Article published on March 9th 2012 | Internet

The Internet is arguably the most powerful marketing tool ever created. Many companies took advantage of the fact that the Internet became immensely popular among users since the latter part of the 1990s. In addition to its popularity, the Internet provides cost-effective marketing platforms on a much wider scale.

Internet marketing covers all forms of marketing conducted online. Companies can create websites and increase their visibility to users by utilizing the principles of search engine optimization (SEO). They can pay to have their advertisements strategically placed on websites that web users always visit, like social networking sites. If the potential customers wonâ€™t come to them, they can come to the customers by sending e-mailsâ€”as long as these e-mails donâ€™t end up in the spam folder.

One type of cutting-edge Internet marketing method is search engine marketing (SEM). This strategy uses the principles of search engine optimization (SEO), as well as paid inclusion, paid placement, and contextual advertising. SEM may be an umbrella term including SEO and other means of marketing online, or it may exclude SEO and focus solely on the paid components of online advertising.

Paid inclusion (a.k.a. sponsored listings) is a strategy where businesses pay search engines to include their company websites in the search index. This is distinguished from paid placement, where companies pay to have artificially higher rankings in search engines. Contextual advertising is performed when the content of an online ad is related to the content of the website being viewed by users.

Paid inclusion is used a lot for online business directory listings. When a user types a keyword containing a place combined with the a particular service (e.g. â€œcosmetic surgery san diegoâ€•), the use will find the names of companies that offer cosmetic surgery in San Diego listed on the first search results page. However, companies that pay to be included in the search index are not necessarily guaranteed a place on the first page.

Companies that make profits from social networking sites like Facebook typically use contextual advertising. Users â€œlikeâ€• the page of companies with Facebook pages for business because they hav tried the services of these companies before and were satisfied. For example, a user who has liked â€œanimeâ€• will find advertisements for manga (Japanese comic books) showing up on his or her profile page or news feed.

Sometimes, marketing can only reach so many people. To save resources and provider more focus to their marketing campaigns, companies use local marketing to promote products within a certain area (e.g. a single state). If you want to read articles on search engine marketing, go to searchengineguide.com.

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Article Keywords:
business directory listings, facebook pages for business, local marketing

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