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Search Engine Optimization v's Search Engine Marketing

Have you ever asked yourself whether you should take the plunge and optimize your website, or would you be better off simply utilizing Pay Per Click or other paid advertising techniques?

Even for us, as a search engine optimization company, that is a tough question for us to answer without first examining their individual company's goals and their unique situations. We have our own opinions, but they are not necessarily correct for each and every company. Before coming to a final conclusion we would need to get answers to questions such as what are the ROI objectives, what is the budget and even what is the company philosophy. Once we get these answers, as well as a few more based on monetary and marketing factors only then can we determine whether one, or perhaps a combination of both will give the best results for that specific client.

All of these things need to be considered so that your expectations are real and in turn you are not disappointed if the results aren't as good as you had hoped.

Whether you are employing a search engine optimization company to do this work for you, or if you plan on doing the work yourself, this article will act as some baseline knowledge for you to build upon.

Even though some people use the terms search engine marketing and search engine optimization as if they mean the same thing, there is in fact a difference.

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO)

Search Engine Optimization is basically what you do to get organic rankings for your site on the major search engines (such as Google, Yahoo, Bing and AOL). Although the long term benefits of search engine optimization far outweighs those of paid advertising techniques, they are just that - long term. Rarely will you achieve overnight success from your search engine optimization techniques that you employ.

One study on whether people use and like the paid advertising on search engine results pages showed that only 15% of searchers actually click on these ads and 29% of people found the ads to be annoying. Compare this to the fact that over 70% of people will click on the organic listing before clicking a paid ad, shows the fact that people have more confidence in the organic rankings. So clearly if you are serious about your business you cannot afford to ignore search engine optimization, even if you are also pay for your ads to be shown or clicked. Regardless of whether you are doing Pay Per Click or SEO the reality is that there is probably going to be a comparable cost for SEO, even if you do it yourself. Whether you measure that cost in terms of money or time, there is an investment to be made. If you are going to do it yourself make sure you read up on what needs to be done, and do it right the first time. Do the wrong thing, and/or employ the wrong types of techniques it could result in your website being barred from the major search engines, and that is something you definitely don't want to happen. Equally, if you are paying someone else to do your optimization make sure you ask the right questions and find out if they are doing onsite and offsite optimization. If your 'expert' says they spend a lot of time on getting your website optimized for keywords and correct meta tags without doing any off page work, you may want to look elsewhere.

SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING

Search Engine Marketing is really a broad term which is used to describe everything one would do that utilizes the various search engines with the common goal of promoting a web site to increase its traffic, and, in the case of websites that promote a business, also increase profits. Search Engine Optimization, would therefore be a subset of SEM. In addition to SEO, others aspects of search engine marketing include:

- Pay-Per-Click (PPC) Advertising

Pay Per Click is simply when you create a short ad and place it on a search engine and/or directory. You also need to set a maximum bid which is linked to specific key phrases that you are targeting. When these key phrases are searched upon then your ad will show. If some one clicks the ad then your account will be charged something up to that maximum limit. The actual amount being determined by the amount of competition you have bidding on

the specific key phrase. Be aware that if you do not monitor these accounts regularly you could be hit with some large bills for clicks that you may never have had a chance of converting into a sale in the first place.

- Paid Directory Inclusion

Some directories allow you to pay for your website details to be included immediately rather than having to wait for a certain period of time. For some directories paid directory inclusion is the only way for you to get your website listed. Others use it as an option.

Paid directory inclusion should only be considered if you feel the directory will yield good results e.g. if it is a specialist directory targeted at your niche target base.

- Paid Advertising

In comparison to Paid Per Click advertising, Paid Advertising is different in that you pay each time your ad is shown on a web page, regardless of whether or not the ad is clicked. You definitely want to be careful of this option if you are not measuring how many visitors these sites are sending you.

So with the exception of Search Engine Optimization these other aspects of Search Engine Marketing can fulfill your immediate needs when it comes to making your website visible to others searching the Internet.

Pulling together all, or some of these techniques could, and should, help you to increase traffic to your website, which after all is the main purpose of this exercise. So if time and/or your budget allows then Search Engine Marketing could be just what the doctor ordered for your website.

Having said that though I wouldn't suggest any kind of paid search engine marketing efforts without having a search engine optimization program running in tandem.

The major disadvantage of only running a search engine marketing campaign without the search engine optimization part of it is that you will only get the benefits while you continue to pay. Once you stop paying, then if your website will no longer show up in the search engine page results, and you are back to square one.

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Studies have also shown that only 30% of search engine users click on the paid or sponsored listings, leaving an overwhelming 70% who are clicking the organic listings. Even at 30% you would still be competing with the other ads that show up at the same time as yours.

When your ad does show up in the directories and/or search engine results page then at best you can hope to get a 3% ratio of visitors clicking your ad. So you really need to have a well written and appealing ad to entice prospective customers to choose yours above the others.

Finally I would like to mention 'analytics'. Regardless of whether you choose one or more of the techniques you really need to be measuring the performance of all your hard work. Install something like Google Analytics on the back end of your website so you can measure things like how many visitors are coming to your site and where they are being referred from. If your hits don't improve as a result of your search engine marketing efforts you definitely need to revisit what you have done and then make the required adjustments so you get better results.

I wish you the best of luck and all the hits your heart desires!

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