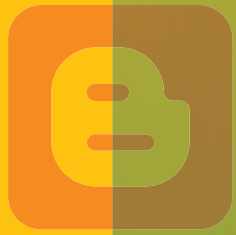


# YAHOO!



Blogger

msn

# SEARCH:

## A MUST FOR EVERY MEDIA PLAN

Internet-driven “search” has become the ultimate connection mechanism, linking buyers and sellers at a level of relevancy and immediacy never seen before.

 **myspace**  
a place for friends

By Greg Smith

# Google

You

 **flickr**  
GAMMA  
TM

“Seek, and ye shall find.”  
–Matthew 7:7

MEDIA FRAGMENTATION IS A reality that increases daily, making it impossible to reach relevant consumers in any but the broadest, most untargeted media.

In the U.S. alone, consumers can access seven broadcast networks, 95 cable networks (Cable Advertising Bureau, 2008), 19,419 magazines (American Society of Magazine Editors, 2007) and 110 million public websites (Wikipedia, March 2008).

To navigate all the information available online (and, by extension, offline), consumers have turned to search engines. Search is now the second most popular online activity after email.

Paradoxically, as media have fragmented, search solutions have consolidated. The three leaders, Google, Yahoo! Search and MSN Search, together are used for 99 percent of all searches.

How important is this to marketers? Imagine: Google is the largest single medium in history; over 500 million individuals (one in 10 humans) use this one site in any given month. Google alone has bigger daily audiences than combined TV viewers worldwide. Yet, it has no content per se – it simply connects.

Search focuses marketers' efforts by targeting just those who are seeking a specific product or service. For all of this, search marketing is underutilized or, worse, badly utilized by many marketers.

### ANOTHER ASPECT OF WEB 2.0

One way to understand the importance of search is to see how it fits with the latest generation of internet development.

Web 1.0 was the first generation. It was about building sites that were self-contained and updated. For marketers, this phase most closely represented a traditional media model because it resembled the magazine publishing model.

Right from the start, however, users (your consumers/customers) weren't satisfied with traveling from site to site to find what they needed. They wanted to customize content and access other information easily.

Web 2.0 is defined by advanced communication, connectivity and user control, social networking, live chat, folksonomies and mash-ups, virtual worlds, and mobile (not just voice).

This sort of collaboration and sharing creates a more fluid user experience, very different from nondigital media that are controlled by media and marketing companies. It makes life hell for the traditional media planner, but opens a range



67% of search click-throughs come from natural search results versus paid results.

If search is not at the top of your media spend, your media plan is flawed.

of possibilities for the contemporary marketer. Search engines were among the first examples of this. They were built on connecting and sharing information.

### SEARCH: THE FIRST MEDIA DOLLAR SPENT

No argument, no twisted media logic. If search is not at the top of your media spend, your media plan is flawed. If your media plans do not contain a search program that adequately covers the number of searches that relate to your brands, they're incomplete.

Why is search so important?

Search connects. It's the most efficient way of matching consumers' needs with products and services. Also, it makes this connection when consumers are looking for information, products or solutions.

Because of this, in the hierarchy of media targetability, search ranks at the top.

### SEARCH AS PART OF YOUR MARKETING LANDSCAPE

Search doesn't look or work like most media. So how can it fit into the media landscape?

#### 1. THE RINGING PHONE

Each search represents a request from a potential customer. If you don't pick up, a competitor will.

#### 2. A LINK IN THE CHAIN

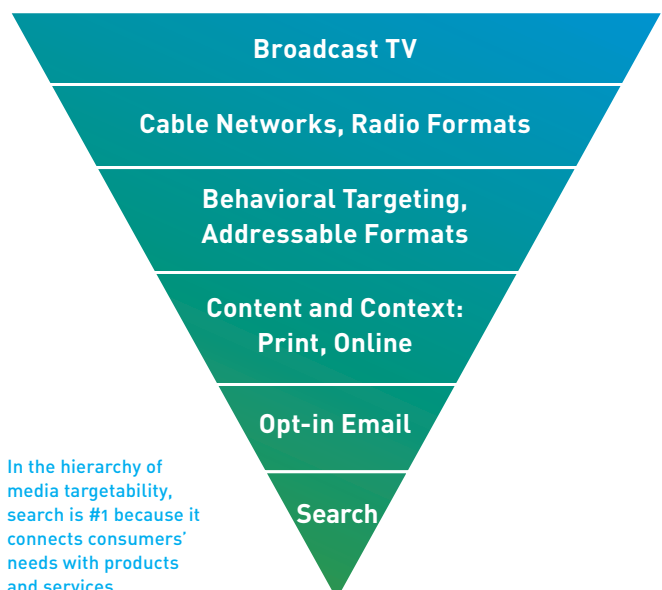
Search works best as a link in a strong marketing program:

- Consumer need for information/solutions most likely exists, but your brand may not be top of mind.
- Marketing activity can drive direct sales, but marketing also increasingly spurs interest, and consumers go online to learn more. This bump is invariably seen regardless of whose activity is the spur, yours or a competitor's.
- A powerful brand site is always needed to close the deal. If a consumer asks and you offer to answer through search results, the answer had better be satisfying.
- Your sales mechanism (direct, indirect, retailer, whatever) should be connected to pick up on these consumer inquiries.

#### PAID AND ORGANIC SEARCH: THE BASICS

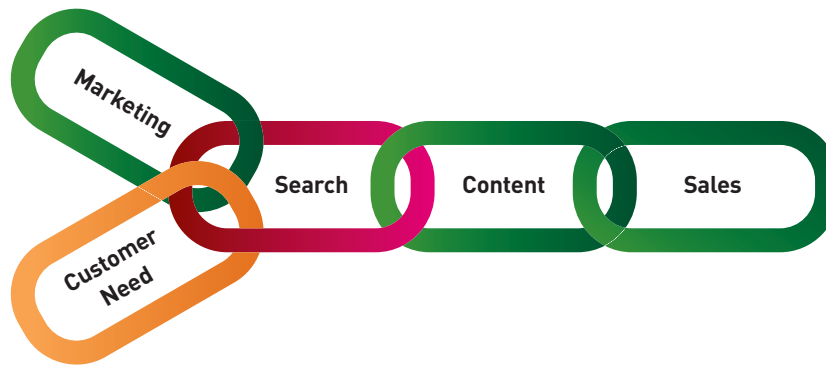
There are two primary forms of search. Most marketers use both to ensure full coverage.

Natural search engine marketing, or organic search, involves optimizing a website so that its contents will be ranked high by search engines based on their relevance to the keywords and phrases that are most suitable to their target audience. This distinction is important because targets may not search for a brand's category the same way the brand stewards perceive their brand. For example, searches for laptop computers might include the nonstandard phrase "portable computer" or the proprietary phrase "electronic notebook."



In the hierarchy of media targetability, search is #1 because it connects consumers' needs with products and services.

Marketing activity drives search, which links customers' needs with sales.



The tactics for a successful program are complex and very esoteric, but here are the three important elements of an organic search program:

### 1. KEYWORD AUDIT

The first step is to conduct an audit of the brand's position and that of its competitors across the list of core keywords. "Core" can encompass anything from several hundred to several thousand keywords and phrases, depending on the brand and category. This establishes the benchmark for optimization. The goal is to achieve a) the first listing, b) one of the top three listings or c) a listing on the first screen page.

### 2. WEBSITE OPTIMIZATION

At its foundation, organic search optimization is about how well a marketer's site is optimized for search engines. Search engine spiders find the site and index the information, so it's important that the site is search engine-friendly. This means designing features into every web page based on best practices that will make the page more relevant and thus rank the site higher under the most desirable keywords and phrases.

### 3. STEWARDSHIP AND REPORTING

Beyond website optimization, the bulk of a good organic search program involves working to modify elements that are not directly part of your site's construction. This includes dealing directly with search engines to present the case for site relevance under a particular keyword. (Contrary to common belief, human editors play a real role in reviewing web listings. A good optimization team works closely with search engine editors.)

Each search result is unique, but for marketers, the rules are always the same:

- Sixty to seventy percent of search click-throughs come from natural results as opposed to paid results.
- A Nielsen study claims searchers are three times more likely to click on the top three listings.
- Our experience is that you need to be on the first page of ranking results for both paid and organic, preferably at the top.

**Pay for performance, paid search or pay per click (PPC)** allows marketers to bid for ranked text ads placed near search terms and search results. Their position within the search results for that search term will depend *partly* on the value of their bid. These results appear at the top or right-hand side of the results page as "text links." Marketers pay only if these links are clicked on.

Assuming the message is relevant, the "pay what you like" model does much to dictate rank, since no marketer would sensibly pay more than their business model could afford (to avoid losing money on each click).

There are other factors that go into these rankings. The most important of these is "relevance." This is the difference from typical media: *the marketer must be responsible to the audience, not just pay to reach it.* For example, an SUV manufacturer may be very low in the paid search rankings (despite a high bid) for "fly-fishing" because their link is only tangentially related to the sport. This is an example of the new rules of marketing: you don't get to interrupt unless you have something relevant to offer.

### SEARCH FIVE-POINT CHECKLIST

1. Is your site "search friendly"? Is it accessible to search engines? (Type in some relevant terms, including your brand name, and see what sorts of results are returned.)
2. Do you deliver the appropriate content? If a user is searching for, say, information on automotive hybrid technology, or performance statistics for your hybrid, do they end up on your company home page, or do they get what they asked for?
3. What is your "search pathway" strategy? If someone searches for your brand or your product/service or your product/service category, what do you want to gain from that?
  - A direct sale.
  - A registration.
  - A deep brand experience.
  - Something else.
4. How is search marketing fitting into your current media plan? (Is it even in your plan?)
5. What's this traffic worth to you? What's the ROI?

### FIVE TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL SEARCH MARKETING

1. Assign responsibility for search to your marketing group, not your site build or technology group.
2. Develop a comprehensive search strategy – organic, paid, search engines and beyond.
3. Don't do this in isolation. Link this strategy with your media strategy and site strategy. If needed, link it with your sales strategy.
4. Understand what to expect from qualified traffic being driven to your brand site. Understand the expected ROI.
5. Call Neo@Ogilvy!