Strategies for Search Engine Marketing

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1. Internet Marketing Mission

*Introduction*

The term *Search Engine Marketing Strategy* refers to how a company can identify and execute a specific set of actions that can be taken to increase a company's exposure and client opportunity on the internet and more specifically increase its search engine recognition and placement.

The first stage of inquiry in setting up a search engine marketing strategy is to determine what the goals are of the organization or entity as well as how an internet marketing strategy will best help reach these goals.

2. Description and Goals

Defining how an entity acquires and keeps its customers is the first step in building a search engine and social networking strategy. If potential customers can easily find you on the internet and what you do is clearly stated through your internet presence, it makes it easier for them to buy goods and services from you.

By clearly defining what your company does and making sure this identity is expressed appropriately on your website, search engines have a better chance of legitimizing who you are and increasing your ranking. Clear **website content** along with proper meta tagging is the first step in creating a successful *Search Engine Marketing (SEM) Strategy*.

**Goals**

What are the goals of your company or entity? Are you looking to acquire new customers? If so, how many and in what time frame? What is your ideal client base and how quickly (or slowly) would you like to grow?

These may seem like obvious questions and the assumption may be that everyone wants to grow, but clarifying the answers to these questions may help in determining what kind of effort is required to make your **search engine marketing strategy** and planning successful.
Importance of Internet and Marketing

While cold calling and direct sales may serve to bring in some additional clients, internet marketing can be particularly effective. When a customer finds you they have a better sense of trust in doing business with you. The impression is that they have done their due diligence and research and found you based on exactly what they are looking for, not the other way around. In other words, with a successfully executed search engine marketing plan in place, potential customers are able to match what they need with what you have, before even speaking with you. This saves everyone a great deal of time and money on both ends.

3. Business Competition

Understanding the Competition

Another very powerful tool in using the internet as your primary source of marketing is that you can very clearly and easily compare yourself to the competition. With tools like Google Analytics and SEOMoz, you can plug in your competitors side-by-side and see how you measure up in terms of search engine positioning.

Leveraging the transparency of the internet can be one of your greatest assets in busting ahead of the competition and making sure the customers to find you first.

4. Marketing Focus and Keywords

Marketing Focus

When building a search engine marketing strategy, it is critical to understand who you are trying to reach and what you are selling. By identifying this clearly, your web content, blog entries, Facebook and Twitter posts and press releases will all reflect this and be aligned with your company’s vision. Without a clear vision of where you are going and what you are marketing, the web and any internet marketing strategy will not serve as a useful tool in acquiring new customers.

General Keywords

The first step in building a clear internet marketing campaign can be as simple as creating a list of general keywords that define who you are, what you do and what you sell.

Although the common belief is that embedding these keywords as meta data at the top of your web pages will be enough to get the search engines to find you, the truth is that it is only a small component in getting you recognized on the web.

Search engines have become very smart and they now know to look deeper than that. For example, if you have a set of keywords embedded in your meta data that imply that you are an online coffee distributor but none of the content on your website reflects this, the search engines will pass you by. It is critical that whatever you are telling the world that you sell or do, your website content reflects it.
**Brand Names and Branded Keywords**

A second area of keyword importance is if you are selling brand names or branded products. In other words, if the name of the product you sell is as important to communicate as the name of your company, this must also be reflected not just in your keyword meta data but in your website content as well.

If you are reselling other brand products it is very useful to make sure they are generously included in your web content.

Finally, if you are selling a service to customers and you are in a position to share the names of these customers on your website, this is a valuable way to attract like customers to your site.

**Site Content**

So now that you know what you are doing and selling and can reflect it clearly in a keyword and branding list, it is time to make sure that those words are used consistently throughout your website content. Meta data alone will not give you the positioning you want to get the search engines to find you based on the words your clients will be using to search for you.

It is the quality and consistency of your site content in the end will be the most important component to helping the search engines find you, and your potential customers as well.

**5. Social Media**

**Facebook**

Despite its reputation as being a place to share family photos and life updates, Facebook can also serve as a valuable tool for releasing new product information, announcing events and company updates as well as building a track-able following of existing and potential customers. Integration with other tools such as Twitter can create increased visibility to search engines such as Google and Bing. Once set up, the key to using Facebook to promote your business is to regularly share information (at least 3 times a week) and to continue to build links to other sites and your base of followers. Once established, a Facebook following has the added advantage of allowing you to track statistics on the pace at which you are gaining new followers and what they are reading on your page.

**Twitter**

Twitter feeds differ in their size and simplicity from Facebook entries but allow for powerful integration with other subjects and lists. Twitter posts will allow you to integrate your basic and branded keywords to allow others to find your posts that may be following a keyword topic but not necessarily following your company. Twitter posting, when done regularly, can be a great way to integrate what you are doing and selling with your existing client base to reach an even wider audience and potential clients.

**RSS Feeds**

Similar to a news feed, an RSS feed allows you to integrate industry news, press releases and other information directly onto your website. If used properly, and with the correct
keyword setup, RSS feeds enable those researching the topics on your site to have a better chance of finding you when searching topics, companies or products that appear in your RSS feed.

6. Blogging, Press Releases and Editorial Contributions

**Blogging**

Blogging is one of the most visible contributions you can make to your search engine and overall web marketing strategy.

Blogging simply means you are creating your own articles (or sometimes even including those of industry colleagues as guest bloggers) and that you are featuring these articles on your site or a sister blog site as regular news and insights about the space in which your business exists. Blog entries can include educational pieces, industry updates, success stories, and accounts and examples of how customers are using your products and services. Search engines love blogs because they verify that your website has real people creating real content legitimizing what you sell and do.

**Press Releases**

Like blogs, press releases are also very well received by search engines. The bigger advantage with press releases is that in addition to being shared on your website, they can also be shared by news outlets, greatly increasing the traffic back to the content the press release and ultimately your website.

The reach of a press release is usually in direct proportion to the number of places and channels through which the press release is shared – the broader the release, the wider the reach.

**Editorial Contribution**

In addition to blogs and press releases, another way to gain search engine visibility is by creating your own content that appears on other source websites. An example of this would be the many non-paid writers who contribute articles to the Huffington Post. While they receive no direct compensation for sharing these articles, they may include topics and issues that directly relate to their own products and services as well as acknowledgements and links back to their own sites.

**Cross-linking**

Cross-linking refers to how many other sites relevant to your space you are including on your website as well as how many other sites in your space are linking back to yours. Search engines love cross-linking because it means that when someone is searching for you or what you do, it turns up not just on your website, but other websites too, helping to legitimize you as a real business with a track record and web relationships.

**Search Engine Strategy: In Summary**

To summarize, creating a successful search engine marketing campaign requires attention to many aspects of your web presence. While no one piece alone will give you the
visibility you are capable achieving, your ability to initially set up and tend ongoing to all of
the following will over time give you the best chance to help your customers find you. To
recap, here is the list:

1. Build keyword and brand keyword lists that accurately reflect what you do

2. Create clear website content that consistently uses these keywords throughout its
text

3. Have a clear understanding of who your top competitors are. Pay attention to the
keywords they are using, and regularly monitor their websites against yours using
tools such as Google Analytics and SEOMoz

4. Continue to keep content fresh. Use social media, blogs, press releases and other
content so your web presence is always living and breathing, making sure the search
engines are always discovering new information that consistently reflects what you
do.

5. Keep an eye on things. Use monitoring tools to keep track of your ranking and
always check for broken links. If a link on your site is broken, there may be a whole
family of other links under it that the search engines can no longer find.