SEO or Paid Listings: which is More Profitable?

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The first stage of debate in the new world of the internet is coming to a conclusion and it seems that promoting a company online is essential. Search engines are dominating the way in which customers find their goods and services these days and so it is imperative for firms to contact this market before they lose out.

The next stage however is what type of marketing should they go for: Search Engine Optimisation or should they opt for hiring advertising space on a pay per click basis?

Search engine optimisation is the practice of working towards getting a client website to rank as close to the top of search engine results as possible. This means that for every search phrase websites are ranked and ordered by their perceived relevance towards it, the higher up the ranking a website is then the more likely customers are to click on it, therefore SEO's aim is to favourably manipulate those rankings. They will do this by optimising the on page material itself and then building up a back- link profile to make Google's search bots think that it is relevant.

Paid advertising hires banner spaces on the sides of popular pages that will promote a website and service. By hiring space of a web page then you know that however many hit the page is getting, those users will also see your advert. Adverts can also be bought to appear on search engine results, guaranteeing that they appear at the top of the search result page.

The argument in favour of paid adverts is their security; search engine rankings are intended to be organic, therefore hired manipulation of a web page's results are frowned upon and run the risk of being penalised by Google.

The risk of penalisation is slim however, so long as the SEO agency are relatively intelligent. So long as they can produce high quality back links and create an organic back link profile then Google will usually be absolutely fine with the practice.

The other main advantage SEO has over paid advertising is that consumers are more likely to trust search results that appear to be organic. Trust is limited online and, after decades of being swamped by television adverts, consumers are generally more cynical when it comes to clearly paid for advertising. On the other hand there appears to be a much greater weight of trust given to the likes of Google, research indicates that 77% of customers will click on an organic search result rather than a paid advert and that translates to 67% who choose organic results when making purchases.

So overall SEO is highly valuable, it gains a greater level of trust from customers and, as well as just generating clicks to the site, SEO is a broad campaign that spread the word of the company and so often customers generated will be more loyal in the long term.

Compared to the simplicity of paid banner ads SEO is a skilled art, and definitely worth it.

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