

Why Search Engine Marketing is Required: A Look Back in Time

Twenty years ago, if you asked someone what was meant by the term 'Search Engine Marketing', the answer you'd get would maybe be a blank stare and perhaps a tentative answer involving using engines to market something? These days, however, the answer would be entirely different.

The term search engine marketing was first projected by Danny Sullivan, editor-in-chief of Search Engine Land (a blog covering information and news on search engines and marketing) in 2001 as a term to cover all the activities involved. It's a method of Internet marketing that seeks to promote websites to the top the search engine result pages (SERPS) for given search terms or queries, and is an extremely profitable method of promoting your business through the Internet. Approximately one third of online shoppers use search engines to find what they are searching for, and when a user has a good experience with a website first time, they will more than likely become returning customers. This makes the Internet a large market to tap into.

However, things have not always been this way. The Internet has not always been the mine of information and online shops as it is today. The first web search engine was introduced in 1993; an engine walled Wandex (now defunct).

When Wandex appeared, others followed suit. Aliweb was also released in 1993, and then WebCrawler in 1994. WebCrawler was the first engine to allow it's users to do word searching in any webpage – this is now standard practice for modern search engines. In January 1995, Yahoo! was launched (an interesting fact - its name was chosen by the creators as they liked the definition of it - 'rude, unsophisticated, uncouth' as written in Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift). 1998 held the launch of MSN Search (now known as Live or LiveSearch) and then, in 2000, Google appeared.

Google was seen as a refreshing change; most of the engines offered the same content over and over without discrimination, so often delivering irrelevant search results. Google have always branded themselves as searching for the most relevant content possible for the user's query, and therefore are continually changing their algorithms (a sequence of instructions for completing a task; in this case crawling search results) to make them more relevant. This means users will receive better search results for their search term(s). Also, Google has always maintained a minimalist approach to their interface, unlike companies such as Yahoo! and MSN who embed their engines into a web portal, so making them slightly harder to use and navigate by the user.

With Google constantly evolving and maturing, more and more of the search traffic was drawn away from other engines to benefit from its increasingly relevant and accurate search results. In May 2008, it was announced that the domain <http://Google.com> attracted at least 135 million US visitors that month alone. Google now controls on average 80% of the search traffic online in the UK.

With this major engine online, it's no wonder the demand for search engine marketing has grown alongside it. However, it's not just a matter of creating a website and putting it online; there's a lot of work involved in getting a website to rank well. This work is best done by a professional search engine marketing company.

The role of such a company is to optimize and promote a website to increase traffic and enhance sales – this of course being the bottom line of all marketing methods across the board. This is often called Search Engine Optimisation, or SEO – improving the quality and amount of traffic driven to a website from high rankings in search engine results based on targeted keyword searches. It seems that, with the volume of users online, and especially those using Google as their primary search engine, search engine marketing is, and will continue to be, an essential part of all online retailing.

About the Author

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