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## Why Online Sales Matter

*Why are we here? Why do online sales matter?*

*For both business-to-consumer (B2C) and business-to-business (B2B) companies, the Internet is an increasingly important marketing and sales tool. Purchasers love it because it's an information-rich medium where they can conduct research and easily make comparisons. Marketers love it because online efforts are trackable and measurable, in real time.*

## First Things First

The Internet is transforming nearly every kind of business, from the obvious B2C e-commerce examples to a niche B2B business. Yet today, a lot of untapped opportunity remains.

This book helps you identify where you are in your Internet marketing process maturity and improve your marketing models both to increase your return on investment (ROI) and to boost sales.

Our goal is to give you tools that let you identify, track, and measure what works and what doesn't—effectively tying your Internet marketing efforts directly to your sales results. *Measurable, repeatable sales* is the ultimate goal we hope to help you reach.

## Internet Research Equals Internet Sales

As consumers, we all intuitively know that more and more research and shopping is done online today than ever before. But it's not just the B2C space that benefits from Internet research and a quicker sale.

According to sources such as AMR International, Enquiro, and Marketing Sherpa, Internet research is now part of nearly every major B2B transaction, and investment in online marketing continues to grow.

In 2009, Google commissioned a study by Slack Barshinger on how small to medium-size businesses use the Internet, and found that 77% of the business owners used online search to find new business suppliers, and 99% of them reported that search engines are the most effective tool for finding business suppliers.

Moreover, the larger the size of the purchase, the more likely the buyer is to make extended research efforts online. Without an integrated online strategy, your prospective customers won't be able to find your website (but they'll likely find your competitor's).

More business decision makers use the Internet to conduct research for their B2B purchases because it's

- An incredibly robust research medium, allowing multiple browsers, tabs, and windows to be open simultaneously for quick comparisons.
- A rich source of information. For more-complex purchasing processes or higher-ticket items, people need more time and more information to come to a final decision. An information-rich website can set a good foundation for the sales team. In addition, people rely on the many potentially persuasive “unbiased” third-party reviews.

- Conveniently open 24 hours a day. This means the buying process can progress over a weekend, instead of having to wait until Monday to ask a question on a toll-free number.
- A fast and economic way for one-to-one communication. Email, online chat, and web-based video conferencing reduce communication costs substantially.
- Dynamic. With ever-changing search engine algorithms and emerging tools such as Google Instant, an Internet search conducted today can reveal better results than the same one run last month.

## Advantages of Internet Marketing

Just as Internet research becomes an increasingly important tool during the purchasing process, more marketers are seeing the advantages, too. It's a win-win situation.

Marketing departments are investing more in online marketing today because it's

- Attractive to a significant segment of the demographics for most customer profiles. It can effectively reach your target customer.
- Faster and less expensive to conduct direct marketing campaigns (for example, an email campaign or online newsletter compared with traditional printing and direct-mail costs).
- More economic to communicate via email, online chat, and video conferencing than long distance phone calls or toll-free numbers offered by your company.
- Measurable, which means that successes are identifiable and repeatable.
- Set up for real-time results monitoring, and it can handle real-time tweaks and on-the-fly changes.
- Open 24-hours a day, which means that even potential customers with insomnia can be reached at some point during the buying process.
- Targeted, allowing you to pinpoint using geography, contextual relevance, and other useful parameters to reach a very specifically defined audience. (Online reviews are used more by expert Internet users or in niche product markets.)
- Continuously available, letting you give away whitepapers or free webinars to gather good sources of leads over time. Products with high price points and long sales cycles require many "touches" and follow-up with a potential customer.

- Cost-effective, in the long run. By adjusting your paid search campaigns to find which ads work best for different keywords, you reduce your ad spend and online efforts over time while maintaining or increasing the number of leads or purchases gained.
- Going social, as more people share information among peers on websites like Facebook and LinkedIn, for business purposes. A recommendation from a friend or peer can go a long way toward closing a sale.

## The Bird's Eye View

Most companies today have immature connections (at best) between their marketing and sales departments. With this book, you'll start to break down this silo mentality and get the different groups really talking and working together.

Which marketing efforts generated more leads? Which efforts generated better *quality* leads, thus enabling the sales team to close more sales? Which efforts cost more than others, particularly when compared to the actual sales they generated?

Metrics are at the heart of answering these questions, and metrics are what you use to assess your various marketing efforts, including search engine optimization, paid search campaigns, contact forms completed, and how many times the phone rings, too.

To get to the level where you have measurement tools in place—and can use them over time to measure results—requires a certain level of process maturity. Don't be annoyed if you're simply not there yet; that's what we'll do together using the tools in this book.

## Standard Practice

It is not unusual for a company today to be fairly inexperienced when it comes to search engine optimization, paid search campaigns, or both.

Perhaps the company's been running campaigns for awhile but never ran the numbers to see which ads work better than others. Or maybe a business knows its products, and therefore what keywords should be woven into the website text, but never really approached it methodically. Perhaps they've never done a competitive analysis for multiple keywords and keyphrases in several keyword themes, which could identify new keyword opportunities.

We're not surprised. We see this all the time. But a desire to reach the next level of process maturity is the key—that's how we get new clients in the door, and that's

why curious people like you have bought this book. You're hungry for more information and want to know how to squeeze more from every marketing dollar spent. You're at the right place.

## Your Online Sales Engine

Wrangling a website into something that generates measurable, repeatable results for your business requires blending together many different areas of expertise *and* building bridges to share information across departments. We call this process creating Your Online Sales Engine.

This book gives you a working knowledge of online sales components so that you can engage competently with your technical and marketing colleagues in a less-stressful environment while producing the most effective final product.

The online sales engine components are

- Speaking to your audience, analyzing keywords, and developing user personas
- Getting visible with organic and paid search
- Making websites that work, either from scratch or through improving what you have in place already
- Selling online, including landing page design and conversion rate improvement
- Reviewing metrics that matter, and revising the other online sales engine components based on sound business analysis

Chapter 2, "What an Online Sales Engine Can Do," covers what the online sales engine is composed of in more detail.

## The Heart of It All: Metrics

To say that we are big believers in gathering and applying metrics is not really quite right... *evangelists* is a better term. You can't make sound business decisions without knowing what's really going on between your website and its visitors. And you can't know what's going on unless you have good data and even better analytic practices.

## Paid Search and Organic Search

Digging into search engine optimization (SEO, or organic search) and paid search (pay-per-click [PPC]) work is just the beginning when you get an online sales engine up and running at your company.

## WHAT WE MEAN

The term *paid search* refers to the paid ads on the search engine results pages. Some people prefer the term *pay per click* (PPC), which is the paid search term in this book.

Just an aside for advanced folks: There is some experimenting within the industry with a pay-per-acquisition model, which we say falls inside the paid search term definition, although it could not be described as PPC. As of this writing, none of the major search engines have identified a pay-per-acquisition that works well.

We also use the term *search engine optimization* (SEO) throughout this book, and some people prefer the term *organic search*, instead. Again, they are essentially synonymous terms.

Although we often refer to Google throughout this book (and show Google tools in most screen captures), other search engines (such as Yahoo!, MSN, and Bing) also deserve attention. Google, however, is the number one search engine in all but five countries worldwide. Google also has a good set of Internet marketing tools available for professionals, which also happen to be free.

For example, Figure 1.1 shows that the bulk of the websites listed on the page come from organic search listings. The three websites at the top, highlighted with a shaded background, and the ones along the sidebar on the right under the map, are the paid search advertisements on the page. The organic listings include Google Places links (the ones with the “map pins” next to them).



Figure 1.1 The mixture of paid and organic search listings for “dog sitter 48105.”

## Other Sales Engine Components

We also take a look at how your website's information architecture can better meet the needs of your website visitors (and better meet your business needs, as well). Other things that impact leads and sales include usability and user-experience design techniques, landing page design, and keyword analysis.

The entire Internet marketing package (everything mentioned so far) needs to be measured. You need to define which data you want to track and how, track it, and then analyze it to see what works (and what doesn't).

*That* is how to apply the online sales engine in your business to get tangible results.

## Back to Basics: Business Strategy 101

Before we move forward and get your website and marketing and sales processes ahead of your competition, let's revisit a few basic business strategies to keep in mind.

### The Customer Is King

In our view, the customer comes first. Period. Don't fall into the trap of designing your home page based on the most beautiful design from your favorite agency. Avoid prominently promoting a whitepaper on your website (written by a CXX at your company) if the download form is not converting enough leads.

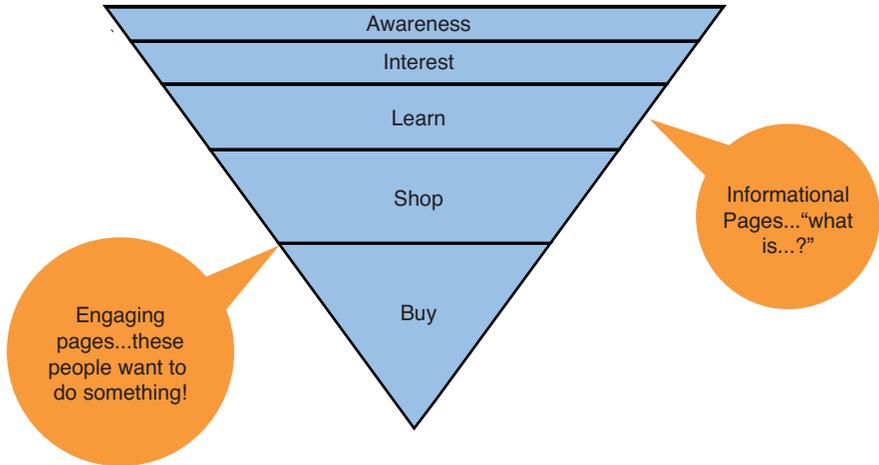
How do you get out of these sticky political situations? With reliable user data. Do your user homework up front, track results, and you'll be able to talk your way out of any poor design decision. After all, the website is for customers and potential customers. If it's not reaching them or converting them or working for them, it needs to change. Fast.

We introduce you to some new tools and concepts that will get you there, such as user personas, usability techniques, and even how to redesign landing pages to benefit users and increase conversion rates. The user (that is, website visitor) is your primary focus.

### Understanding the Buying Process

Website visitors interested in your products or services can be "mapped" to a place in the buying process. Provide different kinds of pages on your website to address different stages of the buying process, as shown in Figure 1.2.

By addressing the needs of your website visitors who are at different stages of the buying process, you can also support the sales process.



**Figure 1.2** *Different buying process stages require different kinds of information from your website.*

## Remove Organizational Silos

Getting your marketing, sales, and website teams to work with each other, share data, integrate their workflow, and coordinate efforts as a team could be your biggest challenge. With everyone sharing the goal to obtain the results we outline in this book, you'll be able to coordinate efforts across organizational silos with less resistance.

What results are we talking about? Essentially, being able to track closed sales back to specific marketing efforts, thereby identifying which marketing efforts bring in more and better-qualified leads than others. Well worth the effort, in our opinion.

## Get the Most Bang for Your Buck

Should you code your own content management system (CMS) or customer relationship manager system (CRM)? We have seen this done, but we typically don't advise that you take this approach.

There's no need to reinvent the wheel or spend all your time under the hood of your website; it's best to use state-of-the-art components instead. Many good tools are available, such as software as a service (such as Salesforce.com) or free open source implementations (such as SugarCRM and CMS systems WordPress or Drupal).

You'll be able to spend your energy perfecting the parts of your website that your visitors will see and interact with. This will take all your creativity and cleverness, so save that for the good stuff, instead of reinventing the wheel.

## Find Out What's Working

Discover what works, and abandon what doesn't. Be ruthless and cut a favorite (or fun) program if it's not giving you leads or sales. Save the funds (preferably as soon as possible!) and initiate new programs that you already know are doing better, thus improving the bottom line overall.

How do you find out what works? You guessed it: with metrics. Set them up, track them, and analyze them. Measuring which efforts drive more online sales or more conversions or more downloads (whatever your specific goal) lets you identify what's working and what isn't.

## Lessons We've Learned

We delve into the nitty-gritty details of paid search, organic search, usability, conversion metrics, and more in subsequent chapters. This section, however, goes over some of the more common problems that stand out for many companies, as lessons already learned.

## Keywords, Keywords, Keywords

The "keyword" issue is one that's nearly universal. Companies have one idea about what their keywords are, but after an initial conversation come away with a completely different concept of what their keywords *really* are, in the eyes of their potential customers.

Sometimes, the keywords that a company initially identifies are not bad, but simply need to be relegated to secondary status in favor of other more commonly used primary keywords. The point is that people use terms for your products and services that may be more everyday words than how you internally label and market your products or services.

Table 1.1 illustrates this concept better than a long-winded explanation. Some of these are real industry examples, some are imaginary (but realistic), but they all illustrate the point.

**Table 1.1** List of Initially Proposed Keywords and Improved Keywords

Proposed Keywords	Improved Keywords
For a fast food company: creamy dreamy drink	Milkshake
For a real estate company: property	Home, house
For a rat-killing product: rodenticide	Rat killer, rat poison
For a security construction company: bullet-resistant divider	Bulletproof wall

**Table 1.1** Continued

Proposed Keywords	Improved Keywords
For a clothing company: outerwear	Coat, jacket
For a leather goods company: handbag	Purse, pocketbook
For a clothing company: polar fleece pullover	Sweatshirt
For a dogcare company: doggie daycare	Dogsitter
For a daycare company: childcare, education	Daycare, preschool
For an automotive parts company: battery maintainer	Battery charger
For a software services company: user's guide	User manual

Sometimes, the business management isn't sophisticated enough to make these keyword mistakes. We often hear things like "my customers can find me if they search my brand name." But what about the potential customer who's never heard about you? Don't you want to capture them, too?

Or worse, what if you have a famous name within your business name, such as Blackbird Shoes or Cayenne Footwear. Perhaps there's a big pro sports team named the Blackbirds, or the hottest new Hollywood actor's last name is Cayenne. You're lost in the shuffle... and even customers who *do* know your business name can't find you online.

You need to put yourself in the shoes of someone who has never heard of your business, and then get visible on those search terms. The point is this: *Choose keywords that generate both interest and revenue.*

## Paid Search Mismatches

It takes a couple of minutes to set up a new paid search advertising account, and a lot of effort after that to optimize it and your website so you're making money instead of spending it.

One of the major issues can be that keywords for ad campaigns are mismatched to actual search keywords.

For example, do a search on something like "pink snow boots" and click some of the paid advertisements. You'll go to websites of retailers, often major national ones, but won't necessarily find your pink snow boots. You might find snow boots (none of them pink) or pink leather boots.

Or maybe you're looking for a new suede coat, so you enter "women's suede coat" in your favorite search engine, only to find advertisers linking to women's down coats, or even men's coats, which is clearly off the mark.

With paid search, you can define rather narrowly exactly what the campaign will be, for which keywords your ad will appear, and which pages you'll link to on your website.

If you have this type of mismatch, you're

- Not getting a sale from the ad
- Paying for the keyword mismatch
- Potentially negatively impacting your brand due to the mismatch, because of frustrated website visitors

It's a lose-lose-lose situation, and one that can be fixed easily. Our general rule of thumb is to use broad matches for keywords and website pages on organic search, and narrow the focus for both landing pages and advertising keywords. Focused is better!

## Get the Fundamentals Right First

We talk a lot about tactics throughout the book that could be thought of as “eating your vegetables,” basic fundamentals that will get you very far.

Yes, we know that there are many exciting things out there today, like working with social media, but we don't focus on those areas too much, even though they're “hot.” We know that where most businesses are today is still at the stage of getting qualified people to visit your website (and converting them to sales). (When these basics are taken care of, feel free to move on to other Internet marketing tactics, such as social media.)

The tools and techniques in this book help you to transform your business and grow your business online. We believe that combining these fundamentals in this way creates a unique competitive advantage. Simply apply these “eat your veggies” basics in the way we propose and you'll find that you are light years ahead and can really get some traction.

*Then*, at *that* point, you can play around with social media and do more “fun” things along those lines.

## Bigger /s Better

It's true, when it comes to phone numbers, calls to action, and Buy Now buttons on either landing pages or regular website pages, bigger is better. In fact, you can very rarely make it too big.

You can find more information about good landing page design in Chapter 6, “Putting It All Together and Selling Online,” in the section “Designing Landing Pages.”

## Content and Inlinks

Everything in the world of search engines, algorithms, and visibility changes constantly, with two exceptions. The more pages of content you have, the more opportunity you have to rank in Google or other search engines. Using a tool like WordPress or another content management system makes it easy to keep adding fresh content. Do it.

The second constant is inlinks (links from other websites to your website's content). How many other people are listing your website, and how reputable are they? The search engine algorithms factor this in when they judge your website and calculate its ranking.

It might be boring, but you really have to do it. It works... so work on your content and inlinks regularly. Yes, it takes time and patience, but these fundamentals can ensure that you make enough money in the long run to make it worthwhile. (When it comes to an ROI analysis for content and inlink effort, you need to be in it for the long haul.)

## Websites Are for Spiders and People

Another thing that's often overlooked is that websites need to be designed and developed for two main audiences: people and the search engine spider programs that analyze your website. Design for spiders and people with every step you take.

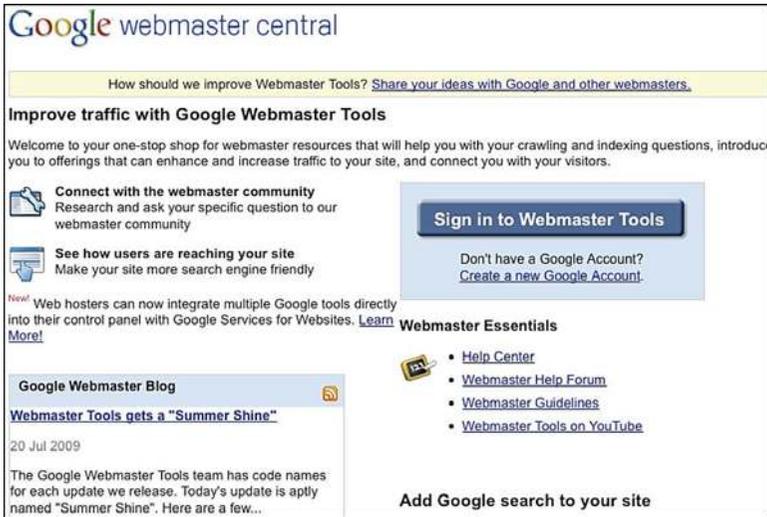
For example, create a Sitemap page for people to see how your website is organized at a glance, but create a separate `sitemap.xml` file on your server for the spiders to read and understand your internal website structure.

Figure 1.3 shows just one of many tools that Google makes available for webmasters to improve their website's ability to be read by the spiders.

## Small Business Safety

A word to the wise, particularly if you are a small business and don't have an IT department continuously checking your back door for hackers: Use a tool such as WordPress to manage your website content or blog.

WordPress ([www.wordpress.org](http://www.wordpress.org)) is free, but has a large community of both developers and users. You won't get in the situation where the person who's helping you with your website goes off and gets a full-time job, leaving you high and dry. Customizable themes and templates are easy to configure and can save you thousands of dollars over time.



**Figure 1.3** Using Google Webmaster Tools is one way to learn more about improving your website for spiders.

What's more, many CMSs are susceptible to hackers. WordPress is too, of course, especially if you don't keep up with the latest version that corrects a newly discovered security flaw. With a large development community, however, it's less susceptible.

It's not fun if you're working with a subcontractor to maintain your website and they get hacked. You're left hanging with a hacked website only to discover that the work required to repair it is considered out of scope.

## Budget for Marketing the Website Itself

A common pitfall is that a "website budget" is earmarked solely for design and development, with little to no funding left for marketing the website itself. Leave enough money (for example, half or more of your budget) to actually promote the website.

Try to avoid overspending on the website itself. Many small businesses find that no one is coming to their new website and they have no budget to fix it. If you consider this issue up front and budget for it, you should be in good shape.

## Learn by Example

Throughout this book, we use two fictitious companies to illustrate how to implement certain elements to improve your website and its marketing:

- **Happy Puppy**, a small service-based business that sells puppy- and dog-training classes
- **TropiCo**, a large conglomerate in the tropical fruit reselling business

Let's meet them both with a couple of quick Internet marketing scenarios.

### B2C Example: Happy Puppy

The two small business owners running Happy Puppy are struggling with starting a paid search campaign from scratch. They're savvy enough to have created a keyword-rich website, but have focused on their preferred cutesy terms (*doggie daycare* instead of *dogsitter*, for example).

They found out about Google's Keyword Tool, and after playing around with it identified several keywords that were more likely to get results from people looking for their training classes and services.

Some of the discoveries, as shown in Figure 1.4, included that people were likely to search for specific training problems, such as crate training, housebreaking, or handling problem behaviors like chewing or pulling on a leash.

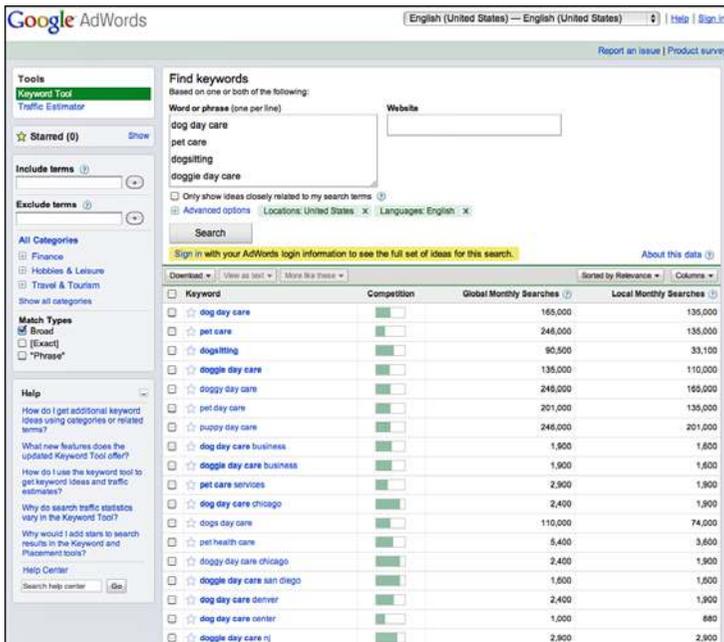


Figure 1.4 Working through potential new keywords for the Happy Puppy website.

This prompted them to turn back to their website and rework their existing content to use terms like *dogsitter* and include dog behavior problems for their daycare and training services pages.

They also decided to start a blog, where they could include posts targeting specific training for different behaviors, keeping the website relevant and fresh. They even decided to rename some of their training classes, before moving forward with their new paid search advertising campaign.

## B2B Example: TropiCo

A recent review of their weblog data revealed that the new landing page graphic design launched last month actually slightly reduced their response rate. The question is, why?

After conducting an informal usability test with a handful of prospective website visitors, they quickly saw that people accessing their landing pages (after clicking their paid search ad) were carefully reviewing the content on the page. Yet, in doing so, they were scrolling down, and the call to action, which was located in the new page header, was scrolling away as well.

A-ha! People in the test were going directly into their main website to look for more information, instead of just picking up the phone or contacting the company online to place an order. No wonder the online lead conversions were dwindling instead of improving.

After a quick fix to the new landing page template, the prominent call to action within the page copy started to pay off, and they slowly saw an increase in their conversion rates.



Refer to the Appendix in this book for a detailed report for our fictional TropiCo company. This insightful “state of the web” report was prepared for their board of directors by the Internet marketing team at year end. It covers data and progress for the year in review, explains how it happened, and has a section looking forward to the following year.

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## Online Sales Engine Success Stories

We also quote several case studies throughout this book, which are from real life and relate directly to the subject of each chapter. Let’s wrap up this chapter by looking at a few case studies of companies that have applied the online sales engine to improve their bottom lines.

## Case Study: Moving into New Global Markets

One high-tech company, spun out of a major research university, develops high-performance cell-analysis systems at a fraction of the cost of competitors. This new start-up company needed to break into an existing and highly competitive market: life-science research equipment.

They needed to build a U.S. presence and break into the international community for their market. The strategy entailed SEO and ongoing paid search in the United States, South America, Europe, and the Asia-Pacific region.

Landing page testing and analysis was part of the package, ensuring that the target market for each country found just what they needed, when they needed it. Advanced strategies with Google Analytics were applied, to measure progress in new geographic markets. The company adapted this same data to inform offline marketing decisions and new target areas.

By applying the online sales engine metrics tools, they are able to follow their online traffic all the way into their CRM system. This way, they know which efforts have the biggest payoff in each country.

After working on these efforts for 2 years, they saw their cost per lead decrease by 64% and their conversion rate more than double. The results from their online lead tracking combined with in-depth website analysis is guiding their Internet marketing strategy for the coming year.

## Case Study: Manufacturing Company Improves Sales

A manufacturer and installation service company for custom security systems needed to expand its reach and drive new sales. The new website just wasn't pulling in the target number or quality of leads they were hoping to garner, despite aggressive marketing efforts.

The strategy to drive more traffic involved focusing on the Google AdWords account to help the company realize return for its advertising expenses. The advertising funds weren't being spent as wisely as they could have been. The AdWords account was reorganized to focus on the keywords that would deliver the best leads back to the company. Expensive keywords that weren't entirely relevant to the business were eliminated, making advertising an effective driver of sales leads.

The impact of online advertising was further increased by more effective landing pages. Many savvy marketers miss the importance of a landing page that delivers, in a compelling way, the exact information a person is seeking when clicking an ad.

The website copy was also improved, adding keyword-rich text throughout, to improve search engine visibility. The effort also included redesigning the company's

website and appropriately indexing the website with Google, to support organic search results.

The end effect was that the organic search rankings improved dramatically. More important, they began driving sales for the first time from their website, achieving just under \$2 million in online sales by the end of their first full year with the new strategy.

This translated to nearly \$20 in sales for every \$1 spent on advertising. The following year, continuing optimizations allowed for an additional 40% increase in revenue with only a 30% increase in advertising spend.

## **Case Study: Large Childcare Provider Increases Web Conversions**

A large provider of early education and care services to children between 6 weeks and 12 years of age wanted to leverage the web to deliver new business leads in a slow economy. With multiple brands, more than 1,100 schools (corporate and franchise) serving over 100,000 children in the United States and internationally, the company was using its brand websites as the primary point of contact to communicate both with prospects and existing customers.

Initial efforts after the initial website launch involved website analytics, paid search, and SEO, although the company was unsatisfied with the outcome of those efforts. They wanted to improve both their online presence and marketing efficiency.

Paid search improvements were tackled first; website-based lead generation was the primary measure of success for the project. A costly website redesign was avoided by identifying ways to rearrange and edit existing website content for increased effectiveness. Paid search was also integrated more fully into existing online marketing efforts, as part of a comprehensive online strategy.

Conversion rates were improved by applying usability improvements. These came from directly assessing website visitor behavior and interviewing both users and the sales team. Paid search campaigns were moved beyond just Google to Yahoo! and MSN, and the conversion rates improved by creating geotargeted landing pages.

The result from these usability, landing page, and paid search campaign changes was that the cost per conversion steadily declined in all three paid search programs and conversion rates increased overall by 35% over a 2-year period. In addition, advertising costs were reduced by 5% for a competitive keyword marketplace.

## **Case Study: Major Software Company Grows Sales**

One of the world's leading organizations in optimizing application performance, this computer industry leader provides software, experts, and best practices to

ensure applications work well and deliver business value. Supporting 46 of the top 50 Fortune 500 companies, and 12 of the top 20 most visited U.S. websites, the diversity of their products, services, and target audiences demands a measured, integrated visibility strategy.

Their initial goal was to appear on “page one” for search engine results listings and paid search results. They also were posing great questions among themselves, such as “How can we build upon and improve our existing online marketing efforts?”

Many strategic online elements were already in place: a successful website, analytics tools, a paid search program, and a talented team poised to implement a profitable visibility strategy. A plan focusing on earning the top spots in online search for multiple languages emerged. Additional objectives included elevating specific company solutions and reinforcing an international presence.

Three key components drove the success of their new online marketing initiative:

- **A review of the infrastructure for search engine optimization:** Search engine visibility improved significantly for nonbranded terms through implementation of a structured strategy for URL taxonomies, page redirection, page design, link building, and more.

With numerous complex websites within the corporate global network, evaluating and leveraging existing content is key, as both the organization and its websites continue to grow.

- **Integrating online lead tracking into their CRM system:** Integrating search marketing activities with lead source tracking now links how customers are finding the company online and the effectiveness of their online marketing activities in converting online interest into sales.
- **Paid search arbitrage:** Building on existing successful paid search campaigns, the next level adds depth using a word market strategy and provides a strategy for the aggressive optimization of individual campaign elements, particularly landing page optimization.

You learn more about the word market in the section “Speak Your Audience’s Language: The Real Search Engine Optimization” in Chapter 5, “The Audience Is Listening (What Will You Say?).”

The company has deepened their level of expertise in the area of search marketing. In addition to investing in online marketing efforts, they are now getting a return on those efforts through metrics: tracking, analyzing, and measuring data. Their newly created online sales engine uses the web to drive and convert customers.

## Summary

We see a lot of companies that have their Internet marketing initiatives (such as paid search and organic search) well underway, but still have room for improvement. But how and where to improve?

The heart of getting real traction out of your Internet marketing program is to tie marketing and sales data together, with metrics. Track what you're doing, track the impact, and track the resulting sales. You'll learn more about what works, or doesn't, for your company.

In addition, take these lessons learned to heart:

- The customer is king, and is your top priority when making website management decisions.
- Be aware of the buying process, and address the needs of your website visitors accordingly.
- Work to break down those organizational silos; get marketing, sales, and website teams talking with one another.
- Don't reinvent the wheel, use off-the-shelf software and spend your energy and money elsewhere on your website projects.
- Find out what's working and abandon what isn't.
- Reevaluate your keywords in the eyes of your potential customers, not your marketing copywriter or product development manager.
- Check for mismatches in paid search campaigns between ads and actual search keywords.
- Get the basic fundamentals right, before jumping into an exciting new area (like social media).
- To create a good call to action on a landing page or elsewhere in your website, bigger really is better.
- Work on adding and improving your website content and continuing to recruit new inlinks to your website as much as possible; they will both make a big impact in the long run.
- At every step, design your website for both search engine spiders (crawlers) and people.
- Small businesses should take a few extra precautions to discourage website hacking.
- Add money to the website budget to market the website itself, not just to design and build it.

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