

Paid and Non-Paid Marketing Strategies for Search Engine Optimization

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Abstract: Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is a way to get more visitors to your website by making it appear in the top searches for a query. It is a technique to obtain a higher ranking and drive traffic in the search engines. SEO has become necessary as the internet is a fast growing space and there is a lot of competition in the market to reach a higher position in the search engine. Web presence of an organization is the best way for it to reach out to its target customers which will in turn be profitable if it is optimized, so if the name of the organization appears in the top of the search list it would be beneficial to them in increasing traffic as generally users prefer the first ten search outcomes. In this paper we have discussed about search engine optimization, paid and non paid search engine marketing strategies and the various factors which affect the SEO. Paid marketing strategies include Cost per click, Cost per impression, Adword Auction. Non Paid marketing strategies include keywords in tags and maintaining your website link structure.

Keywords: Search Engine Optimization, Paid/Non Paid Marketing Strategies, websites, page rank

1. Introduction

Search engine is an important tool to search for information on the web. The explosion in the designing of websites to reach maximum people by business sectors has been tremendously increased in the last few years. Obviously website is of no use if it is not visited. There are number of ways to promote website and reach to maximum users. To promote website through search engine results is the most effective way [1]. They are programs which search through documents and websites for a particular keyword and then lists out those documents or websites which contain those keywords. Users use search engines for queries and mostly prefer the results which are displayed on the first page. Although the exact details are not publicly known, it is generally assumed that each search engine assigns a score to each result that satisfies a Boolean search criteria and then sorts the results according to this score. Its value depends on the value of certain features of each webpage in the result set, e.g. its Page Rank score, the text similarity between the query and the document, etc. [2] SEO can be defined as a natural or rather an organic way of ensuring that a website comes out on top when someone searches for a particular product or a particular keyword. Most of the users open links which appear at the top of the search engines and think that they provide the best result for the queries which are being searched. The main aim of SEO is to increase the number of visitors who visit a website by increasing the rank of the website in the search engine results using appropriate keywords which describes the content of the website. SEO can be viewed as a group of techniques for editing web pages which will increase the visibility of the webpage which in turn will increase the ranking of the webpage. SEO is not an easy process as it requires a lot of experience and knowledge and it will be difficult if the web pages do not have a proper structure. Different search engines use different search algorithms and they are continuously being improved which makes them very volatile, so it is the duty of the SEO engineer to stay abreast with all the latest developments. More and more web pages are added to the

internet every day and everyone wants their webpage to be at the top of the search result. SEO can be broadly divided into two categories. White hat SEO and Black hat SEO. White hat SEO follows all the rules of the search engine to improve the ranking. These techniques are highly recommended to make your webpage search engine friendly. Whereas in black hat SEO the ranking of the website is improved by ways which do not comply with the rules of the search engine. It involves manipulation and deceit. Some of black hat techniques include cloaking and keyword stuffing.

2. Paid Search Engine Marketing

Paid search marketing means you advertise within the sponsored listings of a search engine or a partner site by paying either each time your ad is clicked (pay-per-click - PPC) or less commonly, when your ad is displayed (cost-per-impression - CPM). For example let us take into consideration a user types 'Guitar Strings' in the search box. On the search result page Amazon's Ad for Guitar Strings will appear first this is because Amazon paid the most for the search term 'guitar strings' and therefore Amazon appears at the top of this results box. It will cost Amazon more than the other listed companies if the user clicks on its link. The other companies in the search box would have paid slightly less for the same terms.

PPC advertising is relatively easy to set up. It offers the flexibility for advertisers to choose their own budgets & decide the placements of their ads. There are currently three first tier search engines that provide PPC advertising: Google, Yahoo Overture, and MSN [3]. PPC ads are unobtrusive and easy to read. PPC ads for Google are placed to the top and right edge of the page. Each advertisement is short and concise, but closely relevant to the searched keywords. Also, the format of display of PPC advertisements does not necessarily promote competition [4]. The overall effectiveness of PPC ads is seen by a much higher conversion rate in PPC as compared to traditional

advertisement campaigns. In addition, Google search engine captures a wide range of information that can help advertisers monitor and measure the success of their advertisements. This information can be used to generate the following statistics, which are supportive to analyze Web search engine marketing management data. Conversion ratio – It is defined as the total number of conversion actions divided by the total number of clicks (i.e. conversion means converting a visitor to a customer). Cost per sale – It is the total number of clicks required to produce one sale * average click price. Click value – how much a click is worth paying for. Return of investment – It is the net profit after subtracting PPC advertising costs.

2.1 Cost Per Click

Cost-per-click (CPC) means that you as an advertiser appearing on a Search Engine Result Page, pay the search engine for each user's individual click on your Ad. In other words it is no visit no fee. This is one advantage of CPC, you get charged only and unless a user visits your Ad site. With CPC, you can set a manual bid. Your bid is the maximum amount you're willing to pay per link click. For example, if you set your bid to \$1, you'll never spend more than \$1 dollar per link click. In some cases, you may spend less than your bid.

2.2 Cost per impression

Cost-per-impression (CPM) means that you as an advertiser appearing on a Search Engine Result Pages, pays the search engine for every 1,000 times your ad appears on the page. Advertisements are sold through the traditional cost per impression but with the visitor taking some specific action with regard to the ad[5]. The user doesn't have to click-through, it's just about page impressions. If you've learnt nothing new from this, then the knowledge that the M in CPM means 1,000 is still a decent fact. If your CPM is \$1, you'll be charged \$1 for every 1,000 impressions on your ad. CPM is perhaps best for companies who want to raise brand awareness, whereas CPC is best for sales. But just bidding is not a healthy way to rank and position your Ad, hence a combination of factors are taken into consideration and based on that a standard unit is obtained. This gives a level playing ground to all advertisers else it could prove to be a monopoly in the hands of the rich advertisers which not necessarily means good Ads

2.3 Adword Auction

Google users want to see ads that are relevant to their searches at the same time Google wants to satisfy its users as well as its advertisers so that they come again and use their services again in the future. The approach undertaken by Google differs from a traditional auction. In a traditional auction the highest bidder would walk away with the top position in the Google ad pages but this is not how it works. If we take into consideration 4 bidders say A,B,C,D and relate the with their bids in a tabular form it would look like this.

Bidder	Bid
A	\$4
B	\$3
C	\$2
D	\$1

Figure 2.1: Depicts the conventional bidding process for ad rank, wherein bidder A should get first place

So in a traditional auction bidder A would walk away with first position and so on. Google uses a variation of what is called the second prize auction. In a second prize auction the buyer doesn't have to pay their whole bid they only have to pay the amount of the next highest advertiser. This design means that they so not have to pay the entire bid amount but just enough to beat their competitor. So the table would look like this:

Bidder	Bid	Cost
A	\$4	\$3
B	\$3	\$2
C	\$2	\$1
D	\$1	-

Figure 2.2: Depicts the actual price each bidder has to pay (cost) so as to just beat its competitors

Moreover advertisers have to pay only when they have received a click. But the process does not generally involve just bids because Google wants to show more useful ads in a higher position on the results page. So there are other factors to be taken into consideration.

Expected click through rate: This a kind of feedback mechanism which helps the system decide what the user wants to see and what is relevant. It acts like a voting system which helps decide which ads get more frequent visitors to corresponding search keywords. Hence a site having more click through rate should get an increased positioning on the search result pages.

Ad Landing Page Experience: The page is irrelevant to the user if doesn't provide substance to what the user is looking for. A highly relevant landing page yields a higher score. Factors that determine a landing page include relevant and original content, the page should be easily navigable, transparent about the nature of business and how you will use users personal information.

Ad Relevance: Google determines ad relevance by analyzing the language in your ad and how well it relates to the query. This is a way to relate ads to user search and make sure only useful ads are shown.

Ad Formats: This the way in which the ad is presented, the intrinsic details and specific domains and how the ad is presented I taken into consideration. It is determined by the impact it has on users.

Google then combines these 4 factors with the bid to give a score known as Ad Rank.

Now if we put these factors into the table it will look something like this:

Bidder	Bid	Quality	Ad Format	Ad Rank
A	\$4	LOW	-	5
B	\$3	HIGH	LOW	15
C	\$2	HIGH	HIGH	20
D	\$1	MEDIUM	MEDIUM	8

Figure 2.3: Shows all factors taken into consideration to decide the overall Ad Rank

Hence bidder C with an Ad Rank of 20 will appear on the top most position in a search page simply because of better quality and formats. An interesting feature is that although bidder A bids \$4 but due to a low quality site it doesn't even make it on the search result page. So bidder C will have to pay just enough to keep him ahead of second position that is advertiser B. So it is not just the bid but a combination of factors that determine your position on the search result page. One can improve its rank by improving the quality of its sites and Ad formats, this method provides relevant and useful ads to reach the top through pure quality and not just bid price.

3. NON PAID Marketing Strategies

Keywords in tags : The crawler while crawling through a page goes through its meta-data (page title tags, Meta description tags, Meta keyword tags etc) and using keywords in it will boost a page's rank in the search engine results. Also the page title tags along with description tags are used to display the title and description of the page in the results and hence directly effects whether or not a user chooses to visit your page. They should be rich in the relevant keywords. However we should not use too many keywords that are irrelevant because this could have a negative bearing on our website's rank. In the early days of search engines, keyword density was an important factor in how a page was ranked. However, as webmasters discovered this and the implementation of optimum keyword density became widespread, it became a minor factor in the rankings.[6].

Number and quality of back links : Most sites have links to webpages from other sites too and the more number of sites have a link to your website the better it is. Search engines see this as an upvote and rank sites with more number of back links higher on the search results. Not just the number but also the quality of these backlinks is very important. More reputed the site that links to you is, the more importance is given to the link and hence proves important in increasing your rank in the search results. The whole process of acquiring backlinks from reputed sites is called link building. But the search engines are well aware of this feature being exploited and hence flag those they feel are being unfair. For example Google Penguin is a codename for a Google algorithm update that was first announced on April 24, 2012. The update is aimed at decreasing search engine rankings of websites that violate Google's Webmaster Guidelines by using now declared black-hat SEO techniques involved in increasing artificially the ranking of a webpage by manipulating the number of links pointing to the page. Such tactics are commonly described as link schemes. According to Google's John Mueller, Google has announced all updates to the Penguin filter to the public.[7].

3.1 Content

The content your webpage has is obviously very important and should be rich in keywords. Also it should be updated often because sites with fresh content would not require the crawler to crawl them again and search engines rank such sites higher thus promoting those who keep updating their content regularly. A list of important keywords should be researched and prepared and then these keywords should be strategically placed. Having very high density of keywords is called as keyword stuffing and this is a red flag for most search engines and good have a negative effect on your rankings so keywords need to be used in good measure. Also another thing to keep in mind is that search engines use the content first approach i.e they read webpages from left to right and top to bottom and hence placing the most important content on top would prove beneficial. Also the content should be easily accessible to the search engines. The hyperlinks, images etc tags should have proper descriptive information in their alt tags. Text in figures and tables should be machine readable (i.e., vector graphics containing font-based text should be used instead of rasterized images) so that it can easily be indexed by academic search engines. Vector graphics also look more professional, and are more user friendly, than raster/bitmap graphics. Graphics stored as JPEG, BMP, GIF, TIFF, or PNG files are not vector graphics.[8].

Use of robots.txt: This file tells the crawler of what pages needed to be crawled and thus should be optimized to include all the relevant pages so that they are not missed by the crawler.

The alt attribute of images: With the image tag there is an alt attribute available which is short for alternative and can be used to give a description of the image. The text contained in it will be displayed when the image is unavailable and cannot be loaded. This attribute is read by the search engines and should thus contain keywords to help with the ranking.

3.2 Sitemaps

There are two kinds of sitemaps, HTML and XML. HTML ones are meant for users to help them know your website's structure so they can browse it more comfortably. XML sitemaps on the other hand are meant for crawlers so they can crawl your website efficaciously. This is a good way to control what pages of your website are crawled and which are not. Its a way of telling the crawler "you need to see this!".

Including location in keywords : Most users these days use mobile devices such as mobiles and tablets to perform searches and many a times search queries require location for example "Chinese restaurants close by". Such queries would require to search by location and so thus if you are business to which location is important like a restaurant or cafe etc. You should include your location in your keywords or meta tags. It will help increase your ranks in location based searches.

3.3 Maintain your websites link structure

Sometimes as time goes by some links on websites becomes useless i.e technically take you no where and most likely give an error when accessed and some times pages are deleted but the links to them are not. It is very important to rid your website of such dead link and to make sure that all the pages that are the deleted, the links to those are deleted too and whenever new pages are added they are properly included in the sites structure.

3.4 Upgrading your website design

Again as mentioned before users access websites on a wide variety of devices and thus it is important to have a design that functions robustly on all these devices. If the design is not good the users might not like using your site and the traffic would eventually decrease. Just like good content a good design is imperative for attracting a crowd and above anything else the amount of traffic a page gets is a major factor in deciding its rank in the search results.

4. Conclusion

SEO is a continuous process so we need to keep learning and improvising to rank higher on the search results even though it is difficult to keep up with all the techniques used to improve a site's rating but an effective SEO strategy can give you the desired benefits. [9] Search engines are the most effective marketing strategy for online promotion of websites as it is the major source of getting new customers in today's time. If an organization is looking for new customers it is important that they know a lot about SEO. [4] As there are a huge number of search ranking algorithms it becomes difficult for the SEO engineers to influence all the search engines and in turn rank high on all of them. But there are a number of techniques which can be employed by you, like white hat SEO, which will get you a higher ranking and these techniques also follow the guidelines of the search engines. On the other hand you can improve the ranking of your website using unethical ways like black hat SEO but chances are that these methods will more likely get you red flagged by the search engines. [10] There are different marketing strategies- Paid and Non Paid strategies. Paid search engine marketing strategies is where you buy advertising space in the search engine. So instead of trying to increase your rank on the search engine you pay to appear in the top of web searches while in the Non paid search engine marketing strategy the rank of your website will depend on the quality of your content and the amount of traffic you can garner. Optimization of your webpage will result in increase in the number of customers who visit your website which will affect your sales and increases your brand recognition in turn increasing your rankings too. [9]

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