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essentials



# Search Marketing Strategies

A Marketer's Guide  
to Objective-Driven Success  
from Search Engines

James Colborn

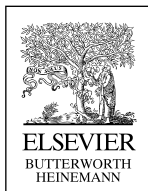
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I would like to dedicate this book to my wonderful family and partner  
Emma.

I would also like to thank my colleagues and friends within the search  
industry for their help in providing insight and content, and finally  
I would like to thank Inceptor's Senior Management Team for their  
continued encouragement and support.

# What is Search Marketing?

## Introduction

The opportunity from search to the marketer is growing rapidly. Recent statistics published by the Search Engine Marketing Professional Organization (SEMPO) recorded search spending above \$4bn for 2004<sup>1</sup>. With over 280 000 advertisers reported by Google (cited in the *San Francisco Times*) in 2004 and an expected 378 000 in 2005<sup>2</sup> the number of companies taking advantage of paid search is growing rapidly. Add in the number of advertisers using mechanisms from companies such as MIVA, Overture, MSN and many of the smaller engines and the uptake for this medium is significant.

This is still a novice industry and many of the marketers operating within the space aren't aware of the necessary approaches to getting the most from the space. With a reported 25 per cent of all advertisers actually engaging in some form of strategy<sup>3</sup> or bidding technique the industry is fraught with companies facing poor performance and limited direction. The result is a medium that is proving time and time again as being one of the strongest vehicles

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.sempo.org/research/sem-trends-2004.php>

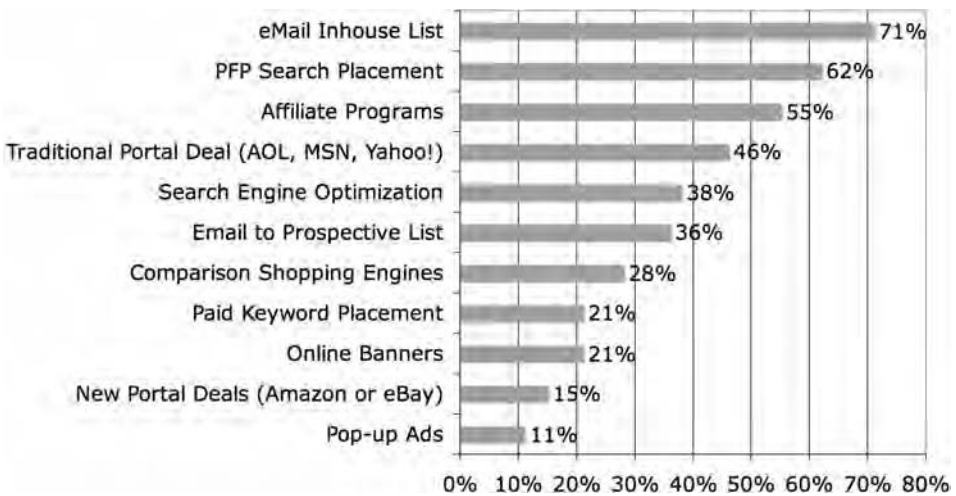
<sup>2</sup><http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2004/10/20/BUG269C11P1.DTL&type=business>

<sup>3</sup><http://www.clickz.com/news/article.php/3427311>



for driving qualified visitors with a staggering 75 per cent not using any thought rationale into the strategic direction behind the medium.

Putting this comparison in perspective with other online media types the search mechanisms available, be it paid or organic, are considered and reported to be some of the strongest vehicles for driving qualified visitors. The following chart from eMarketer (see Figure 1.1) demonstrates that apart from in-house email lists search is the strongest at driving qualified visitors for the retail space.



[Fig. 1.1]

eMarketer – Online marketing tactics used by US retailers, 2003 (as percentage of respondents). *Source:* Shop.org and Forrester Research, May 2003

Search marketing is the application of all tactical elements associated with the search industry and manipulated to form a plan or strategy to achieve online goals. Search marketing as a concept is singular; however, depending upon industry and objective it takes many forms.

In identifying each of the elements involved in search marketing the construction of a plan becomes clearer and easier to comprehend. As the 'search engine' space is relatively new there is a large amount of confusion as to how to succeed within it but the mechanisms are, with guidance, relatively simple. Success is therefore determined by the way in which these mechanisms and elements are pieced together.

Chapter 2 (*Your Search Tool Kit*) lists the variables in much detail and gives a clear distinction as to what is available to the marketer to make search marketing a success and to build a credible search engine marketing plan.

This chapter is dedicated to elaborating on how search marketing came about, how the industry has evolved, what the typical goals of search marketing are and what people try to achieve but find that search just can't support it.

## **Evolution of the search engine industry**

### **The beginning**

The search engine industry has grown rapidly over the past 7 or more years. As the Internet grew so did the demand for vehicles in which Internet searchers could find their way to information quickly and efficiently, in a sense finding that needle in a haystack! Search engines then evolved as the solution to this problem with industry recognized names such as AltaVista, HotBot, and

Lycos being some of the first and favored destination search websites.

These search engines were powered by a simple mechanism that saw a script, or spider, crawl the web in search of data that it could index and present to a search engine user if their search was close enough to the data's content. At the time, as is the case in many instances today, websites were written in Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) which a search spider could skim read and pick up as much information it felt to be of use.

Search engine spiders didn't necessarily have discernible skills and often failed to match the correct websites with the searchers request. In layman's terms, search engines couldn't, and to a degree can't, associate 'Wimbledon' with 'tennis' or 'ford' with 'motor sport' and, as a result, failed to satisfy searchers on many occasions. Search engines recognized this and possessed mechanisms to present results with more detailed results but relied on the searcher to know how to extract the most. The use of *search query strings* often baffled the user and presented an opportunity for a more desirable way to search, if available.

As the search engines were evolving so were directories. These sites, such as Yahoo! or Open Directory Project (DMOZ) contained links to websites that were edited by human beings with the authority to add or reject a website based upon its relevancy to the category it was being placed within. It was largely recognized, as it still is today in some instances, that results from a directory are of a far higher quality than those of a search engine and most sought after by companies wishing to gain a listing.

As the industry evolved so did the technologies used by the search engines and directories. The most notable improvement was made by an engine called Google, which managed to simplify the search process by providing an extremely simple-to-use interface. Additionally, Google

focused not only on the content of a website, such as the wording on the page, but on the number of links pointing into pages from other related websites. This concept, known as *link popularity*, became, and still exists as, one of the most important variables for successful search engine marketing.

But search engines and directories had their own problems, engines still didn't produce the most relevant listings at times and directories only had a select number of listings indexed (after all a human is limited to the number of sites he or she can look at) causing both entities problems. So, in an effort to start to appease the user, something at the time rare for search mechanisms (believe it or not!), search engines listed directory listings at the top of their results and directories back filled or used *SERPs* listings after their human edited listings had been exhausted. For example Yahoo! used Inktomi results; Google used Open Directory Project results.

## Optimization and spamming

As the search engines evolved, creating different ways to index sites based upon the content of a site, so began the dawn of organizations that help companies restructure their sites to gain better listings within the engines. Search engine optimization (SEO) meant the development of *HTML* variables such as *meta keyword tags*, *meta description tags*, *body copy* and *link popularity* (i.e. how do the pages on a website link to each other and sites from outside link into the site being optimized).

As this was, obviously, a monetary engagement, a measurement guide needed to be applied; after all, how was success to be determined? Interestingly enough, the metrics used then still apply today – traffic and rankings. The difference is that where today companies are

scrutinized for their performance and procedures, at the dawn of SEO the industry was rife with unscrupulous techniques that saw search engine results filled with company results that weren't necessarily relevant just placed higher by means of an optimization technique. Mechanisms such as *doorway pages*, *keyword stuffing* and *link farming* all became prevalent and the industry was put in jeopardy as the main target audience, the searcher, wasn't getting the results they needed and the engines or companies were considered to be at fault rather than the optimization firms responsible for the poor performance.

## Relevance and paid search

As with most aspects of business, money makes a difference and the search industry was no different. Around the turn of 2000 the search engines and directories realized that making advertisers pay for listings would not only increase the relevance of search results but would act as a very welcomed revenue stream. Looking back now it seems somewhat unimaginable that search was free at one point but introducing a payment mechanism improved the search space dramatically and elevated search into a fully fledged online advertising mechanism.

But how did paid listings make search 'better' for the advertiser? Quite simply, the interjection of an investment into search resulted in an accountability for action once a visitor hit a website. Why would you pay for traffic that had absolutely no chance of being converted into a sale or lead? Additionally the engines, after being chastised for driving such poor results in the past, created a process of auditing listings and ensuring relevancy was always maintained. So much so that some engines declared that only one listing per page of a website could be submit-

ted at any time to prevent multiple search terms directing the searcher to the same page.

As the search engine marketing continued to grow, the fast pace of 'paid' search and its subsequent cost implications (i.e. every click has a cost) resulted in marketers having to think more about the strategic application of search into a marketing plan.

As the industry is settling down and maturing, the three major types of search engines are as follows; they are documented below but covered in far more detail in Chapter 2 (*Your Search Tool Kit*):

- **Paid For Placement (PFP)** – these engines allow advertisers to bid for position and obtain a position at the top of major search portal listings by paying a penny more than their competitor regardless of the quality of their sites' content for search engine spiders.
- **Paid For Inclusion (PFI)** – this type of search allows an advertiser to pay to have their site included within a search engine index or directories listings. Engines like Overture Site Match xChange™ (formerly Inktomi) guarantee sites express indexing and then require a cost per click thereafter whereas Yahoo! requires a submission fee for consideration for inclusion in their directory.
- **Organic search (SSO)** – this is the remaining area of search that has a zero cost per click but an upfront optimization cost. Stemming from the days before paid search this is still one of the practiced types of search but requires a great deal of upfront optimization and ongoing maintenance for success. Costs here are associated with the hiring of a search engine optimization company or hiring internally to perform the necessary work for success.

In many instances bad practices within the search industry still exist today and paid search can be as bad as poor

SEO optimization. The large numbers of advertisers, who still, to this day, don't track or analyze their search traffic, are the major cause of this and if you are one of these just ask yourself *'How do I know if the traffic I'm driving to my site is doing what I want?'*

## What are the typical goals achieved from search?

Following on from the commentary above (Evolution of the search engine industry), in order to answer the question of determining the success of search it is important to understand exactly what search engine marketing can achieve for a company.

In many respects the answer to this is specific to the individual company in question, as each has its own corporate objectives that form the basis of marketing objectives; this path leads to the objective of the search engine marketing plan. Typically there are many different types of areas search marketing can reach and often companies try to achieve this for more than one, which, if measured correctly, is the best use of this medium and later chapters will study combining strategies to achieve more than one objective from search.

### Typical goals from search:

In a prequel to later more detailed chapters the following goals or objectives can be achieved from search:

- **Branding (Awareness)** – a hot debate within the search engine industry as to whether it's actually true, but branding really is becoming a good use for search engine marketing. Search is a pull medium (as opposed to a push medium) and the user has to physically enter a search term in order to stand any chance of seeing your listing. The results following a search contain

advertisers who feel their products or services are most relevant for that term; for example, should someone type in Walkman™, Sony may feel it appropriate to have a search listing appear as the term is so closely associated with their brand. In many instances companies use the vehicle of search to make people aware of their brand when products and services searched for aren't directly associated with them. Additionally, and more in the case of the Sony example above, companies often use search to reinforce a presence within the market space or to ensure brand continuity across all marketing mediums. Branding and awareness also assists with the development of offline search and it's stated that up to 90 per cent of users research online before conducting their final decisions offline. This is particularly applicable to the **B2C** advertisers.

- **Sales (revenue stream)** – many companies opt for using search as a direct revenue stream. **B2C** companies are particularly aware of this and search is one of the most cost-effective ways to acquire a new customer and a sale online. One of the advantages of online advertising is that it's almost 100 per cent accountable. By tracking solutions you can see what you paid or, in the case of sales where the conversion point is distinctly measurable, achieved results. As search engine marketing became a paid-for medium each cost per click of every **keyword** can be tracked for monetary expenditure. If used effectively this knowledge can be manipulated into judging the sales vehicle with measurements such as return on investment (**ROI**), return on advertising spend (**ROAS**) and cost per acquisition (**CPA**) [*for more information on all search marketing abbreviations check out the definitions section*]. The use of search for driving revenue has caused much conflict within many organizations as it crosses a number of business responsibilities. Business development teams are always on the lookout for new and



exciting ways of building new revenue streams and have been treated to a winner with search. Traditional marketing was always seen as a cost to a company, with the age-old statement ringing true ‘50 per cent of my marketing worked, the question is which 50 per cent’. In the case of search engine marketing the fact that direct revenues can be seen from all money invested is a strange concept to many marketers as the experience required to manage a revenue stream is often missing. Finally, the technical departments argue that search engine optimization (see definitions below in Search marketing) is their responsibility and they should be the gatekeepers for all things ‘search’ related! These problems have manifested themselves for companies using search to drive revenue as they have adopted to search the fastest out of all industry types. Overall this is the richest area of information and one that will lay a path for other industry types to follow.

- **Lead generation** – this objective is typically used by companies with a longer sales cycle such as **B2B** companies or in the sale of large **B2C** items such as automobiles or real estate. The goal of search is to deliver the greatest number of leads that an offline sales force can develop.

These simplified objectives are just a small example of the ways search marketing can assist in attaining online marketing goals and achieving business objectives. As this book develops the finer points about achieving these objectives and merging them it will demonstrate how to refine the use of search or marketing success!

## What can't be achieved from search marketing?

Online there aren't many goals that can't be achieved from search marketing. Search can drive revenue, leads and increase awareness of brand or products. This situation

has resulted in search becoming very successful and lucrative across a wide and diverse number of industries. But as attractive as it may seem and as cost effective a vehicle it has become it's a very different medium to operate within based upon other media. One of the major differences is that a very large component of successful search marketing is the PFP providers. Companies like Overture or Google allow the market to dictate the cost of the advertisements rather than a marketing department of agency negotiating a price. For this reason it's frustrating when companies predetermine a cost per lead or desired cost per acquisition without first understanding what the market costs are.

Search cannot drive 'better' conversions on a poor website. As much as the traffic driven by search engines can be some of the most targeted and qualified within the online space, it will all be in vain if your website doesn't convert. If through research the findings are that search traffic is great but not converting, this could be the result of two things: (1) the search traffic isn't that good, and based upon some of the commentary in this chapter it's understandable why; (2) just think of the old saying *'You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink'* when assessing performance. Over time, website traffic should get better, especially with the mechanisms put in place by many of the engines to increase traffic relevancy so if conversions don't increase, be they sales or leads, then review and enhance the site.

## **Search marketing: is this the same as search engine optimization?**

This book is designed to help marketers determine the best uses of all of the tactical aspects of search engine space and formulate them into strategy. The idea for this entire book came about because 99 per cent of the books

currently on the market focus on tactics and not strategy. The major focus of these books is search engine optimization (SEO), which is defined as the process in which code is rewritten and links are optimized for prominent placement within the search space. The question that must be asked, therefore, and helps determine the difference between these two, often confused, elements is *'What am I optimizing the code to achieve? Is it sales, awareness, branding, lead generation or to offset the cost of some words and phrases that I just can't afford in the paid space?'* The answer to this question is the strategy behind using this SEO technique to achieve one of those (or other) objectives.

To sum up each of these two elements in one big hit the following should apply.

- **Search Engine Marketing:** the pursuit of a plan or strategy that accomplishes the marketing and business objectives of an organization using the search.
- **Search Engine Optimization:** a tactical approach to optimizing a website's code and linking architecture to form one element of a search engine marketing plan.

SUMMARY

The evolution of the search engine industry was swift and aggressive, resulting in an industry in which marketers were confused and unsure of the best way to make the most of the engines. The following key points should be taken from this chapter.

- Search engines were designed initially to find the proverbial needle in a haystack and make sense of the millions, now billions, of web pages on the Internet.
- Search is a rapidly growing industry with a large amount of opportunity for all marketers, especially as many aren't engaging in any form of strategy.
- Companies learnt that optimizing a website to gain stronger listings in search engines was a good way of gaining prominent listings under certain searched terms, this optimization giving birth to Search Engine Optimization (SEO).
- As opportunity for ethical optimization presented itself to companies so did unethical search optimization and the search engine listings were flooded.
- New, tighter rules about relevancy resulted in paid mechanisms that then went a stage further allowing non-optimized sites to be listed based upon the amount advertisers were willing to pay.
- Search is most commonly used for driving awareness, branding, sales and leads via a website's conversion points.

# Your Search Tool Kit

## Introduction

In this chapter each of the different elements that go into creating a good search engine marketing plan will be studied in detail. The purpose of this chapter is to allow a full understanding of what the differences are with, for example, search engine submission or tracking mechanisms so that when tactical decisions are to be made, what the best approach to developing and implementing a strategy will be.

Each of the following components is high in importance when creating your search engine marketing plan (see Chapter 9). The search engine industry is still, compared with other industries, in its infancy but a large number of common characteristics are starting to develop and are becoming the norm within search engine marketer behavior. Having said this, the second constant or norm within this industry is change and as such many of the names associated with engine types, such as Overture and paid for placement search or Google and the organic (natural SSO) search, may well not be the same in 6 months' time. The fact remains, however, that the paid for placement industry exists – as does the natural search space – and therefore regardless of any differences they still become mechanisms, or tactics, of use for the search marketer

regardless of who might be providing them. Saying this another way, should MSN start providing a dedicated PFP service and Overture change from PFP to organic only, the mechanisms by which optimization of the type of search still exist, and the tactics are basically switched from one provider to another.

Closely associated with the search engine industry are tracking and analysis technologies that allow for each click to be recorded for a better understanding of the search traffic's performance. These technologies are also relevant to other online media types, such as banner advertisements, email or affiliate marketing and they are an essential part of a search plan. These will also be clearly defined, as there are many different variations that produce different outcomes.

The last section of this chapter focuses on enhancements that are new or not directly associated with a search engine but have importance to a search engine marketing campaign.

## **Search engine mechanisms**

As the search engine environment evolved (covered in Chapter 1) different types of search emerged. The outcome of each search engine submission type is the same: to obtain a listing for an advertising company as high up the search results page as possible for a search query that matched some element of the company's products, services or webpage information. But, as has already been highlighted, this really is, in many instances, the only similarity so each engine type will be examined in detail.

### **Paid for placement (PFP)**

Paid For Placement (PFP) is exactly how it sounds, paying for a placement within a search engine's listings. In

many instances PFP is known as Pay Per Click, PPC; however, for a more detailed approach and for the purposes of continuity the remainder of this book will refer to PFP. The PFP search engine that started the whole industry was one named Overture (formerly known as GoTo). This company formed relationships with many of the major search engines and portals, such as AltaVista, Lycos, MSN and Yahoo!, and offered a revenue share deal with them to have their listings prominently placed in their results. Overture created a mechanism whereby companies could bid for the top spots in their listings with the offer of a prominent placement within the major search engine results without having to develop code related changes to their website. What made this interesting, and is still interesting to this day, is that only the top placements within the Overture 'network' actually get syndicated to the distribution sites making these top spots very attractive to bidders.

The 'auction' element to this is how the PFP industry grew financially at such a staggering rate with SEMPO reporting the search industry generating over \$4 billion in 2004<sup>1</sup>, Piper Jaffray suggesting a figure as large as \$11 billion by 2007<sup>2</sup>. This growth was and is primarily due to the fact that the market determines the price of a click rather than a predetermined cost per click rate card. Through a relatively simple interface companies could, and can today, select a list of keywords that were felt to represent the website, products or services on offer. These terms are bid up based upon their position and popularity. Keywords such as *'digital camera'* are popular to many companies so bidding can often be fraught and frenetic. As a result, and determined by priority of keyword and placement, i.e. *'I must be No.1 on this keyword no matter what'*, the click prices for keywords can escalate quickly.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.sempo.org/research/sem-trends-2004.php>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.gotoanalysts.com/piperpublic/goto/features/goldensearch.asp?print=true>

**[Table 2.1]**

Major PFP search engines (UK and US)

<b>UK</b>	<b>USA</b>
Overture Google AdWords™ MIVA	Overture Google AdWords™ FindWhat

Setting up a paid for placement account with an engine couldn't be easier and, visiting the URL of any of the major players (see Table 2.1) after choosing keywords and deciding on how the title and description will appear (see Search listing components below) on screen, the account is activated and will drive traffic to a website. Dependent upon how the bidding prices are set using the auction-based mechanism, the amount of traffic on which terms and at what cost are all determined by the user's ability to manage the terms within the current market conditions.

While setting up an account is considered relatively easy, the management of the keywords within the search space is a lot harder. Imagine the scenario of having 500 active keywords, all at different bid prices, and then multiplying these across a few of the major PFP players. If this doesn't seem unmanageable, let's do the mathematics; 500 keywords (terms) multiplied by 3 engines multiplied by up to 1 change every hour means that on any given day 36 000 bid adjustments would be needed! This unfeasible resource requirement is the number 1 reason why companies do very badly with paid for search (see Chapter 5) or do exceptionally well by adopting a technology known as a bid management tool (or even employ an agency) to control their paid for placement activity. Bid management tools will be identified in this chapter and their appropriate use explained in later chapters.



## Paid for inclusion (PFI)

Paid for inclusion engines were, and are still today, engines that require optimization to be prepared to the content submitted. PFI engines were the first step into paid search from the search engines and, as already highlighted in Chapter 1, were to increase not only revenue for a fast growing advertising medium but to improve the quality of searchable results.

The mechanism of paid inclusion is based upon core search engine principles; however, instead of trusting fate and hoping the search engine spiders actually looked at your submission in paying you guaranteed that the search engine would review a website's content and award a listing within the index in a 48–72-hour time period. The option of free submission still existed but the stated time period for review was 'within the next 6 months'.

Submission was, and still is today, on a much smaller scale based upon the following two submission types.

1. Single URL submission – for those who need to submit a limited number of pages or URLs there is a 12-month submission mechanism that allows for the URL to be spidered every 48 hours; should you make changes to your site this means that within a day or two your site is continually indexed. For individual companies that have very few pages on the site this is a perfect mechanism. Pricing is based upon a per URL basis with a fixed cost per click (CPC) thereafter. Details of pricing can be found in the appendices. An example of a company that offers the single URL submission for the engines is PositionTech.
2. Feed submission – for companies with websites that have large quantities of content. Catalogues, multi-channel retailers, ecommerce websites and publishers

are the most likely to favor this type of submission. Unlike the single URL submission candidates for feed submission a rate card CPC is applied dependent upon the nature of the content and a feed is prepared, typically by a company that specializes in PFI feed optimization. Examples of companies such as these are MarketLeap, PositionTech and Inceptor.

In the PFI peak there were at least five engines that were providing services for paying to have a URL or feed submitted, with the likes of Inktomi, AltaVista, FAST, AskJeeves and LookSmart all having offerings.

Now, at the time of writing, there is one major provider, Overture Site Match (not to be confused with Overture PFP) which is, by its own creation, an indication of how the search engine industry has evolved in the past 18 months. Overture bought AltaVista and FAST technologies back in early 2003 and created what was known as the Overture Trusted Feed (OTF). Yahoo! bought Inktomi in late 2002 and then acquired Overture in mid-2003 thus owning the majority of the PFI services. In mid to late 2003 Yahoo! handed the management of all inclusion assets over to Overture, who already had their Trusted Feed, and in early 2004 at the Search Engine Strategies Conference in New York announced the amalgamation of all properties into Overture Site Match. On the very same day, Ask Jeeves denounced paid inclusion giving Site Match the monopoly on PFI.

## Organic 'natural' search (search engine optimization)

Natural or Organic search is the grandfather of search and is the backbone of many of the search engine techniques used today. The concept dates back to the early days of search engines and is still applied today by many larger engines such as Google, Yahoo! and MSN.

The concept is very straightforward: the search engine reads website pages and finds the most relevant content. This content is then indexed (or ranked) for relevancy and the more appropriate for the searcher's query the higher it will be placed within the listings. As has already been discussed in the opening chapter, this form of optimization is open to manipulation and abuse; however, to this day, website design techniques, corporate organizational responsibilities and bad PR have resulted in many companies not taking full advantage of natural search and failing to reap the benefits of this low cost search option.

Just as the concept of natural search is straightforward so are the components that go into altering a website's content for success. There are two major concepts to think about: relevancy and thematic content. Looking at these in detail the following applies:

- Relevancy – as with all aspects of marketing this is the key to success with search, be it organic, natural or paid search. Relevancy within natural search is most important as it dictates how well a site listing shows up within the search results. If the content has nothing to do with the searcher's query then the listing will not show up; similarly if it has major relevancy then it should. Herein lies the problem with many websites: while site design for the user dictates good content that is relevant and pertinent to the user's requirements the code in which it is written and the way the site is designed are often impossible for the search engines to read. If a search engine can't read the site then the content will never be seen as relevant and the site will fail to get a good listing, even if the website is the only one that provides the particular product or service that the searcher is looking for.
- Themed (or Thematic Content) – the second problem with websites is that they fail to present enough

information in the right context for a search engine spider to understand that the site is relevant. Search engines don't have discernible skills so unless a site contains information in a format that the engine can understand then regardless of whether the site is search engine friendly it will not enjoy a sufficiently high ranking.

So, what is the difference between information in a thematic or non-thematic sense? Figure 2.1 demonstrates themed content.

With the type of content that needs to be added being examined, the following section will look at what needs to go into actually performing the site side optimization (SSO). The following elements are the main processes for successful SSO and gaining those rankings needed.

The diagram illustrates the structure of a web page with callouts for various HTML elements:

- PAGE URL:** `source of searchmarketingstrategies.html`
- PAGE TITLE:** `<title>Search Marketing Strategies</title>`
- META TAGS:**
  - `<meta name="keywords" content="search engine, search marketing strategies, search strategy marketing">`
  - `<meta name="description" content="Search Marketing Strategies book, published by Elsevier, is the first book devised to aid marketers in driving tangible results from the search engines">`
- META DESCRIPTION:** `<meta name="description" content="Search Marketing Strategies book, published by Elsevier, is the first book devised to aid marketers in driving tangible results from the search engines">`
- BODY COPY:** `<body>` and `</body>` tags.

In this example, the keywords being targeted are 'search marketing strategies' and 'search strategy'. Throughout the page URL (in this case the URL sub domain) the page title, the meta tags, the meta description and body copy the theme is there and representing the keywords selected.

This example is hypothetical and only represents some of the variables that determine relevancy within rankings, however, it should be evident that there is a theme running through the code and thus 'themed content'

**[Fig. 2.1]**  
Example of 'themed' content

- Code changes – a website is made up of a series of code entries in HTML. With site design advancements over the past 5-plus years the use of HTML has become more limited and other design vehicles, such as dynamic website creation, have become more commonplace. This being said, the fundamental process of changing code to allow a search engine spider to understand the content is paramount to success. Code changes involve the following elements, Meta Keyword Tags, Meta Description Tags and other page design tags, such as Header Tags and Alt Tags. Figure 2.1 demonstrates where, in the source code, changes are typically made.
- Linking architecture – for search engines such as Google link architecture, both internally on the website and more so from reciprocal links coming in to and from ‘other’ relevant websites, is considered to be one of the most important variables for high ranking and gaining a good *page rank*. The process is quite straightforward: sites that have like-minded content should link into the website being optimized and likewise links should also link outwards to other sites.
- Similarly, linking the pages of a website to each other can have a dramatic improvement over the sites’ performance in natural search. A *search engine spider* reads the pages and attempts to find as much pertinent and relevant information as possible to base the ranking score of the content. If the spider can only read the first page, the chances of it seeing enough information for a good score is minimal. Adversely if the spider is able to follow links between pages on the site and index more data, the ranking achieved is considerably improved.

The last major element to take into consideration with natural search optimization is submission. In order to have a site continually indexed and rankings improved by

the engines the engines themselves must be made aware of the site. For this reason the *URLs* of the pages optimized must be submitted via the engines' own submission interface. For the best results this should be done routinely but no more frequently than once a month or so per page, otherwise the engines might get 'spooked' and fear the submission is Spam (see Chapter 1).

## Search listing components

Search engines aren't complete without the components that go into creating the listing. The listing is defined as the search ad or representation of a website within the search engine's results. This is determined by two distinct elements: (1) keywords, i.e. words and combinations of words (*keyphrase*) that are associated with the website's content and (2) creative, which is how the company is represented by the title and description that appears within the search results page.

### Keywords

Keywords and their selection is the most important element of a successful search engine marketing plan. By selecting the right keywords a strategy can work; similarly, selecting the wrong keywords can see the best-laid plans fall by the wayside.

Combining terms results in singular keyword selection but, as the Internet has evolved, keywords have developed into keyphrases to accommodate the advanced search query strings used by searchers (see Table 2.2).

Later, in the chapter dealing with techniques (Chapter 3) and then in the chapters on objectives, the selection of keywords will be looked at in finer detail; however, a concept

**[Table 2.2]**  
Examples of keywords and keyphrases

<b>Singular Keywords</b>	<b>Phrase (1-2 Keywords)</b>	<b>Phrase (3 + Keywords)</b>
Camera	Digital Camera	Sony DSCF717 Digital Camera

that has developed over the past few years is that certain keywords fulfil a certain role, and have different performance criteria. In understanding these objectives and the abilities and limitations of keywords a search strategy will be either strong or poor. The best way to tackle search is to develop a ‘portfolio’ approach to keyword generation and find a mix of words and phrases that will meet and achieve any search strategy objective (see following figure).

Keywords break down as follows (see Figure 2.2):

- **Branded terms:** these represent the brand, products or services of a company. They are likely to be the

<b>Branded</b>	<b>Generic</b>	<b>Specific (Product)</b>
<p><b>Description:</b> Branded keywords represent the brand name of a company and its products/service:</p> <p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elsevier</li> <li>• Butterworth-Heinemann</li> <li>• Elsevier Publishers</li> </ul> <p><b>Keyword Characteristics:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High CTR</li> <li>• High Conversion Potential</li> <li>• Low Cost (cheaper CPCs)</li> <li>• Variable Traffic Volume                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–High for well known brands</li> <li>–Low for not so well known brands</li> </ul> </li> <li>• High ROI Potential</li> </ul>	<p><b>Description:</b> Generic keywords represent the keywords searchers may use that are general to a subject of market</p> <p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing Book</li> <li>• Educational Book Publisher</li> <li>• Book</li> </ul> <p><b>Keyword Characteristics:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate CTR</li> <li>• Moderate Conversion Potential</li> <li>• High Cost Variable</li> <li>• High Traffic Volume</li> <li>• Moderate of Low ROI Potential</li> </ul>	<p><b>Description:</b> Specific keywords are designed to match a searcher’s most specific requests</p> <p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing through search optimization</li> <li>• Search Marketing Strategies: a marketer’s guide</li> </ul> <p><b>Keyword Characteristics:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderate to High CTR</li> <li>• Moderate to High Conversion Rate</li> <li>• Moderate to Low Cost</li> <li>• Low Traffic</li> <li>• Moderate of High ROI Potential</li> </ul>

**[Fig. 2.2]**  
How keywords break down

strongest converting terms and will almost certainly have the highest CTR of most terms within a portfolio. The better known the brand the more likely the increased amount of traffic; however, regardless of the popularity of the company the relevance of terms to the searcher's desired goal is the reason for their attractiveness. The only area where these terms may not be as attractive is if an affiliate program is also engaged. This topic is covered in Chapters 6, 7 and 8 and determines the best control parameters for any situation regarding said affiliates.

- **Generic terms:** these are the most popular in relation to both searcher volume (i.e. how many times used as a search variable) and the amount of money marketers will invest to gain prominent listings. The search volume is therefore high; however, the cost is also high so careful attention needs to be placed upon these terms to ensure an acceptable ROI can be found. These terms also cover a great number of searcher 'wants', i.e. the relevancy of these terms to a particular topic list may be lower. For this reason the CTR may not be as high as for a branded term and a subsequent conversion rate (if applied) may also be lower.
- **Specific terms:** these are some of the most relevant to a searcher's requirements and any listing matching these types of search has a higher chance of converting. The issue with specific terms is that the search volume is low, as the specific nature of the searcher term isn't as frequently used and, as such, a successful campaign should have a large number of specific terms within the portfolio.

## Creative (copywriting)

Creative is the term that describes the text that the searcher sees when they type in their query and have a list



of sites returned (see Figure 2.3). One of the biggest misnomers is that creative doesn't have an impact upon search performance, but this isn't the case and with such fraught competition for clicks from the search engines this is a fundamental part of the process and tool for the well-trained search marketer.

Writing good creative involves the use of many variables; in Chapter 3 several techniques will be listed for different engines and, also in later chapters, on developing creative for different objectives. Above all, creative should do the following:

- Qualify the searcher – as all search has a cost associated with it, be it direct with PFP or indirect with SSO, the click is important as it drives a searcher to the information, product or service they are looking for. But poor creative can increase the amount of unqualified traffic to a website and as such increases costs and reduces the cost effectiveness of search.
- Entice the searcher to click – if the search term is relevant to the information, product or service listed on the



**[Fig. 2.3]**  
Creative (copywriting)

website, making the search result stand out in a crowd of listings is of vital importance. In Chapter 3 the approach to writing good listings will be expanded upon.

## Technologies for search marketing

Technology will provide the search marketer with a level of understanding about the performance of their campaign. Additionally technology provides companies with services that free up valuable resource and give insight into who or what is working within their space. Summarizing in a single statement: **a successful search engine marketing strategy can't work without technological involvement.** The following types of technology are each important to success.

### Tracking and site analysis tools

Tracking and site analysis tools aren't unique to search alone and are important for overall success in a number of website strategies. What makes them most important to search marketing is their ability to measure conversions and in many cases conversions by the singular elements of a search strategy such as search engine and keyword.

Tracking technologies come in two distinct types, those that read a *website's log files* and those that run on a *server-based system*. Both of these systems can use cookies to record more accurate data and in many instances run side by side. The usage difference between each of these is largely determined by cost and ease of implementation within a firm's technological infrastructure (see Table 2.3).

Above all forms of technology any type of tracking technology will enable any strategy to be controlled and measured for success. As each keyword is measured against conversion

**[Table 2.3]**

Differences between server-based and browser-based tracking

<b>Server-based</b>	<b>Browser-based</b>
Systems record and analyse 'additional' activity on a website	Systems analyse 'existing' data on a website from the site's existing logs
Server Based Systems are more expensive to run and install	Cheaper to run and install
Extremely accurate, especially if a cookie is served as a first party rather than third party	Less accurate, in some instances than server-based systems <sup>3</sup>
Data are easily manipulated into formats specified for marketers and not in predetermined formats	Data are presented in pre-determined formats that have historically been designed for technicians not marketers

points any adjustment or improvements needed in a campaign can be identified and fixed; similarly areas that are performing well can be expanded upon. Shockingly, in a late 2003 survey done by WebTrends, only 30 per cent of companies<sup>4</sup> (in the USA and UK) track their search engine activity to conversion. A conversion point is defined as a point within a website where success can be determined. Examples include the 'thank you' page of a shopping cart process for a B2C site or the 'contact us' form on a B2B site. In some instances websites have more than one conversion point; if this is the case, more than one page is identified and then activity is targeted toward that page. An example of this could be for a brick and mortar B2C company. Keywords or activity that target store location should be measured against the 'find a location' page, whereas keywords designed to drive online sales should be targeted at the shopping cart process.

<sup>3</sup><http://www.wnim.com/archive/issue04/emarketing.htm>

<sup>4</sup>Source: *WebTrends/NetIQ July 2003 (Cited in Marketing Sherpa's Search Marketing Metrics Guide)*

The application of any form of tracking solution is determined by the desire to gain information to help with improving success. Typically, SEM agencies will only track conversions, whereas corporations looking to learn beyond the conversion, such as click path analysis, track far more. Some examples of tracking solutions are as follows:

- **WebTrends:** WebTrends are the original tracking solution and specialize in giving detailed analysis of site activity. WebTrends services range from browser-based to server-based. ([www.webtrends.com](http://www.webtrends.com))
- **HitBox (WebSideStory):** HitBox is one of the more popular and powerful tracking tools and provides marketers with server-based tracking. ([www.websidestory.com](http://www.websidestory.com))
- **ClickTracks:** ClickTracks is a browser-based, or log file-based, analysis tool that studies the logs of a website and provides reports based upon activity. ClickTracks also offers server-based solutions and has a unique interface showing reporting superimposed over a website's actual pages. ([www.clicktracks.com](http://www.clicktracks.com))

There are a host of additional tools, specializing in search engine activity tracking such as [www.conversionruler.com](http://www.conversionruler.com) or [www.clicklab.com](http://www.clicklab.com). Additionally, most of the SEM companies provide analytics and the major engines, such as Google and Overture.

Within each of the chapters on objectives (Chapters 6, 7 and 8) the involvement of tracking components will be highlighted and techniques around their use detailed.

## Bid management tools

As highlighted in an earlier section of this chapter (Paid For Placement) the management of keywords within the paid for placement search space is a daunting and resource

intensive process. As a result technologies have been developed to assist the user in the management of bidding against a larger number of keywords.

Each of the larger bid management technologies and companies in the search industry has a direct connection (via an *API*) to the major search engines and the bidding process is automatically fed into the engine processes. A user is then provided with an interface allowing for bids to be placed on keywords for any time of day or rules to be assigned to maintain a position or price throughout the day. The latter enables companies to remain prominently placed on terms throughout the day, on as many terms as they wish, without having to allocate any resource time in the process. Table 2.4 gives some indication of the types of bidding rules than can be applied to bid management tools.

As the market has developed, bid management tools have evolved further into tools that will achieve distinct business objectives and have, in some instances, added artificial intelligence or statistical components to watch for trends within the space and to adjust bids based upon whether they are either meeting or not meeting the business goals. These services tend to come at a premium however, and in many instances are adopted by larger corporations. The fact remains, however, that a bid management tool, no matter how large or small a keyword portfolio, is essential for PFP success.

The following are some of the major bid management tools available in the US and UK markets:

**[Table 2.4]**

Bid rules (Courtesy of Inceptor Inc.)

<b>Sample Bid Management Rules</b>
<i>Optimize traffic while keeping CPC at \$0.25 or lower</i>
<i>Optimize Revenue while keeping ROI at 300 per cent</i>
<i>Optimize Conversions while keeping CPA at \$5.00</i>

**AtlasOnePoint™ (Formerly GoToast)** – this tool was one of the very first bid management tools and under the name GoToast became the tool most commonly referred to for this type of service. It has worldwide coverage and is very strong in the UK and US.

**Bid Rank** – this tool is not as advanced as many of the systems online; however, it has one of the cheapest price tags and performs many of the basic bid management services needed to optimize a search campaign. It has primary coverage in the USA but is also available in many other countries.

**Bid Buddy** – a UK tool, Bid Buddy is a system provided by a company called Website Promotion Services (WSPS) and is one of the more advanced systems available in the UK. The system also provides coverage worldwide for most PPC search engines.

**Inceptor** – At the time of writing, Inceptor Inc is releasing an entry-level bid management tool that incorporates the most advanced analysis and artificial intelligence-based bidding rules currently being used as part of an overall strategy. The tool will cover all major PFP engines and most major markets.

Other tools are available from many of the leading SEM agencies. Companies such as Did-It have a system (Maestro) that studies data for statistical trends and bases bid management upon said research. These tools are typically available as part of an MSP or ASP arrangement between company and client.

## Keyword ranking tools

Keyword ranking tools provide companies with the ability to understand how visible their sites are within the search environment. This is especially useful for both PFI

and natural search as it gives an indication of placements for terms where a guaranteed number 1 listing cannot be purchased (à la PFP).

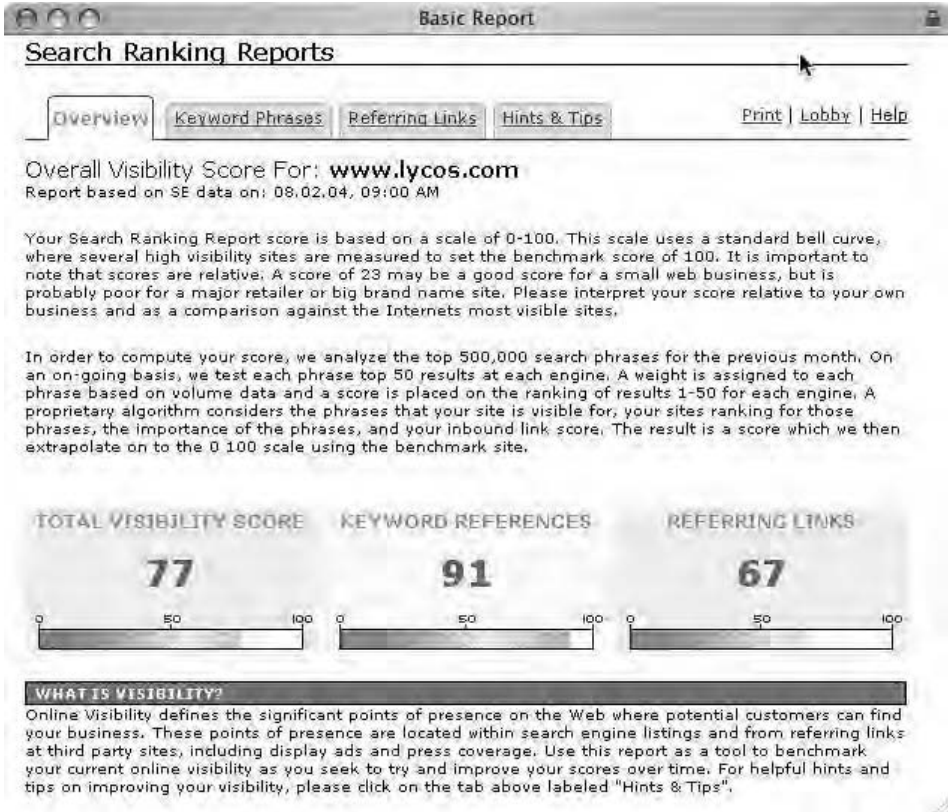
As the market space for these technologies has developed, the latest versions also provide listings for competitive positioning against competitors on the same keywords as well as giving additional keywords competitors only are using.

These technologies form the basis of continual benchmarking and performance indicators and combined with site tracking and analytics mechanisms help to develop full understanding of the impact search engine marketing is having on a number of different objectives.

Later, in Chapter 4, a more detailed approach to keyword ranking tools, and the application of these tools will be studied; however, the following gives some examples of rankings tools available to the marketer:

**Hitwize** – this company provides a wide range of rankings tools that determine the success of a website against selected search terms within the search engines. In addition, Hitwize also provides rankings reports against competitor URLs as well as additional data sources such as demographics and industry standards. Hitwize provides this data in many countries, including the USA and UK.

**Lycos Insite** – Lycos provides a rankings report that lists a website's listings against not only a selected number of phrases but over half a million monthly search queries made on its network. This tool also allows for rankings to be performed against four competitor URLs and has a section of the report dedicated to PFP engines (such as Overture and Google AdWords™) (see Figures 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6).



[Fig. 2.4]

Lycos search ranking reports (overview)

**Web Position Gold** – this service, offered by WebTrends, is one of the better known tools for providing rankings data and combines reporting with optimization services to provide an all round package for marketers looking to increase an organic presence.

**Advanced Web Rankings** – this tool provides both Mac and PC support and lists a sites ranking against up to 200 engines and selected keywords relevant to a website's content. Figure 2.7 gives an example of this.



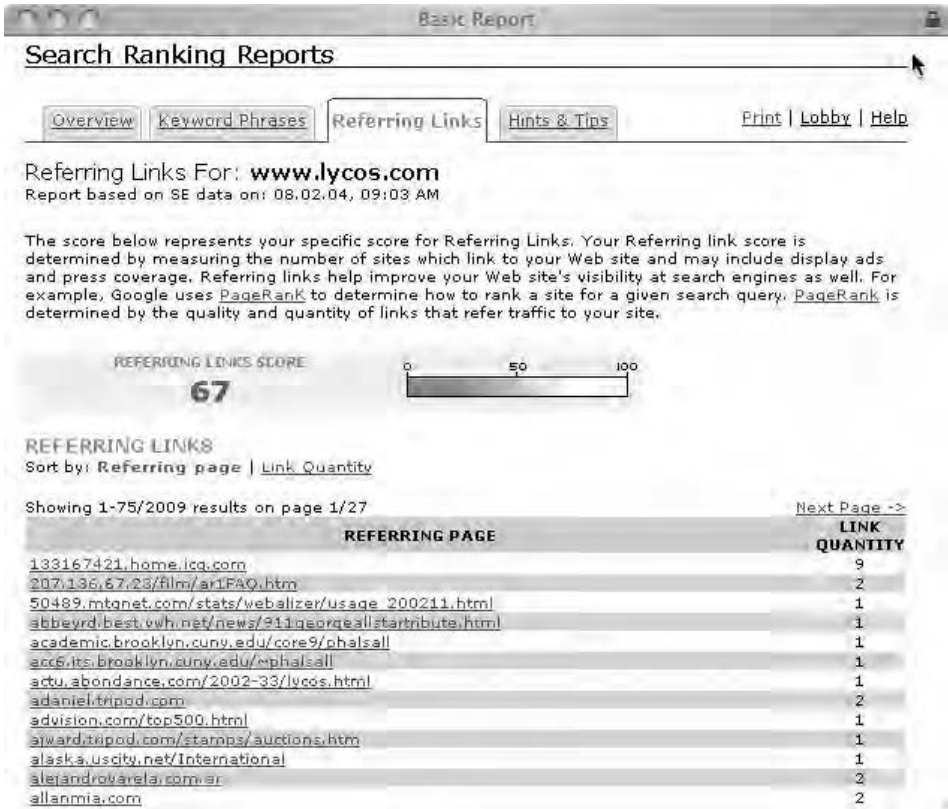


[Fig. 2.5] Lycos search ranking reports (keyword phrases)

## Other search mechanisms

Largely dominant in the USA, there are other search engine mechanisms that are available to the search engine marketer. Specific to certain industries the following different types of search mechanism are available:

- Vertical Engines – vertical engines are those that are specifically designed for a certain industry type. The most notable in the USA is Business.com ([www.business.com](http://www.business.com)), closely followed by Industry Brains ([www.industrybrains.com](http://www.industrybrains.com)). Each of these engines

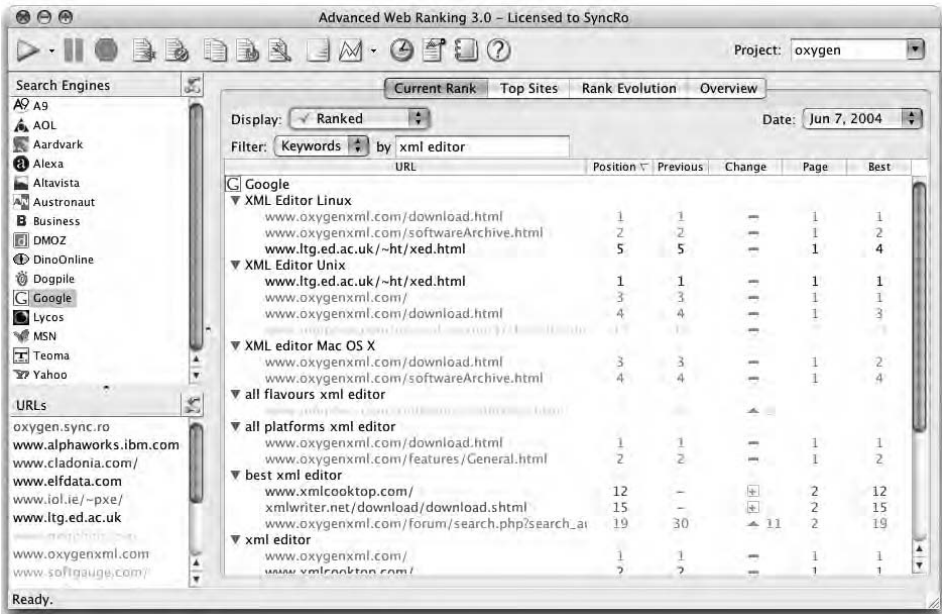


[Fig. 2.6]

Lycos search ranking reports (referring links)

specializes in delivering results to targeted audiences in an attempt to better qualify the user for the advertiser and provide the searching audience with a higher relevancy of returned listings. The pros of these engines are that for many they are a great source of traffic but, as with most specific and niche service providers they come at a higher premium than with the standard engines.

- Shopping engines – prolific in many countries shopping engines have been around for many years. Specializing in the retail sector these engines provide listings from companies on products on sale. Often referred to as comparison engines these sites allow for



[Fig. 2.7]  
Advanced web ranking – SyncRo

products to be reviewed, and then vendor listings with price, delivery and performance rating (voted upon by users of the site) to be plotted side by side for the searcher to make an informed decision. Typically the cost associated with these mechanisms is comparable to that with PFP engines; however, traffic rates are lower but optimized properly the conversion rates are considerably higher.

- Contextual advertising – provided by engines such as Google (via AdWords™) and Overture, contextual advertising is the distribution of the paid listings in huge distribution network of websites. The aim of contextual advertising is to provide search results on pages where information is being provided. Contextual advertising will be referred to in later chapters.

## Enhancements available today

A search engine marketing plan can be influenced by many variables and the success isn't just impacted by the performance of the keywords or traffic that is driven to the site alone. The following focuses on two clear distinctions, enhancements related to search and enhancements that are related to online marketing that impact a search campaign.

### Search engine related enhancements

The search engines themselves are very active in the continual launching of products that serve to improve the performance of a campaign. Some enhancements have been available for many months; however, the take-up can be slow because of the 'unknown' impact upon performance. The following enhancements are commonplace and should be considered in a campaign.

#### **Local search**

Expected to be one of the most prolific developments in search engine marketing campaigns for geographically orientated clients or local businesses, the local search facilities allow users to develop campaigns that focus on either (1) searchers within a designated area or (2) present results for companies within a geographic element to a search engine.

Looking at these in turn, the following exists:

- Searchers within a geographic area – Google, as well as other smaller engines, allows the searcher to target users within a geographic area by recognizing the *IP Address* of the search and presenting back a series of results focused on that particular area. The advertisers have the

option of specifying a geographic target area by selecting elements such as ZIP code range (USA Only) or grid reference, or by city, state etc.

- **Searchers With a ‘Geographic’ Element** – this describes search listings that have an element or factor within the keyword. This could be a phrase, such as ‘new york attorney’, that is relative to a searcher’s term. All of this is in fact already available to any company using any search campaign if performed in relation to the geographic area mechanism listed above. In using both in relation to an expensive term, such as the one listed in this paragraph, the costs associated with clicks from a national search will be reduced.

Local search is likely to be one of the contributing factors for the expansive growth forecast by Piper Jaffray. In an article presented at the tail end of 2004 local search was considered to be the next generation of contextual search.<sup>5</sup>

### **Press release optimization**

Press releases have an enormous impact upon an organic optimization program. As organic listings have a major impact upon the link popularity of a website a new service has begun to get large amounts of coverage involving the optimization of releases for search engines. Press release optimization firm SEO-PR states that over 90 per cent of journalists now turn to the Internet and search engines to find the latest news and information about companies and do so by typing in related searches. As search engines such as Google and Yahoo! develop improved news search mechanisms the optimization of a press release can offer the following two major benefits:

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<sup>5</sup>[http://www.mediapost.com/dtls\\_dsp\\_SearchInsider.cfm?fnl=050203](http://www.mediapost.com/dtls_dsp_SearchInsider.cfm?fnl=050203)

- Increased link popularity for a site to aid in the development of an organic optimization service
- High placement on sites such as Google News and subsequent coverage on main portal search results pages for listings relevant to search terms.

### **Pay per call**

In the US market, a new service being offered by search engines is pay per call. Instead of engaging with the user on a click basis, search listings are presented with a telephone number and the instruction to 'call us now'. This is then tracked via a telephone coding system and any telephone call received generated by the search engine is charged for.

This service is new to many and has yet to provide enough information within the search space to determine success or indeed failure; however, the concept of targeted sales leads via search engine, instead of the user visiting the site and having to find a contact number, is attractive to many companies reliant upon telephone sales or lead generation.

### **Blogging**

The art of blogging (web logs) is the development and usage of simple authoring tools that allow users to post information about subject matter, opinions and thoughts on a particular product, service or topic. Recent enhancements within the search engine space has allowed for many blogs to be spidered and indexed by the search engines based upon content, the reason being that it is felt that blogs are an honest, and potentially relevant, source for information on a particular topic. Many search engine marketers are now developing approaches to understand blogs more and use them to increase elements such as link popularity and aid in the development of an organic campaign. The more skilled the marketer the more the blog

contains elements of search optimization, such as keyword density, relevant body copy and linking architecture. These components aid in the promotion of a blog to higher rankings within the search engine natural listings.

## Industry enhancements

The main enhancement that can be associated with a search engine marketing plan but isn't necessarily directly associated with search, lies in the development of getting better performance from a website. With this in mind the following are enhancements that have a direct impact upon results.

### **Conversion process**

There is an old saying: 'You can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink' and in the context of search marketing this is most relevant. One of the main reasons cited by search engine marketers for a failed campaign is the fact that the traffic didn't convert. This has two possible reasons: the first is related to search and suggests that the traffic being driven to a website is not relevant. This is possible but if the guidelines suggested in this document are followed, there could be a second reason – it is most likely to be that the site itself is failing to convert visitors into customers by not qualifying each visit and directing the visitor's path throughout the site to the desired conversion point.

This flaw of failing to convert has been identified by many companies and as such there are services available from vendors specializing in the area of finding improvement in the design of a company's website, from the homepage through to the confirmation page of the conversion. The thought rationale behind a conversion assessment is relatively simple and follows the thought process of many

marketing principles. By developing the AIDA (Awareness, Interest, Desire and Action) model the approach is to refine the user's experience of the site by ensuring a qualification process and an enticement process, a desire, and finally, creating a prompt to provoke an action. One such company, Future Now Inc, suggests on their website ([www.futurenowinc.com](http://www.futurenowinc.com)) that, by using conversion improvement processes, some websites can see increases in conversion rates from under 1 per cent to over 54 per cent. To put this into context, Table 2.5 indicates the performance improvement that is associated with the implementation of measures to increase the conversion rate of a website.

**[Table 2.5]**

Performance improvement to increase website conversion rate

	<b>Example A</b>	<b>Example B</b>
Site Traffic	10 000	10 000
<b>Conversion Rate</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>2%</b>
Sales/Leads	100	200
Average Order Value	\$200	\$200
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>\$20 000</b>	<b>\$40 000</b>



SUMMARY

The tools available to the search market are varied; however, when the strategies are created the following summarized components will form the backbone of the tactics and control mechanisms:

- The major search engine mechanisms are **paid for placement (PFP)** provided by companies like Overture and Google. **Paid for inclusion (PFI)** and **Organic 'natural' optimization**.
- *The search engine components are **keywords** and **creatives** and both possess the key to a successful campaign within the search engine mechanisms.*
- Accurate search campaigns need appropriate **tracking and analytics tools**. Be it log file-based or cookie-based these systems allow for accountability of clicks, especially when recorded against distinct conversion parameters.
- A successful campaign needs technological involvement and should the PFP engines be engaged the use of a **bid management tool** is highly recommended. These mechanisms allow for automation of the bidding for keywords freeing up valuable resources.
- If the measure of a campaign is in the branding or awareness performance within a particular market or organic optimization is engaged, **rankings tools** are necessary for accurately depicting market conditions.
- A search campaign is not limited to the major search engines only. Other mechanisms from engines specializing in a particular industry (**vertical engines**) or focusing on purely retail models (**shopping engines**) are available to increase the marketer's options.
- It is important not to look at search engines alone for success. Sometimes the performance of the website is so poor that it can hinder the overall success of the search and online marketing campaign. Look to conversion improvement companies or suggestions to make sure the website is performing up to standard.

CHAPTER

# 3

# Search Marketing Techniques

## Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to demonstrate some of the major techniques used by search marketers to achieve their strategic objectives using the tools highlighted in Chapter 2.

There are many ‘how-to’ books within the search engine industry that will, in some instances, be able to take some of these techniques further; however, listed here will be some of the mainstay techniques that will stand the test of time.

## Keyword techniques

A search campaign is nothing without keywords; the challenge is how to find the most appropriate keywords and then once selected how to ensure that they are working to achieve success. Chapter 4 looks in detail at the research approach needed to create a solid search strategy and will elaborate on many of the concepts mentioned here. Keyword research is most particular to PFP and Organic search techniques.

## Keyword portfolio

The fundamental aspect of keyword research is to find terms that are relevant to the objective(s) that are being met. It doesn't make much sense to select specific keywords relating to a particular point of origin that drive very targeted traffic for a branding objective. Similarly it doesn't make sense to select only singular word keywords if the objective is to drive targeted traffic or targeted conversions.

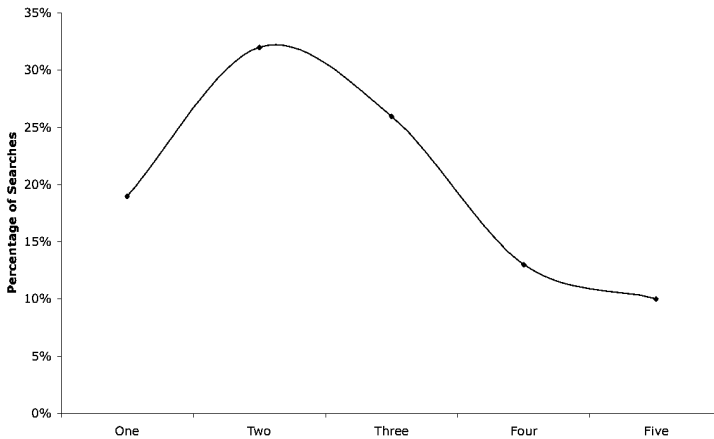
The strongest approach to take with search marketing is to develop a portfolio approach to a keyword list. Within this portfolio keywords can be selected to achieve different objectives; some will perform multiple objectives while others will be specific to a particular task.

The following demonstrates the thought processes involved with determining different types of keyword that will go into a portfolio. When operating within any search marketing campaigns it is essential to classify keywords into a portfolio and then assign a different performance metric to each. A mistake made by many is to view a complete list of keywords against one goal and rate the performance of search against it.

- Selection by Type – keywords are often sorted into portfolio grouping based upon type. In the simplest sense a keyword that represents a certain type (i.e. brand) will be classified as such. Therefore a keyword that represents a brand name might be classified as 'branded', a keyword that represents products might be classed as 'product', and so forth.
- Selection by Performance – keywords can be sorted by performance. In many campaigns the most important words require more attention than those that have lower performance or risk of damaging the overall

success of a campaign. Therefore, if keywords are sorted by performance and those that require attention separated from the pack a focused approach can be simplified and resource better allocated.

- Selection by property (i.e. number of words in phrase) – keywords are easiest to break down by the number of words within the listing. This can then be related to type, i.e. generic through to specific. The following, cited in Marketing Sherpa's *Search Marketing Metrics Guide* and originally contributed by *One Stat*, demonstrates the number of words within a query (Figure 3.1).

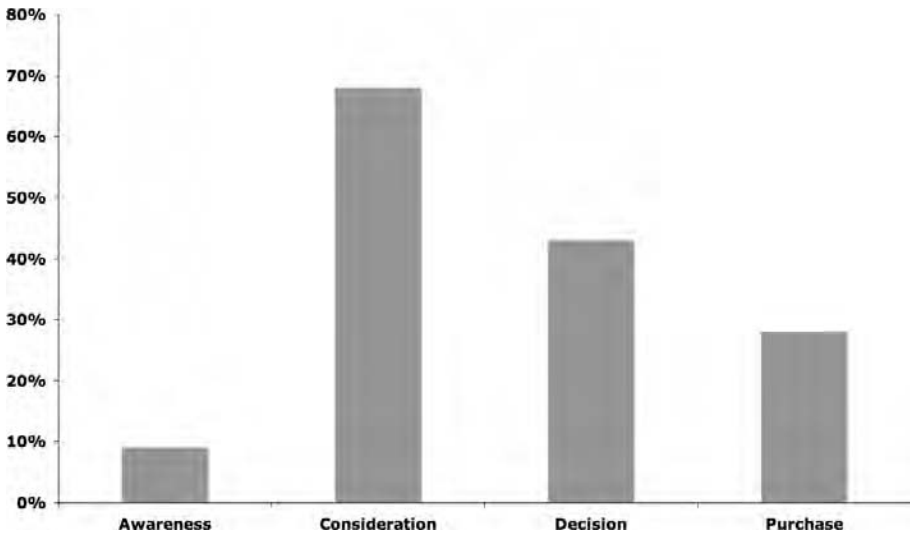


**[Fig. 3.1]**

Number of keywords within keyphrase

The classification of keywords is user-defined (i.e. based upon business model and industry); however, the idea of the classification is to give searchers with different search characteristics the ability to see different results. The following indicates how a searcher may look for information and demonstrate the relationship with the portfolio.

A study performed by Enquiro in early 2004 and published under the title *Into The Mind Of The Searcher*



[Fig. 3.2]  
Search engines – likelihood of use

indicates the following percentages of why people use search engines (see Figure 3.2).

While user search patterns are not defined this approach will allow for listings to be displayed in many of the common ways information, products and services are searched for. In understanding the performance of each designated group a better understanding of a website's specific audience can be gained.

Depending upon the industry or objectives needed to be achieved different focus or weighting will be applied to each section of the portfolio.

## Keyword and Landing pages

It goes without saying that different types of keyword warrant a different landing page on the site. For branded terms the landing page should be the homepage. For generic terms the recommended landing page is typically

the category page of the product in question, i.e. digital camera going to the category page for digital cameras. The final type of keyword relates to specific terms and for these it is recommended to land a visitor on a page that represents the specific nature of the term such as a product or specification page.

## Keyword expansion

Keyword expansion is the development and addition of new keywords to portfolio for the general improvement of a campaign. The best technique for expansion is to tie it in with other variables that might influence performance. This can fall into a number of different areas:

- Existing Keyword Performance – the best source of understanding where keyword expansions might be found is an existing base of keywords. Dependent upon the correct tracking of success (see Technology in Chapter 2), new keywords can be developed from those that are performing well, via a process known as *keyword stemming*.
- Push Messaging (Promotional) – should a new product, service or topic of information become key to the particular business or website being optimized, new keywords will become available. For example, a large retailer pushes messaging via offline or online graphical advertising to the general public for a new product or service. From that point onward it makes sense to create synergies between these messaging efforts and the keyword selection process.
- Competitive Space – knowing what competitors of a company or website are doing provides a good grounding for selecting new keywords. Whether it is keywords that are being bought that is appropriate or whether it's

messaging being used (as per the bullet point above), anything that makes the searcher aware of new data will be good for keyword expansion.

One of the areas where companies can fall over with keyword expansion is when it is done without first determining why. Bad keyword selection and large numbers of new terms can add increased traffic and extra resource loads on bidding processes so, as a word of caution, it's unwise to engage in expansion unless done in a controlled and measurable manner.

## Keyword deletion

Making the decision to delete keywords is one of the hardest to do. The worry, or fear, is that if the keyword is deleted today it might perform tomorrow. One of the most important variables to consider is that, in most instances with search engine marketing today (be it PFP, PFI or organic search), payment is only expected after a keyword has received a click. No click, no payment. The issue is often with the cost associated with clicks: if a term is costing a lot of money then is it really working or delivering what it needs to? The answer to this has to come from some form of tracking – only when keywords are made accountable can they be deleted from a portfolio.

Once again, the optimization of keywords is very much focused on paid search. And while adding keywords is seen as common practice, the removal or deletion of words is seldom done. For this reason there are a number of basic options for keyword deletion, as follows.

- Deletion of keywords due to **cost** – the correct determination of the removal of keywords because of cost should be associated with performance. The idea is to delete keywords based upon a return principle, i.e. if

the cost is greater than my return threshold then I must either eliminate it or, in some instances, reduce the overall CPC.

- Deletion of keywords due to **performance** – very similar to the technique mentioned above, the removal of keywords due to cost, this is based upon performance. However, depending upon the performance the singular keyword may not be associated with cost. For example, should a keyword portfolio contain 500 phrases that don't perform against return metrics but only drive a single click each, is the problem about cost of keyword or performance? On mass, the click volume of underperforming words can be the determining factor of overall success and therefore regardless of singular cost the keywords must be screened based upon their impact as a group.
- Deletion of keywords due to **relevance** – keywords that don't perform have a cost associated with them and the two reasons for deletion cited above discuss this; however, the biggest factor for why a keyword doesn't perform is often lack of relevance of keyword to subject matter on the website itself. A keyword must be relevant to the site as, the more relevant it is, the better qualified the user and the higher the likelihood for success against conversion. The importance of relevance is so key that in each of the objectives chapters the deletion of keywords will be examined in greater detail and associated with the portfolio classification.

## Creative techniques

As important as keywords are to any search campaign, so are the titles and descriptions that the searcher experiences. As regards importance for the advertising organization the formulation of good creative has an impact upon multiple variables. A recent survey by the IAB and



Nielson Net Ratings has illustrated the importance of search marketing for branding, as the study suggested top paid listings can increase brand awareness by 27 per cent<sup>1</sup> and, as such, creative must represent the organization as well as qualifying the searcher and attracting the desired website traffic.

### Creative characteristics

Search creative, i.e. the titles and descriptions, must contain certain characteristics to fulfill any search objective. Regardless of whether it's branding, sales, lead generation or a combination thereof, the following characteristics apply.

- Active voice – there isn't a great deal of space to get any message across to the searcher. Chances are the listing will be skim read or scanned very quickly for information so there isn't any opportunity to waffle. Listings must be to the point and not be in the passive voice.
- Contain a 'hook' – what differentiates companies within a search result is the ability to add an element within the creative that acts as bait or a hook in which a click will be generated. In the retail business the offer of 'free shipping' or 'next day delivery' is often a way to distinguish a site within a results page that is dominated by companies selling the same item. The B2B space is no different and in the context of appealing to the searcher, including the hook will increase the potential of a higher CTR.
- Highlight a USP – within a competitive environment companies develop a unique selling proposition for the purpose of differentiation. In the context of creative

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<sup>1</sup>[http://www.nielsen-netratings.com/pr/pr\\_040714.pdf](http://www.nielsen-netratings.com/pr/pr_040714.pdf)

this USP must be exploited to aid in the attractiveness of the search listing.

- Use a call to action – instructing the user to ‘click here’ or ‘visit us’ to ‘learn more’ is a good way to induce the click. It is vital to add an instruction for the visitor to click, as the call to action is the final stage of the CTR process. The one area of caution is to watch out for using certain call-to-action words that aren’t accepted by the engines; ‘click here’, for example, isn’t allowed by some as it’s seen as being an obvious next step – argued to the point as to what else should a searcher do?

## Creative performance criteria

Getting the creative right first time is never the easiest thing to do. Understanding the searching audience doesn’t necessarily relate to other marketing activities and with such a small amount of room to gain the searcher’s attention a constant testing of creative must be done.

The performance of creative must be measured upon two distinct elements, quality of traffic and Click Through Rate (CTR).

- Click Through Rate (CTR) – in many instances the aim of creative is to attract as many of the searchers and their associated searches as possible to click through on the listing that appears in the search results. As the larger engines, especially in the paid environment, provide both number of searches and number of clicks the simple calculation ( $\text{Impressions} / \text{Clicks}$ ) will give the CTR percentage.
- Judging Creative by Performance – with the cost of search clicks rising rapidly and with no stabilization of costs in the foreseeable future the value of a qualified visitor is higher than it’s ever been. This means that, in

many instances, a lower CTR is desirable if those that are clicking are more likely to convert. Creative can, in a controlled environment, be measured against conversion parameters. While this form of measurement is less quantifiable than that of the CTR, measuring against sales to click percentages or size of order is another strong way of determining the success of a creative.

Throughout the entire process of measurement the testing of creative performance must be done in a controlled manner. With any form of testing the following steps must be taken.

- Ensure a controlled environment – it is important when testing creative that this is the only test being conducted and that the components, i.e. keywords and engines, remain the same. This is the only way to ensure accuracy in results.
- Test on a sample – it is important to only test a sample of keywords specific to a portfolio designation (see Creative characteristics above) and that the sample is performed over a predetermined number of clicks / impressions (i.e. the first to receive 1000 impressions or the first lot of listings to receive 1000 clicks).
- Have distinct success parameters – it is important to set goals or success parameters. Putting something such as ‘select creative with a 50 per cent increase in CTR’ is the only way to judge performance improvement and determine the success of a test.

## Search engine techniques

Each of the three types of search engine has techniques built around the best way to optimize and get the best performance. From feed manipulation in paid for inclusion to match types with paid for placement this section

of the chapter will highlight some of the major techniques that can take a search engine strategy to the next level of success.

## Paid for placement (PFP)

There are two major types of paid for placement engine. There are those that run on a simple bidding process, i.e. if you pay one penny more than a site bidding on the same term a better position will be achieved; this model, for sake of reference, will be known as the Overture model. The second type of paid for placement engine is one that focuses on bidding price, but also on daily budget to give the optimum performance, and for sake of reference this will be known as the Google AdWords™ model.

### **Overture model**

The Overture model is the simpler of the two bidding models. With the exception of Google, nearly all PFP engines utilize this model (with a few variations) in which a higher bid wins a higher placement in the search listing and therefore the higher rank. The more advertisers there are bidding the more fraught and frenetic bidding becomes.

To succeed with PFP the skill is to relate the objective to be achieved with the service cost (or CPC) of the engine. In later chapters this concept will be studied in further detail; however, the principle to follow is as such. If a goal is to achieve a certain traffic number then a target CPC must be found; similarly if the goal is to achieve a conversion (such as a sale or lead generated), the amalgamated cost of all keyword clicks must be at the investment number for a desired return. In other words if \$1.00 was spent on clicks, \$5 must be made back from the clicks in order to achieve the goal.

This is a simple principle but, in the PFP, one that is extremely hard to achieve, the reason being that the market controls the price and not the search engine and as such a conversion parameter (such as that 5-fold return cited above) can change from one hour to the next.

Success from PFP comes from the management of keywords both in their singular existence and within a group or portfolio. By managing the expectations of keywords against their desired goal, a goal that is ultimately set by the search marketing strategy, a greater handle on the performance can be determined. In later chapters the identification of inefficiencies will be highlighted by only measuring PFP keywords and success via grouping all terms together but for this chapter it is important to follow these guidelines for PFP.

- **Classify keywords by portfolio designation** – depending upon your strategy (see later chapters) keywords will fall into different areas within a portfolio; for example, some keywords will be responsible for branding, others for driving qualified sales. It is in accurate classification that accurate measurement can be determined.
- **Measure against conversion** – measure PFP against a conversion point and optimize against it. Bidding, whether it be manual or via a bid management tool (see Chapter 2) can only be successful if the outcome is measured.
- **Avoid ‘fixed’ bidding** – unless the pros totally outweigh the cons (and this is most uncommon) avoid using the fixed bidding facilities on the engines with the Overture bidding model. If fixed bidding is used and the bids are not monitored accurately (see later points) then excessive budget may be spent needlessly for the same click. As the auction mechanism allows bidders to up their bids but also to reduce them if a bid is placed when many bidders are vying for the same

spot, the CPC might be higher than an hour, day or week later when half the bidders are now competing for that term. This means that a \$0.50 cent bid for position 1 on Tuesday at 1pm might be \$0.25 by Wednesday at 11am but as the bid has been fixed at \$0.50 double the amount is being paid for the term.

- **Use ‘auto’ bidding** – as the other mechanism to fixed bidding this option recognizes the changes in the bidding environment and ensures that bidders only pay 1 cent (or equivalent minimum currency) above the next placed company. This bidding is done up to a bid cap or maximum.
- **Constantly monitor bids** – The Overture model search engines require constant monitoring and adjustment. If left unattended the paid for placement engines can go one of two ways. (1) The bidding within the space is so frenetic that terms that were placed in the top positions (and it’s important to remember here that the top terms are syndicated out to the advertising network) have been demoted to the lower less advantageous positions. (2) The bidding within the space slows or fewer bidders exist and a listing gets promoted to a higher position where the amount of traffic drives up the cost and the cost vs. benefit ratio becomes undesirable.

Throughout the following chapters some of the more specific techniques associated with an objective(s) will be identified but following the cited rules a great deal of success can be found.

### ‘Google AdWords™’ Model

The Google AdWords™ model is one of many variables. The ‘Overture’ model uses only a few basic variables, price being the determinant for position and is the case until the money runs out. Despite releasing new models for controlling budget, the model is relatively simple. The ‘AdWords™’ model is much more complicated. Position

is determined by bid price, click through rate (CTR) and budgetary elements such as daily cap amounts on campaigns and accounts. Only when an understanding of all of these elements is found is it that true success from this medium can be found.

Andrew Holladay, Optimization Expert for Inceptor Inc, explains:

## **The art of the daily budget cap**

*By Andrew Holladay*

While testing new keywords, trying new creative and changing landing pages are all worthwhile efforts in maximizing returns or reducing Costs Per Acquisition, there is one specific feature in the Google AdWords™ tool, that, if more carefully considered, can make significant improvements to your performance in only a few minutes; the low hanging fruit, if you will. Often times, the daily budget caps of campaigns are arbitrarily assigned with little consideration, or are simply never adjusted to ensure that your advertising dollars are working at their peak performance. Over time, you might find that the daily budget cap is more than an administrative decision to be made on the Campaign Settings tab, but rather the focal point of your AdWords strategy.

The strategy is simple. Maximize exposure on keywords that deliver the most value, and minimize the exposure of keywords that do not. This may seem obvious, but as most advertisers must work within budgetary constraints, the challenge lays within sucking the most return out of your limited dollars as possible. This involves assigning proportionally higher daily budget caps to campaigns which contain your best performing keywords and lower daily budget caps to campaigns which contain your less performing keywords. The tactics and implementation of

this strategy are demonstrated in the example below, which is reflective of numerous actual cases.

**Scenario:**

Our business is running 1000 keywords in one AdWords™ campaign and we have appropriated \$15K a month to spend in Google. Our current daily budget cap is \$500 a day (\$15 000/30 days). We need to achieve an overall return of 5× in the next month to reach our quarterly goals, and in this past month, we only achieved a 4×.

**Challenge:**

With all of our keywords in one campaign set at a \$500 daily budget cap, our ads are not being served all of the time. Our ads are not being shown on every search because the AdWords tool is using historical data to estimate how many times our ad needs to be served, in order that we only spend \$500. It then serves ads intermittently throughout the day. More importantly, and perhaps more frustratingly, the keywords which we know are the most valuable to us, are not showing ads as much as we would like. If we could have our keywords, which routinely deliver over a 5× show ads more often than our keywords that deliver below a 5×, we might be able to get our historic overall performance of 4× to become a 5× in this next month.

**Optimization Tactic:**

While we do not have the financial means to have ads served on all of our keywords all of the time, we do have the power of choosing specifically which keywords should have ads served more frequently than others. How do we do this? We will convert our one large campaign into multiple campaigns and assign them varying daily budget caps. Before we can do this, we'll need to do some research and see the ROI by



keyword. We will then sort our 1000 keywords by ROI. Perhaps only the top 50 keywords actually perform at or above a 5×. The next 100 keywords deliver between a 1× and 4× and the remaining 850 keywords are either costing more than they deliver in revenue or only drive traffic.

### **Implementation:**

In this case, we will create three new campaigns. In campaign 1, we'll place the 50 best performing keywords that drove over a 5×. Then we'll check the Recommended Daily Budget tool on the Campaign Settings tab. It may recommend that we need to spend \$300 a day to serve ads on these keywords all of the time in position 1. We want to assign campaign 1 the full \$300 daily budget to ensure maximum exposure on all of our best performing keywords. We'll then place the next 100 'medium performers' driving between a 1× and 4× in campaign 2. Again, we'll check the recommended daily budget for the keywords in campaign 2. It may recommend that campaign 2 needs \$400 a day to serve ads on these keywords all of the time. However, we only have \$200 a day left to work with ( $\$500 - \$300 = \$200$ ). Since these keywords are not delivering as much value as our best performing keywords, it is not as necessary for the ads to be served all of the time. Determining how to break out the budget among campaigns 2 and 3 can be done in a number of ways, but to ensure higher returns, assign the majority of it to campaign 2, which contains the better performing keywords. In this example, we'll assign \$150 to the 'medium performers' and the remaining \$50 to the 'poor performers'. By investing more dollars in our better performing keywords, we should begin to see higher returns from this point forward.

While this is a fairly simplistic example, it does demonstrate how breaking down campaigns into smaller campaigns and appropriately assigning daily budget caps gives us more control over how our dollars are being spent. This control allows us to give more weight to our better performing keywords, and therefore, increases our returns. As this technique has demonstrated in the past, giving an extra measure of attention to the daily budget cap and applying a bit more thought to campaign organization can greatly improve the performance of your AdWords™ account.

### Match types

Within each of the PFP engines there are different ways of matching a searcher's request, i.e. what is typed into the search box, with the search term or keyword bought by the advertiser. Each company has a definition for these services, definitions that often change, but the basic principles are as follows.

**Identical matching** (*Exact Match* in Google AdWords™ and *Standard Match* on Overture) – this is where the search term matches exactly as the searcher typed it in:

SEARCHER	RESULT
digital camera	digital camera

**Relevant matching** (*Broad or Phrase Match* in Google AdWords™ and *Advanced Match* on Overture) – this is where the searcher is presented with matches that are relevant in content to the term. Depending upon the relevancy of the keyword to the term the more likely it is that it will be displayed.

SEARCHER	RESULT (examples)
conversion marketing	conversion rate marketing conversion marketing firm

In later chapters the virtues of match types will be identified and applied to each of the objective(s) and strategies surrounding them.

### **Negative keywords**

Some of the issues around match type are concerned with the relevance of the search terms that are displayed based upon the searchers request. In many instances terms might be displayed that have practically no relevance to the request but are displayed based upon the contextual content of the term.

A classic example of this scenario is cruise liners being confused with the movie star Tom Cruise. If a user searches for 'Tom Cruise' in an effort to find the latest information about the movie star, travel companies advertising using the word 'cruise' might have their PFP listing show up. To overcome this problem the travel company would identify 'Tom' as a negative keyword to prevent this situation from happening.

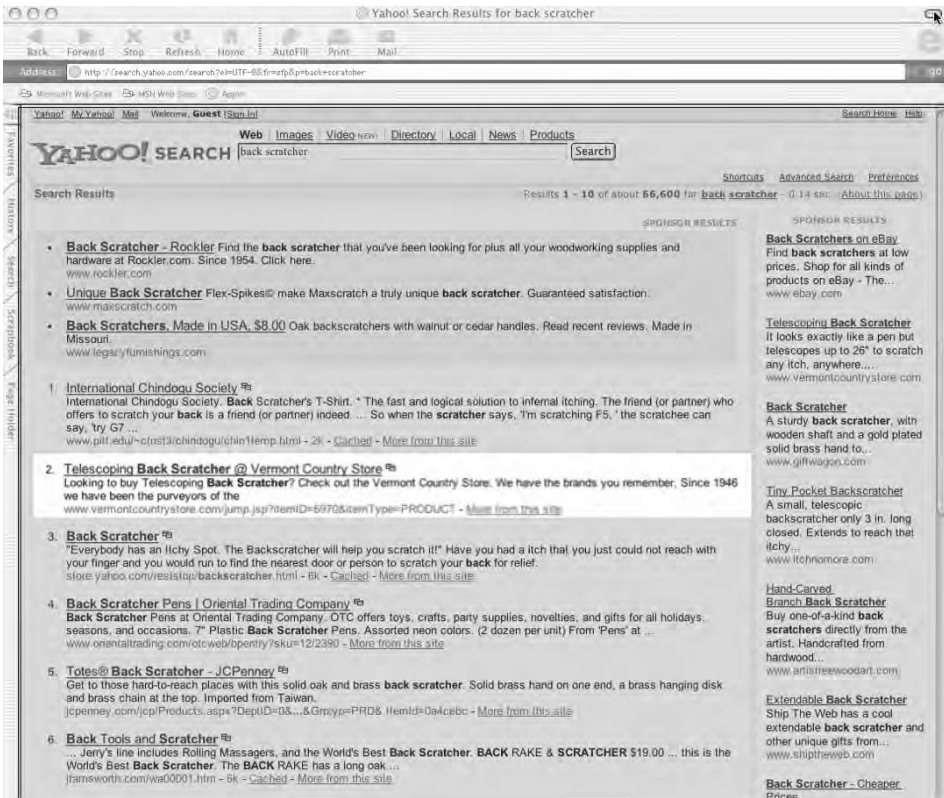
It is important to apply negative keywords to match types to ensure that terms that are searched for are relevant to the matching PFP listing and vice versa.

## **Paid for inclusion (PFI)**

PFI optimization techniques are based upon the factors that influence the feeds ability to either achieve or not achieve the objective. While paid for placement (Overture, Google AdWords™, FindWhat, etc) offer simple procedures for getting a site listed, part of the ever-increasing strength of the PFP market, the processes that are necessary for optimizing PFI are different. With no guarantee of a high placement and reliance on relevant submitted content, i.e. does Overture Site Match xChange™ (Formerly Inktomi and from this point

onwards referred to as OSMX) feel this is 100 per cent relevant to a search or 1 per cent, the challenge to the marketer is much greater. In order to demonstrate that the challenge is not as unfathomable as it may seem to be, the following techniques are listed for optimizing PFI.

- **Understand where paid inclusion data appear within the search network** – the usual place for paid for inclusion data is within the ‘web pages’ results. These are pages that appear when the search term has either (1) limited coverage within paid for placement or directory listings or (2) exhausted all of the paid for placement or directory listings and appears thereafter! Here is a simple example to further explain this – if a search is performed for ‘credit cards online’ on Yahoo! the searcher will be presented with Overture’s top listings ‘Sponsored Sites’, then listings from the Yahoo! Directory Listings and lastly, once these forms of results are exhausted, ‘web pages’ which are OSMX (See Figure 3.3).
- **Understand what is being submitted** – following on from Point 1, as the listings that appear in paid for inclusion are so low in the pecking order the marketer must be careful of which words, phrases, listings to submit. In the example above, creating a PFI listing for ‘credit cards online’ would not be a good thing to do; however, ‘online credit card service’ would appear on page 1 in 15th spot as all other sources had been exhausted. The reason for this is volume; the number of searches for ‘online credit card service’ is 5 per cent of the number of searches for ‘credit card online’. The advantage is relevancy; those 5 per cent of searches are going to traditionally have more relevant searchers as the searchers have pre-qualified themselves with a longer, more considered search term.



[Fig. 3.3]  
Paid inclusion data

- **Don't submit too little** – the issue here is once again volume. The best content to submit to a PFI engine is large bulk amounts taken from sites with lots of data on their site. This lends itself extremely well to catalogue retailers (such as WH Smith or Amazon) or publishers (such as Dalton's Weekly or McGraw-Hill). In many instances the effort needed for one listing in PFI is the same effort as 10 000 listings. The more listings submitted, the less of an issue the smaller search volume becomes, as a larger percentage of more specific searches will match the PFI content submitted.

- **Understand ‘how’ to submit** – there are many ways to submit to PFI engines; many of them will provide assistance with the whole procedure, others will recommend third parties to assist with submission. The most important variable to take into account is relevancy. PFI listings are not guaranteed number 1 spot, even on the ‘web pages’ or equivalent section of the site. It is important to ensure that a submission of a listings for ‘Sony 28 Widescreen TV Model’ has title, description, supporting text and URL, and that all of these elements contain the same information. If this is not done the engine will bump the listing down for being too vague. Understanding the variables of PFI are of high importance; for example, OSMX won’t allow anything but a listing to unique URL ratio of 1:1. In other words the listings can’t all point to a single page; this is considered to be spam.
- **Don’t submit too much** – PFI has a variable rate card per industry (vertical), and upon application this information can be gathered from the engine or a reseller. As with PFP the price is often dependent upon demand for the content: for example, finance and legal services are more expensive than reference or computing. For this reason it is important to do research before submitting a feed. Ensure that considerations are taken into account when putting your entire catalogue of products online and that each and every product if sold justifies the cost per click. In many instances the best course of action is to optimize a feed to PFI up to the point where the AOV of the catalogue products or CPA of the online lead justifies the costs (see Table 3.1). **Note:** it is essential to have a tracking tool to perform this type of optimization.

In the example above the target return on investment from this paid inclusion feed is  $3\times$  (or 300 per cent) so taking the site’s conversion rate (or even with historic data the actual feed conversion rate) and then applying it to the traffic

**[Table 3.1]**  
PFI listing

	<b>Weak PFI listing</b>	<b>Strong PFI listing</b>
Recorded Clicks	1000	1000
CPC (Fixed)	\$0.25	\$0.25
Costs	\$250	\$250
Site Conversion Rate	1%	1%
Sales	10	10
Average Order Value	\$25.00	\$75.00
Revenue	\$250.00	\$750.00
<b>Return On Investment</b>	<b>100% ROI</b>	<b>300% ROI</b>

expected from a listing, by removing terms that even if they converted would reach the ROI goal, will inevitably increase the return from the feed. The drawback to this is that the amount of revenue received from the feed will decrease; however, the revenue made will be profitable or at least in accordance with the ROI goal of the campaign/feed.

- **Creative management** – a PFI listing, as with any other, appears within the search network with countless others. Make sure such listings aren't neglected by relying on the title and description from the feed (i.e. catalogue or website listing). In many instances normal procedure is to substitute the title that appears in the engine with the title that appears on the site. Include calls to action; add unique selling proposition and should the website have a strong brand name be sure to include it (see Paid For Placement above).

## Organic 'natural' search (search engine optimization)

Natural Search Optimization, or Search Engine Optimization (referred to as SEO) is one of the most important areas of any search engine marketing campaign but can

often be mistaken for the overall solution to a search marketing strategy. The lure of a zero cost per click (CPC) makes companies, in many instances, prefer this tactic over all others, such as PFP or PFI, as it has no recurring cost.

The reality is, however, more complicated than it may seem. For every benefit of having a zero cost per click the process that needs to be adopted to achieve results is comprehensive and in many cases expensive. HTML is still the chosen language of search engines spiders, but is, however, the least likely language for designers to use in the development of websites, and thus generates a natural conflict, one that is an expensive one to overcome. Site Side Optimization (SSO) is a process that is a skill that many don't have. Trusting the technology department of web designers to do the job can't achieve the desired objectives and the skills required are held in the hands of individuals and therefore consultancy costs are warranted.

Search engines have always been susceptible to manipulation and fraud by those with less than moral objectives. Known as search engine spamming, the procedures of maximizing a website's potential can be done using techniques that search engines aren't in favor of. For this reason the engines took two particular routes for ensuring that content was of a high quality and relevant for their users. The first is making sites pay for clicks. As ROI becomes more prominent it is a good assumption to make that a site won't pay for traffic that won't convert on the destination site. This model has become one of the most dominant within the space in the past two years. The second method used by engines is to change the variables they use to rank a website, moving the goalposts every now and again to ensure those utilizing unsuitable procedures are constantly having to change. Unfortunately this also means that those optimizing a site legitimately also have to continue to maintain and update the code.



With this being taken into consideration the technique for the correct use of SEO is selecting not only the best time to perform this function on the site but how many pages to optimize.

The following questions might be appropriate (but not definitive) as to the process to undertake:

- **Determine the design of the website** – if the website being optimized is written in HTML, it lends itself well to optimization as code changes, URL structure and ‘spiderability’ (i.e. how search engine friendly it is) are all positive. If the site is dynamically generated with code such as Cold Fusion or Java Script, then the site isn’t necessarily as easy to optimize. As cited above, this is the common format for many of the newly designed sites and as such may require additional effort in order to achieve success.
- **Understand ‘priority’ of website within technical departments** – if the site requires additional commitment from a technical department it is important to understand the priority within the overall workload. The resource required for implementation is important for success especially if financial resources are to be outlaid on optimization recommendations (i.e. from an SEO specialist). This is also important for long-term success; optimization may be necessary on a regular (i.e. monthly) basis.
- **Perform a cost vs benefit comparison between paid and organic** – one of the main reasons why companies turn to organic is because of the price of the PFP market. Conversely one of the main reasons that companies turn to paid is that a website is designed for natural optimization or the schedule of a technical department isn’t favorable toward SSO. For this reason the cost of optimization must be weighed against the click volume or effort required in working with a paid campaign in PFP or PFI. Often this manifests itself into prioritizing the pages on a

website that will be optimized. Putting this into context, if a site has 100 000 pages is it cost effective to optimize all pages or to do the top 10 per cent with SSO and submit the final 90 000 via PFI? This is a decision that will be determined by strategy and resource limitations.

As for the actual optimization techniques, the sister book to this text, *Marketing Through Search Optimization* by Michael and Salter will cover many of the tactical SEO techniques needed for success.

**SUMMARY**

Knowing the right tools to use is only half the battle. It is extremely important to understand what is necessary when using these tools and how to get the most from them in order to drive a successful search engine marketing strategy.

- **Keywords** are the most important variables in any campaign. Whether being used for paid search or organic search the wrong keyword selection could cause serious problems regardless of any other component. For this reason it is important to group keywords and measure, control and optimize them by the characteristics possessed in groups or portfolios.
- **Creative** can hinder or help a search strategy. A creative or set of creatives must be written that qualifies the visitor on arrival. The creatives must contain a series of properties (such as a unique selling point or the use of active voice) and clearly articulate to the searcher why the listing is the strongest of all.
- Different search engine mechanisms require different techniques. **PFP** requires constant attention and optimization based upon market conditions, whereas **PFI** has pre-determined rate card prices so correct configuration is essential. Lastly, **organic** optimization requires longer-term planning and involves more up-front resource so accurate projection and resource allocation is needed.

# Researching and Mapping the Space

## Introduction

When putting together any kind of plan or strategy a full understanding of the space in which a company is going to compete is essential. In the context of a marketing plan, activities in this area would be referred to as the situational analysis and as the search industry is no different to any other medium it is as important.

In Chapter 9 the 'situational analysis' will be studied in detail but for now the variables needed for research will be highlighted.

## Tools for researching the search space

Differing from the tools to measure an individual company's success there are tools in the space that allow a company to determine the parameters, such as competitive nature and price of clicks, that can then be modeled into strategic tools.

## Cost per click tools

Most of the cost per click analysis is performed for the Paid For Placement (PFP) space. For Paid For Inclusion

(PFI) there is a rate card price and the engines can determine price.

For the PFP space each of the engines will provide access to bid prices for search terms; this is a mandatory variable for an auction-based system as it is the market that controls the search price and therefore complete visibility of pricing is necessary. Each of the major PFP engines (eSpotting, FindWhat, Overture and Google) all have mechanisms for researching both the keywords available within the space and how much each click in each of the top positions is going for. Successful research of the environment requires accurate usage of these mechanisms.

### **Keyword research tools**

There are two types of tools, i.e. paid research tools and free research tools. As previously discussed, free research tools are provided by the engines and are as follows.

- Overture Suggestion Tool – probably the most known and most used keyword research tool available to search marketers, this website allows a user to type in a search variable and see hundreds of different variation of the term. Each term displayed is an actual term used by a searcher within a given time period (typically the previous month) and the number of times it was searched for (see Figure 4.1).
- Intuitive search engines – some search engines aren't known necessarily in the mainstream environment as major players so in many instances these engines develop unique characteristics to find a unique selling proposition. In some cases, engines such as Eureka provide search results that aren't necessarily contextually relevant but are intuitively relevant on trend-based analysis. For example: if the same number of users search for 'attorney' as they do for 'lawyer', Eureka will return both of these as viable search terms. This

goes beyond the Overture Suggestion Tool as that would only return all contextually relevant terms for ‘lawyer’ or ‘attorney’ (see Figure 4.2).

- Google Sandbox – Google really hasn’t provided a strong tool for research and the Sandbox is the closest it gets to the quality of the tool provided by Overture. As Google allows users to buy both singular and pluralized terms this tool is useful for not only keyword research but the multiples of variations on the terms.
- ‘Other’ search engine provided keyword tools – most of the major search engines have a suggestion tool. These terms, as much as they will provide possible variations not found in Overture or Google, are useful for deter-



[Fig. 4.1] Keyword selector tool – Overture

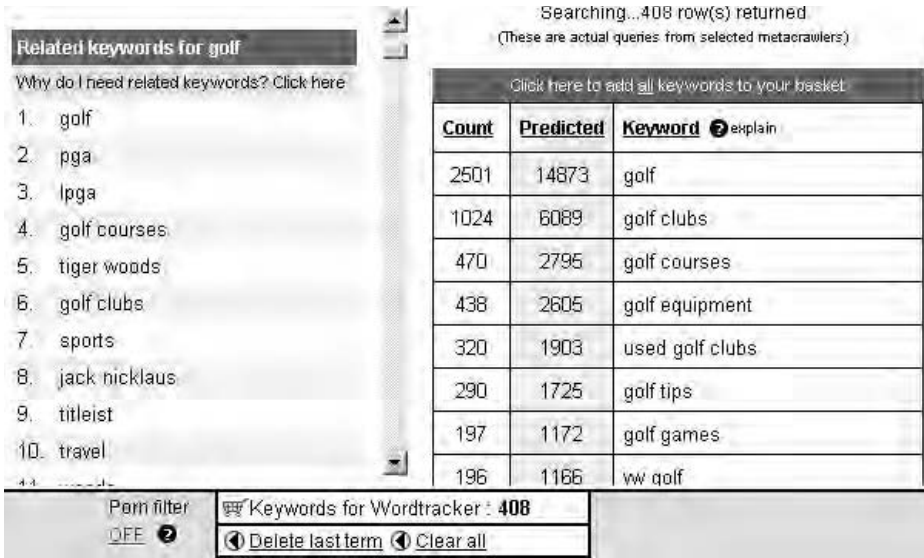


**[Fig. 4.2]**  
Intuitive search engine – EurekaSearch

mining where keyword placement might not be worth committing to, as there isn't the inventory of the major PFP engines. For a complete list of the most useful suggestion tools check the summary of this chapter.

Additional to the suggestion tools in the public domain, there are also software packages and services available that combine a series of these tools to give a bigger-picture look at the search space. These tools also offer user interfaces to combine the research parameters to aid in increasing efficiency by speeding up the process. The following examples are paid research tools.

- WordTracker – one of the first to market research tools, WordTracker uses information from a variety of sources and provides not only keyword viability, in the form of a **KEI Score**, but also opportunities for keyword expansion and providing cost information for PFP terms in engines like Overture (see Figure 4.3).
- AdWords™ Clever Wizard – This system rivals many of the research tools on the market and, as with WordTracker, allows multiple country research. A simple interface not only scores keywords, again with a KEI score, but gives an indication of the number of



[Fig. 4.3] WordTracker

sites listed in the results page in both the PFP and Organic listings.

### Keyword pricing tools

Understanding the number of possible search terms and the number of times a given term is searched for in any given time period is extremely important but while clicks are one thing, costs are another and in the planning stage of any campaign understanding the market costs for the paid for placement keywords is of utmost importance.

As with the keyword suggestion tools, the majority of costing tools, with the exception of WordTracker (mentioned above) are provided free of charge by the search engines. The following are the most useful to use and are both relevant to the UK and US markets and beyond.

- Overture Bid Tool – this tool, controlled by a code entry system (to prevent abuse from software tools),

allows a marketer to type in a keyword and be presented back with all fellow advertisers, and bid amount, for that particular keyword.

This tool provides a solid demonstration of the market conditions (price of keyword) and a snapshot of the competitive space in which a bidding strategy needs to be devised.

- Google AdWords™ Traffic & Cost Estimator – the Google tool is different from that of Overture, as it requires a user to have an account set up before use. The relation of the account to the research content isn't important; therefore, a user who may have had an old account or even one used by colleagues, peers or partners will provide the log-in details needed to activate the tool.

Once access is granted the system allows selected keywords to be entered into a user interface, a maximum CPC set and a country the designated advertising will be aimed at (a multiple can be selected), and will subsequently return the estimated traffic on a daily basis, average CPC, average position and daily spend levels.

This tool is, however, limited to the performance of a keyword for the advertiser researching only and doesn't provide a snapshot of other bidders on that particular term. This being said a combination of the results provided from tools such as the AdWords™ Clever Wizard will demonstrate the estimated visibility based upon the number of bidders (see Figures 4.4 and 4.5).

## Keyword rankings and competitive analysis tools

It is important to understand the ranking performance of any given website to get a feel for current performance. Whether a strategy is looking to engage in PFP, PFI or



**Traffic Estimator**

Get quick traffic estimates for new keywords without adding them to an account or using the AdWords sign-up wizard.

**1. Enter keywords, one per line.**

search engine news  
search engine  
paid for placement advertising  
paid inclusion

keyword = broad match  
[ keyword ] = exact match  
"keyword" = phrase match  
-keyword = negative match

Set optional individual CPCs using this format:  
keyword\*\*0.25

**2. Choose a currency.** Enter a specific Max CPC for your estimates, or let us suggest a value.\*

US Dollars (USD \$)

\*Suggested value should deliver ads in the top position 85% of the time.

**3. Select targeting.**

a. Language

English  
Chinese (simplified)  
Chinese (traditional)  
Danish  
Dutch  
Finnish  
French

b. Location Targeting

**Countries** - choose countries

**Regions and cities** - choose states and regions and/or enter cities

**Customized** - enter a radius and address or coordinates

[Fig. 4.4] Google AdWords™ traffic estimator

Max CPC: USD \$1.00  
Recommended daily budget: USD \$200.00

Keywords ▼	Avg. Position	Clicks / Day	Cost / Day	Avg. CPC
<b>Overall</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>398.7</b>	<b>\$128.06</b>	<b>\$0.32</b>
paid for placement advertising	1.0	< 0.1	\$0.00	\$0.05
paid inclusion	2.2	0.7	\$0.34	\$0.49
search engine	1.3	380.0	\$124.96	\$0.33
search engine news	1.1	18.0	\$2.76	\$0.15

Estimates for these keywords are based on clickthrough rates for current advertisers. Some of the keywords above are subject to review by Google and may not trigger your ads until they are approved. Please note that your traffic estimates assume your keywords are approved.

[Fig. 4.5] Google AdWords™ cost estimator

organic search, a clear and concise understanding of a website's current position and, more importantly under which terms, is important.

There are many different types of rankings tools available, some of which have been discussed in earlier chapters (see Chapter 2); however, it is the application of these tools for researching the market space which is key to this chapter.

### **Rankings tools**

Rankings tools, such as Web Position Gold™ (now owned by Web Trends) or Advanced Web Ranking (from Aphyon) give accurate positioning reports of websites against nominated URLs.

It is important to investigate any rankings tool when making a decision to use one. In many instances the search engines recognize certain URLs or IP Addresses and isolate them as being spammers or non-searchers. The two listed above are credible companies but there are a host of services that might result in a website being blacklisted.

### **Competitive positioning tools**

One of the major challenges of any rankings tool is to determine rankings against appropriate keywords. If the user isn't sure of the terms that a searcher uses (and this is often the case), on many occasions the keywords entered into a rankings tool may pass back better or worse results than reflects the reality. This commonly manifests itself in the form of 'internal' words or terminology the company or firm uses for products and services, which are usually nothing like the words and phrases searchers use.

There are two ways to overcome this problem: the first is to use the keyword suggestion tools (mentioned above in

EXAMPLE

**Phone Card Industry**

A commonly used expression to describe a calling card or phone card that is considered to be pre-paid and of a certain quality is a 'clean' calling card. A searcher is more likely to search for just 'calling card' and, as such, the following applies:

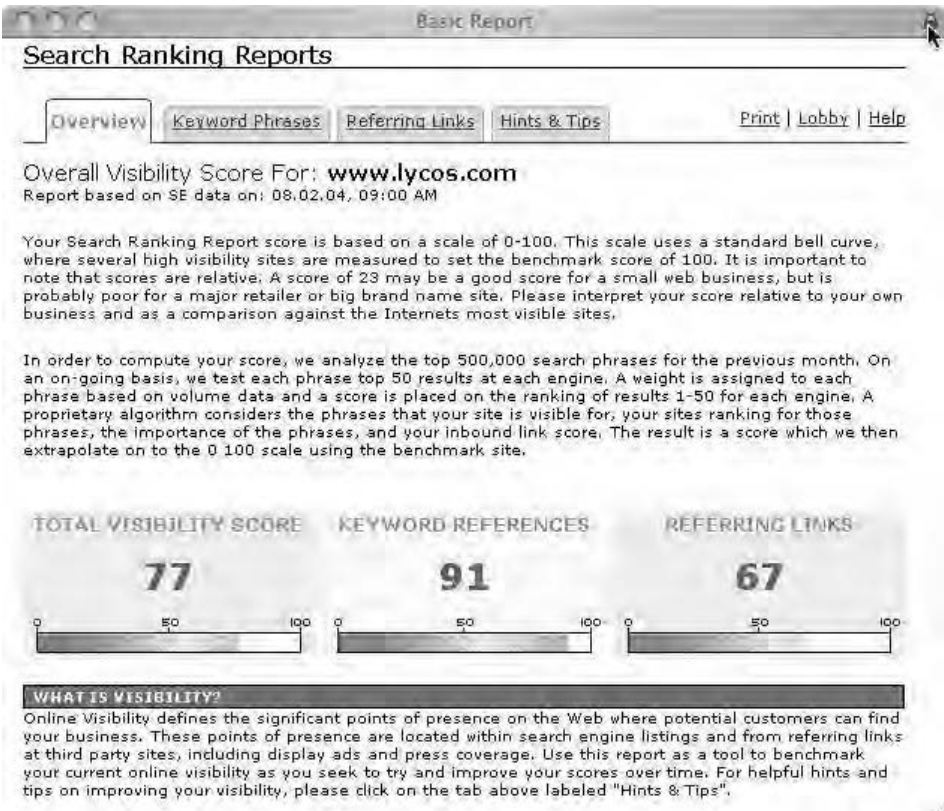
<i>Monthly searches</i>	<i>'clean calling card'</i>	<i>'calling card'</i>
<b>Overture US network</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>97 456</b>

Should the phone card company in this example ask a rankings tool to give a ranking on 'clean calling cards' and they come back with a number 1 position then all might be seen as being well, but if the term 'calling card' is ranked 100 then all isn't well.

Keyword research tools) to get a strong list and the second is to use a competitive positioning tool to see not only one website's rankings (i.e. the site of the firm) but a number of other sites (i.e. the firm's competitors), plus additional search terms, that one site might be ranked on that the others aren't.

Competitor positioning tools are available from companies such as **Lycos** and **Hitwize** and provide insight into more than just position. With knowledge of more than one company's ranking data a number of uses can be made with it, but the fundamental understanding of a market or industry position is invaluable (see Figures 4.6 and 4.7).

Additionally, there are other tools available that cover competitive performance as an extension to a large base of other services. Companies such as **Comscore** provide a service in many countries, called qSearch™, which takes a proven practice in many mediums and extends it to search. These services are expensive but can provide some of the most up-to-date research available.



[Fig. 4.6]  
 Lycos search ranking reports (overview)



[Fig. 4.7] Lycos search ranking reports (keyword phrases)

## Mapping the space

Now that the tools for researching the search components have been highlighted the second and more important variable is to use them to map the search space for a given industry or objective. Later chapters will focus on each of the objectives in more detail but there are standard research techniques that can be used to determine the performance of the space.

## Finding appropriate keywords

The process of finding appropriate keywords is one of the most critical elements of any search strategy. The fine-tuning of a keyword portfolio comes after the initial research has been done but a list has to be started from somewhere and the following is a possible route.

- **Step 1 – find a vehicle for starting keyword research.** Many companies choose to poll their employees to determine a list of keywords that is felt to be important or relevant. As much as this is a solid way to begin, one of the biggest traps is to use ‘internal’ terminology as cited in an example earlier in this chapter. A better mechanism is to see what terms a competitor might be using within the search space by using either the competitive positioning tool (described above) or *viewing the source* of a competitor’s website and looking at their meta-tags. An additional starting point, and for that matter one of continual usage, is the search box on any website that provides one (e-commerce sites especially).
- **Step 2 – expand or stem the list of initial keywords.** Use the suggestion tools or software mechanisms (listed above) to find as many variations of terms, plus the number of searches, as possible. This will give a feel for the keywords within an industry and the way the searchers look for information relevant to a website’s content.
- **Step 3 – cross-check a sample of the keywords with the intuitive engines.** Start the process by sorting the keywords by number of searches or simply just selecting a random number to get a list of keywords, and, using an engine such as Eureka (mentioned above) cross-check the keywords to ensure that there aren’t other search terms which the contextual research tools missed. If there are new terms, add them to the list and repeat Step 2.

## Understanding the costs

The second process is to analyze the keywords for costs. This is particularly important when determining budgets. Using the costing tools, mentioned above in Keyword pricing tools, list the current CPC price of each keyword in the top positions. As many of the engines differ in models use the following rationale.

- **Use Overture Bid Price tool first.** Overture has the largest inventory of keywords within the pure PFP engines. As a result, using this tool will give a good sampling of the market conditions (such as price per keyword). Ensure that the CPC price for the first five terms is recorded. This will allow for an accurate depiction of the bidding strategies used by other advertisers on the same keywords.
- **Use second tier engines (such as MIVA or FindWhat) second.** As these engines have a far smaller inventory of words it is recommended that the top 20 per cent of terms are taken from the research performed on Overture, as these sites just won't have such competition. **Note:** in some instances these sites won't have a dedicated Bid Price Tool interface, such as MIVA. In these cases the trick is to use the actual search function on the website as the top terms will list the current CPC price and cost to advertiser.
- **Use Google's AdWords Estimator.** Google's recent public access to their AdWords Estimator has made predicting AdWords traffic and costs more efficient. Take all of the terms from Overture research and enter them into the tool; to get a handle on performance either assign or don't assign a maximum CPC when instructed to do so for a more accurate budget prediction. As the AdWords model isn't a pure bidding mechanism this is as close to a position determined by price as can be achieved.

Some areas to watch out for on this tool are as follows. First, the number of clicks to be received will be in a day format; to get monthly take the number, multiply it by 365 (days in a year) and then divide by 12 (months in a year) (see Table 4.1). The second difference is that it returns clicks; this differs from Overture as its not presenting searches. To get searches you have to estimate a CTR. A recent forum in WebMasterWorld suggested a CTR of 1 to 1.5 per cent, however, a study performed by 'Find Me Faster' cited in *The Search Marketing Metrics Guide* suggest the CTR by position indicated in Table 4.1 is a strong one, so to get a rough estimate of searches take the number of monthly searches and divide it by 1 to 1.5 per cent. **Note:** to make this tool work you have to have an active Google AdWords™ account. This account can be in any name so for Agencies or SEM companies reading a master account will do.

## Understanding the competition

With keywords, searches and costs found, the next step is to determine what the competition is doing. Not only will this act as a platform for competitive research but it will act as a solid grounding for finding additional keywords that might not have originally been thought of.

**[Table 4.1]**

CTR by number of words

Number of Words	CTR
One	1.0%
Two	2.5%
Three	2.8%
Four	4.8%
Five	7.1%



- **Use a competitive positioning tool**, such as Lycos, to determine the current position of a website against certain terms. Tools such as this require a starting number of keywords to target the industry so in this scenario it's recommended to take the top 25 searched-for terms from the research highlighted above in Understanding the costs.
- **Use a Comscore report**, if funding allows, gaining a stronger understanding of the competitive elements within the search space available.
- **Use Traffic Analysis tools**, such as Alexa or Metrics Market to understand volume of traffic and page views to the site. Additionally, Alexa will give *reach* analysis on each website URL studied.

## Using the search engines and portals

One of the biggest mistakes by novice search marketers is trusting the search engines completely with elements of search engine marketing, such as keyword research and budget setting. This being said, in some instances the search engine input can be most valuable, in both time-saving and experience, and, in other instances, especially with using variables such as Ask Jeeves Premium Listings or MSN Featured Sites, mandatory.

The research that an engine provides should represent the objective of the search engine marketing objective and in later chapters this will be focused on but as a recommended path to follow, taking this data and sanity checking it against some of the research techniques is prudent.

As is expected in business, the larger a client the more service a search engine will be willing to provide and over time the engines will become accustomed to performing research functionality to match a client's criteria.

## Putting it all together!

With all of the various research tools identified and the techniques highlighted about how to map the space it's important to focus on putting it all together for a search engine marketing plan.

In later chapters the focus will be on developing these techniques to achieve different objectives, however, the techniques for putting it together into a logical format are universal across all types. This exercise should be done on all engines that have a variable CPC rate.

## Transferring searches into clicks

Most of the research tools available, with the exception of Google's AdWords™ Estimator, will provide searches. Searches can also be defined as impressions, as the goal is to take a listing and have it show up under these 'searches' thus receiving impressions. As with many types of online media, impressions have a click through rate (CTR) associated with them giving an estimation of clicks.

For the purpose of initial estimation on traffic from a selection of search terms use a conservative estimation on a CTR of between 1 and 1.5 per cent. As cited earlier in this chapter, the engines consider a CTR of this level to be acceptable and when starting a campaign this performance would be seen as good.

## Determine costs (per position)

With clicks now determined and costing analyzed (see Understanding the costs, above) a rough estimate of traffic and cost can be made. In taking the clicks, and

multiplying them by cost per position, an estimated budget may be determined. One word of caution, however, is that position 1 will receive more clicks than position 5 so taking the rationale that each position down (i.e. position 1 to position 2) will lose 10 per cent of clicks a fair representation or estimation can be determined. A recent study by AtlasDMT<sup>1</sup> has determined that between position 1 and position 10 there should be a 10-fold difference in traffic. This further backs up the claim that a 10 per cent drop per position is an approximate assessment.

### Piecing it all together in a logical format

Once click and costs have been determined the final stage for paid search is to piece it all together into a document or documents that allow for budgeting to be conducted. It is from this research that budgets will be potentially set and later in the book applied to conversion parameters to gauge the overall success of a campaign regarding conversion parameters such as return on investment or cost per lead.

The following two spreadsheets (Figures 4.8 and 4.9) indicate how this process and the data can be mapped using all of the variables discussed in this chapter. As each of the major paid search engines have particular differences both the Overture model and the Google AdWords<sup>TM</sup> model (highlighted in Chapter 3) have been projected.

As Google and Overture will cover over two thirds of all search engine marketing costs this presentation of keywords and estimated costs is a good representation of what budgetary considerations need to be taken into account. In many instances the budget assigned is lower than the projected spend from the keyword research. If this

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.atlasdmt.com/media/pdfs/insights/RankReport.pdf>

Sample Keywords	Monthly Searches			CPC Prices			Reduced Clicks (10% Rule)		
	Searches	CTR	Clicks No.1	CPC No.1	Costs No.1	Clicks No.2	CPC No.2	Costs No.2	
search engine marketing	37,794	1%	378	\$ 15.01	\$ 5,672.81	340	\$ 15.00	\$ 5,102.19	
search engine optimization	84,154	1%	842	\$ 2.08	\$ 1,750.40	757	\$ 2.07	\$ 1,567.79	
inceptor	174	10%	17	\$ 0.44	\$ 1.88	15	\$ 0.10	\$ 1.54	
paid inclusion	675	1%	7	\$ 0.46	\$ 3.11	6	\$ 0.45	\$ 2.73	
paid placement	370	1%	4	\$ 0.96	\$ 3.55	3	\$ 0.95	\$ 3.15	
sem	8,292	1%	88	\$ 0.80	\$ 66.34	75	\$ 0.77	\$ 57.46	
seo	32,634	1%	326	\$ 2.61	\$ 851.75	294	\$ 2.60	\$ 763.64	
organic search engine optimization	153	1.50%	2	\$ 0.30	\$ 0.73	2	\$ 0.11	\$ 0.24	
conversion rate marketing	62	1.50%	1	\$ 0.10	\$ 0.08	1	\$ 0.10	\$ 0.08	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>164,315</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1,580</b>	<b>\$ 5.03</b>	<b>\$ 8,350.73</b>	<b>1,494</b>	<b>\$ 5.02</b>	<b>\$ 7,498.84</b>	

Variable CTR (Determined by Keyword Type)

Cost & Performance Established (CPC, Clicks, Costs)

[Fig. 4.8] Process and data mapping spreadsheet 1 – Overture

Sample Keywords	No Max CPC				Max CPC \$5				Max CPC \$2			
	Clicks	Avg. CPC	CPC	Costs Pos.	Clicks	Avg. CPC	CPC	Costs Pos.	Clicks	Avg. CPC	CPC	Costs Pos.
conversion rate marketing	2	\$ 0.05	\$ 0.08	1	2	\$ 0.05	\$ 0.08	1	2	\$ 0.05	\$ 0.08	1
inceptor	15	\$ 0.31	\$ 4.53	1	11	\$ 0.19	\$ 2.08	1	11	\$ 0.16	\$ 1.75	1
organic search engine optimization	2	\$ 9.48	\$ 12.90	1	2	\$ 2.74	\$ 4.17	2	2	\$ 1.57	\$ 2.39	3
paid inclusion	216	\$ 4.84	\$ 1,045.24	1	216	\$ 2.39	\$ 645.72	2	46	\$ 1.25	\$ 57.03	4
paid placement	7	\$ 2.61	\$ 17.47	1	6	\$ 1.84	\$ 11.75	1	3	\$ 0.86	\$ 2.62	2
search engine marketing	237	\$ 15.48	\$ 3,767.53	1	43	\$ 3.06	\$ 130.31	6	37	\$ 1.77	\$ 64.51	9
search engine optimization	882	\$ 9.44	\$ 7,974.03	2	271	\$ 4.28	\$ 1,156.63	4	176	\$ 1.35	\$ 243.46	6
sem	456	\$ 0.76	\$ 346.75	1	456	\$ 0.71	\$ 323.94	1	456	\$ 0.35	\$ 159.69	1
seo	760	\$ 10.00	\$ 7,600.17	1	365	\$ 2.96	\$ 1,060.40	2	268	\$ 1.23	\$ 329.23	4
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2,576</b>	<b>\$ 8.06</b>	<b>\$20,772.68</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1,371</b>	<b>\$ 2.45</b>	<b>\$3,357.07</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>999</b>	<b>\$ 0.86</b>	<b>\$ 860.84</b>	<b>3</b>

Adjusting Max CPC changes projected performance

[Fig. 4.9] Process and data mapping spreadsheet 2 – Google Adwords™

should be the case, testing of a selection of keywords from the list within budget is necessary. If the projection is lower than an assigned budget, using the research techniques mentioned earlier in this chapter (see Tools for researching the search space) expand the keyword list to accommodate the budget. **Note:** there may be instances where the keywords universe can't support the budget assigned. To determine this is a task specific to each keyword.

### Selecting keywords for organic optimization

Based upon some of the criteria highlighted in Chapter 3 the selection of keywords for use as meta tags or as words to add into themed content is very much controlled by the quality of the page. This being said, the process of focusing on keywords with a strong KEI score or keywords that competitors aren't ranked under is a useful way of using both the competitive analysis and keyword research to find areas of great opportunity.

### Calculating financial performance

In each of the objectives-focused chapters (Chapters 6, 7 and 8) the financial calculation will be taken into consideration for each measurement. But for forecasting purposes the calculations are quite simple. Once cost has been determined, using the research techniques mentioned in this chapter, all that remains to gauge is how well the traffic, at the forecast cost, translates into conversions and at what cost.

To determine this, a conversion rate must be applied to the traffic being generated by the researched keywords. Table 4.2 gives an indication of the types of conversion rate<sup>2</sup> being seen by companies.

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<sup>2</sup><http://www.clickz.com/stats/sectors/retailing/article.php/3338561>

While this table is specific to the retail industry it does give a good indication of where average percentages are with sites converting visitors into customers.

**[Table 4.2]**

Conversion rate

<b>Conversion Rate</b>	<b>% of E-Businesses Surveyed</b>
0-1%	8%
1-2%	22%
2-3%	11%
3-4%	12%
4-6%	11%
6-8%	4%
8-10%	4%
11-15%	3%
16-20%	3%
20%+	2%
Don't know	19%

Note: Rate was determined by number of orders divided by number of visits group

Source: the e-tailing group

Finding out what is available from a search engine strategy is important. This chapter has indicated the necessary methods for determining the costs of many of the search engine mechanisms and, in particular, has highlighted how to make sense of the PFP market, which can, at times, be extremely confusing. The following are representative of this chapter's main points.

- **Keywords** are the most important variable in a search campaign, as has previously been highlighted in past chapters; therefore it is of vital importance that the correct keywords are researched for a search strategy.
- Many of the major engines, such as Google, Overture and MIVA, provide **free tools** for researching keywords and providing suggestions for other alternatives. Additionally there are **paid tools**, such as WordTracker, that perform the same function with greater ease.
- Additionally, the PFP engines also provide **bid-pricing tools**, to allow for calculations from search volume to click costs to be determined.
- Some engines only provide searches and not clicks; to determine clicks a **Click Through Rate (CTR)** must be applied to determine an appropriate level of clicks.
- **Competitive positioning tools** allow for an accurate depiction of the market-place for a website and up to four other sites. This information provides users with an accurate snapshot of where a market may be within a period of time and provides useful insight for researching competitive keywords.
- It is important to **map the space** by ensuring that any research performed is done by relating it back to the specific market-place. Within this form of relevance a search campaign may well be unsuccessful from the very start. This is also useful as a benchmarking procedure.
- The last section is to **put it all together into a logical plan**. This will allow for budgeting to be conducted and a cost associated with a plan. This is done by piecing together the costs, clicks and possibly conversion rate to determine these statistics.

## Resources

The following URL will give access to all of the major suggestion tools available in many markets (especially the USA and UK):

[http://www.goodkeywords.com/support/suggestion\\_tools.php](http://www.goodkeywords.com/support/suggestion_tools.php)



CHAPTER

# 5

## The Most Common Successful and Unsuccessful Elements of a Search Marketing Campaign

### Introduction

This chapter looks at some of the most common uses of search that have proved to be successful and, conversely, not successful. The successful elements of search will be extracted and applied to each of the strategies documented in the following chapters. Unsuccessful uses will be defined as both the strategic thought process behind search and the tactical *faux pas* made by marketers.

The identification of these parameters is based upon research conducted in the search engine environment, experience gained through first hand experience of marketers' attitudes towards the medium and practical application that will take a search campaign from unsuccessful to successful.

## **Most common reasons for successful uses of search**

The most common uses of search can be categorized into two distinct sections. The first looks at the most successful uses of search within a marketing or media plan; the second studies some of the tactical aspects from a high level, which will help shape the thought process of tactical application to a strategy.

### **Most common successful uses of search**

Probably the number 1 successful use of search lies in understanding what search can actually achieve for a company. Search is, like many media, a vehicle for taking a user from one site to another. As marketers develop an understanding of the branding impact of search, observing the fundamental principle that search forms part of an overall mix is essential. For this reason, for those who recognize search as a component and not the ‘savior’ of marketing, the stronger the campaign.

Following on from this, and being directly relevant to the later chapters on strategy, second on the list is to develop a search engine strategy and the use of all search engine components to achieve an objective. As has been highlighted so far in this book, different types of search components, from keywords to search engine submission types, all perform different functions. The savviest marketer develops a search plan using components that can actually achieve the desired goal.

Third on the list is to recognize the direct and quantifiable value of search as a revenue or direct marketing medium. The old adage that states ‘50 per cent of my marketing worked, the problem is I don’t know which 50

per cent' doesn't apply to search engine marketing. As tracking technologies exist, some a great deal more advanced than others, the marketer is able to see the tangible benefit of search in a cost vs. benefit analysis. As each keyword can be measured regarding click costs and then value, an accurate assessment can be drawn. Therefore, the successful marketer measures their success and optimizes against it based upon their objective.

The fourth point is the recognition that search engine marketing requires resources to make it work. This may manifest itself in the dedication of an employee's time to conduct the necessary actions required for success or the development of a budget to outsource the program to a search engine marketing company. Either way marketers that make search work are those that recognize that it isn't a one-time event and often requires daily attention (especially paid for placement – PFP)

### Case Studies

#### **Overture (UK)**

#### **The most important sales driving marketing channel for travelocity!**

#### **Travelocity background:**

Travelocity is now one of the largest online travel agents globally – but at its UK launch in 2001, the company had little marketing and minimal budgets. Sales volume needed to be increased within a very tight CPA.

#### **Travelocity and overture:**

- Travelocity carried out a successful test with Overture in early 2002 with a £10k budget.
- Today, paid placement search is the single most important sales driving marketing channel – and PPS budgets have continued to increase in proportion to the overall marketing budget.

*Continued*

- In some months as much as 50 per cent of total online bookings can be attributed to search marketing.

**Travelocity quote:**

*'Paid placement search delivers an ROI of 15:1 in a highly competitive market.'* Joshua Krichefski, Account Director, Klondike



[Fig. 5.1]  
The Travelocity website

This case study demonstrates that the client of Overture’s determined success metrics implemented a test campaign and then, once the concept was proven, engaged with Overture to drive what is demonstrated to be very strong results.

## Case Studies

### MIVA (UK)

#### *Norwich Union Direct*

#### **Norwich Union Direct background:**

NUD wanted to drive cost-effective targeted leads to three key areas of their site; home insurance, car insurance and travel insurance. To do this they listed their site on MIVA, Europe's leading paid for listings provider.



[Fig. 5.2]  
The Norwich Union website

#### **Campaign objective:**

Three differentiated campaigns designed to drive highly targeted traffic to three different areas of the site; home insurance, car insurance, and travel insurance.

*Continued*

## Case Studies

### **Campaign Strategy: Titles**

All three campaigns contained promotional messages in the title of their listing.

E.g. 'Norwich Union Direct, save 10 per cent online'

### **Keywords**

A mixture of targeted and generic keywords was employed

Generic, e.g. 'home' and 'travel' for branding

Targeted, e.g. 'building content insurance' and 'annual holiday insurance' to drive targeted users at a lower CPC.

### **Deep content URLs**

Directing users straight to the relevant sections of the Norwich Union Direct site instead of the homepage ensuring higher conversion rates.

### **Campaign Results:**

'Click to Quote' Conversion rates; 50%+ for travel, 40%+ for car and 40%+ for home.

### **Norwich Union Direct quote:**

***'MIVA represents one of the top sources of CPC traffic for Norwich Union Direct'*** Steve Genders, Head of E-commerce, Norwich Union Direct

This case study demonstrates that strategic direction was created to match an objective and the ensuing results are evidence of the strategy working. It also gives good insight from the engines as to the creation of keywords that have desired objectives. Here is found the representation of both keywords for branding AND keywords for driving qualified visitors.

## Case Studies

### Google Adwords™ (USA)

***AT&T Wireless found more leads and conversions with Google AdWords™.***

With 22 million subscribers and \$17 billion in revenue, AT&T Wireless is the third largest wireless carrier in the United States. The company delivers advanced mobile wireless voice and data communication services – including cell phones, phone plans, features and accessories – to businesses and consumers throughout the USA. AT&T Wireless employs more than 30 000 people and is based in Redmond, Washington. Integrated marketing is standard practice, says Marketing Manager Les Kruger. ‘We make use of promotions, email marketing, reseller programs, and banner ads to build our customer base.’ Search marketing is also part of the mix, and the company has also used Google AdWords™ for the past year.

#### Challenge

Kruger says AT&T Wireless has two goals for its AdWords™ program: ‘to increase customer acquisition and to lower the cost of acquiring’ these new customers. Rather than setting hard-number goals at the beginning of the program, he says the company ‘looked to grow Google search marketing over time to significantly grow the number of low cost-per-acquisition customers we acquire online.’

#### Results

A ‘gross add’ is the industry measure for acquiring a new customer by purchase of a plan and a phone. By optimizing their AdWords™ campaign – ‘we’ve added keywords and have automated our bids,’ Kruger says – the number of leads has grown. ‘*Conversions through AdWords ads have been higher than they have been through other channels, meeting our metrics. And traffic has been heavy, steady, and perhaps most important, steadily growing,*’ he notes. Since

*Continued*

## Case Studies

January 2004, customer acquisitions through the Google campaign have increased 50 per cent.

Because his team can track campaign performance daily, Kruger says they continue to optimize for even better results. 'As we grow our keyword list, and better understand this space, our results continue to improve,' he observes. 'We can make changes as often as necessary, and we're very fond of the ability to test creative and landing pages.' He also makes use of the industry information Google's vertical markets provide such as volume of vertical traffic, cost data, and the competitive landscape related to search advertising for the telecommunications market. 'As search marketing continues to be a highly efficient, trackable way to acquire customers, we've continued to grow our ad spend with Google,' says Kruger, who adds, 'search marketing programs such as Google AdWords™ represent the lowest-cost, scalable marketing channel we've found.'

This last case study demonstrates further the importance of tracking and keeping a goal in mind when optimizing keywords. Here the commentary mentions the use of testing to determine the path to success and cites in many instances that the 'trackability' through testing provides grounding for continued success.

## Most common reasons for unsuccessful uses of search

Strategically, marketers that typically ignore or don't perform the functions mentioned above make the most common unsuccessful uses of search. This symptom is not uncommon in many marketing mediums and it is through the identification of what elements can go wrong



that strategies can encompass control measures to ensure that this doesn't happen.

The following two sections focus on many of the reasons why search engine marketing fails for companies. These are by no means comprehensive; however, the symptoms that exist in most failing campaigns are to be found in the following:

### Strategic reasons for failed campaigns

While many blame the search engines themselves or focus on the failures of individual tactical elements of a campaign, some of the major reasons cited for a failed campaign cover lack of strategic thought and preparation. The following are strategic reasons for problematic search campaigns:

- **No clear objective:** this couldn't be reiterated more throughout this book, as one of the major cited reasons behind success with search is having a clear objective or goal for a search strategy. This is evident from the case studies above. Without a direction the rest of the plan will fall over as there is no way to judge either failure or success until it is too late.
- **Unrealistic goals or objectives:** as a stark opposite to the reason given above, one of the problems that often appears is that too much is expected from a search engine marketing plan. As a victim of its own success, SEM has become the savior of many companies' marketing efforts with the lure of low cost per acquisition costs. Campaigns are often started within careful preparation and appreciation of the marketplace and, as a result, regardless of how good the results of the SEM campaign may be, if the initial

goals have been set to unrealistic levels the program is set for failure.

- **Thinking ‘search engines’ are free:** in many instances the historical understanding of search engine clicks (i.e. once upon a time the traffic was free) has prevented many companies from properly investing in search engine marketing plans. This often manifests itself in many companies turning to organic search in a hope to drive incremental traffic to a website for free. One of the factors not being taken into account is that any form of optimization, be it from a consultancy firm or internal resources, will have a cost associated with it and without careful planning could result in large amounts of initial investment and little return. After all, a site optimized for the most competitive keywords in an industry might not drive a single click and the ensuing return on investment will potentially be lower than that of a paid campaign. Either way, both search submission techniques are of equal importance but it should be noted that neither of these is free.
- **Lack of tracking metrics:** From the case studies given above, a common factor can be identified; each one uses a form of tracking to gauge success. A major failing in search campaigns is (1) the lack of tracking, (2) the fact that traffic is often used as the only metric for success and (3) all search activity is grouped together and scored evenly against a goal. In each of the chapters on strategy (Chapters 6, 7 and 8) these problems will be avoided by making sure all activity is measured not only against a metric but that each of the components are also measured, i.e. branded keywords measured differently from generic keywords.
- **Poor resource allocation:** search campaigns can't run on limited resource. The number of factors that make

up a campaign, by nature of the characteristics possessed (i.e. PFP engines) require constant attention, often hourly. Search campaigns fail if little or no resource is allocated to the upkeep and maintenance of a plan and the measurement of said plan against goals and objectives.

### Tactical reasons for unsuccessful search marketing plans

It was indicated above how important it is to prepare well for search marketing; however, any well-laid plan can go badly if the tactical aspects of the strategy aren't prepared properly. The following are some of the most common tactical mistakes made resulting in unsuccessful uses of search:

- **Selecting the wrong keywords:** keyword selection is critical to a campaign, a fact that has been highlighted in nearly every aspect of this document. If the wrong keywords are selected then many factors can occur. Examples include: (a) too little traffic, (b) too much traffic, (c) non-relevant traffic, (d) converting traffic at too high a cost, (e) not enough converting traffic. All of these variables can hinder a campaign and it must be noted that keywords are the very first contact the searcher will have with anything relevant to a company and the company's website, products and services.
- **Using the wrong search engines:** some search vehicles are specific to a particular industry or submission type. It would be foolish to use paid inclusion (PFI) to drive generic traffic. Similarly it wouldn't make sense to use a vertical engine for a website that has products or services that weren't relevant to the search audience. It is critical in any campaign that each of the search engine vehicles is researched and that the appropriate channels

are used in relation to the advertising company's products and services.

- **Using poor creative:** once the effort has been made to select the right and relevant keywords for a campaign the next challenge is to get the searcher from the results page to the website. Many companies suffer from low click-through rates (CTR) and, in the case of the major PFP providers, suspension of keywords owing to low click volume. It is often the lack of creative focus that results in this low CTR. If the ad is less compelling to the searcher, it will not be clicked on. If this ad is clicked on too few times, it will become subject to penalty from the engine's CTR performance criteria. This essentially states that an ad which has a poor CTR will be disabled to free up advertising space for a more attractive ad. More alarming is that in many respects it is often the keywords that get suspended that have some of the highest relevancy or conversion potential out of an entire keyword portfolio.
- **Poor bidding techniques:** specifically related to the PFP engines, the major variable for poor performance is lack of appropriate bidding techniques. As the market controls the position of listings it is of vital importance that appropriate positions are maintained to ensure success; however, should these positions change, in relation to cost, the keyword may become highly unsuccessful. This could be because of two things: (1) the bid price on a term has greatly diminished and lower positions are now much cheaper than before, and having a listing competing in the top placements may result in CPCs that are way above what the financial calculation warrants or (2) the previously set (or bid) CPCs have resulted in position 1 at lunchtime becoming position 7 by tea-time, and the lack of syndication has lost the coverage across the advertising network.

- **Inflating the market conditions:** a problem associated with the PFP is bidders inflating the cost of the market conditions to a point where all bidding within the space end up paying more than necessary. For reference purposes, market conditions are the bids and prices of keywords within a set period of time. These market conditions are increased if bidders place too much emphasis on ensuring a number 1 position and not on watching for ROI metrics or tracking any form of click activity. The problem typically manifests itself on engines using the Overture model with bidders using the 'auto bid' mechanisms. As this allows the max. bidder to only pay one penny or cent above the next-placed bid regardless of the amount bid. To put this into context a bidder can place a bid of \$1.00 when the next-placed bid is \$0.50 and only pay \$0.51. The problem becomes evident when another bidder attempts to claim the top spot and bids \$1.01: now the market conditions for top bid have doubled as it went from \$0.51 to \$1.01 in one move. As more and more advertisers place bids, the market conditions become inflated and all advertisers start to pay more than previously needed.

SUMMARY

Identifying the most common reasons for a successful or unsuccessful campaign is of vital importance as it gives an indication of where mistakes can be avoided when preparing a search engine marketing plan from scratch. These reasons aren't comprehensive by any means, but in essence these listed here represent some of the most common instances of failure and success within this fledgling industry.

- Companies which **set predetermined goals and objectives** for a search strategy find success as every eventuality has been covered within the plan. This includes the control of expectations, the control of resources and the appropriate use of the correct tactics.
- The use of **tracking technologies** against these results makes all search activity accountable. It is with the use of tracking and an understanding of direction that success will be achieved.
- It is the **appropriate designation of resource** and the constant commitment to a search strategy that is rewarded. It is only through persistence, tracking, testing and control that success is found.
- The setting of realistic goals is essential. Researching the space and determining costs and possible areas of success only can do this. Failure to do this will almost certainly **result in unrealistic expectations** for a search campaign.
- Companies who regard search marketing as **a one-off activity tend to fail**, especially those which regard search engine traffic as being free.
- **Poor use of tactical elements**, such as keywords, creative, and engine selection can hinder any well-structured search marketing strategy.
- **Failure to appreciate the bidding environment** on the PFP engines will almost certainly result in a strategy collapsing. As the market controls these engines it is only through constant attention, be it human or technological, that successful use of these engines be maintained.

# CHAPTER 6

## Objective I: Branding and Awareness

### Introduction

Recent studies by the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) have confirmed what a lot of search marketers believed: the power of search engine marketing, and the advertising medium of search, in driving branding and awareness; and the IAB reported in a recent survey an increase of 27 per cent in brand awareness from search<sup>1</sup>. Further research performed by Comscore suggests that, for some retail sectors, some 92 per cent of purchasers willing to buy researched the purchase online and subsequently bought *offline*<sup>2</sup>. This indicates that search marketing is one of the largest influencing mediums for researching products and services that are researched online.

With this information available the construct of a search-marketing plan around the objective of driving brand and corporate awareness is of high importance. This chapter will study the components necessary in the construction of a search-marketing plan around this topic.

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<sup>1</sup>[http://www.nielsen-netratings.com/pr/pr\\_040714.pdf](http://www.nielsen-netratings.com/pr/pr_040714.pdf)

<sup>2</sup><http://www.comscore.com/press/release.asp?press=526>

## Submission type and engine selection

### Submission type

This strategy requires prominent placement on terms that are commonly used. When constructing a portfolio (see Keyword and creative selection below) the focus will be on generic words and phrases as well as the branded terms specific to the company and website in question. For this reason the following mix is recommended.

<b>Paid For Placement</b>	<b>Paid For Inclusion</b>	<b>Organic Search</b>
Yes	No (optional)	Yes

**Paid For Placement (PFP)** has been selected due to its ability to rank terms at the highest and most prominent placement within the search landscape. This includes both generic terms that have the highest search volume and also the branded terms related to the firm or organization.

**Organic Search** has been selected as it has one of the best opportunities for branded search. Additionally, if the site is well optimized it can be used for generic phrases, but above all else the ability for an organic listing to appear in the most prominent placement in the organic listings can account for up to two thirds of all click throughs from search engine to site according to an iProspect survey in early 2004.<sup>3</sup>

**Paid For Inclusion (PFI)** has not been selected as it lends itself well to an ROI or commerce related strategy and not one of branding. The specific nature of the searcher's requests suggests a progression past an awareness stage

<sup>3</sup><http://www.clickz.com/stats/sectors/software/article.php/3348071>



(following the AIDA model) and more towards one of interest/decision. It has been left in as optional as arguably the more listings that a company has related to a product or service the higher the likelihood of awareness being generated. The decision to use this medium must come from a cost vs. benefit analysis.

## Engine selection

It is important to select the correct search engines to achieve this objective (see Table 6.1). The criteria necessary are good coverage across a large number of the search engine and portals the audience uses and to capture interest by allowing for prominent placement of listings within these engines. In other words if a branding or awareness campaign is to be run, getting the search listings at the top of Yahoo!, MSN, Google, Ask Jeeves and AOL is critical to success.

**PFP First tier** – these are the engines/search providers that are going to get the strongest coverage for the marketer. At any one time it is stated that these engines alone cover 90 per cent plus of the search network and, as a result, will give maximum coverage for branding and awareness.

**The Second tier PFP** engines listed here are some of the stronger contenders for this type of strategy among many available. Each of these listed here has a particular share of the market space and or demographic. MIVA, for example, has strong coverage across Europe. Kanoodle has strong coverage of many news or entertainment portals.

**Organic** listings are critical to a good branding exercise for many reasons. The first, and probably the most important, is that these listings will attract the largest percentage of clicks. Previously cited statistics have illustrated that two

**[Table 6.1]**  
Engine Selection

<b>Engine</b>	<b>Use</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>PFP First tier</b> Overture	Y	<i>Great for top listings on MSN, Yahoo!</i>
Google AdWords™	Y	<i>Great for top listings on Google and AOL</i>
Ask Jeeves	Y	<i>Branded Response: great for branding!</i>
<b>PFP Second tier*</b> FindWhat / MIVA	Y	<i>Strong contenders for widespread coverage</i>
Kanoodle (USA)	Optional	<i>If budget allows (great for traffic)</i>
Enhance (USA)	Optional	<i>If budget allows (great for traffic)</i>
Mirago (UK)	Optional	<i>If budget allows (great for traffic)</i>
ePilot	Optional	<i>If budget allows (great for traffic)</i>
Search123	Optional	<i>If budget allows (great for traffic)</i>
<b>Organic</b> Google	Y	<i>Results cover ⅓ of the screen real estate</i>
Yahoo!	Y	<i>Prominent placement possible on first page</i>
MSN	Y	<i>Search mechanism provides first page listings</i>

thirds of searchers click on the organic listings and trust them more than paid listings for providing the most accurate answer. The second is that this listing should show in the highest placement against the brand name of a company. As a result ensuring that this listing has the correct title and description (creative) is essential as many factors can contribute to poor performance. This can be measured, not by ranking position, but by CTR from listing to site.

## Keyword and creative selection

Once the submission type and distribution network has been identified (i.e. the engines) the next variable is to determine the components that go into representing the company within the vast array of searchable variables. This manifests itself in the keywords and creatives (variables discussed in earlier chapters).

### Keyword selection

Keywords play an integral part of any type of strategy. For branding and awareness the keyword selection must focus on gaining the company as many listings against words that have the highest *search volume*. It is also important to ensure that all terms related to anything associated with the company, the products, or the services are covered with keyword selection, as this is the critical stage of any association between searcher and company.

Keyword Type	Branded	Generic	Product
Use	Yes	Yes	Optional

**Branded terms** are most important keywords to use for this strategy. Every time a searcher looks for a company a listing should show up. A debate rumbles on as to whether the purchase of a brand term is a solid investment, one that is covered later in this chapter, but for now the focus here will be on buying the phrase as a viable keyword to aid in the building of brand via search.

**Generic terms** are of equal importance. The reason is simply branding and awareness in relation to a product or service that might not have been directly associated with the company advertising. In other words if a leading electronics retailer stocks a particular brand of television, it is

important for a listing to show up when a user searches for that particular brand or product. These terms will also have the largest amount of click volume and as such yield a greater share of voice (SOV) within the search landscape.

**Product terms** are optional in this exercise. The search volume of these terms is relatively low, as a result isn't necessarily the best option for an awareness strategy. These terms do, however, possess the same values as a search term and if the cost vs benefit analysis proves favorable for these terms then the same awareness for the products they advertise will exist.

### Match types

When selecting keywords it is important to ensure that the greatest coverage is gained from these terms. For this reason it is recommended that match types such as Broad Match on Google AdWords™ and Advanced Match on Overture be used to ensure that these terms get the maximum exposure. It is advised, however, to check for negative keywords to maintain relevancy.

## Creative development

For a branding and awareness strategy the development of the creative element of a search listing is one of the most important. Within the small amount of text presented by the advertising company must be illustrated elements such as an offering, a unique selling proposition, a competitive advantage and a call to action. For this reason it is recommended for this type of strategy that the following is utilized:

Type	Branding	General	Specific Offer
Use	Yes	Yes	Optional

**Branding** creatives are those that continue a theme or maintain continuity with other branding or marketing activities. They could continue a strap line (tag line) that the company uses. Recent examples of this could be *'I'm lovin' it'* from McDonald's or *'The best a man can get'* from Gillette. In many instances the use of a limited amount of text in a search listing for a tag line is often not recommended, typically as it is felt to be a squandered opportunity to mention an offer or call to action, but in a branding strategy it is most acceptable.

**General** creatives are those that represent the core benefits, offerings or values of a company but are designed to reinforce the fact that the searcher has come to the right place or found the right company. In many instances search results are dominated with listings that might not be the actual site being looked for. Affiliates, resellers, and competitors might all be buying or optimizing against a particular term and in most instances if the keywords being used are generic the likelihood of the maximum number of other bidders is high. For this reason if someone is searching for *'digital cameras'* and a listing from Canon appears with *'digital camera'* written within the title and description the searcher is reassured that a trusted brand such as Canon is also presenting a link to *'digital camera'*.

**Specific** creatives are those that utilize the titles and descriptions to represent a specific offer or message related to the keyword or searcher's interest. In a branding and awareness strategy these types of creatives are an optional element. In many respects a specific offer creative is often used when a seasonal variable or event gives a company a short-term competitive advantage. Taking the *'digital camera'* example above, if a company had surplus stock of one particular item and wrote a creative indicating a specific offer that was price or delivery based,

purchasing the term specific to the product would make sense.

As an additional variable to consider, the specific creative can be attached to a generic or even a branded keyword (depending upon relevancy with engine requirements) if large exposure is required on a specific message.

## Measurement/control parameters

Once all of the actionable variables (i.e. engines, keywords, creatives) have been highlighted the next stage is to get an understanding of how to measure the performance against the branding and awareness objective.

### Control parameters

The most important variable here is to determine what the success metrics are and how they are to be measured. In many instances the most rudimentary metrics are used and are as follows.

- **Traffic** – many companies still, in this day and age of tracking, ROI measurement and click accountability, determine the success of a search campaign by the amount of traffic that is driven to a site. This being said, with a branding and awareness strategy, often traffic is a good measurement of a successful campaign. The rationale is that the greater the number of traffic and clicks, the greater the number of searchers that have seen the *search listings* of the company.
- **Share Of Voice (SOV)** – search engine marketing is becoming a strong branding vehicle (according to the statistics demonstrated earlier in this chapter) and one of the strongest ways to measure this is to determine how many times a search listing appears in respect of

the number of possible searches on a particular keyword or selection of keywords. The rationale here is that, if searches are defined as voice, if 100 per cent of the terms show up 100 per cent of the time then this is considered a strong SOV. To use this metric it is essential to make sure the selection of keywords is accurate or appropriate within the particular space or industry. It is recommended that the research process highlighted in Chapter 4 is followed to gather a strong and accurate list.

- **Impressions** – each of the major PFP search engines yields ‘impressions’ or ‘searches’ back for each of the keywords in a particular portfolio. This information gives an indication of the number of times a listing was shown during a given time period of searches. If careful assessment is prepared before a campaign is set, along with a target number of searches within a given time period (identified using techniques from Chapter 4), impressions can be used as a measurement.
- **Rankings** – defined as the average position a keyword receives within a search engine listing; this measurement is strong for any type of submission (defined in the introduction above) and is probably the easiest of the four types of control parameter. The rationale is to ensure that a top placement, i.e. position 1 to 5, or at least the top 10, is achieved for a company’s most important keywords phrases.

## Measurement

With the identification of the control parameters the focus must now be looking at how to measure each of these parameters to gauge success or failure. Using measurements provided back from the search engines themselves, such as impressions, and statistics provided by the tools

and technologies highlighted in Chapter 2, this can be done.

The following give suggestions on how to track and analyze each of these separate control parameters in detail.

- **Traffic** – traffic is easily measured using a range of devices and sources. Each of the paid search providers (such as PFP and PFI engines) provides listings but the organic providers (such as Google) do not. For this reason many companies use a range of solutions, most of which are listed in Chapter 2, and if traffic alone is being assessed many turn to the simpler log file analysis systems.

Expansion of the traffic measurement could be done in two ways for more accuracy or financial accountability. If site activity (such as page navigation or entry and exit pages) is assessed, a further understanding of what the branding or awareness exercise is driving people to may be arrived at. After all, if a branding campaign led the largest part of the audience to a particular product or service, this information could be used for other marketing activities (such as market research).

It is, however, in the current search climate, easy to drive traffic to a website in abundance; the challenge is doing it with both relevance and cost effectiveness. For this reason it is recommended that the research methods cited in Chapter 4 are utilized to get an understanding of what costs are likely to be incurred for top spots on a wide range of keywords. This data will allow for (a) budget setting purposes and (b) expected deliverables.

- **Share Of Voice (SOV)** – SOV is a difficult measurement and is only possible on a number of the paid for placement search engines. A simpler measurement that gets close is that of rankings; however, in the paid for placement search engines, such as Overture, a top



placement gets syndication across the major networks. As a recap, top placements on Overture will get syndicated to sites such as Yahoo! or MSN, and Google AdWords™ will get syndicated not only to Google but to AOL and Ask Jeeves.

The process of determining SOV is to use Overture’s Bid Tool, highlighted in Chapter 4, and record the CPC prices, traffic volume and companies bidding. This must be done on the chosen keywords to be used within the search strategy. The rationale here is to create staged benchmarking processes of the company’s listings in the top spots throughout a given time period to determine how many keywords are in prominent positions (see Figure 6.1).

- **Impressions** – Impressions should be measured against the total number estimated for the particular keyword or portfolio of keywords. The search engines provide estimates and the procedure for finding these is cited in Chapter 4. The rationale behind this measurement is to get as many impressions on a *term* as possible. If com-

1. Keywords Researched		2. Bidding Companies Plotted				
		Position 1	Position 2	Position 3	Position 4	Position 5
Keyword		Company A	Company B	Company C	Company D	Company E
Keyword		Company F	Company A	Company D	Company G	Company Z
Keyword		Company A	Company B	Company W	Company D	Company L
Keyword		Company B	Company G	Company C	Company I	Company T
Keyword		Company A	Company U	Company C	Company X	Company R
<b>No. Top 5 Listings</b>	<b>Listings</b>			<b>SOV</b>		
Company A	4			80%		
Company B	3			60%		3. No. Listings vs Keywords to determine SOV
Company C	3			60%		
Company D	3			60%		
Company G	2			40%		
10 Other Companies	1			20%		

[Fig. 6.1] Share Of Voice process

combined with a rankings report, cited below, and the SOV calculations listed above, it is possible to learn additional variables to utilize in other marketing efforts and search strategies. An example might be as follows.

**High Impressions, Top Placements** (high SOV, top 5 rankings) yet **Low Traffic** would indicate that the listings creative is not prompting the searcher to click despite having been in their eye line in an '**above the fold**' position. In a branding and awareness strategy this isn't necessarily a bad result; however, if the same rationale is applied to ROI or B2B strategies (cited in later chapters), the result isn't as intended as the market might not be responding to the call to action within the title and description.

**Low Impressions, Moderate Placements** (medium SOV, top 10 rankings) and **High Traffic** would indicate that the creative is almost too refined and attractive for a click. If this variable is associated with a conversion rate and the return is positive, it indicates a strong situation for an ROI strategy. For an awareness strategy this isn't a strong result as the low impressions and poor rankings suggest the objective isn't being achieved and few people are seeing the listing. Other criteria could be that the keywords are incorrectly researched (i.e. specific rather than generic keywords have been used) or the title and description is very attractive to all searchers.

**High Impressions, High Placements** and **High Traffic** is not a perfect combination for an awareness or branding strategy unless (a) traffic is the sole desire or (b) an unlimited budget exists. In most instances with a strategy it is user defined; however, if cost is a conscious variable then selecting terms with high velocity and getting a good CTR will increase the costs as every searcher is clicking on the term. In this scenario the suggested correction may be in the keywords selected or in making the creative less attractive for a CTR and making it more specific.

It is important to recognize that many of these characteristics transfer across many strategies. Despite this chapter focusing on Branding and Awareness some of the thought processes are relevant for many different types of objective.

- **Rankings** – calculating success based upon the keyword's position within a search engine is the simplest calculation of all. Tools mentioned in Chapter 4 allow for selected keywords to be measured within the engines. To gather a stronger SOV analysis, tools such as Lycos' Competitive Analysis Report allow for a selection of keywords (plus hundreds of thousands more) to be measured against up to five websites giving a market space assessment of a company's standing, overall rankings and SOV.

## Management and optimization

The final stage in working toward a particular objective is to understand the way to manage the campaign and to optimize its performance if it isn't achieving what was expected. In Chapter 9 the whole search strategy development will be listed in a logical flow, however, it is important in understanding how to make the most of search engines and generating awareness.

### Management

Managing a campaign for awareness requires simple characteristics but must be done with financial due care and attention. Managing a campaign of this kind relates to the paid search engines, such as Overture or Google AdWords™. There are two distinct variables that must be taken into consideration:

- **Presence** – this is defined within the control parameters listed above and ensures that a company's website has the maximum presence within the search listing for important keywords.
- **Pricing** – managing the aforementioned presence in relation to a budget requires fiscal responsibility and as

such a firm understanding of the objectives and budgetary allocation is necessary before, during and after any campaign has been run.

With both of these variables of equal importance the answer to managing an awareness strategy is twofold, the first being with human input and the second (and preferred option) via the use of a technology.

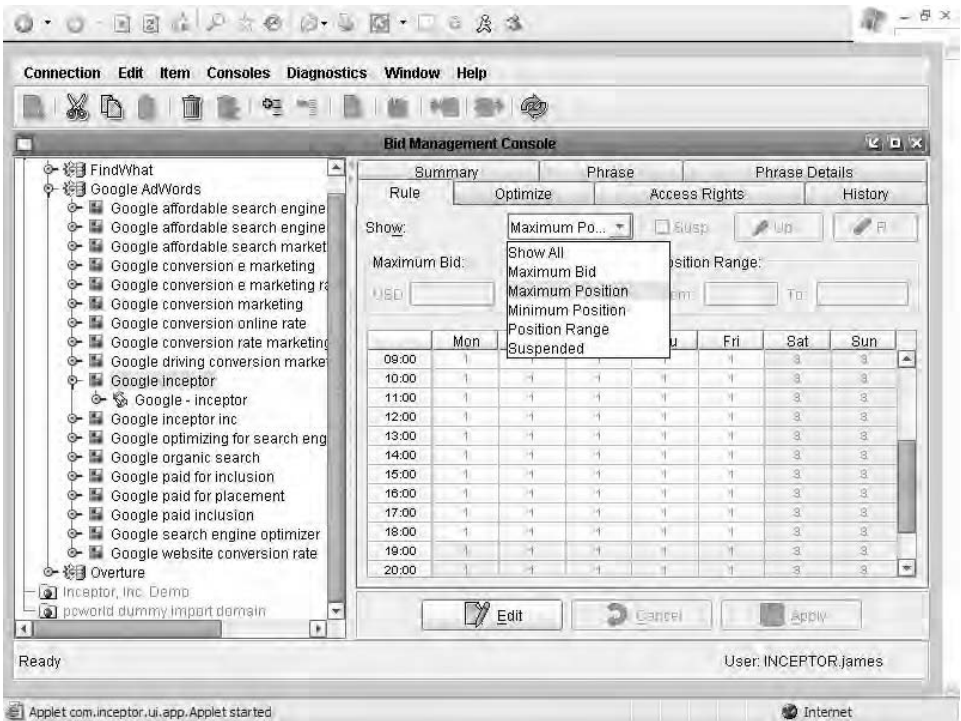
### **Technology ‘bid management’**

The key to managing a campaign that maintains the strongest presence while keeping in mind price is the use of a bid management technology. Depending upon the type of system selected the technology must use informed variables such as maximum CPC, daily budget limits and selected position ranges. The following process must be used to determine these criteria:

- **Step 1: Research** – following the parameters described in Chapter 4, a selection of keywords must be researched for relevance (user defined), velocity (searches provided by engines) and price per position (provided by the engines). Once this information is gathered an understanding of what costs are involved and average CPC will be acceptable for top positions.
- **Step 2: Selecting keywords** – the research performed above will give both the estimated coverage (in terms of searches) and the representative costs per click. The next phase is to select the keywords based upon budget. Some words are going to be very expensive; if the budget won't cover the entire list, the keywords must be selected in turn and tested against the goals of the strategy.
- **Step 3: Implement** – the plan using a bid management technology. Set the variables determined in Steps 1 and 2 and use these as the parameters for daily/hourly bid management.

Some bid management tools are more advanced than others and, for the simplest management of all, letting a tool determine the best time of day or position to get the maximum presence from a predetermined budget is the way to go. The screen shot shown in Figure 6.2 demonstrates where an 'optimization rule' can be set and then allow the system to do the rest.

The advantages of utilizing an advanced bid management system such as this are that a great deal of resource can be saved. Resource in this instance is defined as people time. A simpler way to look at this is to analyze the variables involved. In an awareness strategy the desired outcome is presence at the right price. If the search engines allow for hourly updates of keywords, terms that you set at number 1 to number 5 at 1pm could be in position 10 by 2pm or the



[Fig. 6.2] Setting of 'optimization rule'

cost per click price of the market could have escalated over an hour-long period beyond a desired CPC range. For this reason it is important to do some mathematics to determine whether bid management is necessary:

<p><b>500 Keywords</b> (in an awareness strategy these are likely to be high traffic volatile terms)</p> <p>MULTIPLIED BY</p> <p><b>3 PFP Engines</b> (e.g. Overture, Google AdWords™ and FindWhat/MIVA)</p> <p>MULTIPLIED BY</p> <p><b>24 Changes Per Day</b> (Changing bids on an hourly basis)</p> <p>MULTIPLIED BY</p> <p><b>5 Seconds Per Update</b> (Allowing for the time to find, change and refresh the engine bid page)</p> <p>EQUALS</p> <p><b>180 000 Seconds Per Day (or 50 Hours!)</b></p>
--

From this mathematical example it would require, taking an 8-hour day, over six full-time employees working around the clock to manage a simple portfolio of 500 keywords. This example may take this point to the extreme; however, in an awareness strategy where keyword position is important and bidding is furious it is key to have a type of technology or, at least, mechanism, working towards an overall goal.

### **Manual management**

Manual management is defined as the control of a campaign using limited additional technology. The focus is to

find work around mechanisms on the words and phrases being used to ensure that a campaign's performance is maintained at all times.

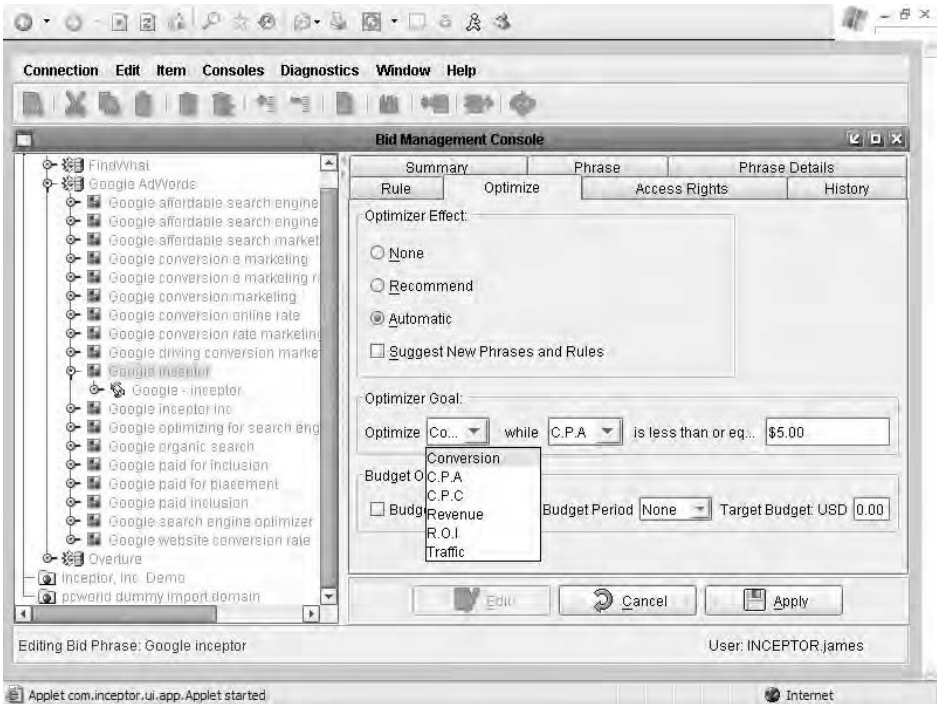
Without a bid management technology this is a very difficult and challenging task, however, it is not impossible. The way to master this is to focus on the tools and mechanisms provided within the industry that are freely available for all to use. In this instance these are the bidding vehicles provided by the PFP engines themselves.

The process for optimization is then very similar to that previously cited in this chapter (see Technology 'Bid Management'), and the keywords need to be researched, and the selected phrases implemented and the bids controlled.

The screen shot shown in Figure 6.3 demonstrates how the interfaces from the engines allow for position range and maximum CPC limits.

The effectiveness of these mechanisms is in actuality determined by the amount of resource allocated. The question becomes one of frequency and of updating techniques. Many companies choose to use different ways to overcome resource issues. As highlighted in Chapter 5, one of the worst ways to ensure a top spot is to purchase the number 1 phrase, using auto bidding, and place a very high maximum bid. Other more successful methods are as follows:

- **Manage keywords sorted by importance:** if the keywords are sorted by importance and relevance to a company's products, services or branding exercises, more emphasis could be placed upon these words only and the remaining terms updated less often.
- **Manage keywords sorted by cost:** for the more fiscally challenged campaigns the management of keywords by price is critical. In relation to sorting the keywords on



[Fig. 6.3]

Interfaces from the engines allowing for position range and maximum CPC limits.

the basis of those that have a high likelihood of running away with a campaign, these should be managed more carefully and more often than those that don't carry as high a probability. **Note:** this rationale is particularly important for the management of Google AdWords™ and in reference to organizing campaigns to get the most from each keyword based upon a budget.

## Optimization

So far throughout this chapter, search components and their management have been highlighted but it is important to highlight what to do if things don't go exactly to plan and optimization is necessary.



An awareness and branding campaign really isn't one that requires as much optimization as, for example, an ROI strategy as the components for success aren't as defined with an exact value. There are, however, a number of situations that need to be watched for and where optimization needs to be taken into account (see Table 6.2).

The optimization characteristics above are relevant to the objective of using search to drive increased awareness and brand recognition. In Chapter 9 the process of constructing a search strategy from beginning to end will be discussed, along with how to revisit a tactic should it not be working as expected.

## Management and optimization of 'other' submission types

### **Organic (natural search) engines**

One of the most effective ways of increasing branding and awareness online is to adopt organic search engines, such as Google, Yahoo! and MSN. In many instances these mechanisms have low recurring costs, which are in fact based upon the commitment of an organization to constant improvement, and can be very strong in driving top placements under a company's brand name in particular.

This is therefore one of the most important aspects of a search strategy designed to achieve branding and awareness; however, as has been highlighted earlier in this book the calculation and accountability of organic search are a great deal more complicated than those of paid search. For this reason the following should be utilized:

- **Research:** when either employing an outside firm to optimize a website or placing a request for web designers or technical departments to implement website changes, it is important to ensure that keywords that will represent the brand and company are used within

[Table 6.2]

Campaign performance optimization

Problem	Optimization Technique
<p><b>CPC rises above estimated levels</b></p> <p><b>Low Traffic</b></p> <p><b>Low Rankings (SOV)</b></p> <p><b>Low Impressions</b></p>	<p><b>MANUAL MANAGEMENT:</b> Revisit the keyword list and find substitute keywords that when combined together will drive similar traffic. If the keyword list is exhausted revisit the research process and find additional keywords</p> <p><b>BID MANAGEMENT:</b> If a simpler bid management tool is being used, follow the technique mentioned above. For more advanced systems this should not be an issue</p> <p><b>EXPECTED IMPRESSIONS:</b> This indicates that the creative being used is not compelling enough to entice a click. Similarly, if impressions are the performance metric, this is a good result</p> <p><b>LOWER THAN EXPECTED IMPRESSIONS:</b> There could be two reasons here. The first is that the keywords aren't as popular as expected and more terms possibly need to be added. The second is that the terms aren't appearing in as high rankings as needed for maximum presence and syndication (see low rankings)</p> <p><b>MANUAL MANAGEMENT:</b> The terms are not being maintained in the highest ranking positions. Check the average rankings score for each term and attempt to up the management schedule on the most important words</p> <p><b>BID MANAGEMENT:</b> If a basic bid management tool is being used, it is probable that the position range is not achievable from the maximum bid. Revisit the research phase to determine if an increase in CPC prices is necessary or new keywords need to be used. With the more advanced tools this problem should not be an issue</p> <p>See Low Traffic</p>

the optimization process. Above all else it is important to be listed organically against these terms alone as many searchers still to this day utilize search engines even to find company websites rather than typing in a website address.

- **Measurement:** for a branding and awareness strategy it is recommended to use rankings (see Control parameters above) as the control and measurement variable.

As organic listings aren't as dynamic as paid listings, optimization and control isn't as fluid. For this reason when optimizing organically it is important to construct a history or presence within the engines and build upon this. The constant optimization necessary for organic search is performed via attention to detail on the keywords and phrases that are most important to a business and increasing the relevancy, via code changes and link architecture, to ensure long-term presence.

### **Paid for inclusion engines (*optional for this objective*)**

Paid For Inclusion optimization and management lies in the determination of whether this is an appropriate medium to use and a cost-effective one. If the company using the search engines for awareness and branding has a large catalogue or larger amounts of web content (retailers and publishers are some of the most prolific users of paid for inclusion), paid for inclusion could be a strong solution. For others, especially those with limited content, it really isn't a good option.

The following should be utilized:

- **Viability:** when researching a PFI campaign it is critical to determine some of the variables involved in setting up a campaign. The first is to ensure that a feed can actually be produced. In many instances PFI can

only be correctly optimized by a Certified Partner of Overture Site Match xChange™, however, Overture will accept a feed prepared by a company's technical department and in many instances provide the assistance needed for doing the preparation. Each one of these variables has a cost associated with it and does require the assistance of a technical department so scheduling issues may exist. **A minimum of 1000 URLs are required** to use this mechanism (at the time of writing).

- **Determine pricing:** Overture Site Match xChange™ or a Certified Partner will have a rate card of the CPC for a particular company's industry. If the CPC is close to the research performed for the PFP engines, this might be a viable option; if not, the cost of this traffic will be higher at the time of campaign launch. As a caveat to this the PFP pricing might escalate (as the market controls the price) so a fixed CPC may be of benefit over a longer time period.
- **Determine budget:** Overture Site Match xChange™ requires a **minimum budget of \$5000 a month**. This is allocated per click and not controlled over the month.
- **Measurement:** for a branding and awareness strategy the use of traffic is recommended (see Control parameters above) as the control and measurement variable, since it will prove to be the most qualified variable for a cost vs benefit analysis.

## Key issues in branding and awareness via search engines

There are a number of key issues that must be taken into consideration when building a campaign around branding and awareness. These items relate to different aspects

of building a campaign and should be associated with a campaign if deemed necessary.

## Affiliates

Understanding affiliate marketing for the purpose of building a strategy around branding and awareness is important to highlight here.

Affiliate marketing is an online medium that has been used for many years. Defined as a network of reciprocal links, an affiliate network traditionally placed links on similar-subject websites to increase relevant exposure of products and services in return for a percentage of any generated sale. With the advent of paid for placement search engines the affiliate networks started to utilize this medium as a platform for increasing the relevant links for the company they were placing links for, and so dawned the age of affiliate marketing via the search engines.

In early 2005, Google AdWords™, the major affiliate search mechanism, announced that only one listing could be presented for a single domain (i.e. company address); for this reason companies now have to face the realization that affiliates may take the only spot available. With this being said the following issues exist with affiliate marketing and should be controlled at all costs.

- **Unnecessary bidding against affiliates** – work with the affiliate and create a bidding precedent for the bid prices paid by all parties. This problem persists mainly on branded terms but if controlled carefully each party can successfully maintain a presence for the advertising website. With Google only listing the company with the highest CTR and best bid price, it is important to ensure that a freight bidding war hasn't been created

between the advertising company and affiliate to gain that one elusive listing. If this is the case the affiliate will escalate the cost of a keyword or series of keywords, which should be at the lowest rate.

- **Keywords disabled due to affiliate bidding** – additional to the points raised above, creatives (Titles and Descriptions) must be designed so that the searcher can identify the advertising company and the affiliates.
- **Affiliate creative is poor** – talk with the affiliate network advertising and ensure that a branding standard is maintained. If it is not, prevent the affiliate from advertising until the standard is met.

Above all, be conscious of engaging with an affiliate network. In a branding and awareness strategy the affiliate network may not be interested in engaging on a traffic basis, as the traditional model is to take a percentage of sales or CPL. This being said, Chapter 9 studies the development of an overall strategic plan and if combinations of objectives are to be met, branding and awareness may be merged with an ROI strategy and thus affiliates will be a very viable proposition.

## Contextual advertising

Content match has been a much maligned mechanism for driving traffic to a website from some of the major (and minor) PFP engines. As a vehicle for driving traffic it is exceptionally good; however, as soon as ROI metrics are placed against it many suffer poor returns.

In a branding and awareness strategy, content match or content targeting is a very strong vehicle and should be used if financially viable. The following should be observed.

- **Research** – when researching the keywords on some of the engines, content matching can be added to the analysis parameters to determine what additional success will be gained from using this measurement. Some engines are more capable of providing these data so use judgment when selecting keywords.
- **Measurement** – for this measurement use traffic and CPC. A content program will give exceptional coverage on relevant topics, articles and sites; however, as there is a distinct cost associated, which can increase dramatically, measure traffic against costs and budget.

### Buying brand name keywords

The last topic to mention in this section is the issue that surrounds the buying of brand-related terms. This is defined as buying keywords that are, or variations of, company names or brand names. This issue exists because of the nature of the types of listings that appear on screen. If the website has any form of organic optimization, the chances are the number 1 to number 3 spot will most likely be filled with a listing for said company. The debate then rages as to whether a further PFP listing should also be bought, with the question raised *‘Why Should I if my website is already number 1?’*

The answer to this question isn’t clearly defined and must be tested using controlled scenarios. A clear-cut way to determine this is to utilize a log file based tracking tool and record the total traffic from search engines with a paid listing and without (provided a prominent organic listing exists) but to aid in the decision to warrant this activity the following table lists the pros and cons of buying brand terms (see Table 6.3):

**[Table 6.3]**

Pros and cons of buying brand terms

<b>Pros of Buying Brand Terms</b>	<b>Cons of Buying Brand Terms</b>
<p>Guaranteed number 1 (budget pending) on terms related to a brand or company name</p> <p>100 per cent control of the creative, allowing for more dynamic messages to be broadcast as well as testing to be conducted to improve CTR</p> <p>Ability to 'double up' on the number of search listings (without affiliates) legitimately thus capturing those who click on organic listings AND those who click on paid listings</p> <p>Ability to ensure competitor(s) do not buy the brand terms related to the company advertising and steal screen real estate and SOV</p> <p>With most brands and company names the purchased brand terms should always have the highest CTR and Conversion Rate (see Chapter 7) and lowest CPC</p>	<p>The costs of buying brand terms all can be considerable. For popular brands these terms could account for more than 50 per cent of a monthly search budget</p> <p>The superior performance of brand terms can mask an otherwise poorly performing search campaign. It is for this reason that the suggested process of keyword categorization is performed</p>

The question as to whether buying branded terms or not makes sense for any particular brand or company can only be answered by testing. In Chapter 2 a number of industry responses have been listed.



### SUMMARY

Branding and awareness is becoming a strong metric for judging the performance of a campaign and a viable objective to achieve via SEM. Branding within the search engine requires serious budgetary investment as well as strict measurement techniques to ensure that the invested budget is being well spent. Unlike eCommerce strategies where a distinct clear metric is calculated from each click, a branding and awareness strategy looks to increase the awareness of corporate website within the engines. This being said the measurements taken must ensure that a return on investment is being seen, be it from placement within the engines, share of voice (SOV) or traffic to the site.

- **Paid for Placement (PFP)** engines and organic search are the two most likely types of search engine mechanism to use for a branding and awareness campaign.
- The major **PFP engines and a selection of tier 2** are recommended, as these will give the maximum coverage within the search engine network. These will be complemented, especially on brand terms, by the organic listings.
- It is recommended that **generic and branded keywords** are used for a branding and awareness campaign; specific terms will not drive enough volume or be searched upon enough times to warrant usage.
- Similarly **generic and branded creatives** are also recommended to ensure the maximum exposure for corporate messaging is obtained.
- Control should be obtained by measuring success against the following (but not specific to any one): **traffic, share of voice, impressions or rankings**.
- Management is deemed necessary in **maintaining position** of these phrases at the maximum amount possible within budget.
- **Affiliate marketing must be controlled** to ensure that any activity performed on branded terms (as well as generic terms) is done so at the lowest possible CPC.

- **Contextual advertising** is an option, but must be done with strict control measures on traffic and cost to ensure fiscal responsibility.
- **Buying brand names** is recommended for this strategy; however, it is understandable that should an organic listing be present this might not be as necessary. It is, however, worth noting that branded terms must be used in one form or another.

# Objective II: Sales Via Fully eCommerce Driven Websites

## Introduction

Using search engines to drive accountable sales via a fully eCommerce driven website is one of the most common and effective uses of the medium. The following chapter looks at how to use each of the components to drive cost-effective and profitable sales. The use of search engine marketing for eCommerce sales is one of the most well documented as it allows for the greatest accuracy with measurement. Through the use of accurate tracking and careful planning a series of measures can always be taken to ensure that the correct return or cost per sales is being achieved.

## Submission type and engine selection

### Submission type

This strategy requires all forms of submission type. As many websites are abundant in content, for example retailers and publishers, the representative keywords and engines available are vast. The challenge in many respects, as this chapter develops, is selecting the most appropriate to gain success.

Paid For Placement	Paid For Inclusion	Vertical Engines	Shopping Engines	Organic Search
Y	Y	Optional	Optional	Y

**Paid For Placement (PFP)** – the paid for placement engines, such as Overture and Google AdWords™, are very important for a sales strategy. With the largest inventory (i.e. number keywords) and strongest syndication (distribution network) these providers are the backbone of any campaign.

**Organic search** – as with any strategy or objective from search engines, the use of organic search is of paramount importance. This low-cost opportunity presents the marketer with the possibility of optimizing a website to drive sales with low to minimum costs and high return on investment.

**Paid For Inclusion (PFI)** – PFI is well suited to sites that have large volumes of products to sell online. PFI gives the opportunity to optimize more specific search variables such as *SKU numbers*, product descriptions, sizes, quantities etc, without having to select each and every keyword and submit via PFP.

**Vertical engines** – engines such as Business.com or Industry Brains (US sites specifically) offer the marketer specific audiences. For a strategy such as this it is advised that testing should be conducted to see the response in terms of ROAS. An additional note is that vertical engines are typically more expensive than traditional PPC engines owing to a specific audience.

## Engine selection

It is important to select the correct search engines to achieve this objective (see Table 7.1).

[Table 7.1]

Engine selection

Engine	Use	Comments
<b>PFP First tier</b>		
Overture	Y	<i>Great for top listings on MSN and Yahoo!</i>
Google AdWords™	Y	<i>Great for top listings on Google and AOL</i>
Ask Jeeves	Y	<i>Recommended. To be removed with poor performance</i>
MSN Featured Sites	Opt	<i>Guaranteed top 3 at flat CPC on MSN Search</i>
<b>PFP Second tier*</b>		
FindWhat / MIVA	Y	<i>Recommended. To be removed with poor performance</i>
Kanoodle (USA)	Opt	<i>Syndicated results may work well if tested</i>
Enhance (USA)	Opt	<i>Syndicated results may work well if tested</i>
Mirago (UK)	Opt	<i>Syndicated results may work well if tested</i>
ePilot	Opt	<i>Syndicated results may work well if tested</i>
Search123	Opt	<i>Syndicated results may work well if tested</i>
<b>Organic</b>		
Google	Y	<i>Results cover ⅓ of screen real estate</i>
Yahoo!	Y	<i>Prominent placement possible on first page</i>
MSN	Y	<i>Possible first page listings on MSN Search</i>
<b>Vertical Engines</b>		
Business.com (USA)	Opt	<i>Syndicated results may work well if tested</i>
Industry Brains (USA)	Opt	<i>Syndicated results may work well if tested</i>
<b>Shopping Engines</b>		
Shopping.com etc.	Opt	<i>Great for B2C consumer products</i>

**PFP First tier** – these engines are the search providers that will drive the majority of sales. With the strongest syndication and largest keyword inventory the variations in keyword, creative and bidding strategy makes these engines very flexible to manipulate. MSN featured sites will, if negotiated carefully, provide a flat rate CPC that could result in guaranteed top 3 placements for a long period of time. The downside is that these listings aren't controllable as often (edits every 3 months) and MSN has a minimum spend level (at the time of writing) of \$75 000 a year.

**PFP Second tier** – many of these second-tier engines have a good probability of driving some very cost-effec-

tive sales. Sites like FindWhat and MIVA both have a strong enough distribution network and keyword inventory to make them viable propositions. The other engines may also have the potential to drive sales; however, the likelihood is lower so testing is recommended.

**Organic** – natural listings are essential to any strategy. For a sales-orientated focus the organic listings possess the qualities to improve any search campaign. If optimized correctly the traffic received from this type of search has no direct cost associated with it and any sale generates a very positive ROI. With up to 66 per cent of the screen real estate being taken up by these listings, this type of search engine cannot be ignored.

**Vertical engines** – an option for any sales focus, these engines have good distribution into sites that are relevant to specific subjects, namely the B2B audience. Success may be possible here if the product or service being sold is directly relevant to the searching audience. Engines such as Business.com or Industry Brains will have to be tested as the specific nature of their listings carry a premium over many of the other paid search providers.

**Shopping engines** – an option but one that should be seriously considered. If the product is viable, appropriate categorization within the leading shopping engines, such as Kelkoo in the UK and Shopping.com in the USA, can result in strong return on investment.

## Keyword and creative selection

Once the submission type and distribution network has been identified (i.e. the engines) the next variable is to determine the components that go into representing the company within the vast array of searchable variables. In many respects this next section relates mainly to the

engines where keyword selection is possible (i.e. PFP engines), however, keyword research is also extremely important for organic search.

## Keyword selection

Keywords play an integral part of any type of strategy.

Keyword Type	Branded	Generic	Product
Use	Yes	Yes	Yes

**Branded terms** – these terms are as important for a sales strategy as for any other type of objective. Being terms the most likely to drive qualified visitors to a website compared with any specific (product) term, the approach to be taken with the research of branded terms is to ensure that every variation is covered in the initial campaign launch.

**Generic terms** – generic terms will drive large volumes of sales: the issue will be at what cost. Generic terms will likely drive a large percentage of traffic to the site and many other advertisers are aware of this, resulting in increased CPC prices. Additionally companies adopt different strategies: some might be utilizing search engines for branding or awareness and have more tolerance to higher CPC costs than a marketer looking to make cost-effective sales. The recommendation with generic terms is to use them in moderation and measure their success against distinct measurement and control parameters.

**Product terms** – product terms are essential for a sales strategy. As Generic terms hold value in search velocity, product terms hold value in relevance and high return. Product term characteristics consist of driving low volume traffic that has higher conversion likelihood. In order

to drive enough volume to make a difference to the impact of a search campaign it is recommended that a large number (number determined below) of terms be used.

To find the ideal number of product terms really depends upon the mechanisms used to measure success; however, the following process should be considered when researching these terms (this relates to PFP engines specifically):

- **Research process:** this should follow the research suggestions made in Chapter 4. As a starting platform it is important to ensure that the core areas of business are covered so an approach could be to determine best selling products and research around them. Once done, expanding the product keyword list into other areas of the business could be a viable next step.
- **Build from success:** adding keywords is often an interactive process based upon the success of existing keywords. If a keyword has proven successful based upon the parameters set for the campaign, use that particular word via the Research Process (Chapter 4) to build new phrases. Add these to the keyword inventory and repeat. This type of expansion is often referred to as stemming.
- **Test:** It is important in any search campaign to test. In this instance it is important to nominate a budgetary amount that can be used for testing. Once identified add keywords and test over a set period of time until poor and good performers are identified. Poor performers can be discarded, good performers can be added to the keyword list and keywords with an indifferent performance can be tested again.

### **Match types**

When selecting keywords the match type is key to success. If the wrong match type is applied to a keyword, the



resulting traffic number could jeopardize the overall return of the campaign. It is for this reason that user discretion is applied to the match types and should any broad or advanced match types be used, negative keywords should be carefully researched. As an initial guide the following should be observed.

- **Branded terms:** broad match types are acceptable for branded terms to cover all of the variations of a brand name. As a caveat to this, if the brand name of the company is generic to many subjects (such as Boots or Orange) then negative keywords might be applicable to ensure that Boots Plc listings don't appear when a searcher types in 'walking boots'.
- **Generic terms:** matching as specifically as possible is advised here unless heightened resource is provided, as the more broad or generic the match the higher the likelihood of irrelevant traffic that doesn't convert well into sales and good return. Negative keywords are essential on generic terms as the multitude of searches possible is beyond the budget and aims of most marketing campaigns.
- **Product terms:** product terms, by the nature of the search characteristics (low traffic, specific search) held, can support a very broad (advanced) match type.

## Creative development

For a sales approach the creative used must qualify a searcher as a potential customer and be compelling enough, with a call to action (see Chapter 3).

Type	Branding	General	Specific Offer
Use	Optional	Y	Y

**Branding** creatives are those that continue a theme or maintain continuity with other branding or marketing activities. In a sales strategy the branded terms can be used in multiple ways to increase awareness of a company's particular brand, sale or product range. This ties in very well with the specific creative listed below and as such the direct branding creatives, mentioned in Chapter 6, are an option for this particular approach.

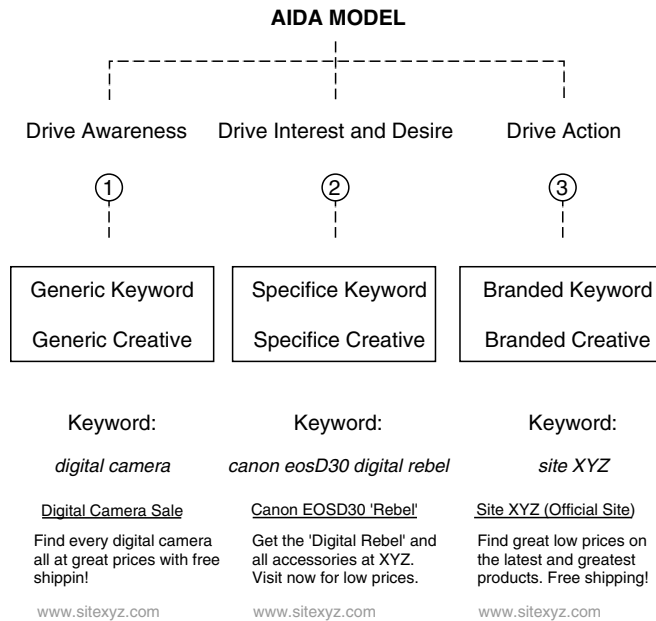
**General** creatives are those that represent the core benefits, offerings or values of a company but are designed to reinforce the fact that the searcher has come to the right place or found the right company. In many instances search results are dominated with listings that might not be the actual site being looked for. Affiliates, resellers, and competitors all might be buying or optimizing against a particular term and in most instances if the keywords being used are generic the likelihood of the maximum number of other bidders is high. For this reason if someone is searching for *'digital cameras'* and a listing from Canon appears with *'digital camera'* written within the title and description the searcher is reassured that a trusted brand such as Canon is also presenting a link to *'digital camera'*.

**Specific** creatives are those that utilize the titles and descriptions to represent a specific offer or message related to the keyword or searcher's interest. In many respects a specific offer creative is often used when a seasonal variable or event gives a company a short-term competitive advantage. Taking the *'digital camera'* example above, if a company had surplus stock of one particular item and wrote a creative indicating a specific offer that was price- or delivery-based, purchasing the term specific to the product would make sense. These terms are particularly important for product-related keywords.

## Keyword and Creative mix

Within a sales strategy it is important to use a mix of keywords and creatives to give maximum exposure to the searching audience. If a searcher uses more than one search term to find an item, different types of search term may be used. Additionally, with different search terms, different search creatives may be required. Figure 7.1 illustrates that by using different search variables a 'search session' may be captured rather than just one particular search.

This model demonstrates the application of the AIDA model through the type of search path taken. In this model, stage 1 sees the searcher begin the search by looking for digital cameras without necessarily focusing on a particular brand or model. The creative clearly allows the



**[Fig. 7.1]**  
AIDA model

searcher to see that not only are all digital cameras available but also as low prices with free shipping (see Creative characteristics, Chapter 3). The second stage is where the searcher may have selected a brand and model and is now looking for companies that sell said item. The creative and keyword match the query and reinforce the fact that not only will the searcher find the lowest price but all accessories are available providing enough reasoning to prompt a second visit. The third and final stage is when the searcher may well have decided upon a company to purchase from, in this example site XYZ. The keyword is related to the brand and the creative provides enough information to ensure that the user will still receive the best price and will also get free shipping. The last point of stage 3 is that the user is shown 'official site' within the title to ensure that an element of trust is there with brand recognition and that the creative being listed is from the site that the searcher knows.

## **Measurement/control parameters**

Once all of the actionable variables (i.e. engines, keywords, creatives) have been highlighted the next stage is to get an understanding of how to measure the performance against the objective. In this instance it is sales so the following control parameters are used as well as the measurement thereof.

### **Control parameters**

The most important variable here is to determine what the success metrics are and how they are to be measured. In a sales strategy the perfect solution would be to make all traffic to a website accountable. Understandably, many

sales are generated offline from online traffic (see Chapter 6) but to determine success online the following parameters should be considered.

- **Return On Investment (ROI)** – A simple calculation of revenue divided by cost, is one of the most effective ways of determining the performance of a search engine marketing campaign. If a predetermined return is needed, a search campaign can be controlled to that particular level.
- **Return On Advertising Spend (ROAS)** – this calculation is the same as an ROI calculation except that the marketer will have determined what return is needed on advertising expenditure rather than advertising plus all additional costs of sale.
- **Cost Per Order (CPO)** – a CPO measurement takes into account the number of conversions (sales) generated by an advertising medium. If the cost of advertising (in the case of search cost of clicks) is divided by the number of sales, the CPO is determined. Many companies have a range for a CPO and optimize within that range.
- **Cost Per Acquisition (CPA) / Cost Per Sales (CPS)** – see above.

## Measurement

With the identification of the control parameters the focus must now be to look at how to measure each of them to gauge success or failure. Using measurements emanating back from the search engines and parameters gathered by tracking and analysis tools the following apply to the tracking of a sales (eCommerce) strategy.

## Measurement variables

The essential criterion for measuring an eCommerce strategy is to be aware of all the parameters that determine success. The most important variables to use are traffic, cost of traffic, conversions (generated sales) and if possible value of sale (which can be substituted for an average order value [AOV]). There are three means of obtaining this information.

1. **Search engines:** many of the engines, such as Overture and Google AdWords™, provide the search marketer with the option of taking all of the above-mentioned data. This is free of charge in most cases or can be obtained with a small premium. The disadvantage with this type of tracking is that despite the information being free it is only available for a selection of engines and will not give a complete picture of success/failings.
2. **Tracking tools:** in Chapter 2 there is a detailed description of the tracking tools available to track the entire search campaign. The advantage of a tracking tool is that all search submission types (PFI, Shopping Engines, PFP, Organic) can be measured in one location and, by analysis of performance, compared type for type. The disadvantage is cost and resources required to manage such a tool.
3. **Homegrown systems:** many companies have devised analysis tools that allow marketing departments to track the performance of a search campaign using the website's existing logs. By utilizing a code (such as an affiliate ID code) a company can identify the source of traffic and watch the progression of said traffic through the site. If these data are compared with the data provided by the engines all of the variables for control are covered.

### Detailed measurement

It is also important to ensure that measurement for an eCommerce strategy is as granular as possible. Keywords should be measured individually so for some search engines, such as Google AdWords™ or FindWhat that allow you to measure groups of keywords together (e.g. in an AdGroup), these options should be ignored in favor of the singular keyword tracking. For sake of reporting, keywords can be grouped together and summarized but in an ideal scenario keywords, engines and sales must all be recorded in minute detail.

### Indirect conversions (deferred sales)

Additionally it is important to appreciate conversions both directly and indirectly. In other words it is vitally important to recognize that users may return to the site after a few hours, days, or even weeks, to conclude a transaction.

### Measurement calculations

With this information at hand all of the control measurements can be recorded as follows.

	Calculation	Example
ROI/ROAS	Revenue DIVIDED BY Costs = ROI/ROAS	\$1000 / \$100 =10 × (or 1000%)
CPA/CPS/CPO	Costs DIVIDED BY Conversions (Sales) = CPA/CPS/CPO	\$100/10 = \$10 CPA/CPS/CPO

The measurement parameters for success will be marketer defined according to the business parameters of the company. For many companies search is measured differently from other marketing activities, as it is accountable (i.e. revenue over costs).

## Management and optimization

The final stage in working toward a particular objective is to understand the way to manage the campaign and to optimize the performance if it isn't as good as expected. In Chapter 9 the entirety of formulating a search strategy will be listed in a logical flow; however, it is important in understanding how to make the most of search engines and generating sales.

### PFP management

The variables that require management are quite simple and represent the core foundations of a strategy around achieving sales via the search engines. The following are the said variables.

- **Presence** – ensuring that search listings appear under search terms that are most likely to prompt a click and an eventual conversion.
- **Quality** – ensuring that search listings that appear are converting the searcher into a visitor to a website.
- **Cost effectiveness** – making sure that all search campaigns are running the desired business goals set for the particular medium and objective (i.e. meeting an ROI goal).

Managing a campaign for sales (eCommerce) consists of two distinct methodologies, as with the branding and awareness campaign. These are (1) technology and (2) manual management. Typically the strongest search campaigns will develop using both, but, as has been discussed in previous chapters, the two can exist in singularity.



## **Technology ‘bid management’**

With an effective sales campaign working with all types of keyword it is essential to use some type of bidding technology to aid in driving success. In Chapter 6 (Management and optimization) the resource implication of managing to a position or average CPC was highlighted. In a sales approach to SEM a third component is added, to manage towards a return on investment goal, and the parameters for success are increased as price and position will be determined by a keyword’s ability to perform, either singularly or as part of a group, towards a return goal or a measurement type highlighted above (Measurement/control parameters). The following stepped process should be considered when managing a campaign through a bid management technology.

**Step 1 Research** – following the principles laid down in Chapter 4, it is critical to research the right keywords to use in a campaign and more importantly to apply bidding to each of them. Elements such as bid price, keyword velocity and estimated conversion rate can be applied to terms and the price and position needed to sustain an effective campaign.

**Step 2 Selecting keywords** – keywords researched must be selected both by their singular ability to achieve the goal and as a portfolio. Different bidding rules or practices must be applied to keywords with different capabilities. Keywords that are generic, for example, may have stricter CPC limitations as they hold most risk in using a large percentage of a budget. Brand terms, for example, may require top placements to ensure a brand-related search is always catered for within the top syndicated positions. The keyword classification must be done based upon the research mentioned in point number 1 so that accurate keywords can be selected to achieve goals.

In applying the conversion principles, keywords should also be selected based upon conversion potential. This

applies to any kind of keyword management; however, applying the same conversion rate to a generic word as to a specific word may produce inaccurate projections. When selecting the keywords to use and the bid price range or position range at whatever time of day, based upon whether the research demonstrates the keyword performing at the desired return level using averages. Averages must be estimated in the initial setup of a campaign; then, as more realistic data are passed back from tracking tools, the averages must be replaced with actuals.

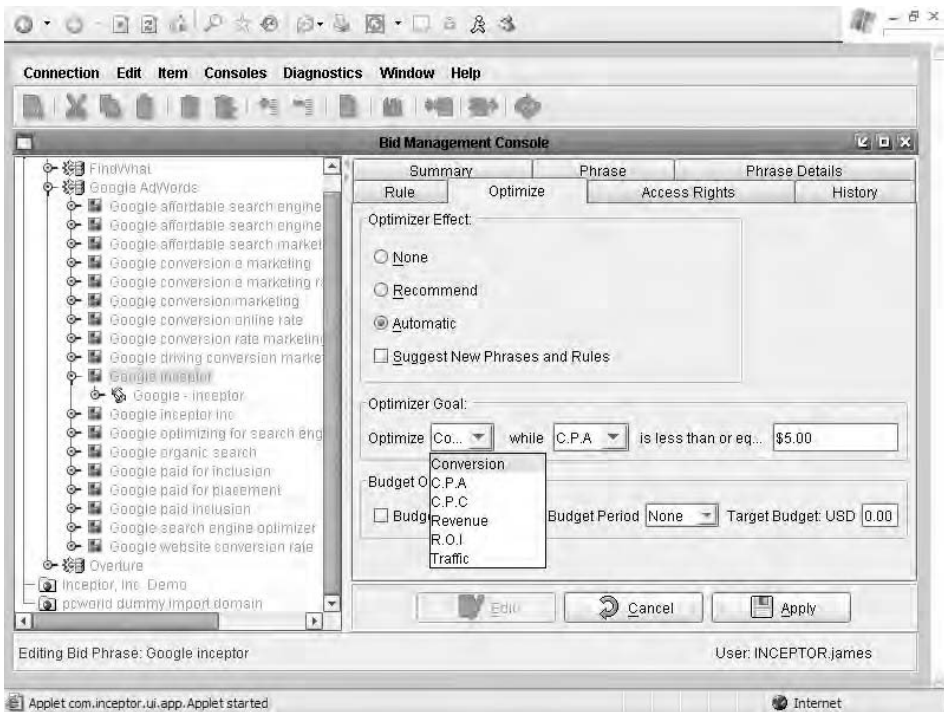
**Step 3 Implement** – once the keywords are selected it is essential to produce the most appropriate bidding rules for each term. Selected terms that can justify higher positions must have rules different from those that hold more risk. Use the selected keywords to apply bidding rules and implement the terms on an hourly basis.

In many instances bid rules must be applied to singular terms, however, in many instances, the same bid rule or bid management technique can be applied to more than one keyword. As many of the terms indicated in Step 2 don't hold a keyword velocity warranting concern, these can be grouped together and a 'universal' bid rule applied.

Some bid management tools are more advanced than others. The more sophisticated tools allow for market conditions and the performance of the keywords to determine the best bidding rules. These systems take much of the guesswork out of bid management, as trend-based analysis determines the most appropriate time of day, day or week, by keyword, to place bids and listings to ensure maximum coverage within the PFP search engines (see Figure 7.2).

### **Manual management**

Manual management is defined as the control of a campaign using limited additional technology. The focus is to



**[Fig. 7.2]**  
Bid management

find work around mechanisms on the words and phrases being used to ensure that a campaign’s performance is maintained at all times.

Without a bid management technology this is a very difficult and challenging task, however, it is not impossible. The way to master this is to focus on the tools and mechanisms provided within the industry that are freely available for all to use. In this instance these are the bidding vehicles provided by the PFP engines themselves.

The process for optimization is then very similar to that previously cited in this chapter (see Technology ‘bid management’, above); the keywords need to be researched, the selected phrases implemented and then the bids controlled.

The effectiveness of these mechanisms is in fact determined by the amount of resource allocated. The question becomes that of frequency and updating techniques. Many companies choose to use different ways to overcome problematical resource issues. As described in Chapter 5 one of the worst ways to ensure a top spot is to purchase the number 1 phrase using auto bidding, and to place a very high maximum bid but, as highlighted, this isn't one of the better ways to go about it. Other methods more successful than this have been employed, as follows.

- **Manage keywords sorted by importance:** if the keywords are sorted by importance and relevance to a company's products, services or branding exercises, more emphasis could be placed upon these words only and the remaining terms updated less often.
- **Manage keywords sorted by cost:** for the more fiscally challenged campaigns the management of keywords by price is critical. In sorting keywords by those that have a high likelihood to run away with a campaign, these should be managed more carefully and more often than those that don't have as high a probability of doing so. **Note:** this rationale is particularly important for the management of Google AdWords™ and in reference to organizing campaigns to get the most from each keyword based upon a budget.
- **Manage keywords sorted by performance:** As a search engine marketing campaign matures, information becomes available from many sources on the performance of each keyword. If this is applied to a conversion parameter, performance can be determined. Whereas a bid management tool allows for hourly bid management based upon performance, the manual mechanism is a great deal more crude – when managing on an 'as and when' basis, analysis is only available at intermittent times. The latter form of management

does give an element of control, however, as keywords that consistently perform well, related to sales, can be isolated and managed separately.

### PFI/Feed management

PFI/Feed management is something that is often neglected by companies. The resource burden of the PFP engines nearly always outweighs the importance of managing feeds for engines such as Overture Site Match xChange™. As with any listing that appears within any engine the parameters for management should be as follows.

- **Ensure relevance** – when preparing a feed it is essential to ensure the listings are relevant to the subject matter of the landing page (i.e. where the searcher will land upon clicking the link). The title, description, and optimized content (such as the short and long description of the product in question) all possess a similar relevancy and have a theme.
- **Have One to One (1:1) ratio of listing to product (landing page URL)** – as a prerequisite to using a PFI engine it is important to maintain a 1:1 ratio of listing to product URL. In other words if the site has a listing for one particular product, there can't be two listings in a feed pointing to that same product. This is important for management as updated feeds will potentially be processed faster when the feed is both relevant (see point above) and has this ratio.
- **Use strong creative** – like any type of listing in any search engine the searcher is expected to click on the link if it is deemed to match the search query. PFI listings should have all of the properties for compelling the searcher to click. See Chapter 3 for more data on writing strong creative.

It is also important to remember that in many instances PFI is most effective when managed in bulk, i.e. when an entire catalogue of products is submitted. Overture Site Match xChange™ will only take listings of this nature.

## Optimization

So far throughout this chapter the search components and their management have been highlighted but it is important to draw attention to what to do if things don't go exactly to plan and optimization is necessary. In many respects, using the search engines to generate sales requires constant optimization as many of the variables, such as keywords and market conditions (bid prices) as well as demand for terms and seasonality, change on a constant basis.

In Table 7.2 are listed many of the problems that are commonly associated with a strategy designed to drive sales and some suggested optimization techniques are presented for review.

The optimization of a strategy to generate sales is a dynamic and fluid process that must be repeated on a constant basis. *Market conditions* change on a constant basis, both by the nature of the competition and by demand from the searcher, and, as such, constant manipulation of the criteria that determine success is required, especially in the case of PFP engines, on an hourly basis.

When using the optimization methods mentioned above, it is important to ensure that enough of a timeline has passed to enable assessment to be done. Optimization based upon hourly or even daily performance may not provide a size of sample large enough to enable determination

[Table 7.2]

Sales-driven strategy problems

PFP Engine Problem	Optimization Technique
<p><b>High Traffic, Low Sales Volume</b></p>	<p><b>Scenario A:</b> The most common problem here is that the keywords being used aren't as relevant as need be. If traffic is being received, there is interest but upon arrival on the site it is not finding exactly what is required and leaving without converting. Revise the keyword list to weed out terms that are driving large volumes of traffic that isn't converting</p> <p><b>Scenario B:</b> The keywords being used are in positions too prominent within the engines. Number 1 isn't always the best option as in many instances the user may click without first determining if this is the right search listing to solve the query. Attempt to lower the bid prices to lower traffic and attract more qualified users</p>
<p><b>High Sales, Low ROI</b></p>	<p><b>Scenario A:</b> The sales that are being generated are doing so at a high CPC cost. Revisit the keywords and study the generic terms to determine if the cost to benefit ratio is working on these terms. Using bid management attempt to control exposure of these keywords to the most optimum times of day that will generate sales. Pay particular attention to the terms that are driving traffic and no sales</p> <p><b>Scenario B:</b> The products being sold cannot justify the CPC charges. Study the CPC price in conjunction with AOV to determine if CPC prices are too high</p>
<p><b>High ROI, Low Sales Volume</b></p>	<p>The keywords selected are too specific and the products aren't getting enough exposure. Revisit the keyword list and increase the number of generic terms and product terms to cover more of the searching audience. If the current keyword list is exhausted, use the techniques learnt in Chapter 4 to build new keywords</p>

Objective II: Sales Via Fully eCommerce Driven Websites

PFP Engine Problem	Optimization Technique
<p><b>100% Sales from Branded Terms</b></p> <p><b>High Traffic, Low Sales Volume</b></p> <p><b>High Sales, Low ROI</b></p> <p><b>High ROI, Low Sales Volume</b></p>	<p>The branded terms are masking the performance of the other terms within the keyword portfolio. Revisit the categorization of the keywords and study the performance of the generic and product terms. In most scenarios with a popular brand up to 90% of sales can be generated by branded terms, however, in analyzing the performance of each grouping a more accurate portrayal of performance can be determined</p> <p>The feed may contain too many products that aren't converting or have more informational qualities (i.e. the listings show up when a searcher is looking for information on a product with no intention to buy). Scan the feed for SKUs that are driving traffic and no sales and remove them from the feed</p> <p>The products being sold aren't justifying the CPC of the rate card. As the CPC isn't as flexible as the PFP engines the products must be optimized to a level whereby at the site conversion rate after a sample number of clicks (say 100) the potential sale can justify the costs. Remove terms that a) may drive too much traffic or b) as per the example below, can't justify the cost.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>EXAMPLE</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">100 Clicks \$0.25 CPC</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1% Conversion Rate (sample) 1 Sale @ \$20</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Costs = \$25 Revenue = \$25</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Return On Advertising Spend = <math>1 \times</math></p> <p><b>Scenario A:</b> The feed is too specific. Attempt to increase the number of products within the feed</p>

*Continued*



[Table 7.2]

Sales-driven strategy problems (*continued*)

PFP Engine Problem	Optimization Technique
	<b>Scenario B:</b> Only a select number of keywords are showing up. Have the feed analysed for possible improvement
<b>Shopping Engine Problem</b> <i>(beyond the feed issues listed above)</i>	
<b>Poor Performance [Determined as low ROI from either a) too much traffic or b) too little traffic]</b>	Poor categorization of products within a shopping feed can result in poor performance. Revisit the categorization of the products and investigate (test) different categories to boost performance

of either success, or (as above) failings that need correction. In Chapter 9 this point is taken further, in considering the appropriate steps to take to ensure decisions are not made in haste.

## Management and optimization of ‘other’ submission types

### **Organic (natural search) engines**

One of the strongest ways to increase sales at a very strong ROI is to adopt organic search engines, such as Google, Yahoo! and MSN. In many instances these mechanisms have low recurring costs, which are in actuality based upon the commitment from an organization to constant improvement, and can be very strong in driving top placements, under a company’s brand name in particular.

It is therefore one of the most important aspects of a search strategy designed around sales, however, as has been highlighted earlier in this book the calculation and accountability of organic search is a great deal more complicated than that of paid search. For this reason the following should be utilized.

- **Research:** when either (1) employing an outside firm to optimize a website or (2) placing a request for web designers or technical departments to implement website changes, it is important to ensure that keywords that will represent the brand and company are used within the optimization process. Above all else it is important to be listed organically against these terms alone as many searchers still to this day utilize search engines even to find company websites rather than typing in a website address.
- **Measurement:** for a sales strategy it is recommended that rankings are used (see Control parameters) as the control and measurement variable and that sales from organic traffic are measured by recording the data from log file analysis against conversion points within the website. While adjustment and optimization of words and phrases based upon success is difficult it is possible to record total sales and then measure additional organic optimization.

As organic listings aren't as dynamic as paid listings, the optimization and control aren't as fluid. For this reason when optimizing organically it is important to accumulate a history or presence within the engines and build upon this. The constant optimization necessary for organic search is performed via paying attention to detail regarding the keywords and phrases that are most important to a business and increasing relevancy, via code changes and link architecture, to ensure long-term presence.

## **Key issues in achieving sales (eCommerce) via search engines**

There are a number of key issues that must be taken into consideration when building a campaign around sales.

These relate to different aspects of campaign formulation and should be associated with a campaign if deemed necessary.

## Affiliates

Affiliate marketing has been covered in Chapter 6. In addition to the points raised in this chapter the following considerations must be applied to managing affiliates in a sales strategy.

Changes in affiliate bidding, as of January 2005, on Google AdWords™ (the most commonly used search engine for affiliate bidding) resulted in affiliates bidding frenetically to get the only listing available for a company under a particular keyword. This is a departure from the current scenario, which allows more than one listing for a company to appear under one term.

The problem in a sales strategy, as with any, is that (1) if one listing is being shown, the term being placed might not be the 'official site' listing and (2) if bidding is happening behind the scenes then should the 'official site' listing appear it may do so at a much higher cost than can be justified by the site's conversion and ROI performance.

## Contextual advertising

Content match has been a much-maligned mechanism for driving traffic to a website from some of the major (and minor) PFP engines. As a vehicle for driving traffic it is exceptionally good; however, as soon as ROI metrics are placed against it, in many cases poor returns have been the result.

## Objective II: Sales Via Fully eCommerce Driven Websites

In a sales strategy, content match or content targeting is not recommended, but, with any type of vehicle, not completely disregarded. The following mechanism should be applied.

- **Research** – when researching keywords on some of the engines, content matching can be added to the analysis parameters to determine what additional success will be seen. Some engines are more capable of providing these data so use judgment when selecting keywords.
- **Measurement** – for this measurement use traffic, CPC and conversion data. Both Overture and Google AdWords™ have the capability of providing tracking parameters to measure search listings against content listings. Ensure that these mechanisms are used to gauge the success of contextual advertising.

### SUMMARY

Using search engine marketing for ecommerce activity on a website is like a perfect marriage. The combination of sales-related activity, i.e. recording the number of sales and value and plotting this against the overall cost of the click, provides the perfect grounds for measuring success and being able to optimize to the most granular level. The following are the major highlights of a strategy designed to achieve sales or activity via an ecommerce site.

- **Paid For Placement (PFP), PFI engines and organic search** are the recommended types of search engine mechanisms to use for an ecommerce campaign.
- **All types of search engines** are recommended, as these will give the maximum coverage within the search engine network. It is, however, recommended that the second-tier engines are tested to ensure that metrics are met.

*Continued*

- It is recommended that **generic, specific and branded keywords** are used for an ecommerce campaign; this is to ensure that each type of search query is covered throughout the research to buy cycle.
- Similarly **generic, specific and branded creatives** are also recommended to ensure all types of search and all types of keywords are complemented with appropriate creative.
- Control should be obtained by measuring success against the following (but not specific to any one): **return on investment, return on advertising spend, cost per order and cost per acquisition.**
- Management is deemed necessary in **maintaining position in accordance with the control metrics (listed above)** of these phrases at the maximum possible within budget.
- **Affiliate marketing must be controlled** to ensure that any activity performed on branded terms (as well as generic terms) is done so at the lowest possible CPC.
- **Contextual advertising** is not an option.
- **Buying brand names** is recommended for this strategy, as this helps with the entire buying cycle and these terms can often have the best return on investment.

# Objective III: Lead Acquisition

## Introduction

Using search engines to drive lead generation requires much of the same thought process and rationale used in the sales (eCommerce) approach. As a vehicle for B2B companies the search engines can provide a very cost effective vehicle and 20 times cheaper than with some other forms of marketing (such as direct mail) according to a Piper Jaffray report entitled 'New Methods in Search Marketing' published mid-2004<sup>1</sup>. The difference between using the search engines to drive sales and to drive leads is typically based upon (1) the nature of the business or industry as lead generation trends more toward B2B and not B2C (although not exclusively) and (2) the channels that are available to use are different. The following chapter studies the points specific to a lead generation strategy.

## Submission type and engine selection

### Submission type

This strategy requires, and in many cases can only be supported by, two distinct submission types owing to the

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<sup>1</sup>[www.sempo.org/research/Rashtchy-Presentation.pdf](http://www.sempo.org/research/Rashtchy-Presentation.pdf)

nature of the content on the website and by virtue of the distribution. A couple of submission types are optional and through a process of testing may be valuable channels.

<b>Paid For Placement</b>	<b>Paid For Inclusion</b>	<b>Vertical engines</b>	<b>Shopping engines</b>	<b>Organic search</b>
Y	Optional	Optional	N	Y

**Paid For Placement (PFP)** – As with the previous two uses for search engines the PFP engines are by far the strongest paid options. With distribution to the major channels used by searchers these mechanisms are the strongest providers of fast and accountable results.

**Organic search** – Essential in any strategy, the organic search engines (e.g. Google) are likely to be some of the strongest providers of large volume traffic and success. In many respects Google works extremely well for B2B websites and as two thirds of searchers’ clicks come from the organic listings this type of submission is a must.

**Paid For Inclusion (PFI)** – Optional for a lead generation strategy, this mechanism is suitable for websites with large scale volume. Sites that contain information (such as Whitepapers or B2B product listings) will benefit from this type of search submission.

**Vertical engines** – The second optional submission type for generation leads. These engines are strong in driving contextually relevant traffic and in the case of the B2B industry are very targeted. Sites like Business.com are worth investigating; however, like any optional element to a strategy these mechanisms should be tested as the targeted traffic comes at a premium and might not justify the Cost Per Lead (CPL) metrics.

## Engine selection

It is important to select the correct search engines to achieve this objective. With a lead generation strategy many search engines are optional, pending testing, as the results may swing either way from strong to poor (see Table 8.1).

**PFP First tier** – the first-tier PFP engines such as Overture and Google AdWords™ will be the two strongest performers for a lead generation campaign, only rivaled by Organic optimization. Ask Jeeves may provide

**[Table 8.1]**  
Engine selection

Engine	Use	Comments
<b>PFP First tier</b>		
Overture	Y	<i>Great for listings on MSN and Yahoo!</i>
Google AdWords™	Y	<i>Great for Listings on Google and AOL</i>
Ask Jeeves	Opt	<i>Recommended. To be removed for poor performance</i>
MSN Featured Sites	Opt	<i>Guaranteed Top 3 at flat CPC on MSN search</i>
<b>PFP Second tier*</b>		
FindWhat / MIVA	Opt	<i>Recommended. To be removed for poor performance</i>
Kanoodle (USA)	Opt	<i>Syndicated results may work well if tested</i>
Enhance (USA)	Opt	<i>Syndicated results may work well if tested</i>
Mirago (UK)	Opt	<i>Syndicated results may work well if tested</i>
ePilot	Opt	<i>Syndicated results may work well if tested</i>
Search123	Opt	<i>Syndicated results may work well if tested</i>
<b>Organic</b>		
Google	Y	<i>Results cover ⅔ of screen real estate</i>
Yahoo!	Y	<i>Prominent placement available on first page</i>
MSN	Y	<i>Possible first page listings on MSN</i>
<b>Vertical Engines</b>		
Business.com (USA)	Opt	<i>Targeted B2B traffic – could be expensive</i>
Industry Brains (USA)	Opt	<i>Targeted B2B traffic – could be expensive</i>



solid back up and MSN-featured sites might be applicable, however, a minimum spend level of \$75k is required for this engine to be viable.

**PFP Second tier** – these engines are all optional as the syndicated results may well provide good enough ROI. Expect the possibility of high traffic and low conversion or very low traffic and conversion (this is dependent upon syndication partner). The conversion likelihood of these sites may be higher than on a sales strategy as a lead isn't committing the search 100 per cent to a company; however, it is important, as with any engine, to test to find the right blend of keywords.

**Organic** – as previously mentioned in Chapters 6 and 7 the use of the organic engines is essential in any strategy. With zero CPC and the largest coverage of screen real estate on most major search portals, this type of engine is critical.

**Vertical engines** – in the USA, engines such as Business.com and Industry Brains lead the way in driving vertical specific traffic to a site that is contextually relevant. This traffic is strong in relevance but driven from contextual type advertising (i.e. not directly from an engine) and as such should be tested for conversion potential. As the traffic comes at a premium these engines can produce very high CPL.

## Keyword and creative selection

Once the submission type and distribution network has been identified (i.e. the engines) the next variable is to determine the components that go into representing the company within the vast array of searchable variables. The following types of keyword and creatives should be used to drive leads to a website.

## Keyword selection

Keywords play an integral part of any type of strategy. The following table and text suggests the most appropriate keywords for branded, generic and product terms.

Keyword Type	Branded	Generic	Product
Use	Y	Y	Y (if applicable)

**Branded terms** – branded terms are essential in any strategy as they hold the highest possibility for traffic at a low cost with a high conversion potential. If the brand is well known, this is even more applicable.

**Generic terms** – generic terms are important but in a lead generation strategy, especially for the B2B environment, can be exceptionally expensive. Generic terms in this context are expensive not because of the search velocity possessed but because of the relevance to a subject and, in complete contrast, as the traffic velocity is so low any click is treated like gold dust. The management of these terms is particularly important to the success of a strategy to drive cost-effective leads.

**Product terms** – product terms are important in any type of strategy but the research required must be done to ensure it is effective to research a large number of terms. In many instances the cost–benefit of researching and implementing terms that aren't going to be searched for at least once a month may not be favorable and, as such, utilizing more generic terms with broader match types might be the answer. Regardless of this fact, if there are product terms being searched for it is important to make full use of the opportunity held.

### Match types

When selecting keywords the match type is key to success. If the wrong match type is applied to a keyword, the resulting traffic number could jeopardize the overall return of the campaign. With such little traffic available on some terms and every click a potential lead, the match types used could be set as broad as necessary. It is, however, of vital importance to use negative keywords to ensure that irrelevant traffic is not received.

### Creative development

For a lead generation approach the creative used must qualify a searcher as a potential customer and be compelling enough, with a call to action (see Chapter 3).

Type	Branding	General	Specific Offer
Use	Optional	Y	Y

**Branding** creatives are those that continue a theme or maintain continuity with other branding or marketing activities. In a lead generation strategy the branded terms can be used in multiple ways to increase awareness of a particular offering of competitive advantage.

**General** creatives are those that represent the core benefits, offerings or values of a company but are designed to reinforce the fact that the searcher has come to the right place or found the right company. In many instances search results are dominated by listings that might not be the actual site being looked for. Resellers and competitors might all be buying or optimizing against a particular term and in most instances if the keywords being used are generic the likelihood of there being a maximum number

of other bidders is high. General creative is optional as, in many respects, designing as compelling as possible a creative to prompt a click and then rely on the website to convert the user into a qualified user, could be a viable option.

**Specific** creatives are those that utilize the titles and descriptions to represent a specific offer or message related to the keyword or searcher's interest. A click on keywords, especially a generic keyword, is so desirable that a general creative might fail; if this is the case applying a specific creative to a generic keyword may provide enough of a compelling statement to prompt a click.

## Measurement/control parameters

Once all of the actionable variables (i.e. engines, keywords, creatives) have been highlighted the next stage is to get an understanding of how to measure the performance against the objective. In this instance it is lead generation so the following control parameters are used as well as the measurement thereof.

### Control parameters

The most important variable here is to determine what the success metrics are and how they are to be measured. In a lead generation strategy the perfect solution would be to make all traffic to a website accountable. Understandably, all sales from a lead generation strategy are handled offline, however, if any leads are to be generated from this medium, the following control parameter must be used.

- **Cost Per Lead (CPL)** – a CPL measurement takes into account the number of conversions (leads) generated

by an advertising medium. If the cost of advertising (in the case of search cost of clicks) is divided by the number of leads generated, the CPL is determined. Many companies have a range for a CPL and optimize within that range.

## Measurement

With the identification of the control parameters the focus must now be how to measure each of them to gauge success or failure. Using measurements provided from the search engines and parameters gathered by tracking and analysis tools, the following apply to the tracking of a lead generation strategy.

### **Measurement variables**

The essential criteria for measuring a lead generation strategy are to be aware of all the parameters that determine success. In making such measurement the most important variables to consider are traffic, cost of traffic and conversions (generated leads). There are three means of getting this information.

1. **Search engines:** many of the engines, such as Overture and Google AdWords™, provide the search marketer with the option of taking all of the above-mentioned data. This is free of charge in most cases or can be obtained with a small premium. The disadvantage with this type of tracking is that despite the information being free it is only available for a selection of engines and won't give a complete picture of success or failings.
2. **Tracking tools:** in Chapter 2 there is a detailed description of the tracking tools available to track the entire search campaign. The advantage of a tracking tool is that all search submission types (PPF, Organic)

can be measured in one location and, analyzing on performance, compared type for type. The disadvantage is cost and resources to manage such a tool.

3. **Homegrown systems** – many companies have devised analysis tools that allow marketing departments to track the performance of a search campaign using the website's existing logs. By utilizing a code (such as an affiliate ID code) a company can identify the source of traffic and watch the progression of said traffic through the site. If these data are compared with those provided by the engines, all of the variables for control are covered.

### **Detailed measurement**

It is also important to ensure that the measurement for a lead generation strategy is as granular as possible. Keywords should be measured individually so for some search engines, such as Google AdWords™ or FindWhat that allow you to measure groups of keywords together (e.g. in an AdGroup), these options should be ignored in place of singular-keyword tracking. For the sake of reporting, keywords can be grouped together and summarized but in an ideal scenario keywords, engines and sales must all be recorded in minute detail.

### **Indirect conversions**

Additionally it is important to appreciate conversions both directly and indirectly. In other words it is vitally important to recognize that users may return to the site after a few hours, days, or even weeks, to conclude a transaction. For a lead generation strategy this is of particular importance as a B2B (or high scale B2C) sale requires a great deal of consideration and as such the searcher may well study many websites before finally converting on a website. With some cost per clicks being in the dollar (rather than cent) range it is important to track this cost back to a sale well after the initial visit.

### Measurement calculations

With this information at hand all of the control measurements can be recorded as follows.

	Calculation	Example
CPL	Costs DIVIDED BY Conversions (Leads) = CPL	\$100/10 = \$10 CPL

The measurement parameters for success will be marketer defined according to the business parameters of the company. For many companies search is measured differently from other marketing activities, as it is accountable (i.e. revenue over costs).

## Management and optimization

The final stage in working toward a particular objective is to understand the way to manage the campaign and to optimize the performance if it isn't as good as expected. In Chapter 9 the entirety of formulating a search strategy will be listed in a logical flow; however, it is important in understanding how to make the most of search engines and generating leads.

### PFP management

The variables that require management are quite simple and represent the core foundations of a strategy around generating leads via the search engines. The following are the said variables.

- **Presence** – ensuring that search listings appear under search terms that are most likely to prompt a click and an eventual conversion.

- **Quality** – ensuring that search listings that appear are converting the searcher into a visitor to a website.
- **Cost effectiveness** – making sure that all search campaigns are running at the desired business goals set for the particular medium and objective (i.e. meeting a CPL goal).

Managing a campaign for generating leads consists of two distinct methodologies, as with all previous campaigns. These are (1) technology and (2) manual management. Typically the strongest search campaigns will develop using both, but, as has been discussed in previous chapters, the two can exist in singularity.

### **Technology ‘bid management’**

With an effective sales campaign working with all types of keyword it is essential to use some type of bidding technology to aid in driving success. In Chapter 6 (Management and optimization) the resource implication of managing to a position or average CPC was highlighted. In a lead generation approach a third component is added, i.e. to manage towards a cost per lead (CPL) goal and the parameters for success are increased as price and position will be determined by a keyword’s ability to perform, either singularly or as part of a group, towards a return goal or a measurement type highlighted in Measurement/Control parameters above. The following stepped process should be considered when managing a campaign through a bid management technology.

**Step 1 Research** – following the principles laid down in Chapter 4, it is critical to research the right keywords to use in a campaign and more importantly to apply bidding to each of them. Elements such as bid price, keyword velocity and estimated conversion rate can be applied to terms and the price and position needed to sustain an effective campaign.



**Step 2 Selecting keywords** – keywords researched must be selected by both their singular ability to achieve the goal and as a portfolio. Different bidding rules or practices must be applied to keywords with different capabilities. Keywords that are generic for example may have stricter CPC limitations as they hold most risk in using a large percentage of a budget. In a lead generation strategy the generic keywords may be the deciding factor between success and failure so selecting the right keywords is of critical importance. Brand terms, for example may require top placements to ensure a brand-related search is always catered for within the top syndicated positions. The keyword classification must be done based upon the research mentioned in point number 1 so that accurate keywords can be selected to achieve goals.

In applying the conversion factors, keywords should also be selected based upon conversion potential. This applies to any kind of keyword management; however, applying the same conversion rate to a generic word as to a specific word may produce inaccurate projections. When selecting the keywords to use and the bid price range or position it is key to utilize the practices highlighted in Chapter 4. Averages must be estimated in the initial setup of a campaign; then, as more realistic data are passed back from tracking tools the averages must be replaced with actuals.

**Step 3 Implement** – once the keywords are selected it is essential to produce the most appropriate bidding rules for each term. Selected terms that can justify higher positions must have different rules from those that hold more risk. Use the selected keywords to apply bidding rules and implement the terms on an hourly basis.

In some instances bid rules must be applied to singular terms, however, in many instances the same bid rule or bid management technique can be applied to more than

one keyword. As many of the terms indicated in Step 2 don't hold a keyword velocity warranting concern, these can be grouped together and a 'universal' bid rule applied.

As previously discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, some bid management tools are more advanced than others. The more sophisticated tools allow for market conditions and the performance of the keywords to determine the best bidding rules. These systems take much of the guesswork out of bid management as trend-based analysis determines the most appropriate time of day, day or week, by keyword, to place bids and listings to ensure maximum coverage within the PFP search engines.

### **Manual management**

Manual management is defined as the control of a campaign using limited additional technology. The focus is to find work around mechanisms on the words and phrases being used to ensure that a campaign's performance is maintained at all times.

Without a bid management technology the process of driving leads from the PFP engines is a very difficult and challenging task; however, it is not impossible. The way to master this is to focus on the tools and mechanisms provided within the industry that are freely available for all to use. In this instance these are the bidding vehicles provided by the PFP engines themselves.

The following screen shot demonstrates how the interfaces from the engines allow for position range and maximum CPC limits.

The effectiveness of these mechanisms is in actuality determined by the amount of resource allocated. The question becomes one of frequency and updating techniques. This has been clearly demonstrated in previous chapters.

- **Manage keywords sorted by importance:** if the keywords are sorted by the importance and relevance to a company's products, services or branding exercises, more emphasis could be placed upon these words only and the remaining terms updated less often.
- **Manage keywords sorted by cost:** for the more fiscally challenged campaigns the management of keywords by price is critical. In sorting keywords by those that have a high likelihood to run away with a campaign, these should be managed more carefully and more often than those that don't have as high a probability of doing so. **Note:** this rationale is particularly important for the management of Google AdWords™ and in reference to organizing campaigns to get the most from each keyword based upon a budget.
- **Manage keywords sorted by performance:** The performance of each keyword is critical for generating leads. As with the sales strategy the performance of a keyword can be determined through the tracking mentioned earlier in Chapter 2 and, as such, the keywords that hold the greatest performance opportunity should be managed more often than those keywords that don't show as much promise.

## Optimization

The optimization of a lead generation strategy is most similar to that of a sales strategy. The difference lies with the optimization toward a conversion metric of leads rather than that of sales.

In Table 8.2 are listed many of the problems that are commonly associated with a strategy designed to drive sales, and some suggested optimization techniques are presented for review:

[Table 8.2]

Sales-driven strategy problems

PFP Engine Problem	Optimization Technique
<b>High Traffic, High CPL</b>	This would indicate that the traffic being driven to a website is either a) not relevant enough or that b) the cost of driving this traffic is too high. Revisit the keyword list to see if more terms are available to test or attempt to lower the bid price to gain less traffic that may well be more qualified
<b>High Leads, High CPL</b>	The keywords being used are converting but at a high cost. Attempt to weed out terms that are driving nothing but traffic. If this exercise fails to reduce the CPL attempt to control the positioning of the converting terms and, if applicable, apply bid rules or day parting to ensure success
<b>Low CPL, Low Lead Volume</b>	The volumes of leads in this scenario are too few in number. Increase the number of keywords being used or attempt to increase the position of the terms within the engines to boost performance

While the optimization techniques mentioned above are some of the more common scenarios with solutions, there are many factors at play that could determine success or failure. Beyond inappropriate keyword selection there could be other forces, such as market conditions, searcher demand, and even creative selection, that might affect the success of a campaign.

## Management and optimization of 'other' submission types

### **Organic (natural search) engines**

One of the strongest ways to increase leads at a very low CPL is to adopt organic search engines, such as Google, Yahoo! and MSN. In many instances these mechanisms have low recurring costs, which are in actuality based upon the commitment from an organization to constant

improvement, and can be very strong in driving top placements, under a company's brand name in particular.

It is therefore one of the most important aspects of a search strategy designed to drive leads; however, as has been highlighted earlier in this book the calculation and accountability of organic search is a great deal more complicated than that of paid search. For this reason the following should be utilized.

- **Research:** when either (1) employing an outside firm to optimize a website or (2) placing a request for web designers or technical departments to implement website changes, it is important to ensure that keywords that will represent the brand and company are used within the optimization process. Above all else it is important to be listed organically against these terms alone as many searchers still to this day utilize search engines even to find company websites rather than typing in a website address.
- **Measurement:** for a lead generation strategy it is recommended that rankings are used as the control and measurement variable and that sales are measured from organic traffic by recording the data from log file analysis against conversion points within the website. While adjustment and optimization of words and phrases based upon success is difficult, it is possible to record total sales and then measure additional organic optimization.

As organic listings aren't as dynamic as paid listings, the optimization and control isn't as fluid. For this reason when optimizing organically it is important to accumulate a history or presence within the engines and build upon it. The constant optimization necessary for organic search is performed via attention to detail on the keywords and phrases that are most important to a business and increasing relevancy, via code changes and link architecture, to ensure long-term presence.

## **Key issues in achieving sales (eCommerce) via search engines**

There are a number of key issues that must be taken into consideration when building a campaign around lead generation. These items relate to different aspects of building a campaign and should be associated with a campaign if deemed necessary.

### **Affiliates**

Affiliate marketing has been covered in Chapters 6 and 7. In addition to the points raised in this chapter the following considerations must be applied to managing affiliates in a sales strategy.

Changes in affiliate bidding, as of January 2005, on Google AdWords™ (the most commonly used search engine for affiliate bidding) resulted in affiliates bidding frenetically to get the only listing available for a company under a particular keyword. This is a departure from the current scenario, which allows more than one listing for a company to appear under one term.

The problem in a lead generation campaign, as with any, is that (1) if one listing is being shown, the term being placed might not be the 'official site' listing and (2) if bidding is happening behind the scenes then should the 'official site' listing appear it may do so at a much higher cost than can be justified by the site's conversion and CPL performance.

### **Contextual advertising**

Content match has been a much-maligned mechanism for driving traffic to a website from some of the major

(and minor) PFP engines. As a vehicle for driving traffic it is exceptionally good; however, as soon as ROI (in this instance a CPL) metrics are placed against it, in many cases poor returns have been the result.

In a lead generation strategy, content match or content targeting is not recommended, but, with any type of vehicle, not completely disregarded. The following mechanism should be applied.

- **Research** – when researching the keywords on some of the engines, content matching can be added to the analysis parameters to determine what additional success will be seen. Some engines are more capable of providing these data so use judgment when selecting keywords.
- **Measurement** – for this measurement use traffic, CPC and conversion data. Both Overture and Google AdWords™ have the capability of providing tracking parameters to measure search listings against content listings. Ensure that these mechanisms are used to gauge the success of contextual advertising.

Using search engine marketing to drive leads is again a strong match. As most research is performed online and with most online users turning to search engines to source the information required it makes perfect sense to use an SEM strategy to achieve these goals. The following are some of the highlights from this chapter.

- **Paid For Placement (PFP)** engines and **organic search** are the recommended types of search engine mechanism to use for lead generation.
- **The major first tier PFP and vertical engines** are recommended, as these will give the maximum coverage on the major portals and provide results for very specific audiences. Second tier are optional; however, it is recommended that testing is done to ensure success.
- It is recommended that **generic, specific and branded keywords** are used for a lead generation campaign, if possible. The more specific the search request, the better the creative will have to be. As traffic levels for the B2B space are often far below those of the B2C the clicks are worth more and driving a higher CTR is almost essential.
- Similarly **generic, specific and branded creatives** are also recommended to ensure keywords are matched with appropriate creative.
- Control should be obtained by measuring success against the following (but not specific to any one): **cost per lead, cost per action**.
- Management is deemed necessary in **maintaining position in accordance with the control metrics (listed above)** of these phrases at the maximum possible within budget.
- **Affiliate marketing must be controlled** to ensure that any activity performed on branded terms (as well as generic terms) is done so at the lowest possible CPC.
- **Contextual advertising** is not an option.
- **Buying brand names** is recommended for this strategy, as this helps with the entire buying cycle and these terms can often have the best return on investment.



CHAPTER

# 9

## Objective IV: Formulating a Search Engine Marketing Plan

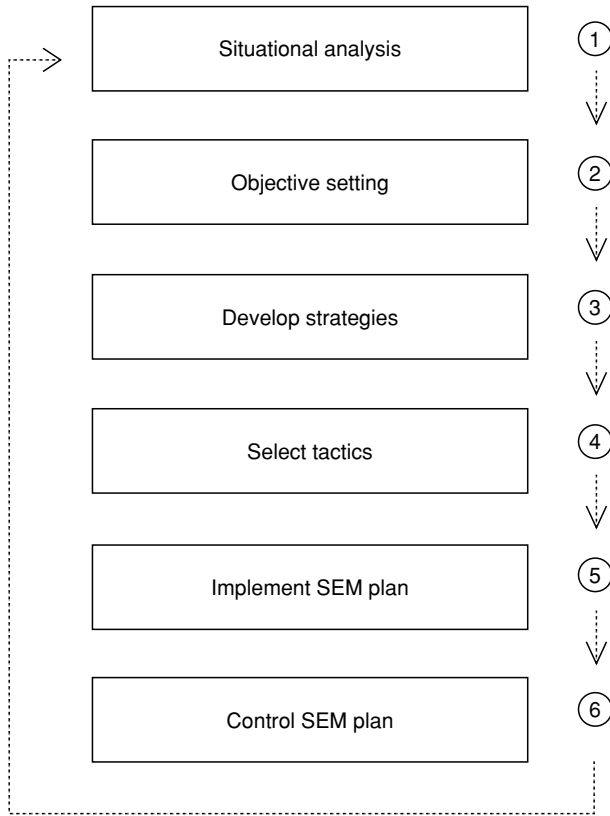
### **Introduction**

With all of the components of a successful search engine marketing (SEM) plan now outlined, this chapter will address formulating all said components into a logical plan that complements a marketing plan, the eventual business plan and corporate objective(s). This chapter studies the internal and external aspects of search planning and determines how best to select, implement and measure the right strategy for optimal achievement of objectives.

### **Taking an accurate snapshot of the market (situational analysis)**

When planning any type of marketing activity it is important to ensure that an accurate portrayal of the market and industry in which a plan is going to be implemented is made. In classic marketing plans this is determined as the situational analysis and, for the devel-

## Objective IV: Formulating a Search Engine Marketing Plan



**[Fig. 9.1]**  
Creating a search marketing plan

opment of a search plan, it is highly relevant based upon the relative infancy of the search market and the limited knowledge available on the benefits thereof.

The issue also exists with planning that more time can be spent preparing a plan than actually implementing it, so the following variables within a situational analysis for search focus on the market, related to search engine marketing, making the assumption that a larger analysis of the corporate market has been determined.

## Internal assessment

As has been previously highlighted within this book, one of the major reasons for a poorly performing SEM campaign is failure to allocate enough resource to it. As a result, the internal assessment of a campaign should focus heavily upon three major areas:

1. **Marketing resources (Thought Leadership)** – any strong SEM campaign has thought leadership from the marketing department. The matching of search tactics with an overall plan should come from the marketing team. A search plan must have at least one individual assigned to search. Whether it be full-time or part-time largely depends upon the size of the SEM activity but generally the larger the campaign the more resource is needed.
2. **Marketing resources (Hands On Resource)** – in Chapter 6 the process of search activity in engines such as Overture requires constant attention. If bidding is engaged in manually without the use of a technology (which is not recommended) then a full-time resource is necessary just to maintain the positions and spending limits to deliver successful results. In many instances a technology can aid greatly in offsetting much of this resource burden but as with any tool a resource is necessary to control it.
3. **Technical resources** – the IT department, IS department or whoever is responsible for the maintenance of a website is directly impacted by an SEM campaign. Depending upon the type of engagement, changes will be needed to the website. From a simple 1x1 pixel being placed for tracking services to a full scale site code overhaul for an organic optimization exercise any involvement with a technical department will require resource and planning. Without appro-

## Objective IV: Formulating a Search Engine Marketing Plan

appropriate planning and implementation considerations, the operations of the technical department can create a serious delay in any campaign.

It is fair to say that in every aspect of a situational analysis any resource requirement has a budgetary implication to it. It should be stressed, therefore, that any search engine marketing campaign must have a budget assigned to it. Later in the chapter budgetary considerations will be taken into account to help determine what strategic approach could be taken.

The major points above are the internal factors that repetitively exist in the development of a strategy. There are, however, additional variables that exist and they should be noted to ensure appropriate mapping is performed. These are typically unique to a company and often exist based upon the industry or market. An example of this is the pharmaceutical industry, regarding which advertisers must fulfill certain criteria relating to engines to advertise listings; a further example is the gambling industry, which has social implications that prevent certain listings being allowed or particular engines used (i.e. Overture has a ban on gambling sites).

## External assessment

Analyzing and benchmarking the state of a market or industry for an SEM plan is critical to success. Earlier, in Chapter 4, details on how to map the space were determined and only with this level of assessment will a strong understanding of the external environment be gained.

Regardless of the type of strategy or tactic implemented it is important to benchmark the following criteria in order to gain an understanding of both market forces (i.e. competition and demand) and current positioning to gauge improvement throughout the plan.

- **Current site performance** – this can be broken down depending up the activity that is currently being performed. If there aren't any SEM campaigns live, or that have ever been live, this process is simple and can be done with a straightforward ranking report. If the site has been engaged in any form of SEM, the following is recommended:
  - i. Traffic levels: if traffic can be measured, record the levels of traffic from each of the engine properties. This function is available from any log file analysis system and most technical departments will be recording data such as this for analysis and website performance purposes.
  - ii. Conversion data: if available the conversion data of any traffic to a website should be recorded. This information will be vital if a search campaign is going to be launched as the more accurate information entered into a forecast or projection the closer the campaign will get to the planned objectives and goals.
  - iii. Website visibility: as mentioned, one of the simplest and most effective forms of site benchmarking, especially for an organic strategy, is to utilize a rankings report to determined website position. It is recommended that this be performed against research keywords that hold value to an objective or strategic goal.
- **Market demand assessment** – this can be determined through the keyword research phase mentioned in Chapter 4. With appropriate research of keywords the volume of searcher interest can be determined on a monthly basis. This information will provide the grounding for gauging the viability of an SEM campaign and, in many instances, the type of search engine mechanism to use. If low search volume is available, engaging in a resource-extensive search project may not work out as a cost-effective option; however, if the opposite exists then a widespread campaign may pro-

## Objective IV: Formulating a Search Engine Marketing Plan

duce a very cost-effective campaign. **Note:** there may be need to revisit the research again for a more in-depth approach once an objective and strategy has been determined. This assessment is designed to gauge the market conditions with enough accuracy to make informed decisions in later stages of plan development.

- **Competitive landscape** – the final piece to the external analysis is to gain an understanding of what the competitive landscape looks like from both an organic and a paid search standpoint. This information will determine aspects of budgetary assignment and strategic direction based upon the goal or objective of the campaign. The following mechanisms should be used to determine competitive position and for the best results should be combined.
  - i. Competitive rankings reports – using tools, such as the Lycos Insite Rankings Report or Hitwize, a picture of the competitive environment can be determined. This information will give examples of both organic and paid search listings and enable plotting of the position of a website within a market or industry.
  - ii. Paid Search SOV Analysis – after selecting the most appropriate keywords, or at least a representative sample for this exercise, the plotting of company vs. bid price vs. keyword will give a good example of the overall competitive landscape for paid search (most importantly PFP search).

As with the internal analysis there are many external factors that impact the performance of a search engine marketing campaign. But, as before, these are specific to a company and industry.

### 1.1 Summarizing the snapshot (summary of situation analysis)

Once the major points of the situational analysis have been prepared or identified it is important to summarize them as points that could help or hinder the success of a

campaign. These points should then be used for incorporation into a bigger marketing plan, such as components within a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis. The use of these points will determine the strategic direction and tactics to be used in the implementation and selection of an overall plan.

The following are hypothetical examples of a summarized Snapshot.

- The technical department estimates that any new project cannot be implemented for at least 3 months.
- The average CPC of the market space is, at present analysis, \$0.50 and traffic possible is at least 10 000 clicks a month so a minimum budget of \$5000 is needed to engage with the engines.
- The marketing department doesn't have enough resource to operate a search marketing campaign at the present workload.
- Competitor XYZ has 50 per cent SOV on the keywords most important to our business.
- Our website has an overall visibility score of less than 10 per cent of the possible coverage.

## **Determining objective (objective setting)**

Simply put, the determination of SEM plan objectives is dependent on the criteria of the business plan and, ultimately, the marketing plan. It is fair to say, however, that the development of objectives is something that must be done and, if it is not, any plan will be flawed for not having a clear and precise direction.

In this book, Chapters 6, 7 and 8 have studied the major objectives served by a search marketing strategy. Each of these chapters studies the direction necessary to be taken

#### Objective IV: Formulating a Search Engine Marketing Plan

to achieve these objectives but in many cases the objectives of a company require that *more than one* objective be met from a search campaign.

The assignment of multiple objectives to a marketing plan is not uncommon and as a result the determination of what value a search engine marketing plan can bring to an overall marketing campaign is important. A website can offer both a strong sales vehicle and a mechanism to add value to a customer's experience of a company or brand, be it via brand association or serving as an additional component to the sale. The use of search engines, as an online vehicle, can only add to this value by increasing the prominence of the site on terms that are relevant to each objective.

So in deciding where a search engine marketing campaign can fit in, the following are typically used to gauge which objective to target.

- **Seasonality** – many companies choose to set or combine different strategies at different times of year depending upon the seasonality of business. This is often met with the use of a seasonal calendar that plots out over the year the expected demand and marketed response to such demand with the objectives (and subsequent selected strategies).
- **'Other' marketing (promotional activities)** – in developing the seasonality model further, many companies have developed a promotional calendar both to capture the demand when it's there and to attempt to manufacture demand. An obvious objective could be to match this activity with the usage of an SEM campaign through the keywords selected or creatives used within a strategy.
- **Business type** – in some instances the type of business or industry a company is in limits the selection or



determination of objectives for an SEM plan. The opportunities for a B2C site are more abundant than those for a B2B site and, as such, an objective assigned to SEM may be more varied.

Taking these determining factors, a series of objectives can be assigned to a campaign or plan that will then translate into strategy or strategies for implementation.

## Developing a strategy (or series of strategies)

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 focus on the development of strategies for each of the separate objectives, however, the development of a multiple objective approach requires multiple strategies. A strategy defines an objective in far greater detail. Putting this another way, a strategy develops the objective (the *'where do we want to go'*) into the defined plan in terms of how this will become an actionable or implementable plan (the *'how we are going to get there'*). If we used an analogy or example to demonstrate this, the following may apply.

<p><b>OBJECTIVE:</b> <i>To get from Boston to London</i> <b>STRATEGY:</b> <i>Decision made to fly from Boston to London</i> <b>TACTIC:</b> <i>Use American Airlines flight AA108</i></p>
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The process of developing strategies for achieving the plan's objectives requires many variables to be considered and it is at this stage within the plan that a number of options can be determined to push forward with tactical planning and implementation. A good strategy will allow the matching of the variables discussed in the situational analysis. This information will then shape the direction taken with the tactical aspects of the campaign. Putting this in the simplest sense, if the objective were to increase sales via SEM, yet the budget assigned doesn't allow for

## Objective IV: Formulating a Search Engine Marketing Plan

the appropriate PFP engines to be used as a tactic, the strategy may be shaped differently. Similarly, if the direction were to increase overall traffic to the site and the budget was limited, yet the technical department has a code freeze on any new developments to a website, using the organic optimization tactic might not be an option.

The preparation of strategic choices may take the following approach (see Figure 9.2).

The strategies listed in the table above are hypothetical and, depending upon the size of the campaign or business on the web, may well not represent the approach necessary. It is important to ensure that strategies are matched with objectives and variables from the situational analysis. If market conditions, determined by demand or promotional and seasonal activities, change on a monthly (even

Objective(s) <i>Maximize revenue at a 3x ROI during the peak seasons and maintain a prominent coverage during the quieter months to complement offline sales:</i>		
	<b>STRATEGY 1</b>	<b>STRATEGY 2</b>
<b>SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS</b>	Marketing Resources Assigned Budget Allocated of \$10k/m <i>Technical Department Limitations</i> Market conditions favourable for paid search	<i>Limited Marketing Resources</i> <i>Small budget \$20 (annual)</i> Technical Resources Assigned Market conditions favourable for paid search
<b>STRATEGY</b>	Implement a paid search campaign	Implement an 'organic' campaign with option of using paid engines at peak seasonal times
<b>SUMMARY</b>	Heavy load on marketing resources but with appropriate technology can provide fast turn around time and accountable results	Limited load on marketing department but lower investment and longer term return from the organic search direction. Paid engines will give short term boost in busier season

**[Fig. 9.2]**

Preparation of strategic choices

weekly) basis, the strategy must reflect this and the decisions made must be based upon this information.

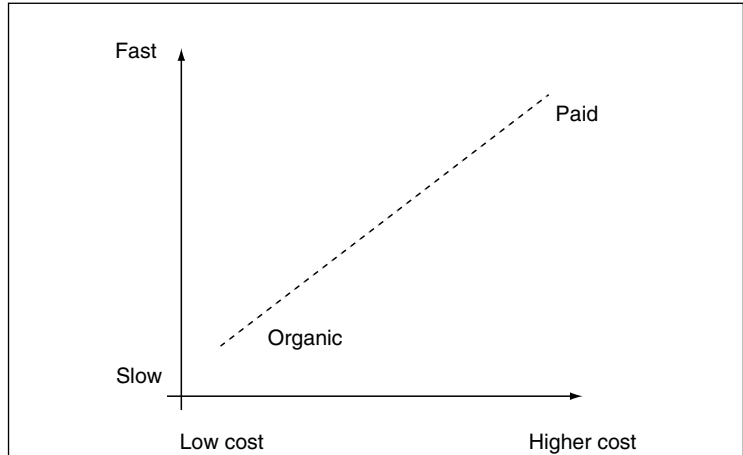
In many SEM plans it is this development of a search campaign that achieves multiple objectives, such as a branding campaign and an ROI campaign, that results in poor performance as all tactical aspects, such as the keywords and engines, are grouped as one and measured as one. It is important, therefore, to identify the best strategies to use within each campaign and to ensure separation of performance to determine success. This will manifest itself later in the preparation of the plan when the tactical aspects are employed and portfolio groupings are prepared for keywords.

### Applying learning from chapters 6, 7 and 8

The application of the learning from previous chapters is of crucial importance in this strategic element of the plan. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 focused on the very detailed element of what could be done with a campaign with an exhaustive budget and no limitations on any of the resources of departments such as technical and marketing. It is therefore important to note that the content of this chapter can only be applied once an analysis of the situation (situational analysis) has been performed.

**Strategic planning – Organic vs Paid (see Figure 9.3)**

The number of strategic options that are created in actuality depends upon the number of variables that have been determined in the situational analysis AND are available to an organization based upon the industry. In many instances the two major determining factors are cost and tangible results or the speed at which they are available. The chart shown here, while crude, is a simple demonstration of both of these variables and should weigh as a factor when determining strategy. It is not uncommon for



**[Fig. 9.3]**  
Strategic planning—organic vs paid

an organic campaign to take up to 3 months to see traffic after submission to the search engines. Add on the additional time of recommendations (either given in-house or from an expert) and implementation and the timeline could be extended out well beyond the 3-month mark. With a paid campaign, listings can be live as soon as 20 minutes after submission, however, a carefully planned paid campaign may take weeks to prepare but should speed be of the essence the paid search engines can, at a cost, provide the results. The more granular approach to each of the variables will be covered later, in tactical selection, but these two variables play a very large role in the development of a strategy. It is important to note here, however, that organic optimization is recommended for all types of strategy for longer-term value (with limited associated costs) to any campaign.

## Selecting tactics

Tactical selection refers to the appropriate usage of the tools mentioned in Chapter 2 and then detailed in Chapters 6,

7 and 8 in relation to achieving a particular objective. Tactics are, in nature, flexible and easily changed, and, in the context of these chapters refer to the selection of tactics based upon viability *vis-à-vis* a particular objective; however, in this section some will also be looked at in terms of their application in relation to a budget or time of implementation.

Previously, in Developing a strategy (see above), the considerations necessary for the direction needed for a strategy, be it paid search or organic search, were studied in relation to these two submission types and the associated speed and cost of expected results. The following will give more of an indication as to the decision variables on some of the tactical aspects of any search engine marketing plan.

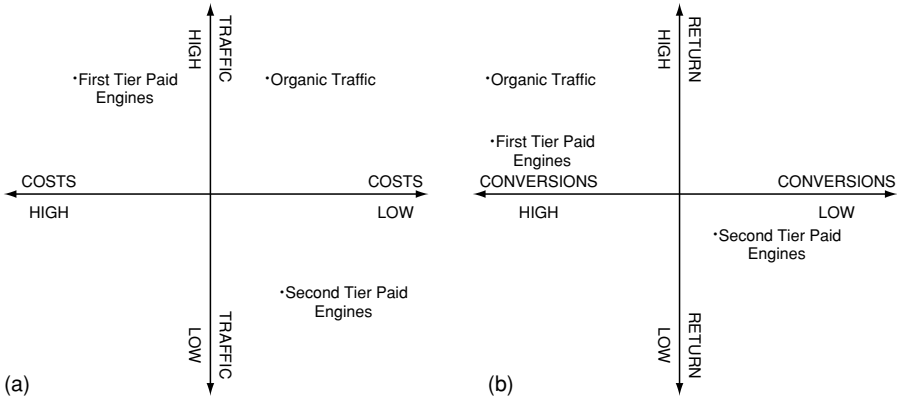
### Selecting engines

Engine selection is specific to the strategic direction, or directions, taken but it is important to recognize that the selection of engines is dependent upon the goals of the campaign as some are better suited than others. Figures 9.4a and b demonstrate a positioning grid of the major engines available (as of Jan 2005) and their likely performance.

It is important to understand this model when considering the selection of engines for a strategic goal, as limited resources or immediate results will come with the appropriate engines being used.

In applying this rationale to the engines highlighted for each objective in Chapters 6, 7 and 8 the focus of budgetary allocation may be easier. For example, if speed and limited budget is an issue, from the positioning models, placing focus on the first tier paid engines or

## Objective IV: Formulating a Search Engine Marketing Plan



**[Fig. 9.4a]**

Engine positioning: possible traffic vs costs

**[Fig. 9.4b]**

Engine positioning: possible returns vs volume of conversions

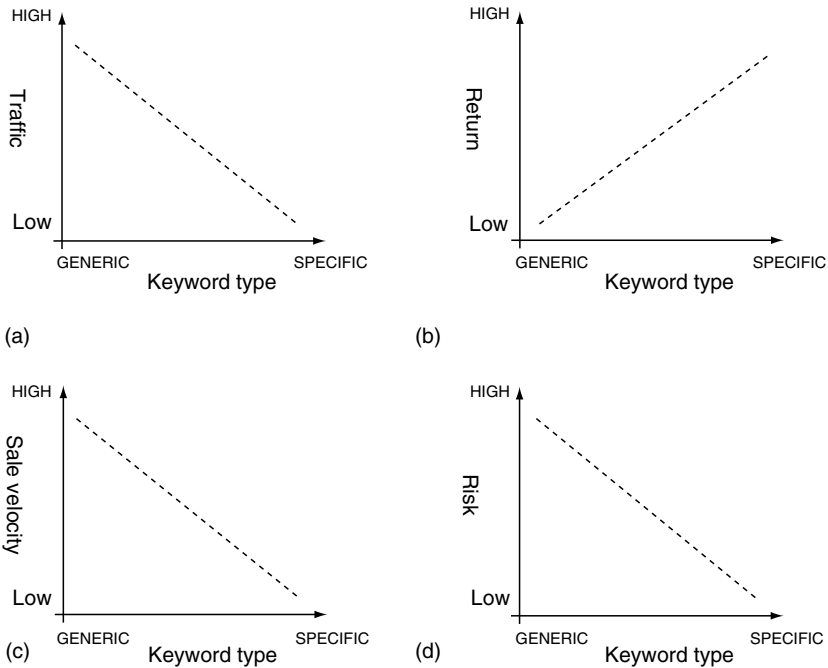
engaging with the organic engines (covered mainly within the strategic focus) will be beneficial. Similarly if the goal is to drive large traffic at a lower cost to a website, engaging with the second tier paid engines may be an option.

## Selecting keywords

As has been highlighted many times within this book, the selection of keywords is probably the most important variable for a successful campaign, be it with the organic engines or with the paid search engines. Each of the objectives focused chapters study keyword selection in detail, but it is important to recognize many values of a keyword and the keyword type (highlighted in Chapter 2) to gain a better understanding of the best course of action or direction.

### Selecting keywords for paid search

The following diagram demonstrates the spectrum or range between the types of keyword from generic to specific. Branded terms have not been added to these charts as in many respects branded terms by their nature possess many of the qualities that are specific to the organization and not to the keyword itself. Saying this another way, if a brand has values associated with it, such as a leading retailer like Dixons or Circuit City, the performance of the keywords is associated with the brand and website and is not necessarily determined by the nature of the keywords itself (i.e. not in the case of a keyword for a digital camera that focuses on a generic phrase representative of a product or market) (see Figure 9.5a–d).



[Fig. 9.5a–d]

(a) Keyword type vs traffic potential; (b) Keyword type vs expected ROI (courtesy of M.Sack CTO and EVP Inceptor); (c) Keyword type vs velocity in sales; (d) Keyword type vs risk\* to organization (\*Risk defined as potential to escalate costs and possibility of missed conversions)

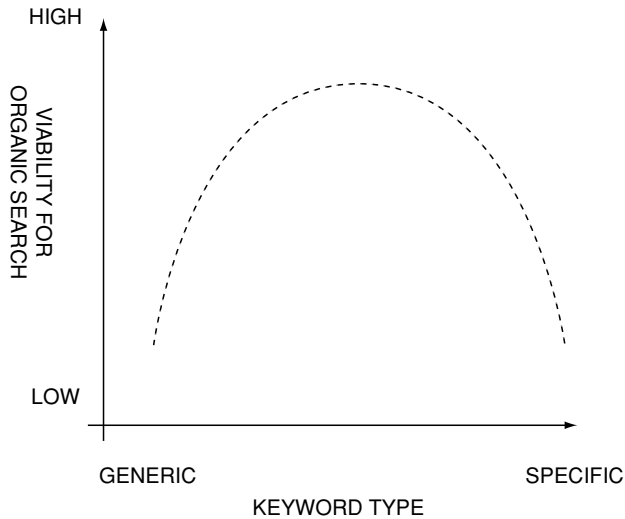
It is evident from these charts that the more generic the keyword the greater the opportunity and hazard. While generic keywords do possess the qualities of high traffic and high sales potential, these same keywords also have the highest cost premiums and potential of lower returns. For this reason it is important to ensure that tracking is performed on every word to watch for these opportunities and threats as the sales value of a generic keyword can often be waylaid by the low return levels.

There is no predetermined number of keywords, especially for the PFP engines, that any company should possess and if tracking is performed to an ROI level then the number is comfortably increased, however, there is a point where adding more keywords can become damaging. For this reason it is important to ensure that keywords are measured carefully, with diligence, and symptoms recognized where more is often less.

### **Selecting keywords for organic search**

The selection of keywords for organic search is as important as with the paid engines, however, the thought rationale needs to be slightly different based upon the longevity of the listings within the engines (see Figure 9.6). An organic listing or listings with a search engine like Google, have the potential of being live for a long period of time. Additionally the work necessary to get listed on search terms within organic requires a large amount of up-front work to succeed. With this in mind it is not recommended that keywords of a very generic or competitive nature be targeted as the probability of getting listed is much lower. Instead, keywords should be selected on the KEI scoring provided by many of the keyword research tools. This scoring will give an example of how competitive the term is and allow for accurate targeting that gives a good cost to benefit ratio. The important factor to consider is that the most generic terms





**[Fig. 9.6]**  
Selecting organic search keywords

might not be attractive, but the most specific terms are also not attractive as the likelihood of a click deteriorates the more detailed the term becomes. In other words, it would be folly to target a keyword that has the likelihood of driving one click a month as this would involve targeting a keyword that drives 100 000 clicks a month; i.e. it would be far too general. This thought process is depicted in the above figure.

## Selecting creatives

The process of selecting creatives is subjective and specific to the company; however, different types of creative should be used for different strategies and for different types of keyword. It is common belief that a good creative is designed to increase the number of click-throughs from the search listings page to the site, however, and as argued throughout this book, the focus of creative should be to

## Objective IV: Formulating a Search Engine Marketing Plan

qualify the searcher, even if this minimizes the CTR as it will, in turn, potentially increase return.

As with all of the tactical elements, Chapters 6, 7 and 8 have covered each of the types of creative that should potentially be tested with each objective and ensuing strategy, however, as a vehicle for quick changes, some engines take longer than others (if at all) to change the types of creative being used. Table 9.1 illustrates, at the time of writing, the time needed to change creatives within the engines. This must be taken into account, as must the writing of creative and submission over the number of keywords within a campaign.

This information will be critical when implementation and testing is performed throughout the plan.

## Implementing an SEM plan

The implementation of a search engine marketing plan is complex if looked at regarding all of the moving pieces, however, when simplified into engine, keywords, creative, bid management strategy and tracking variable, it should seem simpler.

The implementation of a plan must represent the strategy, or simultaneous strategies running, and the tactics selected for each. It is therefore important to ensure that

**[Table 9.1]**

Time required for change of creatives within engines

<b>Engine Type</b>	<b>Time to Change Creative</b>
Organic	<i>Up to 3 (three) months</i>
PFP (Tier 1)	<i>20 min to 5 days</i>
PFP (Tier 2)	<i>Approx 2 days</i>
PFI	<i>48 hr (after submission)</i>
Shopping engines	<i>Up to 1 week</i>
Specific engines	<i>Up to 1 week</i>

an implementation matrix is made to represent the approaches necessary. Additionally it is important to be aware of the time needed to see results (see earlier text) as the time for submission and expected results differ from engine to engine (see Figure 9.7).

The matrix demonstrates the identification of each of the different tactics within each of the strategies as well as expected results. This information needs to be clearly separated, to ensure that measurement and control is assigned each of the components, such as the keywords, creatives and measured results.

### Implementation ownership

When implementing any form of marketing plan, be it for print media or search engine marketing, it is important to ensure ownership is established within an organization. With ownership determined, a plan will be implemented

	<b>STRATEGY 1 (Achieve 3×ROI)</b>	<b>STRATEGY 2 (Increase Branding)</b>
Submission type	Organic, PFP, PFI	Organic, PFP
Engines	Tier 1, Tier 2, PFI, All Organic	Tier 1, Organic
Keywords	Branded, Generic, Specific	Branded, Generic
Creative	Match to offer or USP	Match to Corporate Branding
Bidding rules	Maximize Revenue while keeping ROI at 3×	Maximize traffic (position) while keeping CPC at or below \$0.35
Expected results	3×ROI on all keywords grouped into STRATEGY 1 measurement	Top 3 placement on most terms within the STRATEGY 2 grouping

**[Fig. 9.7]**  
SEM plan implementation

faster and more accurately with the appropriate checks and balances in place, to ensure that, should any problems arise, they have an owner who is charged with putting any element of the plan, be it keyword research or setting up an engine, back on track or reporting back to a project leader the issues and adjusting the timelines.

## Implementation timeline 'allocating enough time'

It is of paramount importance to ensure that the appropriate timelines are set when engaging in SEM and constructing a plan. Many of the variables and timelines will be provided by each of the components or elements of a campaign, such as the timelines needed to submit keywords and get them live within a PFP engine. Equally important is to get a handle on the implementation schedules of internal resource. In most cases SEM is a service performed by members of a marketing department so it is important to ensure that adequate time is given to getting a plan underway inclusive of other activities. It is more important, however, to get the resource of 'other' departments mapped for the project as well. An example of where this is critical is the development of an organic optimization, as the technical department or in some cases external site design help (adding funding issues too), need to be forewarned and given an adequate chance to provide timelines and start dates for a project. This information, as has been illustrated in earlier sections of this book, may sway a decision away from one type of search submission and towards another.

## Controlling an SEM plan

Controlling an SEM campaign can be difficult and challenging yet at the same time extremely rewarding as

search can drive excellent results toward an overall business objective. It is through control that success can be found and, as a complete opposite, without any control an SEM campaign can run riot and fail.

In Chapters 6, 7 and 8 the control mechanisms associated with separate types of objective and strategy were identified, however, it is important to note that merely identifying the control measures and implementing them in the campaign is one thing but making decisions based upon performance is another. This section will take into account the variables that should be considered when controlling an SEM campaign:

## Measurement

### **Use the 'correct' performance measure**

Probably one of the major failings of a search campaign is measuring search, a strategy and the tactical elements using the wrong measure. With the previously mentioned statistic of only one third of searchers measuring activity the remaining two thirds are using traffic as the gauge of success. This can, and often does, result in little appreciation for the success of a campaign; it limits budgetary and fiscal responsibility and provides an ambiguous result to measure against. If the goal of the campaign is traffic then this is acceptable but the most important factor to consider is this: if the site is designed to drive leads or sales then measuring against traffic is not going to give enough control. It is therefore advised to use one of the control methods listed in each of the strategy and objectives chapters.

### **Avoid 'mass' performance measurement**

If measurement of performance is being done, a campaign is on the right track; however, a common symptom

of tracking is that everything, i.e. all keywords, are grouped together and measured against one overall goal. This is an acceptable measure should there be one strategy being performed; however, if an awareness strategy were used in conjunction with an ecommerce strategy then the conflict in keywords would result in almost certain failure. Instead keywords and creatives should be judged in groups or portfolios and then reported upon separately.

### **Avoid 'hasty' decisions on performance measurement**

Keywords in a singular sense are large in volume but have unique properties when being tracked (i.e. traffic, costs, return). Keywords are the most prominent part of any decision-making process and are selected, deleted, bid up, bid down, and controlled to ensure the success of an overall goal. The problem with this is that many marketers make the mistake of controlling a keyword before it has had a chance to perform and provide enough statistical relevance for an accurate decision to be made.

As a hypothetical example, if a website has a 1 per cent conversion rate, this would suggest that a keyword has to have at least 100 clicks before it may see a single conversion. In this scenario it wouldn't make sense to control a keyword before it has had ample opportunity to at least convert one visitor on the site at the site's performance levels.

For the reasons mentioned above it is important to ensure that, when research is performed, tight control measures are placed but not so tight as to constrict success. Allow keywords to function to a level where, upon review, enough data have flowed through the campaign to qualify the ensuing decisions.

### **Avoid 'short term' reaction control**

Putting this into context, many companies view the results of a campaign on an hourly and daily basis, which can often lead to undue and unnecessary stress and the possibility of hasty decisions. There will always be fluctuations in performance; on some days the performance will be higher than on others and in many instances daily spikes and dips are often 'unexplainable'. It is therefore important to watch for situations where problems may arise, such as a keyword that has become the subject of a bidding war or an SKU within a PFI feed that is driving far too much traffic for no return. This being said, if technology is being used to manage the listings and appropriate measures are in place for control, looking at the data over a longer period of time (for example a week) will allow for a more settled approach and more trend analysis than with daily/hourly peaks and troughs.

## Testing

Within any form of plan it cannot be stressed enough to test all of the tactical components to increase and build upon success. If new keywords need to be added or creatives need to be changed, testing is essential. There are, however, the following factors that should be considered with testing.

### **Avoid testing too much!**

Testing should be performed on a sample and then the learnings translated to a larger group. This applies to all aspects of testing, be it creative or keywords, and it is with representative samples that enough learning can be gathered to draw conclusions which can then be acted upon.

### **Run one test at a time**

With SEM the challenge is making sure the results are accurate. As all tactical aspects work together, i.e. the creative is attached to the keyword, if two tests – one of keywords and one of creative – are tested together, the results will be inconclusive as the determining factor for the test results is unresolved between the tactical components. It is not out of the question to test multiples at one certain time but it is important to test variables (tactical elements) independently of each other to ensure success.

### **Structure the test**

Testing must follow a plan, similar in a sense to an overall search marketing plan. The test must have an objective, a strategy, an implementation cycle, an appropriate testing timeline or threshold (i.e. # clicks on keywords or # impressions for creative) and lastly metrics or measurement to determine the performance of the test. Without these variables the test will be inconclusive and no learning will be achieved.

### **Measure ‘testing’ separately from the main campaign**

Any budget or performance variables associated with testing should be measured as a single unit and not included in the overall performance of the main plan and campaign. This avoids any confusion with performance should a test run well or badly and potentially skew the overall results. It is also important, when budgeting, to assign enough budget to a test such that it can run its full length and, again, not be financially linked to the main strategy.

### **Use automation**

If possible it is advised to use automation where possible. For example, if landing pages for specific keywords are



being tested side by side, running an A-B testing platform will allow the searchers and visitors to a website to determine which landing page will yield a stronger conversion rate. Additionally, when testing variables such as creative, it is advised that the services provided by the engines, most notably Google AdWords™, are used in order to test creatives side by side to see which yields a stronger CTR.

SUMMARY

The development of a search engine marketing plan is designed to complement an overall marketing plan, which, in turn, is designed to achieve marketing and business objectives. In this chapter the components and techniques behind plan development and plan implementation have been discussed. The following highlights are the most important to take from this chapter.

- When starting a search engine marketing plan it is important to map the space and get a full understanding of the situation. In a **situational analysis** both **internal and external factors** are assessed and summarized for the purpose of objective setting.
- The **determination of objectives** comes from the business objectives of the company and the designated purpose of the website. When setting objectives for a search campaign it is important to take into account what can be achieved from search to ensure that a plan can in essence work.
- The search strategy, **or series of strategies**, must take into account the desired direction (indicated from the objectives) and the data formed from the situational analysis. The strategy will start to shape how the objectives will be achieved. The strategy may focus on the types of search that may work (i.e. paid or organic) but will not focus too heavily on keywords and creatives which form the **tactical elements**.
- **Engine selection, keyword selection and creative** creation comprise the tactical elements of the strategy and plan, and go toward achieving the objective or objectives.
- When **implementing** a plan it is important to have **time-lines and ownership** for each of the variable factors to ensure a plan gets up and running.
- **Controlling** a campaign consists of **measurement and testing**. Without these a plan isn't going to work as expected and may fail to achieve the overall goals and objectives.



# Glossary

(Just in case you found a word or phrase that made no sense!)

## Abbreviations

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Full Name</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>API</b>	<i>Application Program Interface</i>	An automated method of transferring information between interfaces.
<b>B2B</b>	<i>Business To Business</i>	Businesses providing products and services for other businesses.
<b>B2C</b>	<i>Business To Consumer</i>	Businesses providing products and services for end consumers.
<b>CPA</b>	<i>Cost per acquisition</i>	How much it costs to acquire a conversion (be it a lead or sale).
<b>HTML</b>	<i>Hyper Text Markup Language</i>	The language that websites are, at least to some degree, written in.
<b>ISP</b>	<i>Internet Service Provider</i>	A company that sells web access to the general public. Example: AOL.
<b>PFI</b>	<i>Paid For Inclusion</i>	Search engines and directories allow advertisers to have their sites included for an inclusion fee (no guarantee of position).

(Continued)

## Search Marketing Strategies

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Full Name</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b><i>PPF</i></b>	<i>Paid For Placement</i>	Search results providers, such as Overture, allow companies to pay for their desired position, such as Number 1.
<b><i>ROAS</i></b>	<i>Return on Advertising Spend</i>	Same as for ROI below, but just accounts for investment in advertising.
<b><i>ROI</i></b>	<i>Return on Investment</i>	Monetary return for the money invested in a product, service or project (such as search engine marketing).
<b><i>SERPs</i></b>	<i>Search Engine Results Provider</i>	Some engines, such as Google, provide results for other sites that don't have their own search results such as in Google's case. AOL is an example.
<b><i>SSO</i></b>	<i>Site Side Optimization</i>	The process of optimizing the HTML code of a website for better search listings.
<b><i>URL</i></b>	<i>Uniform Resource Locator</i>	The 'official' name for a website address such as <a href="http://www.google.com">www.google.com</a> .

## Definitions

### *'Above The Fold'*

This is a phrase that refers to the search engine listings that appear on a web browser's page before the user has to scroll down. Typically the top 10 listings appear above the fold but depending upon screen resolution sometimes more than 10 appear. As a search marketer it is a safe bet to aim for the top 10 listings to ensure above the fold at all times.

### *Body Copy*

This refers to the actual content of a web page and, more specifically, the written text.

### *Cookie Based Tracking Systems*

If more specific information is required, beyond that of a log file analysis system, small pieces of code, known as cookies, can be placed on a website visitor's computer, both temporarily (i.e. while the searcher is on the site) and permanently (to determine if this user returns at a later date). This information, in conjunction with other variables deliberately placed on the website, often referred to as page markers, gather specific information pertinent to a marketing objective. This information is more useful as it is user defined, rather than predetermined reporting formats having to be used.

### *Doorway (Gateway) Pages*

These pages contain large amounts of 'optimized' content related to an advertiser's website. They typically are hosted remote to the destination website and instantly redirect traffic from the page ranked within the search engine to the destination site in a thousandth of a second. Their purpose is to gain better rankings, by means of adding large quantities of keywords, links and descriptions, for sites that can't be ranked highly or when the changes necessary for ranking are too resource intensive. The search engines scorn the practice of doorway pages.

### *IP (Internet Protocol) Address*

This is a series of numbers that identifies a sender and receiver of information on the Internet.

### *KEI Score*

Keyword Efficiency Indicator (KEI) describes the viability of a keyword for use in a search campaign. This scoring is used by keyword research programs, such as WordTracker, to determine good keywords. The higher the KEI score, the more popular the term and the harder it is to get a good placement on the term.

### *Keyphrase*

Keyphrase describes a keyword that is made up from more than one word. All terms used in the search engines are referred to as keywords, however, in most instances the keyword is made up of more than one word (i.e. search engine optimization) and therefore is sometimes referred to as a keyphrase.

### *Keyword Density*

The number of times a single keyword can show up on any given website. Typically, keeping the number below 10 and in context with other words, i.e. in a sentence or title, is an accepted practice.

### *Keyword Stemming*

The process by which a well-performing keyword might be used as the basis for more variations of the keyword or keyphrase; e.g. 'camera' would be stemmed out to perhaps 'digital camera' or '35mm camera'.

### *Keyword Stuffing*

This describes adding excessive keywords into a website's code or into a doorway page. This procedure uses the *meta keyword tags* (mentioned earlier) to find as many words as possible associated with the content of the website or page. For example, if a page should have approximately 3 or 4 words in the meta keyword tags, a page that has been stuffed has multiples of these all in relation to the topic of the page. Once again, search engines scorn the practice and have an acceptable *keyword density* allowed per page.

### *Link Farming*

As '*link popularity*' (see below) increases the ranking of a website many search engine optimizers and optimization firms created websites dedicated to hosting many links pointing into and out of similar sites. These '*farms*' of

websites increased the popularity of a site but potentially at the peril of the advertiser who, if caught by one of the engines, would blacklist (i.e. remove and tag as an offender) the site and remove the listing.

### *Link Popularity*

In an effort to increase the relevance of a search engine listing the engines regard a site that has links pointing to it from other websites as being more popular and therefore having a greater relevance to the searcher – the rationale being that if more than one link points to it, it must be a better site than one with no links pointing to it at all!

### *Market Conditions*

This term refers to the bidding conditions of a particular industry. Specifically market conditions focus on costs per click amount and position.

### *Meta Description Tag*

A meta description tag allows the search optimizer to add code to the source code of the website to determine the description that appears within the search listing should you be ranked. This description will not only influence the end user to click on your link but should contain the right level of information to make the site more attractive to a spider.

### *Meta Keyword Tag(s)*

A meta keyword tag allows a search engine optimizer or designer to add supplemental words into the source code of a website to aid in making the website more attractive to a search spider.

### *Offline*

In the context of this book most references are made to activities that are online. The other elements to any company's activities are those that are offline and in many



regards the online marketing efforts typically only scratch the surface of a marketing plan. Offline refers to all activity performed when not online and the interaction between offline and online.

### *Page Rank*

Page Rank describes the scoring given to a website by Google. The better the quality of the code, relevance to topic and link popularity the higher the page rank given. Sites with a less than 4 page rank are considered poor; sites with a better than 5 are considered good.

### *Portals*

This term is used to describe a website where many different information sources and services come together online to create a virtual 'one stop shop' for all things. Portals are often the homepage of *ISPs* such as MSN, AOL or BTOpenworld. Portals are important for search engine marketing as they have a comprehensive search engine mechanism.

### *Reach*

Reach, defined in a marketing context as the level of penetration of a marketing activity into the desired market space, is included in search engine campaigns as the total number of searches a company can capture via the search engines, keywords and positions (via syndication) used.

### *Search Engine Marketing*

This is the pursuit of a plan or strategy that accomplishes the marketing and business objectives of an organization using the search.

### *Search Engine Optimization*

This is a tactical approach to optimizing a website's code and linking architecture to form one element of a search engine marketing plan.

*Search Listings*

This refers to the placements a company's website might have within the search engine results. Saying this another way, if a company has 500 listings then there are 500 instances of the company's URL within a search engine's overall database of sites.

*Search Query Strings*

This is defined as the use of characters within a search query (e.g. looking for 'Wimbledon tennis') to refine the search to ensure accuracy with the results presented. Examples of these characters, often referred to as Boolean Logic, are + – “” and are used as follows:

Wimbledon+tennis	Wimbledon <b>AND</b> tennis	Find all sites that contain the terms Wimbledon + Tennis
Wimbledon–tennis	Wimbledon <b>NOT</b> tennis	Find all sites that contain the term Wimbledon but don't contain tennis
“Wimbledon tennis”	Wimbledon with tennis is as a <b>Phrase</b>	Find all sites that contain the phrase “Wimbledon tennis” in content

Additionally, should the searcher type their query in BLOCK CAPITALS the search engine would try to locate only terms written in block capitals. Should the searcher type their query in lower case the search engine would look for all terms in lower and upper case and, as a result, if a searcher wanted to expand their search it is recommended that their term is typed in lower case.

*Search Volume*

This describes the total amount of searches and clicks available to a company. This is often determined through research (highlighted in Chapter 4) and is a simple determination of the amount of predictable or received traffic.

### *SKU (Stock Keeping Unit) number*

The language used by cataloguers to identify products within a catalog or inventory.

### *Spiders*

A search engine spider is a program that visits websites and their pages (web pages) to find information to create a search engine index or list (database) of websites.

### *Syndication*

Within the search engine industry, syndication is the term used for a search listing from one engine being fed into the results of another. Syndication partners create a network of distribution and the larger this network the better the traffic potential. An example of syndication would be Overture, who syndicate their results to MSN, Yahoo!, Lycos and others.

### *Term*

This is another name for a keyword. Often referred to as a search term, or just term.

### *Viewing the Source*

On all web browsers (such as Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator) there is a function that allows the user to see the code (HTML) used to design the page. This is the primary way of determining if a website designer has used meta-tags and meta descriptions on a web page.

### *Website Log Files*

Every activity on a website is logged in what is known as a log file, from a click from one page to another to the source of an incoming link and its origin and, in the case of a search engine marketing campaign, the keywords that it came in on. These data are stored natively on a website

server; however, some tools are able to read these logs and provide the user with tangible results such as site navigation and entry and exit pages, and whether a user ended up on a conversion point within a website.

# Resources Guide

Throughout the book a number of different resources have been mentioned as sources for finding data, be it for strategic planning or for researching the industry. The following is a quick guide to some of the most useful resources within the search engine market.

## News and Industry resources

Resource name	Description	URL
eMarketer	eMarketer is a research and online industry resource that publishes data on all aspects of online including search. <i>Top Tip: subscribe to eMarketer's daily newsletter to keep up to date with all the current news</i>	<a href="http://www.emarketer.com">www.emarketer.com</a>
ClickZ	One of the most comprehensive sources for data on search engine marketing (as well as other mediums). This site has some of the industry's leading authors as well as an up to date resources section for worldwide data	<a href="http://www.clickz.com">www.clickz.com</a>

Search Engine Watch	Search Engine Watch is the first port of call for most search marketers for finding information. Providing a free and members only section, this site is one of the most credible sites and is run by Danny Sullivan, arguably the number 1 and most reputable expert in search	<a href="http://www.searchenginewatch.com">www.searchenginewatch.com</a>
Pay Per Click Analyst	PPCA is a site that lists reviews and commentary on all pay for placement engines in both the UK and the USA. Additional articles written by industry professionals makes this site a useful resource	<a href="http://www.payperclickanalyst.com">www.payperclickanalyst.com</a>
SEMPO	SEMPO, or the Search Engine Marketing Professional Organization, is the industry resource for search marketers. Members of the site contribute news, reviews, updates and articles and SEMPO conducts research into all aspects of the market. A very useful site	<a href="http://www.sempo.org">www.sempo.org</a>
What's New In Marketing	A site created by the Chartered Institute of Marketing. The audience of this site is primarily UK focused. News, review and information about all things new to marketing include articles written about search marketing	<a href="http://www.wnim.com">www.wnim.com</a>
New Media Age	The UK's strongest resource for all news online, this site lists good data about the market and articles and data on search engine marketing	<a href="http://www.nma.co.uk">www.nma.co.uk</a>
Marketing Sherpa	A great research company that publishes useful documentation on a regular basis. Highly recommend buying: <i>Search Marketing Metric Guide</i> – this is one of the most useful documents of collated industry data available	<a href="http://www.marketingsherpa.com">www.marketingsherpa.com</a>

Since the Google IPO, the search engine industry has been present in nearly every business magazine and newspaper on a regular basis. For this reason the following is recommended: keeping up to date with news and reviews by reading beyond the sites listed above and addressing the business press on a regular basis.

## Research resources

The following research tools are the most important aspects of planning and forecasting an accurate search engine marketing plan. Most of these are free and available for all to use but in some instances a user account is required. If this is the case it will be indicated as such.

### Keyword Suggestion Tools (most commonly used)

Resource Name	Description	URL (if applicable)
Overture Suggestion Tool	A useful tool for determining keyword suggestions and the number of searches in specific markets	US: <a href="http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/">http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/</a>  UK: <a href="http://inventory.uk.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/">http://inventory.uk.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/</a>
Google Sandbox	Google's suggestion tool that provides suggestions for new and improved keywords for a campaign	<a href="https://adwords.google.com/select/main?cmd=KeywordSandbox">https://adwords.google.com/select/main?cmd=KeywordSandbox</a>
MIVA Suggestion Tool	MIVA's keyword suggestion tool that provides suggestions for keywords and number of searches	<a href="http://www.miva.com/uk/">http://www.miva.com/uk/</a>

## Bid Price tools (most commonly used)

Resource Name	Description	URL (if applicable)
Eurekster	A great website for intuitive searches rather than just contextual	<a href="http://www.eurekster.com">http://www.eurekster.com</a>
Overture's Bid Price Tool	A tool for showing all advertisers and bid prices on a particular term	US: <a href="http://uv.bidtool.overture.com/d/USm/search/tools/bidtool/">http://uv.bidtool.overture.com/d/USm/search/tools/bidtool/</a> UK: <a href="http://uv.bidtool.overture.com/d/UKm/search/tools/bidtool/">http://uv.bidtool.overture.com/d/UKm/search/tools/bidtool/</a>
Google's Keyword Estimator	A tool that allows for estimated clicks and costs for different max bid prices. NOTE: a Google AdWords™ account is required	<a href="https://adwords.google.com/select/TrafficEstimatorSandbox">https://adwords.google.com/select/TrafficEstimatorSandbox</a>

## Complementary texts within *E-Marketing Essentials* series

The following text is a sister book within the series that focuses on the 'how to' aspects of getting a site listed within the engines. This book is recommended for further clarification of some of the more tactical aspects of a search marketing plan.

*Marketing Through Search Optimization* (2003) by Alex Michael and Ben Salter. Elsevier. ISBN 0 7506 5979 3





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