

Integrated search engine marketing as an effective demand generation tool for B2B companies

Why is search engine marketing important to you?

Right now, someone, somewhere, is looking for your products or services on the Web. They may not know your company by name, but they want what you are selling. Having a Web site, no matter how informative or visually pleasing it may be, is simply not enough. The harsh reality is that if your Web site isn't listed among the top results in the search engine they're browsing, that prospect will most likely never find you.

With business-to-business purchases, search engines have evolved to a level of fundamental utility equal to the Yellow Pages or Thomas Register. Research shows that 93.4% of B2B prospects use the Internet to research a purchase; 63.9% of them indicate that a search engine is the first place they turn.¹ More than known manufacturers' sites or information portals, search engines are the dominant research tool of choice.

If you want to target the broadest potential audience, you need to figure search engine marketing (SEM) into your budgets with the same careful consideration given to print advertising, direct mail or hiring a salesperson. Good SEM delivers the lowest average cost-per-lead among various direct marketing methods.² By improving your site's ranking in organic listings, purchasing paid listings, or a combination of the two, you'll become visible to a universe of prospects you may have never reached previously.

SEM isn't just for businesses with an online store. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 74 percent of manufacturing facilities use the Internet for daily business operations.³ Search engines are how potential customers find what they need today, even if a sale isn't completed directly on a Web site. Connecting with your prospects during the research phase of their buying cycle can give you a competitive advantage when they're ready to buy — even if that purchase occurs offline.

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Know the lingo

To better understand SEM, it's helpful to be familiar with some of the terminology. Here are a few of the more common terms:

Click-Through Rate (CTR) — The percentage of clicks on a link out of the total number who view it. If 100 people view the link and 10 click on it, the CTR is 10%.

Cost Per Action (CPA) — Many B2B advertisers analyze CPA metrics since their goal is to get the visitor to take some "action", such as signing up for a newsletter or downloading a white paper. Online retailers typically analyze cost per order (CPO).

Index — A search engine's collection of information that searchers can query against.

Keywords — Also called search terms, these are words that a potential customer types into a search engine's query field to find what they are looking for.

Listings — The information that appears on a search engine's results page in response to a search.

Organic Listings — Also called "natural listings," these are the results of a search that appear ranked in order of relevance, as determined by the search engine's algorithm.

Pay-Per-Click (PPC) — A paid placement where an advertiser bids a sum for each click potential customers make on a link leading to the advertiser's Web site.

Search Engine Marketing (SEM) — Marketing a Web site via search engines. It includes SEO, PPC, and other methods.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) — Developing or modifying a Web site's copy and technical design so that it ranks higher in organic listings.

Put search engines to work for you

There are two primary ways to leverage the immense lead-generating potential of search engines: search engine optimization (SEO) and pay-per-click (PPC). Which one is right for you? Probably both. Each form of SEM delivers benefits individually and even greater synergies when used together. A comprehensive SEM program should balance the strengths of both in consideration of your company's specific objectives.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

SEO begins with choosing keywords that prospects will use when searching for your products or services. Once selected, these keywords are then carefully woven into the content of your Web site — both as visible text and "behind the scenes" in code. Upon submission, these keywords will be crawled by the search engines' spiders and sophisticated algorithms applied to rank your site's relevancy according to each keyword. Myriad factors contribute to your site's ranking, including page content, titles and layout, metatags, directory naming and referring links from other relevant sites.



Organic (or natural) search engine listings

SEO can push your site from relative obscurity to prominence. Effective SEO is a combination of insightful content deployment and vigilant results tracking. Because search engines perpetually modify their indexing techniques, SEO also requires persistence. Add in the constant influx of new competitors, and the need for a disciplined, ongoing SEO effort becomes clear.

Persistence pays off. Research indicates that the average Web site gets 73 percent more total traffic within six months of optimization.⁴

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Pay-Per-Click (PPC)

In addition to organic search result listings, most search engines offer paid listings. Earmarked as sponsored links, they typically fall above the organic listings, along the right side of the page, or both. PPC still necessitates submission of keywords, but also allows you to include a brief, textual "mini ad" with the search results.

As the name implies, PPC requires you to pay a fee for every user that clicks upon your ad. Arrangements vary by search engine. Some offer priority ranking solely to the highest bidder, while others base their rankings on a combination of bid amount and click-through rate.

Among the virtues of PPC is the fact that results are realized quickly. Craft an ad and, if the price is right, you can assure yourself top placement. This responsiveness lets you quickly adjust your SEM campaigns, often in hours or days. Test different combinations of ads, keywords, regional placements and landing pages to determine the combinations most effective in converting click-throughs.



Pay-per-click (or sponsored) search engine listings

Making it happen

Select focused, relevant keywords

Choosing keywords is one of the most vital decisions you can make. It's important to avoid choosing overly broad keywords that might lump you in with an ocean of businesses unrelated to yours. Conversely, you want to avoid picking keywords that are too specific or complex — reducing the probability that prospects will actually use them. Talk to current customers to see what words they use to search for your products and services. Probe the search engines yourself — test keywords to see where your competitors rank. Remember to consider both SEO and PPC. You can choose to pursue different groups of keywords on each to leverage their respective strengths.

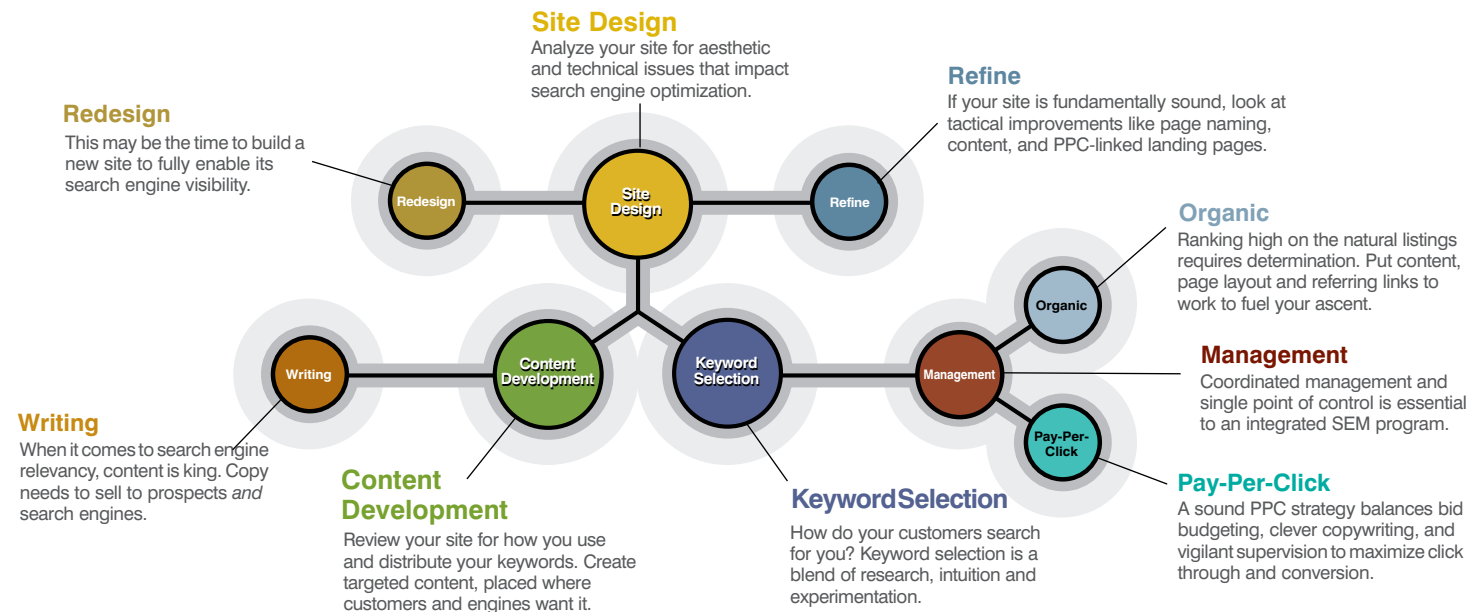
Ensure your Web site is fine-tuned

Your site must be properly designed to get maximum results from any SEM program. This requires that a critical eye be turned to both aesthetic and technical issues. Search engines crawl sites in predictable patterns, prioritizing components such as page titles, navigation and directory names, as well as the quantity and distribution of keywords in body copy. Finding a balance between what appeals to the user and the search engines is one of the most important mandates of a successful SEM effort.

Make every word count with targeted content

When it comes to effective, search engine-friendly copy, two of the most important criteria are relevancy and honesty. Search engines have evolved over the years to a level of remarkable sophistication. They value legitimate text that delivers information while containing your keywords. They also punish gimmicks and sleight of hand that try to find shortcuts to high rankings. When executed well, your site's copy will be compelling to the reader and the search engines.

With PPC, conversion rates are dramatically impacted by the relevancy of the landing pages linked to a paid listing. Ask a question in an ad and the connected page needs to answer in no uncertain terms. Link to a generic or tangential page and you'll lose prospects as quickly as they can close a window.



Stay the course

Just like any marketing effort, SEM isn't a one-shot deal. A successful program needs to be maintained continually over time to deliver optimum results. Once an SEO initiative is deployed, search engines can take three to eight weeks to register changes in rankings. So persistence and patience are necessary. On the other hand, PPC programs can elicit overnight results. Bid fluctuations, competitive ads and other time-sensitive variables mandate almost constant vigilance. Through it all, the search engine environment is in constant flux — submission rules change frequently, algorithms are modified, and hundreds of new, competitive sites launch every day. The bottom line is that you have to be diligent and proactive to keep your rankings where you want them.

How can we help?

Companies typically fall into three camps with regard to search engine marketing: 1) “we’ve got it covered”, 2) “we need help”, or 3) “what’s search engine marketing?” Binary Pulse can help those with all three types of outlooks.

If you’re in the first camp, and you’re actively trying to promote your site on the search engines, good for you. But ask yourself if you’re fully leveraging both SEO and PPC. How many resources are you dedicating to the effort and what are the ramifications on overhead and productivity? Do you have the technology to track and tune your initiatives effectively?

If you’re in the second camp, we can be an effective supplement to your team...or the whole team. Let us optimize your site or deploy a few trial PPC campaigns. We can help offload some of the management burden and also capitalize upon new opportunities you may not have considered or had the time to attempt.

If you’re in the third group, don’t feel bad. Many companies are just now realizing the importance of SEM. We’ll help you get the most from your online presence, even if you don’t have a Web site at all. We can help you formulate the most appropriate strategies and guide you through a deployment and management initiative that gets you the results you want.

Binary Pulse offers a comprehensive suite of SEM-related services

SEO and PPC require significantly different skill sets. Just so happens that we have them all under one roof:

Search Engine Marketing Programs — Depending on your budget and marketing requirements, we can develop a program to improve your standings through organic search engine optimization and pay-per-click campaigns.

Web Site Analysis and Enhancement — Our Web development and design team can collaborate to create a new Web site, or refine your existing one. Or put us to work on landing pages that empower your PPC efforts.

Content Creation — Binary Pulse staffs copywriters in-house who help craft content that is informative, persuasive and search engine-compliant.

PPC Management — Effective PPC campaigns require insightful strategy and perpetual supervision. We combine marketing strategy, copywriting and program management to ensure your PPC ads perform optimally.

Technology — We’ve invested in the software, subscriptions and systems necessary to fully implement and track both SEO and PPC initiatives, so you don’t have to.

Tracking and Reporting — We analyze the performance of your keywords, traffic logs and keep abreast of any changes. We can create an SEM maintenance program or schedule to keep your marketing efforts on pace with your objectives.

We are confident that we can significantly improve your company’s search engine rankings, but we will never make promises that seem too good to be true. Binary Pulse does not engage in the “smoke and mirrors” tactics that some less scrupulous firms will.

Who are these guys?

Since 1994, Binary Pulse Technology Marketing has specialized in demand-generating programs for technical industries across the nation. With the ability to offer modular or comprehensive services in print and interactive disciplines, Binary Pulse offers a unique blend of technical know-how, B2B and channel experience, and old-fashioned hard work.



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If you would like us to help energize your online marketing efforts, give Tim Howell a call at 714.429.0110. There is absolutely no obligation. We will learn about your company and offer up a few ideas we think will help. If you like what you hear, we can work on a broader proposal, customized to your needs.