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## Search Engine Marketing How Google Changed The Way People Buy

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Search engines have changed the way buyers buy. Buyers no longer have to go to consumer shows, buy magazines or turn on the TV to learn about what they want, because nowadays information is easily accessible on websites. Search engine marketing (SEM), including pay-per-click (PPC) and Search engine optimization (SEO) reaches buyers when they are researching a purchase and indeed ready to buy.

So what's the difference? When you put key words in Google, or any other search engine, you get pages of search results. The results at the top in a highlighted colored box, and the links at the right of the page are referred to as **paid search results or PPC (part of SEM)**, which is a result of paying for key words. The other links, down the left side of the page, are referred to as organic search engine **results or SEO**, which is a result of several things such as how your site is designed and programmed, the content you have on your site, and how you are linked to other sites.

This form of marketing was once considered a niche, but search engine marketing (and optimization) is now as main stream as print, radio or TV advertising. Here are some noteworthy facts about online search behaviors you should be aware of:

1. Forbes.com reported in '07 that nearly 58% of C-level executives we're doing their own research. (Translation: Luxury buyers are online)
2. Enquiro reported in '08 that more than 60% of online business to consumer research was done within a month of purchase. (Translation: Long buying cycles are a thing of the past)
3. Marketing Sherpa reported in '08 that between 20% and 30% of search traffic volume goes to sponsored (paid) search ads. (Translation: People do click on those ads)

### **Why you should allocate some of your marketing budget for SEM**

Search engine marketing is the new direct marketing. Buyers are going to the search engines to do their research and to buy. Here are some benefits to search engine marketing:

1. It's Measurable - done simply with website visitor tracking software
2. It's Flexible - changes are easily made on the fly
3. It's Global - and visible 24/7

#### 4. It's **Easy to Prove ROI** - because it's measurable

Which is better?

If you're reading this you may be wondering if you should be doing either paid per click search marketing (PPC) or organic search engine marketing (SEO). In both my experiences, the client and agency side, **the more successful strategy incorporates both tactics**. Here are my favorite reasons to do both PPC and SEO:

1. If your website is new - SEO takes time to pay dividends
2. Immediacy - one can launch a PPC campaign in an afternoon
3. Improved conversion rates - organic and paid listings build your brand
4. Owning your space - an organic and paid listing take two listings away from your competitors on the search results page
5. Reach - expand your list targeted keywords with long tail and adjunct keyphrases
6. Testing - Learn quickly with PPC and apply it to your organic effort
7. It's measurable - easily implemented with tracking metrics
8. Your competitors are already doing it - why wouldn't you?

#### **How do I get started?**

**PPC** - Don't buy into the mantra, "I never click on those ads", because you believe it. There is a reason why Google has the largest market cap of any company in the U.S. People do click on those ads. If done effectively, paid search ads provide a positive ROI. Setting up a paid search campaign is as easy as going to <http://www.google.com/adwords>. Be cautious though, there are a lot of money pits one can fall into when advertising on Google. It helps to organize everything into "keyword buckets" and write your ads relevant to those "keyword buckets". That's the biggest trap people fall into. If it's relevant and organized, it will work.

**SEO** - In my next posting I'll get more into the details of an effective organic and paid search strategy. In the meantime, one element (of 3) of an organic strategy is content development. No doubt, you probably think of yourself as an authority on your destination or property. You probably are, however, have you provided your visitors with the wealth of knowledge you possess on your website? Dense, rich, compelling content on your website, not only serves your site visitors, but the search engines too. Become an authority on your destination because there is no such thing as "SEO magic pixy dust". Start writing!

Is your website listed on Google for your most important keywords? If they're not, or if you're not sure, then I welcome you to email or call us for a consultation. You can contact Melanie Alexander at [melanie@maacq.com](mailto:melanie@maacq.com).