



**Search Engine Marketing
White Paper**

SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING: A Look Behind the Scenes at How to Successfully Market Your Small Business, Non-Profit Organization or Church in Internet Search Results

Presented by Pathmaker Marketing LLC

Modern marketing is no longer a matter of creating ads for print publications or a media buy; today's small businesses, non-profit organizations and churches that are not conversant with the ever-expanding possibilities of internet marketing risk being left behind by savvier rivals. Internet marketing has progressed far beyond the realm of simply creating a web site, submitting it to a few search engines, and waiting for people to find it. Nor are flashy, fancy website features likely to drive sufficient traffic to noticeably affect your bottom line. Don't be easily fooled. Internet marketing today is all about proactively driving qualified traffic to your website and enticing your visitors to convert surfing into actions.

How to drive qualified traffic to your website remains the million-dollar question in internet marketing, but search engine marketing and keyword targeting are key to putting your website in front of web surfers by as many means possible. Search engines remain one of the primary means by which internet users find web sites, but search engine marketing entails a great deal more than simply achieving a high ranking on search engine results pages. The objective of all search engine marketing is to ensure that any search on priority keywords that relate to your brand will result in the user finding website as one (or more) of the options.

Search Marketing Strategies

[Pathmaker Marketing LLC](#) uses a five-tiered approach to the objective of driving traffic to our clients' websites. All five methodologies work together as a coordinated effort, creating a web of inter-related links and overlapping strategies to enhance the ultimate goal of putting your name in front of any user searching for what you offer. The five strategies used are:

1. Search Engine Optimization
2. Pay-Per-Click Advertising
3. Social Networking
4. Link Building
5. Keyword Targeted Blogging



The goal of this process is to deliver as many relevant results for you as possible in a first-page set of Top 10 rankings on your target keywords. Each of the categories in the outer circle of our illustration has the potential to deliver you one, two or even more listings in the Google, Yahoo or Bing results. So we use them all as we look to achieve multiple rankings in the search results.

Search Engine Optimization

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of ensuring that search engines can find and read your website. Some design techniques, such as over-use of images or pure Flash animation, can make it difficult for search engine robots, which “crawl” and index pages in a website, to read your text or understand the site’s link structure. This can seriously degrade your website’s rankings in the search engine results. Proper SEO methodologies should be applied to the construction of any website to ensure that the layout, the content hierarchy, and the content itself are all conducive to the site being properly crawled and indexed. This includes ensuring proper keyword depth in the text found on each page, proper construction with regard to browser limitations and computer screen resolution, and a variety of other techniques used in professional development of websites.

SEO techniques, to be effective, are applied during the planning and development phase of the site, as well as refined after the site “goes live” and is publicly available. SEO goes hand-in-hand with keyword targeting and pay-per-click advertising, as keywords that have been determined to drive traffic and produce conversions to lists, leads, sales or gifts can and should be emphasized in the site’s content on every page that search engines are allowed to crawl.

A typical SEO plan involves:

- Determining the priority keyword phrases that will drive qualified traffic and conversions and optimizing them within your site’s content, including text, along with image “alt” tags, title tags in the HTML, etc.
- Ensuring the site’s construction conforms to SEO standards for optimum exposure to search engines
- Proper use of images and other elements to enhance site usability and navigation by users and robots alike
- Ensuring the site hierarchy encourages easy access to information
- Making the site’s navigation structure logical for both human and search engine use. Reducing the number of clicks between a user and the action you want them to take enhances the odds of a successful conversion. It also

makes the site easier for the search engine bot to understand, which cuts down on incorrectly indexed pages.

Pay-Per-Click Advertising

The use of pay-per-click (PPC) advertising to ensure that certain keyword searches return your name and web address in search engine rankings is a highly effective means of placing your company or church ad at the top, or near the top, of search engine results on priority keywords. In addition, it is an excellent tool for evaluating the effectiveness of chosen keywords and keyword phrases for application to SEO and other keyword marketing strategies. Rather than simply SEO your website, then analyze site traffic statistics over months in an effort to discover how users are finding your site and what pages interest them, PPC, within 4-6 weeks, will help you get proven, baseline metrics. You'll identify which keywords are search volume producers, which terms and ads drive users to "click through" to your website, and which result in conversion activity on the visitor's part, whether in contacting your business for additional information, or converting the visitor to a name on your email list, qualified lead, actual sale or gift.

There are several options to consider when deciding upon a pay-per-click advertising method. But most people will start with Google, then go to Yahoo or MSN (now Bing). PPC can be run nationally or locally depending on your needs. Each search engine has a slightly different way of determining which competing ads get the top placement, but it generally boils down to a combination of ad relevance and popularity and bid strength.

One of the most significant factors in PPC advertising is landing page optimization. I've seen numerous advertisers bail on PPC advertising, blaming Google or Yahoo when it doesn't work for them. Generally though, the search engines did their job to get you the qualified search traffic, but your website failed to convert the traffic into useable assets like lists, leads or sales or gifts. Realize that the role of PPC advertising is to get you qualified traffic. Your website must then convert the traffic.

In fact, in all of the five strategies above, it's centrally important that your website is using Best Practices at website Traffic Conversion.

Social Networking

Use of social networking to drive traffic and raise brand awareness has exploded in the past few years. The effectiveness of sites like YouTube, FaceBook, and MySpace has given "viral" a new connotation. Dozens of other sites are also growing in popularity, such as Twitter, Blogger, and LinkedIn, which have the capacity to connect hundreds of thousands of people through shared interests, mutual acquaintances, or simple curiosity. Businesses are increasingly developing smart

marketing strategies to take advantage of the power in these sites to create brand awareness, raise interest in products or messaging, and to drive traffic to the company's main website. A successful video posted on YouTube can "go viral" in a matter of hours; even one that does not can be easily shared by anyone who finds it, with zero effort on the company's part beyond posting the video and ensuring that it is properly tagged for searches. One Hollywood celebrity recently achieved a landmark million "followers" on Twitter, which relies exclusively on messages of 140 characters or less to let followers know what's happening "right now." Targeted messaging on Twitter and other social networking media can be an extremely powerful, timely tool for attracting and keeping the attention of hundreds or thousands of people.

A coordinated effort to maximize the social network that has now become an integral part of the internet is crucial to any real internet marketing plan. Because MySpace or FaceBook pages are treated by search engines as separate websites, they attain their own search engine rankings. Therefore, a search of a single keyword may return dozens of results for you, if you create and maintain a widespread social networking presence. This can only increase the chances of new visitors finding your site. It will also enhance your company's credibility and brand awareness within the search engine rankings when it comes up so often on search, by a variety of means. In addition, you are establishing new marketing channels through these social networks to compliment traditional ones like your existing snail mail and telephone lists, retail outlets, etc.

A sample social networking plan might look like this:

- Create a profile page for key company personnel (CEO, owner, pastor) and your organization on the following sites:
 - FaceBook
 - MySpace
 - LinkedIn
 - Twitter
- Create a profile page on other sites frequented by your target audience
- Create and maintain a blog or blogs which will provide visitors both timely and targeted information and a reason to return to your site again and again.
- We recommend a Keyword-Targeted Blogging Tool over free blog options.
- Create a forum on your site to encourage users to exchange information and form a community devoted to your products, services, or ministry
- Post video to:
 - YouTube
 - Content sites frequented by your customer base
 - Flickr or other photo-sharing sites

- Create linkbacks from FaceBook and other social networks to your website.
- Make widgets like the FaceBook toolbar available for download from your site to facilitate easy viewing of your videos and other media
- Allow visitors to post content on your site. Collaborative websites building high-value information of interest to your users is a good way to build a loyal community with high repeat traffic. Examples of this include building a prayer wall or posting recipes, tips and tricks, or photos.

Link Building

Building a network of high-value inbound links enhances your website's credibility and raises awareness of the site's existence. When potential visitors find your small business, non-profit organization or church through means not directly connected to your company, such as through a page on Wikipedia, it removes the stigma of "advertising" from the listing and makes the site seem important in and of itself. Likewise, social bookmarking sites, which allow users to categorize and post, for anyone's use, their internet favorites normally stored in their own PC's browser, can rapidly build traffic to the site because the recommendations come from users, not from the website owner. Such link building is tied directly to all other major elements of the internet marketing plan, from "links" created through PPC advertising to social networking, etc.

Link building can usually be boiled down into four main areas:

1. Local Link Building
2. Volume Link Building
3. Authoritative Link Building
4. "Deep" Link Building to subpages other than your Home Page

Companies can build a high-value network of links through the following means:

- Wikipedia: establish an approved page about the company, and about the company's owner or CEO personally, on Wikipedia, the most widely-accepted online encyclopedia. As an alternative, try Google Knol
- Maintaining timeliness of content on social media sites—stale content provides no incentive to users to return, and makes the company look either incompetent or out of touch and uninterested in its customer base.
- Article marketing: creating and placing multiple articles about the company or its products and services, its business strategies, key personnel, recent successes, and sponsored events on third-party websites
- Press releases posted to news organizations and the company web site which highlight positives about your company

Keyword Targeting

Evaluating, choosing, and “owning” the most relevant keywords that will drive traffic to and achieve sales for the business is one of the most fundamental strategies of internet marketing. Without well-chosen keywords, properly targeted, potential visitors may not find your website even if they are looking for it. To raise awareness among people who have not yet heard of a particular company, and to avoid spending effort, time, and money promoting phrases that are not effective, it is important to spend some time choosing and deploying keywords that will return the most value.

You may or may not know what search terms will return the best results for your site. A simple search of the ones you find most relative should return, at the least, your chief rivals’ websites. If the search term returns nothing relevant, it is time to rethink the keyword strategy. Visiting the sites of business rivals and evaluating where they rank on searches is one way to start. This may provide just the preliminary keyword and phrase list for a business website, however. Continual refinement is required to get to the golden list that is most relevant to your site’s content and to what your customers are actually searching for. [Pathmaker Marketing LLC](#) can help you do this vital research.

Strategies for keyword targeting include:

- Evaluating and applying results from PPC advertising: What terms produced site traffic and which did not?
- Analyzing search results across search engines: What keywords did visitors actually search?
- Tracking tags from blogs and social network postings: All blogs use tags to identify site content and boost interest. Which brought in more visitors?
- Analyzing visitor traffic to the client site: What pages did visitors spend time on after finding the business website? What promotions were effective? What caused them to convert from lookers to active shoppers?
- Proper use of meta tags in page design: Largely overlooked by many designers, proper title tags and descriptions used in the HTML meta tags are still powerful ways to boost keyword relevance and provide additional useful information to visitors.

The objective of keyword targeting is to “own” the chosen keywords; in other words, for searches on those keywords and phrases to return your website at the top of the search engine real estate or otherwise put your name in front of potential visitors. This involves reducing the potential list of keywords to a few of the most effective, then applying them in efficient ways across all of your online marketing efforts.

One of the most effective tools for maximizing keyword effectiveness is Compendium Blogware, a subscription service which significantly reduces the time spent propagating keywords across multiple blogs related to a single client. Multiple blogs can be populated from a single blog posting, with only those blogs that are tied to the keywords in a particular post receiving that post. Thus, you could maintain multiple blogs for the company, on different topics directly related to your business, its products, its goals, sponsored events, or its community outreach and other activities, without spending a great deal of time maintaining them. While some maintenance is required to keep any content fresh, this tool reduces the workload and returns value quickly.

Strategies recommended for businesses to maximize keyword targeting include:

- Keyword research: finding the most valuable keywords that have the most potential to get your website seen
- Website analytics: applying well-chosen tracking software on the server to track and analyze visitor behavior
- Coordinated change program: applying the results of keyword analysis in an organized fashion, tracking the results of small changes rather than one massive overhaul to see which was truly effective and required

Maintenance

Static content is as deadly to search engine rankings as a poorly-designed website. To encourage return traffic and to ensure that search engine spiders are attracted to the site again and again, fresh content, on a regular basis, is essential. Content that never changes offers no incentive to visitors to return, and it will ensure that a once highly-ranked site will quickly slide down several pages in the search engine results, out of the range of all but the most determined searchers. Some content, such as blogs, requires daily or weekly updating; other content should be freshened monthly or, in the case of non-company controlled content such as Wikipedia entries, reviewed at least monthly to ensure accuracy.

[Pathmaker Marketing LLC](#), as part of the overall search engine marketing strategy for its clients, maintains the marketing plan and its various coordinated elements, to include creating and posting content such as blogs and monitoring pay-per-click placement, etc.

You can create much content in-house, but you should consider whether you have the expertise on staff to create viable content. Not everyone is a writer; poor grammar, spelling, sentence construction, or a stilted writing style can drive visitors

away and seriously degrade the company's credibility. While blogs and newsletters are excellent ways to hook visitors and keep them coming back, companies should consider not just the type of content to be posted, but the way it is presented as well.

Likewise, a poorly-maintained site negatively impacts the brand. Pictures of products that are no longer sold, broken picture or text links, outdated promotions, expired coupons, and seasonal content still available two months later are all signs of amateur maintenance or a company that does not place much importance on its web presence. If maintaining a site in-house, make sure the personnel tasked to do so are trained and conscientious; otherwise, professional management of the web site is probably a good idea.

Return On Investment

A properly implemented internet marketing plan ensures a coordinated, tightly-integrated approach that capitalizes on all of the avenues available to drive traffic to a website and encourage conversion from casual looker to active participant. For most companies, ROI will be realized in several ways:

- Elevated brand awareness of the company and its products
- Direct sales of product
- Expanded customer base
- Trust and credibility and increased customer loyalty
- Enhanced brand value, converting to increasing sales revenue

Summary

Search engine marketing is neither a quick nor simple affair. It requires a coordinated strategy and a long-term commitment to adjusting and refining the marketing plan. You may want to find a marketing partner that understands the complexities of SEO and how to design the website to accommodate the possibilities and requirements of search engine marketing. Web site design is no longer a matter of pretty graphics and short, targeted messages; behind the scenes of the web page lurk design issues fully as important as what the casual visitor actually sees when he lands on the page.

Creating a web site that will both entice web surfers to visit and that nudges them toward action is the goal for any business. The five-part strategy for search engine marketing employed by [Pathmaker Marketing LLC](#) has been proven to increase client revenue and brand awareness for many clients, in many markets.

Pathmaker Marketing LLC's experience across all five tiers drives the specific approach for each client. While there are many social networks and many places that most clients could spend their advertising budget, those we recommend are

always chosen as the most targeted and the most highly effective with regard to reaching a particular business's target audience and achieving its goals. Projected returns are based upon real results observed for other clients, not best guesses.

Search engine marketing strategies generally require a close ongoing relationship between Pathmaker Marketing LLC and the client. Training of client staff is required to best capitalize on the efforts put in place. Ongoing maintenance of the content across all media is also required in order for visitors to find timely and fresh content on a regular basis, thus encouraging return traffic and word-of-mouth advertising by visitors who have had an interesting and satisfying experience. The client knows its own business best; any marketing firm can help and guide and refine the content created by the client but the client must be proactive in deciding what it wants to showcase and what information will put the best face on its business.

Clients can generally expect a fairly rapid return on investment using the search engine strategy outlined above. Ongoing and increasing rise in revenues and brand awareness is noted as the plan is adjusted and refined to take advantage of lessons learned and new avenues of approach.

It's a whole new world in advertising. Companies will do well to devote some time to learning search engine marketing and capitalizing on its possibilities for their business bottom line.