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There is so much information about SEO – it’s enough to make your head spin. To make it easier, I want to pull together a collection of my most important articles so you have a reference at a glance.

Enjoy!

Articles:

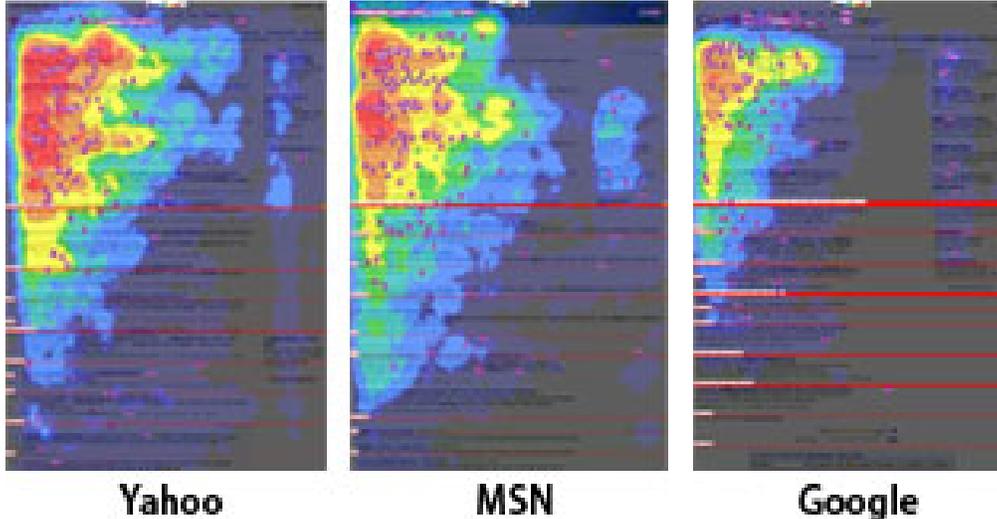
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PPC versus SEO Current Update:

In the *Marketing Sherpa Search Benchmark Study for 2008*, PPC was rated 4th on the list of high ROI marketing tactics. This direct quote is the most telling statement in the report:

“To say that 99 people out of 100 click on the natural search results is probably an underestimate.”

Between the Marketing Sherpa report and the eye tracking studies, it's clear that Organic SEO is the way to go for site owners looking to get the most out of their marketing budget.



Source: Enquiro

Marketing In A Poor Economy



There is no escaping the reality of the economy. These are not good times for most people. Many individuals and businesses are suffering.

However, in spite of that, many online businesses are still doing well. Online shopping was up over shopping in traditional retail stores (Cyber Monday was up 15% over the previous year).

People don't stop searching the web just because times are bad, and the number of searches per person are on the rise, so there is still plenty of traffic to be had. Then it becomes the job of your website to convert that traffic.

What you need to know is that people tend to shop differently in a poor economy. They research more, they comparison shop more and they look for more value for the money they spend.

It's true, individuals and businesses are trying to cut costs - but most people and businesses can't stop buying. There are still supplies, inventory, services etc that we need - to function and to run our business. So when people go to purchase these products and services they are more likely to look for discounts/sales and to search and compare on multiple sites.

Now is the perfect time for websites to step up and provide potential customers with the information and incentives needed to get the sale. Do a marketing review of your website and make sure your site is compelling, informative and offers a great deal.

You should look at what special offers you can afford to make to entice people into doing business with you. You can also set a deadline on the special offer in hopes of getting people to just buy right then rather than comparison shopping.

If you know for sure you are cheaper than some competitors place your own price comparison chart on your site so they can compare you to others without leaving your site.

You may also want to consider revisiting your keyword phrases and add phrases that include words like: sale, discount, free shipping on, best price on, cheap, etc. People are more likely to search for products or services combined with these kind of phrases in hopes that they will quickly come across a great deal.

Create a marketing campaign with a special discount for people that have already ordered - offer them a discount for their repeat business. Remember everyone is looking for a good price right now, so reach out to them and show them what you have to offer.

Don't forget Blogging. (By the way, If you don't have a Blog get one up and running - it's a great way to get more traffic into your site and to connect with your visitors.)

You can create your Blog posts around keyword phrases that are highly trafficked and bring in new traffic quickly (Blogs often get ranked very quickly these days.)

Another great idea is to become a resource for people on saving money in their industry - for example if you sell paint, you could offer a report that shows people how to get the most out of their paint can - show people just because times are tough it doesn't mean they have to live with a room or even a whole house that needs work. Top off the special report with a coupon for that can of paint they need. You'll help people, get new business and possibly even gain attention from the media. The media is so focused on reporting on the bad economy and they are constantly looking for new stories related to these hard times.

Being a great resource for people on saving money in a certain industry should garner some attention. The more creative you are with your money saving ideas the more exposure you will get out of it. You could also start a regular "column" in your newsletter or on your Blog that shares money saving tips for people.

The key is to get creative - know your customers (what are they afraid of, what are their needs, what can they do without during rough times and what do they absolutely still have to have) and then come up with a campaign that ends up helping them and you. A great win-win!



Discover The Secrets Of SEO

There is so much information floating around out there about Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and how to get some rankings. So much of it is contradictory and confusing. I wanted to spend a little bit of time talking about the *secrets* of top rankings.

So, let's jump right in with the *secrets* to SEO success....

Search Engine Secret # 1: There are no secrets! The search engines make it all very public and clear what you need to do to get top rankings. The success lies in the details and proper implementation. But there is no top secret, proprietary technique for getting top rankings.

OK, so now we all know there are no *secrets*, but that doesn't mean there isn't information you need to know, such as:

If you don't optimize your site, you won't get top rankings. It really is that plain and simple. If the engines can't spider your site and you don't have links and strong content, you don't stand a chance against the sites that do have all that in place. So many people don't want to spend money on SEO, or are afraid to take the plunge but then they can't understand why they don't have rankings. So maybe there is a secret – maybe the secret is **take action and get your site optimized!**

Your site structure matters! I can't tell you how often people have said to me "I know my site is a mess, but I don't want to spend the money fixing it, so can't you just throw up some keywords and Meta tags and get me some rankings?" Ummmm, no, I can't. Your site structure is your foundation. You would never build a house without a solid foundation, why would you build an SEO campaign without a solid foundation? (For more information on the importance of a solid site foundation and how to evaluate your site foundation, visit: <http://www.ecombuffet.com/SEO-consultation.htm>)

Don't just focus on small keyword list that is made up of the most popular and competitive keywords. **You will be missing out on opportunities** for great keyword phrases that convert really well. **Expand your list.** Include long tail phrases. They may have less traffic but they will convert at a higher rate and if you get enough of these phrases they will likely add up to be better than your original list.

SEO is changing and evolving so staying current on what the engines are looking for is important. Either hire a firm to get you top rankings or find a way to make sure you stay current with information you can trust. (For more information on how to stay current and informed on the SEO Industry, visit: <http://ecombuffet.com/sos/>)

Social media and SEO go hand in hand, so get out there and be social. You can optimize your site without doing social media, and you can do social media without an optimized site. But why would you? The two enhance and compliment each other. The

truth is there is a lot of competition out there for website traffic so why not use all the tools at your disposal?

Focusing on SEO without focusing on conversions is a mistake. You are going to work so hard, or pay someone your hard earned money to get you top rankings. You can't afford to ignore marketing issues. Make sure your site is going to convert all that great new traffic you are going to send to your site. (For More Information on marketing and conversions, visit: <http://www.ecombuffet.com/WSS.htm>)

Google Webmaster Tools and your web stats are a goldmine of information. Make sure you take time to see what words people are actually using to find your site and see what people do once they get to your site. See how many people link to you and which of those sources are driving traffic. Find out if there are errors on your site. There is so much information to be analyzed; you just need to make the time to check it out.

Successful SEO requires time, patience, skill, knowledge, persistence, attention to detail, knowledge of HTML, current information and an understanding of marketing helps too – then you can write the best possible text while using the keywords well, and it will also help you write compelling Title and Description tags....**OR – the willingness to invest in a professional firm to get those top rankings for you.**

Just Because You Don't Want To Hear It, Doesn't Mean It Isn't True (SEO Friendliness)

This article may not make me real popular with many site owners, but it is the honest truth.

So many people want top rankings but they aren't truly prepared to do what it takes to get those top rankings.

The truth is the foundation of your site is important to the success of your SEO campaign. Not all sites are built "SEO Friendly" and those errors need to be corrected or you are limiting your rankings potential.

I understand that it is no fun at all to have spent a lot of money or time on a site that looks great only to find out that the backend is not search engine friendly at all.

Let me take a quick minute to explain what "search engine friendly" means: a site with clean code that does not block the spiders from crawling it, and does not consist of fundamental elements that the engines have a problem with.

Here are just a few of the common search engine friendly issues:

- CSS or java script on-page
- Site is built in frames
- URLs are dynamic with tons of parameters in the URL
- Site is built with session IDs
- Extraneous code which the engines have to crawl through before they get to your content
- Navigation the engines can't follow
- The site was built in a SiteBuilder that doesn't allow for proper code or optimization

So, as I said, it is difficult when you find out the site isn't designed to be SEO friendly and that it's going to take some work to fix things. However, just because you don't want to hear it doesn't mean it's not true. And the other truth is that if you are not willing to have the issues corrected, you are going to be limiting your own results in the engines.

Adding content and getting links is definitely a good idea but without a solid foundation you are going to limit the benefit of that work and hinder your rankings.

There are some things in life we can avoid, and there are other things that hurt us too much if we continue to avoid them. If you aren't sure if your site is search engine friendly, it's a good idea to find out quickly and address the problem. It isn't going to go away and it could actually get worse as the engines continue to tweak things and demand more from sites.

Should You Handle Your Own SEO?

Everyone is trying to save money in today's economy – but sometimes when you think you are saving money you are actually losing so much more than you save.

If you are considering handling your own SEO, that is only a good decision if;

- a) you have the time to do the work and actually get it done and
- b) you can get the results you need so you actually increase your traffic from top rankings.

To determine if you should handle your own SEO – check out these questions.

1. Can you work within simple HTML?

At a bare minimum, you need to be able to add Meta tags to an HTML document. Ideally, you can also bold text, set up links, change formatting, rename images, move java script into a .js file etc.

2. Do you have enough time to make your site search engine friendly?

Plan on a minimum of 3 hours for site's that are in great shape, and up to 25 hours (or more) for sites that may need a complete overhaul. In our experience, 3 - 6 hours seems to be the norm for time spent on updating SEO friendliness issues.

3. Will you have this time for SEO friendliness work within the next week?

Typically if people don't take action in the immediate future (within the next 5 business days), the project ends up being delayed indefinitely. You need a clear scheduled start date for your SEO work – especially when the holidays are approaching! You need to get things going!

4. Can your business afford to “lend” this time to SEO without experiencing some other negative impact?

If the time is not truly extra time you have, then you would be “borrowing” the time from another area of your business. Can you do that without harming another area of your business?

5. If your SEO project becomes bigger than you initially anticipated, will you have the time and attention to continue dedicating to it until completion?

6. Are you an experienced and competent copywriter? If you said no, do you feel you can quickly master writing compelling copy that is also keyword rich?

7. Is the content already on your site something you feel comfortable altering?

Often people that have paid for high-end marketing copy on their websites do not want to make any SEO alterations themselves, for fear of altering the effectiveness of their current copy – and therefore affecting their conversion rates.

8. Do you have any prior SEO experience?

9. Do you have the tools or know where to purchase the tools that will help you in keyword selection, site analysis, reporting and current industry information?

10. Would you rather spend your time working ON your business(i.e., growing it) than IN your business (i.e., taking care of the nitty gritty details rather than the big picture)?

11. Do you have a plan in place to make sure you stay current all SEO trends and changes so you can maintain your rankings on-going?

Now let's take a look at your answers and what they mean:

1: Can you work within simple HTML?

On-page optimization requires that you work within the HTML on your website. If you are not able to work with an HTML document and feel confident that you will not cause any errors or malfunctions, then you simply can not handle your own SEO at this time.

You would need to learn HTML before you could consider handling SEO. Please note, if your site is more complex than simple HTML, you would need to be comfortable working within the code used on your site.

2, 3 and 4: Do you have enough time to make your site search engine friendly? Can your business afford to "lend" this time to SEO, and therefore experience no significant negative impact? If the time is not truly extra time you have, then you would be "borrowing" the time from another area of your business.

You will also later need to write content, alter content and handle various optimization techniques, but to get started – before you can do anything else – you need to make the time to get the foundation ready for SEO. If you don't have time to do this, your project simply won't get off the ground.

Do you truly have the time, or are you just taking it from somewhere else. If you are taking it from somewhere else, that may be fine – you just need to be sure that you aren't harming your business in other ways. Getting rankings, and ultimately traffic to your site will not benefit you if your business falls apart while you work on the optimization.

The remainder of the questions are details for you to consider. Basically, the more No's there are, the more likely it is that you should NOT handle your SEO in-house.

If your results determined you can handle your own SEO, here are the final details you need you consider:

1. What is your time worth per hour? Which option is more cost effective for you - hiring someone or spending your own time?
2. Can you recognize when your choice is not working for you and are you willing to try the other option at that time?
3. You must commit to educating yourself and learning all that you need to know to truly run a successful SEO campaign. Inadvertently spamming, or using a questionable technique can result in a temporary loss of results or a permanent ban from the engines. Be 100% sure you aren't endangering your business.

If your results determined you should outsource your SEO, here are the final details you should consider:

1. Make sure you know what questions to ask the SEO firm you hire (check out <http://www.ecombuffet.com/SEO-Blog/?p=294>)
2. Plan on spending anywhere from \$300 - \$1000.00 per month to run an aggressive SEO campaign.

No one but you can decide - we just wanted to arm you with some things to consider. It is all in the details, and you should consider them carefully before making a decision.

When to Call In the Big Dogs?

We all know the importance of SEO and getting your site listed in the top of the engines so you can tap into all that traffic out there that is searching for exactly what you have to offer.

The question is how do you optimize your site and tap into your piece of the pie?

It comes down to two options – handle your own optimization or hire a professional firm.

After careful consideration, you have decided to tackle your SEO work yourself and control your own destiny in the engines. Congratulations on your decision.

Once the decision has been made, it's important to track your time and progress and determine if the decision is still what is best for you. Things change and what you decided initially may not always be the right decision. Like SEO work itself, deciding how to handle it isn't a one time thing – you have to evaluate the progress and results and you may have to tweak your initial plan of action.

Here are some warning signs that handling SEO yourself is doing more harm than good.

If you decide it doesn't make sense to continue to handle your own SEO, it's not failure, no need to admit defeat, it's simply smart business.

If you find:

- You aren't finding the time to get done all that you need to in order to properly make your site SEO friendly, optimized, and submitted then you really aren't making the progress you need to be and likely won't see the results you were hoping for in the engines.
- You are spending too much time on your SEO, and getting it all done, but the rest of your work has slowed to a halt, and you can't even handle the new business that comes in. That's a problem – a good problem – the new business should increase revenue and you can choose to outsource at that time.
- You work and tweak, and scream, and tweak some more and still no results.
- You had a site that was converting well; you tweaked it for SEO and have rankings, traffic and new visitors, but your site no longer converts

If one or all of these points above are happening to you, it may be time to “call in the big dogs” and get some professional help with your SEO.

Remember, handling your own SEO only saves you money if:

- You have the time to spare and aren't just "borrowing" it from another part of your business that is now suffering.
- You learn enough and actually implement it to get the results you desire.

If you have the time, the knowledge and are getting your SEO work done and seeing results – congratulations. If you aren't, don't feel like you are stuck with your decision you are free to change your mind and outsource at any time to turn things around and start getting your site listed in the engines.

The Death Of SEO



There is a lot of talk about the “death of SEO” and “the death of ranking reports” lately. It all stems from some sessions at PubCon in Las Vegas.

Remember we all want to get our message out there and have our voices heard and one way to do that is to make a dramatic statement. So that is what you are seeing. The truth is SEO is not dead – it is just evolving. And the other truth is.... the more things change, the more they stay the same.

What I mean is; of course the SEO universe is evolving – search is so much more sophisticated than it ever was before. We have universal search, geo-targeting and we have personalization.

However in spite of all that – the foundation has not really changed. To get ranked you should have always been focused on creating high quality content, getting good links into your site and creating a useful, informative site that is focused on the user experience and ultimately on getting the sale. None of that has changed – that is all just as important.

People talk about the death of ranking reports – but for those that know what internet marketing is all about – you should know that ranking reports were never that important. Sure we provide them to clients, to give them an indication of where they stand in the engines – but the real results come from how much increased traffic and sales they get, not from how many rankings they can see on their report.

It’s true with personalization, universal search, intent based search and geo-targeting the landscape is changing and different results will be displayed for different people. That is all good news!

Sure it means you won’t get reliable ranking reports and you may even get less total traffic but the traffic you do get will be more targeted since your webpage coming up in the SERPs was matched to a query that was specific and relevant based on their location and search history.

I’m hearing a lot of talk that makes me think people have misinterpreted what was said at PubCon.

It is true that we need to focus on more than just ranking reports (but as I said, I believe that was already the case). However, you still need a high quality site that shows the engines it is relevant to whatever the query is, in whatever context the person is searching.

In other words if you go with the example Bruce Clay gave at PubCon: If someone performs a search for “java” they may be looking for programming, or may be looking for the beverage, and some are looking for travel information. Theoretically, personalized search will know that and provide results accordingly.

The fact is in all 3 of those scenarios some sites have to come up on top - so you just have to make sure your site is optimized to let the engines and the site visitors know which of those queries you are relevant to (programming, coffee or travel) and then your site can come up on top!

So What Now?

The truth is optimizing your site is more important than ever since traffic is going to be so much more specific and targeted and as a result conversions will be higher.

You should focus on understanding your site visitors and what they want. Focus on what they do when they come to your site. Focus on building content that delivers quality information.

If you don't know what personalization, universal search, geo-targetting and intent based search is stay tuned for my next article.

The final thought I will leave you with: Working with a company that is current on SEO trends and understands what all these changes mean is going to be vital to your success.

About The Author:

Jennifer's vision and concepts are behind all in-house marketing campaigns. Over the past 10 years Jennifer's expertise in online marketing and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) has helped clients increase revenue and achieve their business goals.

Jennifer has trained many companies looking to take their SEO in-house. Jennifer has presented on many SEO teleseminars and trainings and spoken on SEO Panels.

Jennifer has written a downloadable book on Search Engine Optimization and has been published in many SEO and marketing publications.

Jennifer has the technical skill as well as a marketing and copywriting background which makes more for a more comprehensive approach to SEO than many of the other firms out there that just look at the technical aspects of the site and don't consider big picture strategies and conversion issues.

Jennifer is proficient in identifying issues and finding solutions for business growth. Jennifer can be reached at 562-592-5347 or jennifer@ecombuffet.com

Take advantage of your Business Growth Consultation and receive the following:

- A no-nonsense 3 Point Inspection. Jennifer will identify and outline the 3 biggest problems with your website.
- An assessment to determine if you will benefit from SEO and how.
- A no-obligation proposal.

About EcomBuffet:

Industry leader EcomBuffet has been achieving top rankings for clients for over 10 years. Members of the EcomBuffet team have spoken at conferences, been published in industry publications and been interviewed as industry experts in various newsletters.

A full service SEO, marketing and web design and development firm, EcomBuffet is unique in their offerings. Rather than offering only technical SEO work, EcomBuffet also offers marketing services. EcomBuffet's focus is not only on driving traffic but helping convert that traffic into paying customers.