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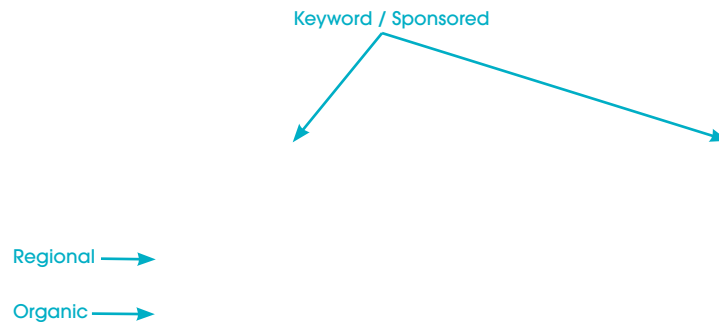
## The Angle

### Driving Traffic to Your Site: An Important Part of a Good Web Strategy

As technology continues to advance, so will the ability to gain valuable insight about clients and prospects through website marketing and communications. The commitment to being successful in your online marketing efforts, however, will remain demanding. Businesses that want to maximize their return on investment must inherently understand the value of making continued improvements to their websites through ongoing search engine optimization, web measurement, CRM (customer resource management) programs and time spent refining their approach.

This month, we are taking a closer look at online marketing to assess what companies can do to ensure the best results in their web marketing efforts. Everyone talks about how to maximize ROI in online advertising, but determining the best approach for your business can be challenging. Here are some guidelines for online advertising opportunities, driving traffic to your site and measuring the success of your efforts.

#### Search Engine Optimization



The primary method for driving traffic to your web is to be search engine friendly. Outside of investing in a clean, educational and easy to navigate website, the focus of your website marketing initiatives should be search engine optimization (SEO). The goal of SEO is to recruit qualified prospects to your site, not just quantity. By remaining committed to reviewing your search engine optimization efforts on a consistent basis, you will ensure that the organic, or natural, ranking of your website (which is based on select keywords) will remain effective and competitive.

Increasing your organic ranking will not happen overnight because it takes time for the "spiders" (used to feed pages to search engines) to register your keyword terms

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on search engine queries. To be continuously effective at this form of marketing, experts are currently recommending allocating about 5% of the online budget to optimizing a website on a continued basis (annually). This will increase conversion rates and, ultimately, ROI. If you continue to do this, your website will be a revenue generator as opposed to an expense. The downside to SEO is that because it is an ongoing commitment, it must be maintained – it must remain a focus to you.

### Pay-Per-Click and Sponsored Searches

Two additional forms of online advertising are pay-per-click (PPC) and sponsored searches. These types of advertisements are common on search engines like Google and Overture and are placed above and to the right of the organic search listings. As with SEO, both are based on keywords and are measurable, but they require a budget for each keyword. The strongest rationale for endorsing PPC advertising is that the results are immediate. You do not have to wait for your search engine optimization efforts to kick into full force (to spider across the search engine indices to be found and organically ranked). When evaluating whether to spend in SEO or PPC, consider the research: Web consumers trust organic search results three times over PPC results. However we may find that as more people understand that SEO is just another form of advertising to the masses, this opinion could shift.

One other point of consideration in determining your PPC and sponsored search efforts is to understand what keywords are most effective at generating qualified visitors to your site and therefore worth their per-click investment. For example: It may be more effective to purchase specific keywords that apply to your business specialty rather than pay a premium to own a more general term. The question to ask is which term will generate the most qualified candidate and be an effective method for ensuring the return on your investment. The more you expand the number of terms purchased, the more costly it becomes. It is better to monitor those terms that actually result in qualified leads and adjust your budget to support owning those keyword/search terms.

### Behavioral Marketing

Behavioral Marketing is another form of online advertising generating media buzz and is offered by major search portals and the sites they manage/own. The advantage of behavioral marketing is the ability to cost effectively target your customers based on their lifestyle interests or zip code/regions. This is similar to targeting lifestyle (horizontal) publications to reach your market during leisure-based activities as opposed to a more industry specific (vertical) approach.

### Measuring Your Success: Set It Up from the Get-Go

How are you going to measure the success of your efforts? A lot of money is being wasted on online advertising that doesn't get interpreted because it wasn't set up

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properly at the start. Before you dive into any form of measurable campaign, make sure you have a strategy built to measure the results. In addition, make sure you have defined what you will consider to be a success. How many conversions or calls do you need to justify the cost? Start slowly and make sure that every campaign has an individual tag to assess what is producing results and what is a waste of your budget.

### **Make It Easy for Visitors to Manage Your Expectations**

We have become so focused on our organization's goals that we forget to address how to make ourselves easy to do business with, or in other words, make it easy for consumers to interact with us. For this reason, it is important to be friendly and spell out what you are looking for as a response. According to NetRaker survey, increasing visitor satisfaction by just 5% can increase sales by 25%. What information are you asking for and are you prepared to integrate that information into your CRM efforts for future communications. Being highly organized will make it easier to track behavior and paths, and interpret it for future use and/or implementation into your CRM efforts. The client/customer will appreciate a site that is easy for them to use.

### **Don't Be Afraid to Test**

The greatest thing about the Internet is that it's real-time. The greatest thing about online marketing is the ability to measure results. Don't be afraid to test different advertising methods. As long as you adhere to your strategy and are organized in your approach, this test can provide great insight into your target audience.

### **Keep Track Of the Competition**

We hear this one over and over again, but there are so many online advertising options to consider from search engine optimization to association sponsorships, that it can be difficult to keep track. A competitor's PPC budget can surpass your budget while you're at lunch. Of course there are software programs that manage these systems, but they too are an investment, which is why it's important to stay committed to your strategy and to continuously evaluate how to impact your target DMA (Demographic Market Area) and audience while staying within your budget.

Finally, we should remember that consumers are becoming more sophisticated and understand that websites serve many purposes. If managed properly, websites and the marketing of them should yield a win-win situation for both the businesses and consumers they serve. For businesses, proper management of your website activities should assist in building lasting relationships and increasing your profits. For the customer: if you're easy to do business with and respond to your customers needs, they will continue to do work with you.

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