

Introduction to Search Marketing By Judith Lewis

Search marketing can seem like an occult science — part math, part art, part psychic ability. The truth is far more mundane, with search marketing based within both the realm of marketing and the discipline of maths and science. The delivery of search results from a database to your browser seems complex and unfathomable when taken as a whole. But when broken down, search results are the output of a little math and a lot of database work.

Some search engines like Google, Yahoo, Ask, and Bing run their own secret mathematical formulas to determine the best result for a search query. This secret formula is called the algorithm.

Each of these four search engines has its own algorithm to calculate how relevant

a page is to the words someone searches for. The math may be complex and the variables large in number, but every paid and natural search marketer must try and understand their part of it. Both paid and natural search rely on their own algorithms to deliver relevant results.

Search engines use an automatic program called a spider, or bot, which visits websites. The information that the spider retrieves is put into an archive — a complex database called the index. This database stores much more information than is ever returned in search results, since most search engines flag the content of pages that are of low value, such as duplicate or dangerous content that won't be delivered in the results.

Search marketing includes two ways of delivering a message through a search result: organic search optimisation, often referred to as search engine optimisation (SEO), and paid search marketing, often called pay per click (PPC). The foundation of both advertising techniques is keyword research.

Keyword research is the art/science of studying the words people use when they

want to find what you're offering on your web page. Both paid and organic techniques rely heavily on keyword relevancy, or how good a match a word is to a query. The words on the page are a strong indicator of what the page is about. The words related to the theme of the page are called "semantically related" and help increase the relevancy of the words on the page to a central theme. The amount that is paid at auction per click is partly determined by market forces and partly determined by the relevancy of the words being bid on to the words on the page.

The calculations made to determine how much each click, on each ad, for each keyword being bid on costs, is based around

relevancy. With paid search, the more relevant the content on the landing page, the less a click costs to the

advertiser. There are, of course, a number of factors that help determine the relevancy of keyword bid to the searcher's intent, all of which determines cost.

Each page of a website should be targeted toward a single theme for SEO purposes. There are occasions when this is not going to be the case, such as index pages, top-level category pages, and list pages. The landing page for a PPC keyword should be a page that is also highly relevant. Someone clicking on a search result for backpacks would not be pleased to land on a page for winter coats, or even a top-level navigation page. Once the search has been completed, a user expects the click to take him to the relevant page. This is the same for organic search results. It will be difficult to get a page to rank for "chocolate truffles" if the words are not used on the page.

Paid search ads need balance as well. The words used, the call to action, how the eye scans the ad, and language all need to be optimised. There is a great deal of psychology behind the creation of ads, and it is through understanding the possibilities available within the limitations of the medium that success can be found.

On-page SEO needs to be balanced, too. SEO is often slow to achieve the desired results, can at times be more competitive, and requires significant effort in managing

all aspects of ranking. There are apparently around 200 factors that go into ranking a web page. The SEO you deploy on each page has an effect on the site as a whole.

Paid search can fill in the gaps where SEO needs to be perfected. Paid search is one of the best tools in your online marketing arsenal.

It can be utilised to advertise timed specials, target keywords not yet optimised for, and expand the control over the targeted marketing message delivered. For example, a single page may have one organic marketing message shown in the SERPs and a different one in paid search.

Likewise, SEO can help reduce PPC costs. This is perhaps the most important point of any campaign and yet often the most overlooked. There is a way to reduce online paid advertising costs to your business by optimising your website and your paid search campaigns. By doing these things correctly, you could see a reduction of 90 percent in PPC costs. While not everyone will see this kind of dramatic savings, by doing your on-page SEO correctly (and structuring your paid search correctly, too), it could bring down your paid search costs.

Search engine marketing, while a complex discipline, is part math, part psychology, part marketing, and part creativity. Broken down like this, it becomes easier to understand and easier to learn. By attending the relevant sessions, this seemingly dark art will be illuminated. From "Introduction to Search Marketing" through the rest of the sessions and the site clinics, there is much insight to be found at SES London. *

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-26%

Display ad impressions among financial services companies dropped 26 percent month-over-month during November 2009.

Source: Nielsen Data

► Learn more at ClickZ State.

ClickZ.com.

SEO can help reduce PPC costs.

Want to learn more?

Judith will be speaking at the "Introduction to Search Engine Marketing" session on Tuesday at 10.45 a.m. Learn more:

SearchEngineStrategies.com/london

