

Inside Edge

Search Engine Marketing - Make it Work for Your Business

In this month's edition of Inside Edge, we look at the trends, tools and techniques of Search Engine Marketing (SEM). Read on to find out how your business can leverage SEM and attract targeted traffic that converts into paying customers.

Whether it's a big brand like Sony, an e-marketplace like Amazon and eBay or a local chocolatier's business, all of them have one thing in common today - the need for greater market share online. Until a few years ago, having a great website was thought to be an effective tool to market to online audiences. That myth was quickly broken when search engines like Google, Yahoo!, MSN and others became the new one-stop-shops for anything and everything a consumer was looking to find. From searching for information to making a travel reservation or simply just buying clothes, search engines became the starting point for all surfers, now more aptly called "searchers".

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Pay-per-Click (PPC) have been the reigning buzz words of Internet Marketing in the last year or two. As a business owner, you have probably explored these for your online business as well, which is a great start. Getting your website to list on top positions in leading search engines is possibly the result of an SEO strategy working really well. Hundreds of clicks coming in to your specially designed landing page is perhaps the magic of a successful paid listing or sponsored link. The question is, how much of this is impacting your bottom line through increased conversions and sales? If the impact is not visibly great, you are probably missing critical elements of your SEM strategy.

Define Marketing Objectives, Identify Missing Elements and Apply the Right SEM Mix

What is it that your business needs to market effectively online and enhance your revenues significantly? Maybe it's an interactive video. Could be an email marketing campaign and a monthly e-newsletter. A blog might be the one thing your business could really benefit from. How about an RSS Feed or a podcast? Whatever it is you are missing, your WSI Internet Marketing Consultant can help you analyze your business needs and guide you towards an appropriate SEM strategy. To help you move your e-business to the next level, WSI can provide you with a comprehensive mix of Search Engine Marketing (SEM) tools and techniques.

While the goal of SEO and PPC is primarily to increase traffic to your website, the goal of a good SEM mix strategy is much more than that. Statistics as shown below from a study by Search Engine Marketers Worldwide indicate that lead generation, direct online sales and driving traffic are the leading objectives for paid search marketing.

Another study by Search Engine Advertisers Worldwide shows similar results, adding brand awareness as a top goal of SEM campaigns to the list.

The Web is a Community

Before you buy a book online, you read reviews by people who have read it before you. Looking for a good hotel deal on your next vacation? The first thing you do is look up reviews by previous travelers. Searching for the best place to have your daughter's 10th birthday party, you visit a popular parenting blog. You want to stay on top of all the latest research about health and nutrition so you sign up for an RSS Feed to get relevant information in a timely manner. The podcast you received about tax tips for small business owners helped you optimize your tax benefits.

For all the claims of the Internet giving people independence and allowing individuals to be themselves, and so on, it goes without saying that the Worldwide Web is a community. Search Engine Marketing is about reaching out to this community and leveraging the power of word-of-mouth publicity. RSS Feeds, Podcasting and Blogs are some of the newest tools that you can use to reach out to your customers. Contact your WSI Internet Consultant today to find out how.

The referrals from search engines that bring people to your site play a critical role in influencing the number of conversions.

Email Marketing - Writing Compelling Subject Lines That Work

This may seem like the oldest trick in the book but guess what? It still works if you can get it right by making it to a reader's Inbox instead of in their Junkmail. So what exactly do we mean by getting right? Here are 5 simple tips to keep in mind:

WIIFM - What's In It For Me? Answer that question for your readers, as quickly as you can in the body of the email but also take care to convey it in the subject.

Keep it short and simple. No one has the time and least of all the inclination to read long winded pieces of literature that severely lack any instruction on what to do next nor offer any call to action.

Don't make a "noise". Unnecessary use of exclamation marks in headings, subject lines and within the text create "noise" that shouts desperation. Good copy does not need a series of exclamation marks because it is attention grabbing in itself. If you must, use question marks instead; they are much more engaging. Don't you agree?

Personalize. Make your reader feel special by addressing them and making an offer in your email that appears to be designed for a select group rather than just about anyone.

Be honest. It is very tempting to use words in your subject lines like "limited time offer", "offer closes on July 30th, 2007", "free for first 25 customers", etc. in order to attract quick sales / conversions to your website. While this may work for some, it may also turn off many others who will not trust what sounds too good to be true and therefore, likely to be spam. If the offers are indeed true, use them, but elsewhere, rather than in the subject.

WSI can devise powerful Search Engine Marketing strategies to help you stay connected with your customers and prospects – before your competitor does. Get in touch today.