Improving Internet Marketing ROI Through Search Engine Optimisation by Trevor Southwold

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Internet marketing may be a new field, but it is one that holds great potential for efficient marketing spend. Unlike print advertising, which typically costs a lot of money, internet marketing is often cheap, creating many exciting opportunities for small businesses.

Most serious enterprises now have their own website. This is the first step on the road to internet marketing success, but far too many businesses stop there and consider the job done. Having a website is half the battle, but ensuring that it generates a lot of traffic and can easily be found is where many internet marketing plans fail to deliver.

Search engine optimisation is perhaps the most vital single area for marketing investment. Studies have shown that many small and medium sized enterprises consider search engine optimisation to be the most indispensable area for marketing spend. This is because reaching potential customers on the internet is easy and it can also be very cost-effective. Purchasing advertising space in a major magazine or national newspaper can cost thousands of pounds each time, but making your website easy to find often costs far less.

Spending on search engine optimisation can generate interest in your business, but it can also have a synergistic effect on investment in other internet marketing practices. For example, a new website that is designed to encourage visitors to buy products from your company might cost a lot of money. While the design and development may yield a higher conversion rate for your business (i.e. a greater proportion of visitors to your website may purchase from you), increased traffic provided by an intelligent search engine optimisation strategy will further boost gains in total sales. By contrast, if you spend a fortune on a website redesign but your traffic figures remain low, the website redesign will provide a lower return on investment.

One of the greatest advantages of a search engine optimisation strategy is that the web has given marketing professionals the opportunity to collect detailed and specific data with unprecedented ease. Using analytical tools available for the web, it is possible for a business owner to learn the click through rate provided by certain search terms (i.e. the proportion of search users who arrive at a site after entering a particular query). It is easy to see and measure performance as a website's ranking improves within the results pages for major search engines.

When internet access first became widely available, many people heralded the end of inequality. Although this grand vision has proved to be premature, the internet has certainly levelled the playing field for many smaller businesses. Before the internet, the high costs associated with marketing prevented many smaller businesses from taking the plunge. This allowed major businesses to consolidate their market-leading positions through advertising. Today, even small businesses can reap the rewards of investing in internet marketing - in some industries, a recent start-up business can quickly begin tempting customers away from a heavyweight incumbent by appearing as an alternative within search engine results pages.

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