

SEO/SEM in a Nutshell

A white paper by Blake Newman, [inQbation™](http://www.inQbation.com)
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Overview

Back in 1995, I picked up a book titled, "[World Wide Web Directory](#)". In the time that it took to create and publish this book, the number of websites had already grown by about 10%. It was out of date within weeks and obsolete within months. It didn't take long to establish a demand for a dynamic directory and indexed search of the world wide web (WWW). This was the impetus for online search engines.

Search engines exist to help manage and organize massive amounts of information accessible over the Internet, which continually change on a minute-by-minute basis, so that website visitors can find exactly what they are looking for in the shortest amount of time and effort.

The leading search engines ([Google™](#), [Yahoo®](#), and [Live™](#)) have developed proprietary algorithms to rank, sort, prioritize, and determine which websites deliver the most relevant content for any given keyword phrase. They constantly tweak their algorithms to improve the accuracy of their search results and, at the same time, discourage search engine manipulation.

Online Marketing

Online marketing includes affiliate marketing, direct e-mail, reputation management, brand management, brand development, website analytics, paid placement, social networking, domaining, copywriting, content development, and lead generation.

There are proactive steps that can be taken to increase the chances that a particular website will be found given a focused set of keyword phrases. These activities are broadly characterized as Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and they fall underneath a larger umbrella called Search Engine Marketing (SEM), which in turn falls underneath an even broader category called Online Marketing.

Search Engine Marketing (SEM)

SEM is a broad set of online marketing activities, based on empirical studies of search engine results, to promote particular websites within search engine results pages for particular keyword phrases, concepts, and categories. SEM activities include:

- Search engine optimization (SEO)
- Pay per click (PPC)

Keyword Phrase Development

Probably the most important step in Search Engine Marketing is targeting the right keyword phrases to focus on. In general, there are two types of keywords:

1. Short-head, broad key words
2. Long-tail, focused keyword phrases

Typically, in the early stages of the consumer's research and buying cycle, they will begin their research using short, generic, open-ended, broad key words. Later on, as the consumer becomes more educated, sophisticated, and ready to buy or act, they will tend to use longer, more precisely focused, long-tail keyword phrases.

Depending on where you want to be or get discovered in the life cycle of that consumer helps you determine which keywords you need to focus your efforts.

Our Words versus Their Words

If you want people to find your website then you need to focus your efforts on the keywords that your prospective website visitors might use to find you, NOT the words that you would use to describe yourself. The following table illustrates the difference between our words and their words:

Words We Use	Keywords They Use
Domestic Professional	Cleaning Lady, Maid
Image Management System	Photo Gallery
Automotive Repair Technician	Mechanic
Physician's Assistant	Nurse
Corporate Icon	Logo
Website Development Professional	Web Designer
Holistic Meditational Therapist	Yoga Teacher
Image and Beauty Consultant	Makeup Artist

Table 1 - Keyword Phrase Development

Do you see the difference?

So, as you prepare your website content, be conscious of the laymen's terms that your perspective clients might [Google](#)™ to find you, your competitors, and other websites or services like yours. If you have any doubts, pick up the phone and call some of your best clients. Ask them, "if you were to Google 2-3 words to find somebody like me but had never heard of me, what words would you use?"

Acting on your Keywords

Once you have these keywords in mind, you can take the next steps towards search engine marketing. For immediate results, establish and launch a Pay Per Click (PPC) campaign, otherwise known as Sponsored Links ([Google™](#)) and Sponsored Results ([Yahoo®](#)).

PPC campaigns are valuable for a few reasons.

1. They allow you to quickly test ad copy, messages, and landing pages
2. They help you determine which keyword phrases are in highest demand
3. They help you discover which keyword phrases are converting into clicks
4. They give you instant exposure, immediate results, and traction
5. They are controllable, you can set budget limits, turn it off, and turn it on
6. They give you precise measurements of key performance indicators
7. They help you determine the value or worth of optimization keywords

PPC campaigns do have drawbacks however:

1. PPC can quickly drain your wallet and rack up your credit card
2. PPC is vulnerable to click-fraud, abuse, and anti-competitive behavior
3. PPC results go away the minute that your money runs out
4. PPC is more like renting word rather than investing in a word

Emphasis on Conversion, not just Traffic

It is one thing to drive traffic to a site but quite another to compel visitors to buy. Consequently, conversion is enhanced by two primary methods:

1. Controlled landing pages relevant to specific PPC keyword searches
2. Emphasis on long-tail keyword phrases rather than single, generic words

By sending website visitors to controlled landing pages, they are more satisfied with the search results, less likely to back out, and more likely to buy. By emphasizing long-tail keyword phrases, you target those in the later stages of the buying cycle.

Natural, organic, search engine optimization

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) involves deliberate activities to ensure that your website emphasizes certain keywords so that the world knows that your pages are about. The frustrating aspect to SEO is that there is no guarantee that [Google™](#) or any other search engine will index or rank your site. In addition, it could takes several months, if ever, for you to achieve your desired results.

SEO activities include:

1. On page optimization
2. Content development
3. Link building
4. Site submission

On page optimization includes the following activities:

- Page title (title, meta tag)
- Page headers (h1, h2, h3 tags)
- Un-Ordered lists (bulleted list), Ordered or Numbered Lists
- Bold (strong tags)
- Hyper links (especially the anchor text)
- Images (alt and title tags)

Website Analytics

You can't manage what you don't measure. We typically manage our search engine marketing and search engine optimization efforts through the use of third party tools such as:

- Web Analytics ([Google™](#), [WebTrends](#), [Omniture](#), [ClickTracks](#), etc)
- Traffic Rankings ([Alexa](#), [StatBrain](#))
- PPC Campaign Reports ([Google™](#), [Yahoo®](#))

The types of key performance indicators (KPIs) and website metrics that we may be looking for are:

- Number of visits
- Unique visitors
- Page views
- Time on site
- Bounce rate
- Browser capabilities
- Traffic sources
- Referring sites
- Keywords used to find your site
- Navigation analysis
- Landing page optimization
- Click patterns
- Conversion goals
- Abandonment rate
- Traffic rank
- Page rank
- Trends over time

Summary

Search engine marketing, search engine optimization, and getting ranked high on [Google](#)[™] is not necessarily luck, chance, or happenstance. There is definitely a science, based on empirical studies of website analytics, to help us determine the best practices to proactively promote websites and gain positive exposure across search engines.

However, there is also an art to online marketing, which involves a study of consumer behavior. If you don't know what keywords your prospective website visitors may use to find somebody like you if they have never heard of, then you cannot effectively optimize your online marketing efforts.

It takes time, skill, tenacity, creativity, resourcefulness, technical skills, and resources to effectively compete online. Certainly, there are basic tasks and activities that a novice can exercise to make positive steps towards SEO and SEM. However, just like anything, in order to be great or highly effective at something, it takes a significant commitment in time, learning, and development.

Professional resources exist to help supplement your own internal SEO activities. However, it does pay to know and understand the basics of SEM and SEO. I hope that this SEM/SEO white paper has helped you grasp the basics and take the next step towards online marketing.

About the author

Blake Newman is the founder of [inQbation](#)[™], a website design company that specializes in start-ups and emerging businesses. [inQbation](#)[™] is on the leading edge of online marketing and web development. It seeks to help professionals and businesses catapult their organizations to new heights by delivering brilliant website strategies, world-class website designs, search engine friendly content management systems, and successful business models.

Newman has a BS degree in Business, MS degree in Information Systems and over a decade in online marketing experiences. He is a veteran of 4 successful startups and leads a global coalition of web developers. His mantra is professionals empowering professionals and he leads by innovation, ideas, and inspiration.

Newman proactively contributes to the prosperity and independence of developing companies, people, businesses, and nations. You can visit Blake Newman and his company at www.inQbation.com.

Document Information

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