricing. Visitors can then comparison shop before going to the individual websites. While these engines produce fewer clicks than regular PPCs, visitors from these sites are already pre-qualified themselves and generally result in more sales.

Shopping PPCs also buy ads from the regular PPCs. There product listing commonly appear in paid and regular search engine listings. Here are a few of the biggest.

> www.Froogle.com – Free shopping site by Google
> www.Shopping.com
> www.Nextag.com
> www.Shopzilla.com
> http://Shopping.Yahoo.com – This is the Yahoo shopping site
> www.Smarter.com
> www.Become.com
> www.shopwiki.com
> www.PriceGrabber.com
> www.MySimon.com

Local Search

More and more people are choosing the internet as their first choice to look for local businesses. Go to Yahoo Local and type in 'pizza' along with your address and you'll have all the pizza restaurants within a 10 miles radius of your address. There isn't an offline medium that offers that kind of power and convenience.

This is why in the past year, the search engines like Yahoo, MSN, and Google have spent large amounts of money to improve their search functions for local markets. All the major yellow pages are now online to capture visitors. Most will sell you a package of online features along with your offline ad. Online ads have a number of advantages

> Generate highly qualified leads and sales from local customers.
> Boost local offline sales - an increasing number of people search the web for products and services they buy in an offline store.
> Low cost per lead compared to print Yellow Pages and Direct Mail.
> Links directly to your company website. This allows the customer to immediately come to your website for more information on your products and services.

Local search engine marketing uses the same techniques as outlined above but targeted at a specific geographic region. You will include local keywords on your website by state, city, county or by region, like the Rocky Mountain, the Pacific Northwest or New England. PPC engines like Google actually let you select regions where your ads will appear. That way you don't have people from Texas clicking on your ads for services only available in New York.

Targeted local search will save you money and effort. You won't have to compete with national chains or people in other regions. You'll have lower traffic but warmer leads as people self qualify by their location.

Local Search Guide
www.localsearchguide.org is a resource where you can find of all the major companies that offer local search products. Internet Yellow Pages, Search Engines, Search Tools, and Vertical Directories are all represented. The Guide is constantly updated so you can always find good company contact information.

Local Checklist
Here are the big companies you should contact to make sure you're properly listed in your local markets. The basic listings are free so there's no excuse not to get registered. If you can't find the time then there are services that will get your listed for a reasonable fee.

1. **Business Listing** – Check to see if your business is included in the three largest sellers of business addresses; Amacai (http://webapp.localeze.com/bizreg/add.aspx), infoUSA (http://list.infousa.com/ - look at the bottom of the page – link says 'Update My Listing'), and Acxiom (http://bcb.acxiom.com/start.pl).

2. **Submit your site to local search engines.** Submit your Web site to local search engines such as Google Local (https://www.google.com/local/add/login?hl=en_US), MSN Local (http://webapp.localeze.com/bizreg/add.aspx), Yahoo Local (http://searchmarketing.yahoo.com/local/index.php), and TrueLocal (http://www.truelocal.com/getlisted.aspx). This will also get you included in the Mapping services on Yahoo, Google, and MSN.

3. **Online Yellow Pages -** Find and update your listings at YellowPages.com (http://www.yellowpages.com/sp/advertise/), Verizon SuperPages (http://my.superpages.com/spweb/portals/customer.portal?_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=bp_listing_find&_nfls=false), and SwitchBoard.com (http://www.leads.com/switchboard.aspx).

4. **PPC (Pay-Per-Click)** – The search engines sell advertising space beside their search results. You can base your ads on keywords and geographic area. Only people within your geographic area will see your ads, thus reducing the number of click-throughs to your website and the cost of your advertising. MSN (http://advertising.msn.com/home/home), Yahoo (http://searchmarketing.yahoo.com/local/index.php), Google (http://adwords.google.com).

5. **Submission Services** – If you don't have the time to do it yourself, outsource it. For a yearly fee Relevant Yellow and RegisterLocal will make sure your information gets into all the right databases and checks to make sure it's accurate.

6. **On-site Changes** – Make sure that your physical address is easy to find for both search engines and visitors. If you are a local company, then I suggest adding your address to the bottom of each page.

Resources

These websites are a great way to for you to educate yourself on online marketing as well as keep up with new trends.

a. www.clickz.com – Articles on a variety of marketing including email marketing, conversion, local search, branding and more.

b. www.marketingsherpa.com – Presents case studies from real website owners and marketers. I highly suggest signing up for a newsletter.

c. www.grokdotcom.com – Create a more persuasive website.

d. www.conversionchronicles.com – Articles on how to convert more visitors into customers.

e. www.websiteservices.com – This is a free offline and digital magazine that discusses eCommerce and website issues. Great way to keep up on new ideas for your website.

f. http://www.highrankings.com/archives.htm - If you have questions about writing for your website, this is a good place to start. Jill Whalen's newsletters is perfect for people just getting started. I highly recommend her PDF "The Nitty-Gritty of Writing for Search Engines" http://www.highrankings.com/seo-writing.htm.

Where do I start?

Here are the first steps every new website owner should take.

1. **Budget and Strategy** – How much do you want to make per month? How many customers will you need to achieve that goal? You need to be realistic in your expectations. If you assume a 1% click-through rate on your online ads and a 1% conversion rate on your website, you'll need 1000 people to see your ad in order to get one sale. How much will money/time do you need to spend each month to get those visitors?
2. **Keyword Research** - www.wordtracker.com – Almost all online marketing is based on keywords so using the right keywords is vital to your success. Word Tracker records all the keywords entered into search engines in the past 90 days. You can go in and see how many times someone looked for the keywords that you use. Two phases that mean the same thing may have greatly different amounts of search traffic. You have a copy of your keyword report attached to this email.
3. **PPC** – Fund accounts with Yahoo, Google and MSN and you'll start getting traffic to your site within a few days. Organic search can take months to get your site listed. I've attached an Overture (Yahoo) report to give you a cost estimate.
   a. Google Adwords – http://adwords.google.com
   b. Yahoo Search Marketing – http://searchmarketing.yahoo.com
   c. MSN – http://advertising.msn.com/microsoft-adcenter
4. **Get Links** - Some search engines (like Google) won't index your website until you have links. Either do it yourself or employ a link building company.
   a. Yahoo Business Directory - https://ecom.yahoo.com/dir/submit/intro/ - Each submission is reviewed by hand so spam or affiliate sites are excluded. Since the directory is considered high quality, lots of other search engines, including Yahoo's own searc bot, regularly index the directory.
   b. DMOZ.org – This used to be the de facto everyone tried to get because so many search bots used it. Unfortunately, it got so big the volunteer editors couldn't keep up and it would take a year or more to even get reviewed. While it's importance is declined significantly, it only takes a few minutes to register.
5. **Press Release** - You have a unique product in a niche market. First, try to get product reviews from different magazines, websites, and bloggers. They will link to your site as part of their review. Second, offer to write articles for other peoples' websites. Come up with two or three articles talking about common tire problems and how to solve them.
   a. http://www.urlwire.com/index.html - I'd highly suggest spending the money on this service. Eric Ward is the first link building professional. If you can get listed here you'll have a huge jump on your link building.
   b. www.prweb.com
   c. www.prfree.com
6. **Content** – Always be looking to improve and expand your content. Organic listings are all about good content so this is a good place to spend your time. If you want to learn more about writing content and META tags that are search engine friendly, I suggest reading http://highrankings.com/seo-writing.htm. It's a $50 PDF but the most concise summary on the topic that I've found.

What does Blue Avenue Design do?

Blue Avenue Design can help you manage your online promotions. As an industry, internet marketing is less than 10 years old, and is very fluid. You need to understand and adapt your marketing as changes arise. A comprehensive online marketing campaign can drive a lot of qualified traffic to your website and determine whether the internet is a profitable marketing channel for you.

My role is a marketing manager. Whether you need some help in getting started doing your own promotions or want to find professionals to do the work for you, I can help you manage, monitor, and maintain your campaigns.

If you want an aggressive campaign I suggest you find companies who specialize in their respective areas. I can help you find the right company and make sure they aren't over-charging or over-promising on results. If you want to do some of the work yourself, I can point you toward the right resources and help you setup accounts. I can also do research in your industry and find websites for link building.

Visitor Tracking
How many people are visiting your site? Which pages are they looking at? What keywords did they use to find you? These are the questions we can answer with visitor tracking. Most importantly, visitor tracking records the referring website so you know where your visitors came from and if your marketing dollars are producing results.

My web hosting packages include basic visitor reports based on server records. For low volume, non-commerce sites this is fine. For eCommerce sites I recommend that you use software based visitor tracking. Code inserted on every page of the website updates a cookie written to the visitor's computer that allows us to track them as they move through the website. Software based tracking also allows us to follow visitors from ads. We can track a visitor from a paid ad, to the site, and all way through the shopping cart. You can then determine how much revenue each ad produced.

Website Updates & Maintenance
Your business isn't static and your website shouldn't be either. You want to add new products, change descriptions, add features, and generally improve as time goes by. Monitoring, maintaining, improving your website is an ongoing process. After your website is complete, Blue Avenue Design can continue to maintain your website and manage your online promotions.