

Winning the Search Engine Wars!

By Lee Traupel

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Creating and building effective Search Engine marketing campaigns is like trying to nail jello to the wall! The challenge can be daunting to many, requiring very specialized knowledge of process that must be blended with unique and disparate technology. Here is some insight gained from years of experience providing these services to clients.

SE marketing is very effective in driving qualified traffic to a web site - over 85% of global surfers utilize Search Engines to find goods and services.

What can you expect for Search Engine ranking via back end conversions or desired responses? There is no “silver bullet” answer to this question; we’ve seen results vary from a low of 1.4% to a high of 22%. You’ll make a dangerous assumption if you measure results purely by focusing solely on SE marketing – your back end response mechanisms (sales rep interaction, ecommerce fulfillment, newsletter signup, web site, etc.) will greatly affect the ROI – assess and critique from a holistic perspective.

Its a zero sum game if you use any of the low cost “we submit to thousands” of search engines service companies - these submissions do very little to drive viable rankings. If you aren’t achieving rankings in the top 20-30 (page 1-3) listings then you’re wasting marketing resources.

Don’t make the mistake of focusing solely on Search Engine marketing to drive market awareness (online branding) and revenue – develop mutually reinforcing processes that are synergistic by utilizing Directory submissions, Usenet/Newsgroup seeding, Newsletter sponsorships, Opt-in e-mail, PR and other offline marketing processes.

Stringent keyword analysis for HTML text is one of the underlying foundations of a successful Search Engine Ranking campaign – it’s analogous to the importance of ad copy for a conventional print campaign. Most good SE firms use a commercial database service like WordTracker which enable them to analyze the relative popularity of keywords and then build a submissions and optimization process around the selected keywords.

The actual Title for your Index and Interior pages will also have a significant impact on whether or not a campaign works. It needs to be the right length, typically 10-20 words, have no hyperbole and pique a searcher’s curiosity.

Contrary to endless marketing hype there are no quick solutions in this form of interactive marketing – it will take at least 1-2 months before you see any immediate results. And, for significant results; i.e. page 1-3 listings via top tier engines add another 2-3 months on top of this on average.

Web site content development impacts good SE rankings – the more the better. Develop content which is relevant to keywords. We use linguistic analysis software for our clients and then build a standalone “stealth web site” which has content expressly designed for SE spiders (bots). But, this level of sophistication and proprietary process is expensive and time-consuming, but very effective.

Remember the Armand Hammer quote about Russia? “An enigma wrapped inside a box buried deep in the ocean.” This is apropos to the Search Engine world, as the top tier SE’s all change their submission rules and algorithms on a regular basis. So, hire a SE firm that understands the market – or be prepared to invest a great deal of time to achieve tangible results.

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