

IT PAYS TO COMBINE SOCIAL MEDIA AND SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING

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What happens when you combine Mentos with Coca Cola? A powerful explosion! The same holds true when you merge social media marketing with search engine marketing - properly integrated, your efforts are magnified tenfold. If kept separate, social media and search marketing lack synergy.

Social media marketing uses social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) to positively influence consumers about a brand. Social media marketing relies on engagement and conversation to establish trust and respect between company and consumer. This process builds a relationship that eventually leads to widespread brand recognition and improved brand perception. As you might guess, this strategy takes time and measuring progress can be challenging.

Search engine marketing promotes a web property through both search engine optimization (SEO) and search advertising (Pay-Per-Click or PPC). The goal of SEO is to improve a website's search engine ranking with "organic" means such as using appropriate keywords, improving webpage design, website structure, content, and attracting links from other websites. Although increasing search engine ranking can be time consuming, tracking incoming traffic is simple.

Search advertising seeks to attract traffic to a website through search engines by matching sponsored links with key search terms. It is the fastest way to increase website traffic and is simple to track with tools like Google Analytics.

The end game of search engine marketing is to maximize conversions, such as the purchase of a product or service, subscribing to a newsletter, joining a discussion group, and so on. In the past, using search engine marketing to deliver consumers to your doorstep (website) was sufficient to complete conversions. Today, consumers expect and demand more information about products or services before taking the plunge.

Word-of-mouth recommendations from friends and independent experts play an ever increasing role in the purchase process. Consumers search for opinions and reviews from these trusted sources. A consumer might follow tweets about the brand, look for blog commentaries about a product or service, scan reviews in discussion groups, or watch YouTube videos featuring the experiences of others.

A positive impression about a company's offering is not only desirable, but greatly increases the likelihood that a conversion (sale) will occur. However brand building

alone is insufficient to ensure consumers will be able to find and buy your product or service. To deliver consumers to your website, your offerings must appear on the first page of search engine results and your paid search advertisements need to gain top billing as well, enticing consumers to click them.

Clearly, social media and search engine marketing are both invaluable to your internet marketing efforts. The trick, then, is how to merge them effectively so that you have a common marketing message.

The first step in search engine marketing is to identify the keywords that consumers will most likely use to locate your offering. Next, you strategically include these keywords in the appropriate density and proximity on your website to improve the odds that search engines will index them in a manner which optimizes your chances of being rank at the top of search engine results. In addition, using the same keywords in content posted

elsewhere that links back to your site will increase your chances of appearing at the top of search results. Moreover, search advertising can make use of these keywords to maximize ad placement and attract clicks.

These same keywords should be an integral part of your social media marketing campaign. They can be used in articles, tweets, on your Facebook Fan Page, as descriptors for your YouTube videos, etc. This approach ensures uniformity of the message between social media and search engine marketing, resulting in a synergistic effect among your social media marketing, search engine optimization, and paid search efforts. The truth is that people are more likely to click on organic search results or a sponsored links, if they feature a recognized and trusted brand. By combining social media and search engine marketing, you can improve your search rankings, gain greater awareness of your brand, and ultimately produce superior conversion rates than you would by otherwise pursuing them separately.

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