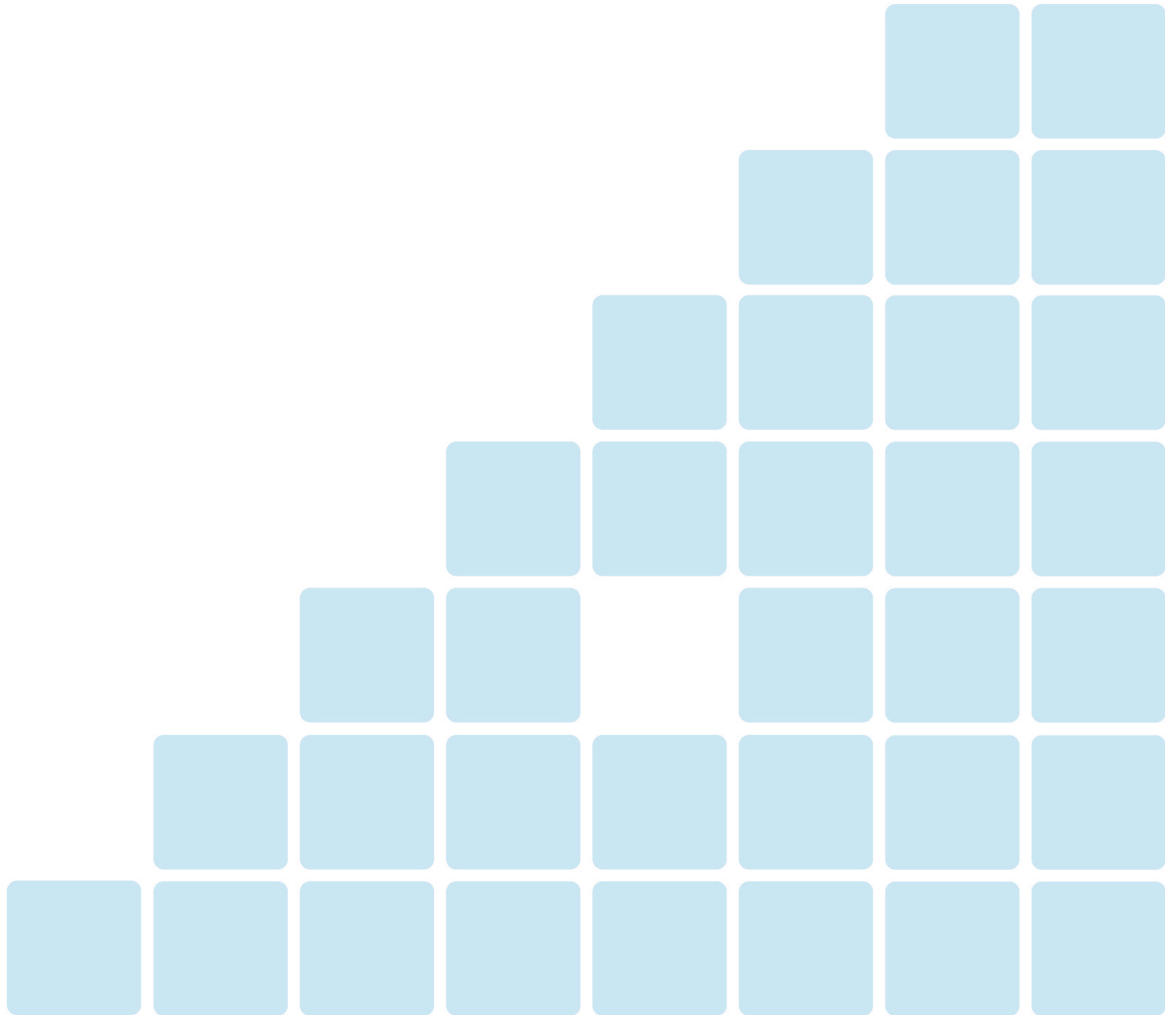


White Paper

Search Engine Marketing for eCommerce

mountain
media ®



What is Search Engine Marketing?

Search Engine Marketing (SEM), also called Internet Marketing or Search Marketing is used to describe acts associated with researching, submitting and positioning a Web site within search engines to achieve maximum exposure and top rankings, particularly when a user performs a keyword search using terms and phrases that are associated with your business. SEM includes things such as; search engine optimization, content authoring and refining, paid listings and other search engine related services and functions that will increase exposure and traffic to your Web site.

Search Engine Marketing for eCommerce

Search Engine Marketing has become an increasingly competitive segment of business in the Web industry and particularly among ecommerce vendors. Although SEM can serve as a key marketing driver for any online business, it is an especially powerful tool for ecommerce sites because ecommerce sites generally have lower traffic and higher income per visitor than a content site. This means that even a small increase in traffic can create a large increase in revenues. Thus making it very cost effective for an ecommerce vendor to invest marketing dollars on search engine marketing as a regular part of their business's marketing plan and initiatives.

One important distinction when optimizing an ecommerce site versus a content site is that your site should be setup to use search engine friendly URLs and meaningful identifiers. Most ecommerce sites are database driven and most shopping cart solutions are not search engine friendly. This can present a problem because search engines may have trouble navigating your product pages. If a search engine indexes your home page rather than your product pages, you may lose out on key traffic because people often search for exact product names or brand names. Mountain Media's "Mountain Commerce" was one of the very first shopping carts to be designed as 'search engine friendly' and remains one of the most robust on the market today.

Also of significant importance with ecommerce sites is the proper optimization of image data to assist the Search Engines in identifying the key focus of your individual product pages. Using correct identifiers in the image code builds relevancy strength for each individual product page and will provide further boosting in Search Engine rankings. Mountain Commerce makes it easy to manage and edit your product images to make sure you're getting the most out of your product pages.

Why Quarterly Marketing?

Search Engine Optimization is an ongoing process as Search Engines regularly change their search algorithms and rank certain elements of Web sites with more importance and other elements with less importance than previously. Because search engines alter their algorithms and metabolize Web site content so frequently, it is highly recommended that you perform quarterly SEM sessions (every 90 days) to maintain or improve your rankings.

It is simply not enough to ensure that your site ranks high when the initial site optimization kicks-in. You must constantly stay a few steps ahead of the competition—who are going after the same keywords that you are. So, even if your site has top rankings for many phrases, SEM will be required to maintain those rankings.

It is also important to consistently expand your Web sites' content to target new relevant phrases as well as developing off-site content and linking strategies. You'll then need to engage in ongoing SEM to help focus on converting your visitors to consumers once you've driven them to your store.

Search Engine Marketers work hard to discover new marketing opportunities to drive relevant traffic to your site every day. Attracting visitors by authoring optimized rich content is only part of the equation. This content has to effectively convert visitors into customers by placing “call to action” elements on the page.

Linking

One of the factors that search engines use to determine the value of a Web site is the number and quality of other Web sites that link to it. Several other factors help determine a site's importance including the age of the site, the relevance of the site's material, and the amount of credible links which point back to that site.

This structuring is commonly referred to as “Link Popularity” and the process of improving link popularity is referred to as “Link Building”. Most experts will agree that other than Search Engine Optimization, there is probably no other single more significant factor in the ranking of a Web site than Link Popularity.

There are many strategies to obtaining links, and you need to make sure that the links coming to your site are from trusted, relevant sources. It does not benefit your site to have links coming from sites are in no way related to the content on the page being linked to. If you are trying to build your link popularity for a page about 'dog bones', than an effective strategy would be to request links from other dog-related sites.

Once the links have been obtained, it is crucial to the success of the link building campaign that the links be presented to the Search Engines in a way that allows them to distinguish the keyword focus of the individual links. One of the more important elements of this is the 'anchor text' (the string of text containing the link). You want to make sure that the anchor text contains the target keyword phrase in order to gain increased credit for that link. As an example, if your link says Click Here For Dog Bones, with the link on the text 'Click Here', you will not receive nearly as much credit for your site about Dog Bones as you would if the link was placed on the text “Dog Bones”.

Directory Placements

Sometimes mistaken for search engines, directories are collections of Web sites that have

been arranged into relevant categories. Popular directories like Yahoo! can serve as excellent starting points for navigating the Internet. They can also serve as a valuable resource for online businesses looking for ways to drive more traffic to their sites.

Directories are important tools in building link popularity and, as a result, help improve a site's search engine ranking. They are an excellent source of inbound, one-way links, which are the most powerful types of links to help build link popularity.

Extreme caution should be taken when choosing which directories to submit to. Unfortunately for individuals in the Search Engine Optimization field, the majority of the directories found online are considered to be spam by the Search Engines, and can result in a strike against your ranking if you are submitted to them. Mountain Media has identified over 50 search-engine friendly web directories that will pass only positive ranking to your site, and as the web continues to grow and evolve, we will continue to identify and submit to the 'best of the best'.

Search Engine Marketing Services

It is important to select an experienced and professional Search Engine Marketing team to successfully perform the services that your site requires. Every online business is different and should be treated uniquely when it comes to a Search Marketing Plan. You should find a qualified service provider who understands this and who is willing to work with you to understand your business and market your site properly. Mountain Media offers the following services as part of its Quarterly Marketing Programs:

- The development of an "Annual Strategic Plan" setting forth goals for the marketing project
- Traffic Analysis & Keyword research
- Web Site visibility reports
- Opportunity Identification
- Fine-tuning of keyword density and frequency on previously optimized pages
- Implementation of measures to improve conversion rates on existing pages
- Research on new keywords and phrases relevant to your target market
- Authoring & optimization of additional content pages targeting new keyword phrases
- Developing off-site content with back-links
- Increasing site's link popularity by accumulating additional backward links
- Quarterly Marketing Status Reports
- Inclusion in Google SiteMaps services

For More Information

To learn more about Mountain Media's Search Engine Marketing Services or other Mountain Media solutions, please visit www.mountainmedia.com or call 877-583-0300.