

ORGANIC SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION ...IS IT THE ANSWER TO YOUR INTERNET MARKETING CHALLENGE?

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Does this sound familiar? You've built a web site in order to draw customers to your business. You've improved the "look and feel" by investing in the services of a graphic designer and branding consultant. You've improved the content by adding professional photography and copy writing. You've even tried the occasional pay-per-click campaign. Despite these efforts, the site is not producing the results you expected.

Unfortunately, you are not alone. Many enterprises rely on search engine marketing as a way to leverage the Internet to their advantage. Many also find the results disappointing.

This is not because the search engine strategy is wrong. In fact, it is one of the most effective internet advertising strategies for many firms. You've probably made the right choice, but your tactics might need a change. Consider the following facts:

Online search is the primary tool that most people rely on when doing research. U.S. searches nearly doubled between 2004 and 2006, climbing from 3.3 billion to 6.2 billion, across 60 measured search engines.

Nielsen//NetRatings, 2006

Over 60% of all adult Internet users (about 60 million) use search engines on any given day.

comScore Media Metrix

More than 90% of people find or launch web sites through a search engine, even when they know the URL!

Spiderhelp, 2006

The second-most popular activity for Internet users is looking for "stuff" using search engines. 63% of the respondents to a recent survey ranked this just behind email, at 77%. Getting news ranked third at 46%. Job-related research, instant messaging, and on-line banking range down from 29% to 18%.

Pew Research

Therefore, you can make a strong case for the use of online search as an advertising medium. Why then can your customers not find you?

Despite your investment in the aesthetic characteristics of the site, the major search engines, *Google, Yahoo!, and MSN Search*, might not "rank" your site very highly. They rank sites in order to determine the sequence in which sites are presented on a search results page. This ranking technique applies to those sites that are listed outside of the paid placement ads or "sponsored links". Rankings are determined by using Internet "spiders" that search the web and look for certain characteristics of each site. It is the understanding and manipulation of your site characteristics that wins success – and high rankings.

Referred to as “organic search engine optimization”, or “SEO”, this technique allows you, the advertiser, to compare your site to the twenty-plus characteristics that the search engines use to rank web sites. These characteristics are very specific and can be easily evaluated on a “pass/fail” basis: your site is either compliant or it is not. It is an extremely objective measure.

Once your site is evaluated and a specific list of remedial tasks is assembled, you can then modify your site to bring it into compliance. This ensures that both the technical and aesthetic characteristics of your site are optimized for the best performance in the eyes of the search engines.

Beyond the physical modification of your web site code and content, an effective SEO initiative can answer the following questions:

1. Are Internet searchers using the key words and key phrases that **we think** they are using to find our company? You may be surprised to learn that only a few of the words and phrases you thought important are ever used.
2. If not those words and phrases, **what are they using** to find us? Single key words are seldom as effective as key phrases. Combinations are extremely important. You may learn that most of your traffic comes to you through phrases that you are not emphasizing in your copy.
3. Once a searcher lands on our site, **where do they go? What do they do?** This is vital to the design of your site and the goals you establish for your Internet campaign.
4. What should I do to generate the **highest number of conversions** and transform those conversions into sales?
5. **Can I measure results?** One of the most attractive benefits of an Internet advertising campaign is the ability to measure your results with a high degree of specificity. This enables the advertiser to tweak the campaign for the optimum results. Guessing is virtually eliminated.

Search engine optimization is a very effective way to enhance your presence on the Internet and realize **measurable** business benefits. Because of the relatively low cost of such an initiative, industry statistics indicate that SEO produces one of the highest ROIs in this segment. When combined with a well designed pay-per-click campaign, SEO can reduce the net cost-per-click by more than 30 percent.

If you are serious about using the Internet to bring more customers into your business, you should give strong consideration an SEO evaluation project.