

Finding Yourself

The Search Engine Overview

Matt, our Search Engine guru, has put together a quick bluffers guide that should help you get to grips with this fast changing market.

Search Engines - not free but very affordable

Let's start with a basic misapprehension - search engines are no longer free. Once upon a time they were. But that was before the bubble burst and everyone got into making money from the Internet. However, if you approach search engine advertising in the right way they are very affordable and deliver superb results.

Our advice is, that if you do not already have a search engine strategy, then now is the time to talk to us about how you can maximise the impact of search engines for your business.

So what's so special about search engines?

Here at RealityHouse we love search engines - but why? Because they are a marketing manager's dream; delivering an interested audience to your website who are ready to purchase or at the very least to contact you.

When a marketer considers Off The Page or Direct Mail advertising they often taught to think around the 'AIDA' concept - get Attention, generate Interest, create Desire and stimulate Action. Both money and time are spent on conceptualising an idea to try and sell a product or service to what is hoped to be a relevant readership.

Search engines on the other hand, make selling a product or service much more cost effective because the majority of the target market are often already at the 'Desire' stage when searching for a solution to their need(s). It doesn't take a genius to realise for example, that advertising 'management training courses' directly to somebody searching for 'management training courses' yields quite a high conversion rate. There aren't many advertising mediums that can provide a marketer with a group of self-defined prospects.

So how do you get your web site to the top of search engine results?

And here's the interesting bit - how we can take your site to the top of the lists. Effective registration - Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) - is the starting point. Keyword sponsored links - Pay Per Click (PPC) - delivers greater targeting. While Return-on-Investment (ROI) tracking enables you to measure exactly how well your website is performing.

Search engines such as Google and MSN are now the primary tools by which Internet users find new products and services online. The problem for marketers, however, is that most web users are impatient and few searchers actually click past 3-4 pages of search engine results. Unless your site is near the top on the first page - you will receive few visits and convert even less into valuable customers. A well-designed web site with good listings on search engines will see a dramatic increase in traffic and revenue.



Paid Placement

Paid Placement is the search engine industry's solution to allow fast and measurable delivery of promotional adverts to web searchers. In essence it is about bidding upwards of 10 pence to place targeted and relevant adverts for your web site at the top of search engine results based upon target keywords.

Adverts are usually text based and appear in a format similar to that of normal search result listings - often they are labelled 'sponsored listings'. When a user clicks on one of your adverts you pay the bid amount to the search engine provider, hence Paid Placement is also called 'pay per click' advertising (PPC).

The two leading networks offering a Paid Placement service are Google Adwords and Overture. Between them they cover all the major search engine results of Google, AOL, Askjeeves, Yahoo!, MSN, Lycos, Hotbot and AltaVista. Keyword research, advert creation, bid management and reporting are very time consuming. It is often better to outsource Paid Placement campaigns to a specialist search engine marketing agency with experience of the most effective methods to achieve maximum sales conversion.

Web Optimisation

Web optimisation involves reviewing and modifying a web site's physical content and architectural structure to improve keyword positioning in relevant 'free' search results. Free (organic) search results usually form the bulk of returned result listings, paid or sponsored listings from Paid Placement usually appear above or to the side.

There will always be some people that have a mistrust of any paid for advertising and shy away from clicking paid placement links that appear in their search results. Web optimisation allows a web site to be found by these people at zero direct 'cost per click'. Although the initial costs of web optimisation are somewhat higher than a pay per click campaign the long-term results are more cost effective as obtained positions generally remain in place for at least six to twelve months.

A web optimisation campaign can never carry any guarantee of results by keyword; each search engine's own algorithm determines the final relevance and position. Additionally optimisation and resubmission usually takes at least 2 months to take full effect on results. A good search engine optimisation consultant will make no promises but be confident of his/her ability to achieve some useful and popular top-ten search result listings within a two-month time frame.

Measuring Return on Investment

When spending your marketing budget on search engine advertising it is important to find a search engine marketing agency who can offer some form of Return on Investment tracking (ROI). This usually takes the form of some JavaScript code that is placed upon your web pages and any contact / process confirmation landing pages. ROI tracking will enable a search engine marketing agency to generate reports showing which keywords have converted visitors into leads or customers and which have not, and at what cost; allowing them to suggest and make improvements in the allocation of your advertising budget to maximise revenue.

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