



“How can my company get more business from our website?”

If you've ever asked yourself this question the answer can be boiled down to three words: **Search Engine Marketing**

The cold, hard fact is that more of your customers and clients than ever are using the Internet to find products and services that you sell. In fact, even during the current recession fully 85% of consumers plan to shop online during the upcoming holiday season and 69% will actually make a purchase (*Burst Media, 2009*). Furthermore, while retail sales this holiday season are expected to drop by at least 1% this year while the forecast for online sales is actually \$15 BILLION higher than last year (*National Retail Federation, 2009*).

So, the writing is on the wall, my friend.

Traditional Advertising No Longer the Best Marketing Investment

Any competent ad agency will admit that traditional advertising (print, broadcast, direct mail, and outdoor) is no longer the prime mover of products and services in the marketplace. **Yellow Pages advertising in particular is dying a slow death**. Traditional advertising is being quickly relegated to a supporting role to more powerful online marketing strategies that are cheaper, more targeted, much easier to track results, and most importantly – are interactive.

Search Marketing Is the *Rocket Fuel* for Your Online Advertising Engine

If your main business is selling, say, “portable widgets” and a link to your website isn't *prominently* displayed when a consumer searches online then what's the point in having a website in the first place?

“Search engine marketing”, or *SEM*, is the marketing *rocket fuel* that is focused on helping you grow your business online by improving the search engine ranking of your firm's website. In fact, ignoring SEM in your marketing strategy carries the very real risk of crippling the long-term growth of your business as competitors learn to leverage the power of “keywords” in their search marketing strategy.

The Goal of Search Marketing

The goal of search engine marketing is to get your firm's website listing displayed on the *first page* of a search results listing when someone searches for “portable widgets”, or whatever it is that you sell. If your site *doesn't* appear on the first page – or even the second page – then you had better find out why – *quick!* Even if you're only paying a few dollars a month for website hosting fees the *really bad news* is that you're practically handing business over to your competition every time a customer uses the Internet to search for products that you sell.

So, how does a business go about getting a first page search engine ranking? Here are five tips on how you can improve your chances of getting a first page ranking when a potential customer is looking for the products or services you're offering.

1. Include relevant and valuable content on your firm's website. Keep in mind that search engine software agents, or “bots”, periodically visit your website to determine the **relevancy** and **value** of your site to its intended topic. Your site, or even just a single page on your site, that is devoted to the topic of, say, “waterproof blue widgets” should contain plenty of useful content on that subject (and *only* that subject). NEVER, EVER pirate content from another company's website as this is a great way to get your site permanently banned from being ranked at all.

If your business handles a variety of products or services it's a good idea to create separate web pages for each one. In addition, you should research keywords (discussed in the next tip) specific to each product or service and incorporate them into the content for each page. Meta tags for each page should include Descriptions, Titles, and Keywords specific to the topic of each page as well.

2. Use keywords in your content that your clients are likely to use to find your website. Avoid the temptation to simply *brainstorm* possible keywords without any evidence that your keywords are what potential clients are actually using. Spend time researching keywords that are already being used to find the products or services that you provide.

Here's an example of a clue I found recently when researching the keyword “dui attorney”. It turned out that another keyword, “drunk driving attorney”, was being used frequently enough to justify rewriting a page for a client that used that new keyword in addition to the original keyword. Now, the client will start getting results on *two* keywords instead of just one – a difference of *thousands* of additional searches every month.

Once you have a list of keywords that you know are being used in actual searches you should use those keywords strategically in your website content. “Keyword stuffing”, or overloading your content with keywords, only triggers warning flags among the search engine bots and should be avoided at all costs. Your content should sound natural when

read out loud and be free of any misspellings or improper grammar which can also jeopardize your search ranking.

3. Use Pay-per-Click advertising to get a first page ranking in less than five minutes! Pay-per-click (PPC) advertising allows you to “bid” on one or more keywords in order to promote your website on a first page search listing immediately.

PPC advertising is not like buying traditional advertising where you pay for advertising *impressions*. Instead, PPC ads only cost you when someone actually visits your company's website in search of your products or services. And when that happens you only pay a few cents or a few dollars – depending on the keywords the visitor used to find your site. It's no wonder that traditional advertisers are being driven out of business by this kind of online advertising model.

4. Use a website address that includes your keyword. There has been a lot of debate in recent years about the effectiveness of a domain name that contains relevant keywords (e.g. “alabama-dui-lawyer.com” or “portable-widget-store.com”) on search engine ranking. But if the keywords used in a domain name are used strategically in the content of the website then such a domain name would definitely improve the site's search engine ranking. At the end of the day, domain names are very cheap to register and it makes sense to leverage a domain name strategy that incorporates keywords that are also used in the site's content. Keyword-rich domain names can be used very effectively for “landing pages” when incorporated into a *Google Adwords* or other PPC advertising strategy.
5. Leverage keyword-rich blogs and directories to improve your site's search ranking. Starting a blog on *Wordpress*, *Blogger*, or any number of other blogging sites costs nothing, but can have a very positive impact on your website's search ranking. With some discipline, you can write a keyword-rich blog each month that always contains a link back to your website. This link becomes a valuable “inbound link” that naturally increases the popularity of your site.

Business directories offer another great opportunity for you to include your website address in your business or professional listing which, in turn, becomes an inbound link back to your website. Anytime you have an opportunity to include the URL of your website in an online directory of any kind it can have a very positive effect on the search engine visibility of your firm's website.

Finally, it is critical to understand that no online advertising strategy will result in more business **UNLESS** your website is designed to move the online visitor to a sale – or at least in that direction. A well-designed site is critical to your online marketing success. You can even visit our website at <http://melcooper.com> and get a free analysis of your website with no obligations.

Conclusion

While the concepts behind search engine marketing are relatively easy for most business owners to understand, it should be emphasized that SEM is still a *discipline*. Effective SEM requires time and skill to master.

Knowing how to write compelling headlines, create effective PPC ads, research the best keywords (with the *least* competition), and design landing pages that lead to conversions can be a daunting task for any novice. CGM SearchMarketing can provide these services – and more – so that business owners and managers can do what they do best: Fill orders, sell products, and provide essential services to their customers while watching their businesses grow.



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For more information about Search Engine Marketing please call us at **(877) 898-3957** or visit the our websites at <http://cgmsearchmarketing.com> or <http://web-design-montgomery.com/>



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