



Breaking Down Internet Marketing

by JoAnna Dettmann and Kaysha Kalkofen

“Internet marketing” is a phrase we hear quite often but don’t really understand. The strategies that fall under this category—paid search, pay per click, sponsored search, organic search engine optimization, natural search engine optimization and online media placement—are equally ambiguous. So, what do these terms mean, and how can they potentially help you in today’s economy?

What is Internet marketing?

“Internet marketing” can be defined as using the Internet to communicate a company’s message about itself, its products or its services. It also refers to the placement of media in different stages of the customer engagement cycle through search engine marketing (SEM), search engine optimization (SEO), banner ads on specific websites, email marketing and Web 2.0 strategies. Still confused? Let’s delve deeper.

Search engine optimization

The SEO process allows more users to find and view your website via a search engine. The process analyzes search engine algorithms to discover how these search engines look for specific pieces of information in specific places on websites.

Organic, or natural, SEO

SEO professionals use this analysis to input the correct information in the right places on a website so that search engines can find you—and find you fast. Think of organic, or natural, SEO as a long-term, strategic process that is consultative in nature. A good SEO firm will work with you to influence search engine results. The key word, though, is “influence.” Organic SEO tactics, though they are successful when executed by a well-respected SEO firm, can only influence search results. Search engines have the ultimate control over what keywords they rank. Note that it takes time for this to work; organic SEO requires continual, consistent monthly efforts and adjustments.

Pay per click equals paid search equals sponsored search

This type of search engine marketing goes by three names. With pay per click, you are

buying your position on the search engine page. You pay for it only when someone clicks on your listing. This Internet marketing strategy gives you more control over the positioning of your ranking; you can even select the time of day and day of the week and, with some search engines, target your ranking by the demographics of the searcher. With paid search, you control the keywords that prompt your site's ranking in the results. You also control the message that appears beside your site's listing. Cost varies by keyword and geographic target. Note, too, that paid search is market-driven because it is operated as an auction—if you pay more, you receive a better position in the search engine results.

Online media placement

You've heard of banner, or display, ads, right? These are the ads that appear on some popular sites: Google, Yahoo, etc. Think of these ads as online billboards. Companies have paid for the space on that webpage to design and showcase their messages. The company does not pay per person who clicks the ad because it has already paid for the space.

So, what should you do?

A couple of questions come to mind:

- If you already have strong organic SEO rankings, should you do pay per click?
- If you are already doing paid search, should you also engage an SEO firm to do organic for you?

The answer is: It depends. If you have strong organic rankings, chances are there are still a few keywords for which you are not being ranked. Paid search allows you to buy those words or the words of your competitor(s). If you are doing paid search, you'll see results right away but might be missing the long-term benefits of organic search optimization. Plus, most respected SEO firms will not recommend that you do paid searches if your site is not ready (e.g., not secure, not easy to navigate, not user-friendly). According to Search Engine Journal, paid search only increases visits to a website by 20% because visitors know that the initiative is a paid-for effort.

The best option? A combination of organic SEO and paid search. According to a study by two New York University professors, Anindya Ghose and Sha Yang, if you use both paid and organic Internet marketing strategies for your site, on average, you'll see a 40% increase in clicks to your site and a 20% increase in the conversions of clicks to sales. It also helps with your branding—the perception is that you are everywhere.

Why should you do it?

Two reasons: return on investment and the ability to track results.

In today's economy, your marketing budget requires justification. Internet marketing tactics such as search engine optimization strategies can help you convert more leads into sales and track the return on your marketing investment. SEO strategies pull instead of push because visitors on the web are already looking for the products or services you provide—your prospects are already primed. Plus, you can potentially reach almost everyone because almost everyone uses the Internet. And 99% of these Internet users utilize search engines. To put this in traditional marketing terms, influencing search engine rankings is like investing in a billboard and being confident that 99% of the people you meet are driving down the road on which the billboard is prominently displayed.

Internet marketing strategies shouldn't be nebulous; in fact, understanding these tactics is important to business success in today's world. Know what the terms mean and what the strategies can do for your organization. Then engage an SEO firm to help you better market your services/products to the current Internet-driven consumer population.

JoAnna Dettmann and Kaysha Kalkofen are co-founders of Clayton-based tSunela, a digital marketing firm that specializes in search engine optimization, paid search marketing, web analytics, social media marketing and online media. For more information, visit www.tSunela.com or call 314-721-88