

The Marketing Directors' Guide to Search

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Site**Visibility**
Think *beyond* the click

From 'browser' to 'searcher'...

It's easy to make large sweeping statements about how the Internet has changed society.

We'll leave those statements to the historians.

One thing you can't argue with is over the last decade we have changed the way we access information.

Before the net you browsed like you would in a library. In the early days of the web the experience wasn't much different.

You might browse a directory, click a hyperlink or even type the address of a website into your browser, but then search engines came along and absolutely everything changed.

We stopped browsing and started searching.

It goes beyond Google...

It's bigger than just Google and their constantly rebranding and restructuring rivals.

The concept of search has far reaching cultural and commercial implications which affect and influence everybody.

Search is the paradigm around which all consumption and synthesis of information is based.

We might sound a little guilty of hyperbole.

The language we've used might even sound a little academic.

But this change is important and matters to every business in the world.

Our search behaviour...

Every website you visit has a white box, a flashing cursor and a search button.

Type in what you want and it'll take you there.

Or at least try to...

This is hugely apparent on two of the largest websites in the world eBay and Amazon; the last time you visited these sites the chances are you used the search.

But it's not just shops we're searching at; in October 2008 (according to Comscore) YouTube became the world's second biggest search engine overtaking Yahoo and Bing.

What people search for may vary but people are doing 'it' everywhere.

The ability to search is changing the way we buy things.

iTunes has shaken up the music industry; singles are thriving, albums less so. Catalogue songs featured in TV shows are topping the sales chart and people only buy what they want rather than just what is available.

Ask anyone in the travel business what their biggest worry is. They'll say getting a bad review on Tripadvisor. (If not let me know and I'll buy you a beer or a coffee)

Type your destination, hit search and choose your hotel based on the results.

Or search on Easyjet and change your departure date based on the cost.

Search is ingrained in us...

Search's influence is seeping offline as well.

You might think you only search online but have you ever searched on your computer for a file you've lost?

If you use a Windows PC, Google Desktop does a great job and on a Mac, Spotlight is equally brilliant.

Why spend time filing your documents, photos or mp3s when you can just search for them?

Need to find a friend's wedding in the middle of the countryside? Or navigate a car-full of kids to a football match in a far flung corner of the county? Type the address in your Sat Nav, press search and become part of the rise of search.



Econsultancy in their 2009 survey of professional marketers, found 79% of marketers used search marketing.

The majority of marketers haven't been slow to catch on to the trend of search.

These efforts will probably take the form of one of two different search disciplines.

The first, Pay Per Click (PPC) is an advertising system where certain search keywords trigger adverts and you only pay if someone visits your site.

This change from paying for eyeballs to paying for action has been hugely popular. You probably run a PPC campaign for your company.

The SEO opportunity...

The second is known as Search Engine Optimisation or SEO. This marketing approach is based on making technical changes to your site to appeal to search engine algorithms and ongoing marketing efforts to achieve the signals of quality and trust they appreciate.

But at the moment there is a huge market inefficiency between where marketers spend their money and where search users actually go.

Put simply most companies spend a small fortune on PPC and invest less in SEO.

Whereas web users spend most of their time clicking on the natural search results as opposed to the sponsored listings. In fact they're 70% more likely to click on a natural search listing.

this red chunk is how much money people spend on natural search



this red chunk is how many people click on natural results



Buying versus renting visibility...

That inefficiency is the 900lb Gorilla in the room of search marketing.

A lot of companies have already worked out that they're better off putting their money in a metaphorical mortgage of SEO as opposed to paying over the odds to 'rent' their traffic via PPC.

Over time more people will realise this and shift their budgets and efforts accordingly but in the meantime you can get a nice head-start over your less inventive and knowledgeable competitors.

If you were playing roulette and there were more red slots than black the safe bet would be to bet on red, wouldn't it?

How long this will stay the case is another question? This is unlikely to last for long so don't say we didn't warn you.

So search is important, but we would say that; we're a search marketing agency!

Hopefully you can see quite how important search is becoming and how Search Engine Optimisation is where the smart money is at the moment .

So, are we suggesting you go out and contract with an SEO company or take on a qualified in-house search marketer?

No.

Search needs to be tightly woven into the fabric of your marketing strategy.

This isn't hard to implement. You can apply search using a variety of marketing models that form part of your conventional marketing planning process.

The 4 Ps....

Every-time we read a new business book someone seems to have added half a dozen extra words beginning with the letter P to the original Marketing Mix of Product, Place, Price and Promotion.

Search can, and should, have an influence on all four.

Place is the most obvious analogy to make.

A prime Oxford Street shop is better than a concession in services of the M45.

This logic rings true with search marketing - a high ranking on your keywords is more valuable than a low one. But, that high ranking needs to be a for a keyword that will drive targeted visitors onto your site who will 'buy'. As with the bricks and mortar world, *"window shoppers don't help to build a business."*

Also, promotion and search work well together. The best search marketing campaigns are closely integrated with other marketing activities. Search can drive or support a particular campaign. It can be used for 'direct response' activity or 'brand awareness building.'

Type into Google the name of a particular product and you're likely be presented with an image and a list of prices from a variety of retailers. If your audience wasn't price sensitive - they are now!

And if your own product listings aren't displaying, then surely you're missing out on sales opportunities?

Do you claim to be the best product in your niche? Studies have found that companies with top rankings have better brand perception.

SWOT analysis

All marketers have carried out a SWOT analysis at some stage or another. It's a great tool to help analyse your business and the external market.

But was your search marketing performance part of that assessment?

Prominent natural search engine rankings for primary keywords is a real strength, as is receiving traffic from a search marketing campaign with better ROI than other channels.

However, many organisations still consider their current search engine optimisation (SEO) performance to be a major weakness and an area where there is room for significant improvement.

If you're a company with a positive outlook the chances are most of your weaknesses can be turned into strengths.

Perhaps there is a competitor who consistently outperforms you in the natural search results. With the right search engine optimisation (SEO) strategy you can turn that weakness into an opportunity to grow your sales and increase market share.

The consistently shifting market place of search is always a threat. What happens if you rely on one type of link building tactic and overnight Google decides to update its algorithm and downgrades those types of links?

What if you were to lose some of your high converting keyword rankings, would your business still be profitable?

Can your SEO campaign cope with a new aggressive competitor? How would you deal with a flood of negative comments on a review site such as Tripadvisor? How future-proof is your current SEO strategy?

Boston Matrix

The Boston Matrix helps you to forecast the future market position of a particular product and will enable you to make informed marketing decisions about each product or service.

If your search team has a good idea of where your products are in this matrix they will be able to tailor their search strategy and tactics accordingly.

A 'Problem Child' – i.e. a product in a high growth market with low market share will require an aggressive SEO campaign, as speed now will lead to momentum later on. And turn it into a 'Star'

A Cash Cow requires a different approach - your product already has high market share, therefore your search strategy should be built around the accumulation of marginal benefits.

'Dogs' with their low growth and low market share have very little future so investing in a long term SEO campaign would not be wise.

They're candidates for divestment, unless of course they are a key part of a product range. In which case, your search strategy needs to focus on branded or product name keywords.

An intelligent search strategist will be able to help you forecast future demand using keyword data tools and Google Insights

Some companies have business plans based around search data gathered from trial pay per click campaigns, which they've run to assess market size and potential before embarking on a full scale launch.

We always recommend this kind of research before launching any new product or service.

It's worth noting the only difference between a dog and a cash cow is its market share. If you get your search strategy right you can make the trans-species shift.

Ansoff Matrix

There are many similarities between the Ansoff and Boston Matrix both are useful analysis tools which we apply to search.

If your strategy is market penetration, growing by selling existing products into existing markets you need to increase your market share. One way to do that is to acquire business that would have otherwise gone to your competitors. Improved search engine visibility will help you to achieve that.

If you want to sell your current products to a new market, search can be a great way to carry out a pilot campaign to target new segments and different value propositions.

Perhaps you could trial a pay per click campaign targeting a specific geographic region or even a different country?

Facebook advertising also enables you to target individuals based on their demographic profile.

If your strategy is to launch new products into existing markets, search keyword demand trends can provide another perspective in your research phase.

This process can also be applied when carrying out diversification into new markets with new products.

You can analyse the search performance of competitors; use keyword data to estimate their search market share; apply industry conversion rates and your margin to forecast P&L for the diversification project.

Search can help with your product strategy in dozens of different ways.

The 'skinny'

We hope that we've been able to explain the strategic significance of search and demonstrated its potential to not only generate more business but also to inform your Marketing Mix.

Can you afford not to take the necessary steps to move search from being ancillary to your approach, to something that is right at the centre of your marketing strategy?

You need a search advocate at a strategic marketing level to help you make the transition. That person could be the company Marketing Director or a senior search specialist from a search agency.

But having that advocate is essential.

Are you ready to start thinking beyond the click?



SEO

Social
Media

PPC

These clients have 'thought beyond the click'...



Site **Visibility**
Think *beyond* the click

Are you ready to start thinking beyond the click?



Why not get in touch or visit our website to learn more about how we can help you to think beyond the click.

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