SEARCH
MARKETING

Gain traffic and visibility from search engines through both paid and unpaid efforts.

RAVEN5

Unique as your customers.

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Introduction to Search Marketing

What is Search Marketing? Search marketing is the process of gaining traffic and visibility from search engines through both paid and unpaid efforts. With all contest marketing campaigns, especially short-run, we always recommend utilizing paid search to ensure you're at the top.

Search Marketing encompasses:
- SEO: Earning traffic via **unpaid/free** listings
- SEM: Buying traffic through **paid search** listings

Originally called "search engine marketing," the shorter phrase "search marketing" is now often used as the umbrella term over SEO and SEM. The longer phrase "search engine marketing" – or SEM is now typically used to describe paid search activities.

What is SEO? SEO stands for "search engine optimization". It is the process of getting traffic from the free, organic, editorial or natural results on search engines.

All major search engines such as Google, Bing and Yahoo have primary search results, where web pages and other content such as videos or local listings are shown and ranked based on what the search engine considers most relevant to users. Payment isn't involved, as it is with paid search ads.

What is SEM? Search engine marketing is the process of gaining website traffic by purchasing ads on search engines.

Below are some of the most common terms also used to refer to SEM activities:
- Paid search ads
- PPC (pay-per-click)
- PPC (pay-per-call) – some ads, particularly those served to mobile search users, may be charged by the number of clicks that resulted in a direct call from a smartphone.
- CPC (cost-per-click)
- CPM (cost-per-thousand impressions)
- Most search ads are sold on a CPC /PPC basis, but may also be sold on a CPM basis.

SEO: On Page Ranking Factors

On Page search ranking factors are within the publisher's control. What type of content do you publish? Are you providing important HTML clues that help search engines determine relevancy? How does your site architecture help or hinder search engines?

1. **Quality:** Do you provide unique content that is something of substance to visitors that they can't find on other sites?

2. **Keyword Research/Usage:** Create content utilizing keywords that are actual search terms people are using. There's no magic number or percentage of how often, just use common sense.

3. **Engagement:** How long visitors stay on your page is a factor. The "time on site" or "bounce rate" are both used by search engines to rank your page's relative value. Ensure that people are finding what they are looking for.

4. **Freshness:** Google has QDF (Query Deserves Freshness). If you're able to post something relative to your industry that happens to be a trending topic, you might see a significant boost in search ranking.

Content: Content is king. Get your content right, and you've created a solid foundation to support all of your other SEO efforts.

SEO: On Page Ranking Factors Cont'd

HTML – The underlying code used to create web pages. Search engines pick up ranking signals from specific elements. The following are the most important in achieving SEO success:

1. **Title Tag:** Without a title tag, search engines can't tell what your page is about. Google may still choose to ignore it, but you should have some uniqueness to each page's title tag.

   `<title>Your Title Here</title>`

2. **Meta Description Tag:** One of the oldest supported elements, it allows you to suggest how you'd like your pages to appear in search listings.

   `<meta name="description" content="This is an example.">`

3. **Header Tags:** Header tags are a formal way to identify key sections of a web page. If the words you want to be found for are in header tags, you have a slightly increased chance of appearing in searches for those words.

   `<h1>Your Headline</h1>`
   `<h2>Your Subheadline</h2>`

4. **Structured Data:** A standard way to annotate your content so search engines can understand it better. Structured data markup makes your content eligible for Google's Rich Snippets, Breadcrumbs or a Sitelinks Search Box.

SEO: On Page Ranking Factors Cont'd

Architecture: The right site structure can give your SEO efforts more momentum, while the wrong one can easily incapacitate them.

1. **Site Crawlability:** Search engines "crawl" websites, going from one page to another and essentially speed reading and storing an index of your website pages. Most sites don't have crawling issues, but things like JavaScript or Flash can potentially hide links, making the pages hidden from search engines. A good practice is to use sitemaps, both HTML and XML, to make it easy for search engines to crawl your site.

2. **Canonicalization:** You don't want duplicate pages posted online, as this doesn't help with your ranking. Instead, if you do have blogs/articles across multiple websites, or within the same site, you should utilize the **"rel=canonical"** tags. These let search engines know which articles are original and should be indexed while ignoring the others. The master site/pages will benefit from not being penalized, and those that come across the duplicate pages will add to the backlinks of the master.

   <link rel="canonical" href="http://www.example.com/">

3. **Site Speed:** Google has declared that faster sites get a small ranking advantage over slower sites. Nobody wants to wait around while your site loads, and a few seconds can easily cost you a conversion. Minimize load times by further compressing images and eliminating unnecessary scripts. Use Google's PageSpeed Insights to improve your speed on all devices: developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed/insights

4. **Descriptive URLs:** Having the words you want to be found for in your domain name or page URLs can increase your ranking. While not a major factor, it still plays a role in the way search engines index your page.

   Use: example.com/news-about-descriptive-URLs **instead of** example.com/news

SEO: Off The Page Ranking Factors

Off Page ranking factors are not directly in the publisher's control. Search engines use these because they learned early on that relying on publisher controlled signals didn't always yield the best results.

1. **Link Quality:** Search engines count all the links pointing at websites with some exceptions, but they don't look at them equally. They instead provide more weight to links that are considered to be better quality.

2. **Link / Anchor Text:** The words within a link or the anchor text are seen by search engines as the way a website is describing another. You often can't control the words people use to link to you, so capitalize on your opportunities to influence anchor text, within reason.

3. **Number of Links:** The more links you have from multiple sites versus multiple links from the same site the better. However, the quality of these links still comes into play here. Search engines can easily downgrade your rank if they think you're spamming your links on random sites.

4. **Social Reputation:** Search engines don't view all social accounts in the same way. Ideally you want to gain references from social accounts with good reputations. Having your own social presence that is well regarded is important as well.

5. **Social Shares:** Quality shares are ideal, but being shared widely on social networks is still helpful. It's quite clear with Google+ shares as they have a clear impact on your ranking.

6. **Authority:** No one knows for sure how search engines calculate authority, although many speculate that there are multiple factors such as types of links your site receives, or social references and engagement metrics. Negative reviews may also hurt site authority.

SEO: Off The Page Ranking Factors

7. **History:** Search engines take into consideration the fact that websites do change, usually for the better. Posting off topic, or things that are out of the ordinary for your site may set off a red flag. However, a good track record should help you, espescially for older sites, while a new site may have to wait weeks, months or even longer to index.

8. **Identity:** How does someone know that you're the official page of the company/service mentioned? Identity can take many forms, from Google's Authorship program to social profile verification on Facebook and Twitter.

9. **Country:** If your site isn't deemed relevant to a particular country, you'll have no chance of showing up when country personalization happens. If you feel you should be relevant, then you'll probably have to work on your international SEO.

10. **Locality:** As with country personalization, if you want to appear when someone gets city-specific results, you need to ensure your site is relevant to that city.

11. **Personal History:** Search engines track what someone has been searching for and click on in their search results.

12. **Social Connections:** Someone's social connections can easily influence what they see on Google, Bing, and Yahoo. If a user is connected to a friend, and that friend has reviewed a shop or shared an article on a topic related to your brand, then the page may rank higher for that user.

SEO: Violations & Ranking Penalties

There are some techniques that search engines deem as "spam" or "black hat", which could result in your pages receiving a ranking penalty or worse, being banned from search engines entirely.

1. **Thin Content:** This domain level penalty targets sites with a significant amount of so-so content. You need not just relevant, but valuable content for the user.

2. **Ads / Top Heavy Layout:** Google doesn't want users to get frustrated with sites that have an over abundance of ads before content. Don't make your users search for your content, ensure it's easy to find.

3. **Keyword Stuffing:** One of the oldest spam tactics in the books. Search engines say to use the words you want to be found for on your pages. Just don't get too carried away with this or you'll be penalized.

4. **Hidden Text:** Search engines don't like anything hidden. They want to see what the user sees. Don't hide text by blending the colours together, making the font super small, or even display:none in your css.

5. **Cloaking:** Rigging your site so that search engines are shown different versions than what humans see. That's cloaking and search engines don't like it. It's seen as a deliberate attempt to manipulate search results.

6. **Paid Links:** Google doesn't want you buying or selling links in a way that passes on search engine ranking credit, period. Doing so can lead to a ban from Google.

7. **Link Spam:** Posting links back to your site on miscellaneous blogs and forums aren't going to help you. In fact, besides annoying those who are commenting and posting relevant content, you're also getting flagged by Google and Bing.

8. **Piracy / DMCA Takedowns:** Google now penalizes sites who received a large number of Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) requests. It's unlikely that most sites will have to deal with this, but you should handle these immediately once you see them in your Google Webmaster Tools.

SEM for Beginners

We will always recommend a paid search network that will best suit your contest marketing campaign to gain leverage fast. **Google AdWords** is the most popular paid search platform used by search marketers, followed by Yahoo! Bing Network, Facebook and Advertising.com. Let's review the top networks:

+ **Traffic volume:** Google commands a huge percentage of search traffic, giving you access to millions of consumers that are actively searching for your product or service.

+ **Top ad positions immediately:** There is no waiting game to reach the top position. If you are willing to outbid the competition, your ads can be sitting at the top positions right away.

– **Clicks can be expensive:** You will typically pay a higher cost per click (CPC) on AdWords when compared to other pay-per-click platforms.

– **Learning curve:** AdWords can take time to fully grasp, and users that don't fully understand how it works, will end up paying higher CPCs than others that have optimized their campaigns.

Yahoo! Bing Network. This platform gives advertisers access to the majority of the search market that isn't using Google.

+ **Lower CPCs:** Keywords that are expensive on AdWords will usually be affordable on the Yahoo! Bing Network. Lower CPCs add a great opportunity to test keywords before using on AdWords.

+ **Great customer service:** If you have a question about your campaign, it's easy to get someone on the phone that will gladly answer questions. This is great for advertisers new to PPC marketing.

– **Lower search traffic:** The search volume is considerably lower when compared to Google AdWords.

– **Limited growth:** Since the search volume is fairly low, it can be hard to grow some campaigns the same way you can on AdWords.

SEM for Beginners Cont'd

Facebook. The largest social network allows you to introduce your product or service to the more than 1 billion users that currently use it. Over 50 percent of all active Facebook users visit daily, providing you a massive audience to interact with.

+ **Several targeting options:** Facebook allows you to target specific demographics, geographical regions and user interests. If you wanted to target men between the ages of 21 to 35 that live in Miami and "like" the Miami Dolphins, it can easily be done.

+ **Largest consumer database:** As mentioned before, you have direct access to everyone that is on Facebook, which right now is the largest and most powerful social platform in existence.

– **Lower CTR:** The click-through-rate is typically much lower than a paid ad triggered by a search query on Google, Yahoo or Bing. Facebook users aren't actively seeking your product or service.

– **Needs constant refreshing:** If you are targeting a small user base, then you will need to constantly switch up your ad copy and images to avoid ad fatigue.

Advertising.com. A division of AOL allowing advertisers to target & adjust bids on websites they want to appear on.

+ **Top websites:** The website inventory available through the Sponsored Listing program is impressive. You are in complete control over which websites your ads appear on.

+ **Affordable visibility:** You will notice your ads receive a lot of impressions as they're on websites that receive millions of page views every day. Top bids can be high, but based on the volume of traffic these sites receive, it's possible to make minimum bids and receive exposure.

– **Lower conversion rates:** Since you're targeting specific websites, not specific users, conversion rates will be lower when compared to clicks from individuals seeking your product or service.

– **Lower click-through rates:** CTR will generally be lower than PPC ads on the search engines, since you are attracting impulse clicks.
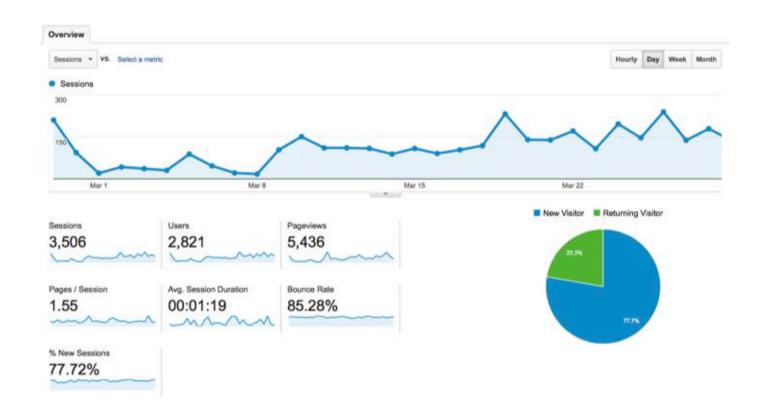
Google Analytics

Google Analytics is a free web analytics service that provides statistics and basic analytical tools for search engine optimization (SEO) and marketing purposes. The service is available to anyone with a Google account. Measurement and tracking of clicks, where visitors go and how long they stay is of utmost importance. It allows you to review and make adjustments if necessary to your SEO, paid SEM and even web content.

Features include:

- Data visualization tools including a dashboard, scorecards and motion charts, which display changes in data over time.
- Segmentation for analysis of subsets, such as conversions.
- Custom reports.
- Email-based sharing and communication.
- Integration with other Google products, such as AdWords.

Visit google.com/analytics to get started.

Mobile Optimization

According to SimilarWeb's State of Mobile Web US 2015 report, 56% of consumer website traffic is now from mobile devices. This report was based on analysis of the top 10,000 US websites in 24 different categories. **The power of mobile is undeniable, and will continue to grow. Here's what you can do to ensure your business generates traffic via mobile:**

• Ensure your website is mobile-friendly across all brands of devices and operating systems.
• Organize the content of your website in a manner that is easily navigable for visitors to quickly guide them along the path to purchase.
• If cost effective and beneficial to your brand, create an app that makes it easy for brand loyal customers to make repeat visits and purchases.
• Keep informed on the constantly evolving mobile advertising landscape.

Use Google Developers Mobile-Friendly test to determine what changes are required for your website: google.com/webmasters/tools/mobile-friendly
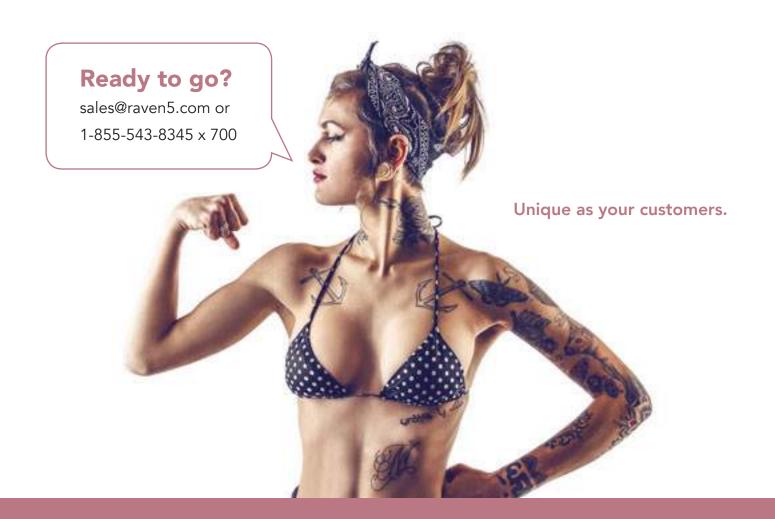
Mobile Site vs. Responsive Design

	Mobile	Responsive
Rendering Experience	Essentially a copy of your website, where the server does the work to deliver a specialized version of your page that's built for mobile screens. *Can be a faster choice instead of reworking your website to fit. Although it doesn't necessarily mean it will be affordable.*	Your device does the work and automatically adjusts according to screen size (large or small) and orientation (landscape or portrait). *Can take longer to convert an entire website but with less ongoing maintenance once set up, this can be a more affordable option.*
Domain Protection	With a mobile site, you must create a different domain (many companies choose to use "m.domain.com"). *This can dilute domain traffic as a sub-domain is viewed as a separate website.*	Responsive design lets you keep your own domain—nothing changes except the code. *A better solution to maintain a single site preserving the canonical URL, avoid redirects, and simplify sharing.*
Link Equity	Because a mobile site uses a separate domain, links shared from mobile browsers will not count as search link equity toward your primary site. *Not as good for search.*	Since responsive design simply embeds new code on the back-end of your website, your company's link equity is preserved. *Better option for search.*
Future Ready	Re-working of a mobile site might be needed in order to stay current with next-gen devices. *Could be higher maintenance and expense.*	Forward thinking, because once added to site, it will work on next-gen devices without having to be overhauled each time. *A better return on your investment.*

Summary

In closing, if you hope to be found online, you need to ensure that your SEO is on point. If you want an even better guarantee that you'll be found online, you need to utilize SEM on the appropriate networks that your target market is on. Although generally Google is where you'll find most, you may find that Yahoo! Bing or Advertising.com perform better. We'd like to leave you with 3 of Google's high-level recommendations for success with SEM for 2016:

1. Connect with Your Customers
2. Get Mobile
3. Track Everything

Ready to go?
sales@raven5.com or
1-855-543-8345 x 700

Unique as your customers.