Introduction

Search engine marketing (SEM) has become an integral marketing tool for brands of all sizes and in all industries – from the Fortune 100 to mom-and-pop dry cleaners and pizza shops. And with paid search now representing the largest portion of online advertising budgets, according to the Internet Advertising Bureau, more marketers are looking for their search tools to provide 360-degree visibility across digital channels to improve results and budget forecasting.

As a result, a new generation of integrated search campaign management platforms has emerged to help marketers more effectively integrate, manage and measure the effectiveness of their digital marketing programs, including paid search (PPC) and organic search (SEO). SearchCenter+ powered by Omniture, for example, provides cross-channel attribution, campaign management and optimization, including PPC, display, email, SEO and affiliate marketing. Real time attribution platforms can integrate third party data sources and provide comprehensive views of prospect and customer actions.

But while technology has enabled most brands today to leverage both PPC and SEO, integrating the two disciplines within the organization remains a challenge. Staff and data are still held and managed in organizational silos that fail to reap the benefits that truly integrated search can provide. For example, PPC has typically been handled by marketing and advertising, while SEO is usually considered a web or engineering tactic.

The majority of consumers, on the other hand, don’t distinguish between PPC and organic listings when viewing and clicking on SERP pages. Instead of treating PPC and organic search as different disciplines, marketers need to look at the search experience from the searcher’s perspective and more effectively structure their marketing organizations to capitalize on PPC and SEO data and resources, as well as get departments and back-end systems working together strategically and cohesively.

This E-book presents several best practices to capitalize on the synergies between PPC and SEO data, as well as address the role that analytics plays in unlocking that value. We also provide guidelines for building an integrated digital marketing team, including good hiring practices, as well as an effective organizational structure and communications strategy that encourage management buy-in.

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Managing Digital Data: How to Bring the Pieces Together

Search Engine Marketing traditionally has consisted of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and paid search, also known as Pay-per-click (PPC) advertising. While search engine marketing has evolved to include the impact of additional digital channels such as social media, it's essential the marketers understand how SEO and PPC work together.

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of generating traffic from free or organic search engine results. All major search engines, including Google, Yahoo! and Bing have such results, where web pages and other content such as videos or local listings are shown and ranked based on what the search engine considers most relevant to users.

Paid search (PPC) advertising, on the other hand, are the search engine results that marketers pay for in an attempt to raise the ranking and visibility of their listings. Industry experts agree that SEO drives 75 percent of search traffic yet only 15 percent of budget; PPC gets 80 percent of budget yet generates only 25 percent of search traffic.

Each search discipline has its unique benefits. PPC offers more precise targeting and measurability and yields greater short-term results. SEO more can have a better ROAS due to free clicks but can also be unpredictable due to engine algorithm updates.

There are synergies that exist between PPC and SEO. Marketers that effectively utilize both search disciplines can increase the clickthrough rates of their top organic rankings by as much as 20 percent with complementary sponsored ads above them or in the right-hand column, according to Stephan Spencer, co-author of The Art of SEO. When both types of search data are integrated, marketers can see and analyze organic and PPC metrics side-by-side, gaining the ability to optimize bids using organic rankings and produce keyword recommendations based on organic search performance. Virtually any type of digital marketing promotion – from launching a new product, website or microsite to maximizing tight budgets and site redesigns – will benefit by leveraging both PPC and SEO.

Using PPC to Guide SEO Efforts

PPC campaigns are an efficient way to gain short-term visibility while awaiting the longer-term results of organic search. It is very simple to first test keywords in a PPC campaign and then utilize the best performers in SEO. Marketers can further expand the integration to the copy and keyword phrases that compelled visitors to click on an ad or buy from a site. Good PPC ad copy can be also be used as a great meta description and the best performing PPC headlines can be great page headers (H1tags) and anchor text.

PPC’s targeting and measurability can also provide valuable SEO insight. Every PPC transaction is monitored and every landing page is constantly refined. By capturing this data, marketers can track the keywords that are driving conversions and cross reference them with SEO lists to identify areas that are missing exposure. In many cases there will be overlap, with the differences in conversion typically due to where users were in the conversion funnel at the time of their searches. Either way, integrating this data across both PPC and SEO programs will provide clues to the phrases and terms that are driving visitors to act.

Going Organic to Help PPC

Highly refined, dedicated landing pages for individual ads are the best practice in paid search. Such pages are laser-focused and use very specific calls to action to reach their goals. But too many times, marketers spend all of their time and budget on the PPC advertising and

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not enough on designing the dedicated landing pages. In larger companies, the resources to manage these page-level changes often don’t even reside in the group spending the money or managing the campaigns, which makes cross-channel communication an issue.

SEO provides the opportunity to blend organic page content with dedicated calls to action. By integrating the message, a single page can do double duty for both organic rankings and as a landing page. With today’s budgets shrinking and resources harder to come by, streamlining costs and creating efficiencies is an approach that resonates with C-level executives.

Both SEO and PPC require pages that are highly relevant and focused on targeted keywords. Smart digital marketers will take advantage of this requirement to create economies of scale by developing content that satisfies the needs of both organic and paid search campaigns as long as neither the ranking or conversions goals are compromised. Go one step further and combine the resulting statistics to uncover additional value. For example, while advanced search marketing applications allow digital marketers to create bid rules based on deep funnel metrics, combining SEO and PPC data enables them to expand bid rules to include SEO metrics and performance. As with everything search, test, refine, test and refine.

Taking this type of holistic approach will lead to terms and phrases that are unique to the organization’s site, product or service and resonate not only with those searching for information, but with those looking to buy. Regardless of where a user is in the conversion funnel, they will see what they are looking for.

Analytics Unlock Integration Value

Analytics, including attribution modeling, hold the key to realizing the bottom-line value of integrating PPC and SEO programs. Many search marketers attempting to integrate their search programs fail to discern what their individual PPC and SEO campaigns are delivering. This insight can be easily developed through the following four steps:

1. Develop a clear understanding of the program’s specific goals, which often differ for PPC and SEO.
2. Have a plan for how to measure everything.
3. Create a rigorous analytics system.
4. Adhere to internal performance accountability.

Ads aren’t the only campaign elements that can be measured and changed – landing pages and the website itself both play leading roles in marketing campaign performance.

For PPC, analytics are built into the process of managing campaigns. From one place, campaign managers can view impression levels, clicks, average cost per click, conversions and average cost per conversion.

There are also many factors that determine performance beyond the inherent value of a keyword and good analytics will help the organization identify those factors. KPIs such as performance by landing page, as well as funnels for PPC segments vs. other segments will show where to boost the return of top performers or improve the potential of underperformers.

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Best Practices for Integrating PPC and SEO

#1: Leverage Each Program’s Strengths

A key element in maximizing both PPC and SEO performance is to leverage each discipline’s strengths. For example, short-term promotions should focus on PPC campaigns since they provide both speed and flexibility. In addition, start and stop dates can be easily controlled, while exact messaging and new landing pages can be quickly created to accomplish specific goals.

Conversely, SEO can drive large volumes of quality traffic by optimizing for longer-term site content. It is ideal for maximizing the impact of core terms and to maintain consistent SERP placement. To leverage SEO for more immediate ROI, optimize for video and image search, which can encourage quicker traction.
#2: Prove Both SEO and PPC Value Within the Organization

The most successful integrated SEO/PPC programs measure the results of each individually before integrating the data. It’s important to find the data, and provide the research, analysis and case studies to prove each program’s value. Lay out the opportunity analysis, costs, issues and risks involved in the process and provide a high-level impact analysis to back up each case.

Reporting on wins will help push future agendas across the organization. Before beginning any program or campaign, think through what data needs to be tracked and analyzed, as well as what goals need to be achieved. When a campaign goes live, make note of its goals and early achievements and start distributing that data across the organization. For example, here are some SEO metrics that can be tracked and reported on:

- Number of pages indexed within the first week
- Unique visitors
- Page views
- Time spent on site
- Bounce rate

Relate this data to the organization’s key metrics and spell out how SEO and PPC achievements contribute to those KPIs. Communication can be as informal as announcements at team meetings or as formal as weekly status reports or monthly updates.

Be prepared for the times when campaigns fail to meet expectations and understand the reasons why. It is okay to fail as long as mistakes are fixed and turned into positives. Often a site re-launch or change in URL structures across a site will lead to a small dip in search traffic that eventually picks back up. The key is preparing data, presenting that data and analyzing how the results will impact site traffic. Forewarning management and other stakeholders will earn their respect and confidence.

#3: Act on Keyword Research and Analysis

Keyword optimization takes a lot of time, research and creativity. Although some search campaign management tools can now combine organic rankings, impressions, conversions and clicks into one source, there is generally a time lag between when SEO keyword lists are chosen and organic traffic starts to grow. PPC boosts keyword traffic quickly and provides enough data in a short period of time to know which keywords are most valuable to the organization’s marketing goals.

Thanks to web analytics, SEO and PPC managers can easily tell which keywords are driving traffic to which landing pages, whether people stay, leave or buy. This data should cause immediate action, but rarely does. While PPC campaigns are almost always ROI-driven, too often SEO turns into a trophy collection of rankings rather than a return-focused business investment.

The keyword research process can be an issue. Most SEO marketers and agencies automatically focus on driving large volumes by optimizing their sites for relevant keywords with the highest search frequency. While this may drive significant volume, it may not drive conversions.

Head terms captivate the imagination of the masses and deliver them to the site, but they’re hard to diagnose and understand. Mid- and tail terms provide more focused traffic that will drive more conversion-prone and focused visitors to the site. They make it easier to understand user intent and alter the site to improve conversion, as well. Identifying mid- and tail keywords involves looking at what happens from both an SEO and PPC perspective.

At the same time, it’s important to make sure to look beyond the ‘what’ and ask ‘why?’ While it’s critical to understand which keywords are driving the most traffic and conversions, it’s just as important to know why those keywords are working – or not. Are they winners on their own, or is it because the landing page is working so well? Is the ad copy not working, or is it something inherent in your website? Knowing ‘what’ happens is important, but with a good analytics package – and good communication among the marketing team – getting the ‘why’ can prove even more valuable. Centralizing SEO and PPC data accelerates all of this learning and subsequent actions.
Cannibalization, or a decrease in organic traffic caused by the addition of a PPC campaign, can occur most frequently to brand keywords and top ranking (first and second position) organic keywords.

#4: Quantify Lift to Maximize Synergies

Putting a sponsored ad near (i.e., above or in the right-hand column) top-ranking organic keywords can increase clickthrough rates by as much as 20 percent.

This type of lift occurs when PPC campaigns provide additional traffic to already well-performing organic keywords. When the additional lift outweighs the rate of cannibalization (i.e., negatively impacting the other's results), it makes sense to continue to do integrated, additional campaigns. The keywords that benefit most from this strategy are unbranded product or service keywords, organic rankings above the fold and the top three paid positions.

Cannibalization, or a decrease in organic traffic caused by the addition of a PPC campaign, can occur most frequently to brand keywords and top ranking (first and second position) organic keywords. The key to monitoring cannibalization is to accurately track attribution and ROI to ensure that PPC and SEO campaigns are being properly credited.

Many variables affect PPC and organic search traffic, including search volume, page layout, keyword bids and rankings. There are several ways to analyze these and other variables to draw actionable conclusions about lift and cannibalization. First begin with the following assumptions:

- Internet (and search) traffic patterns move in weekly cycles.
- Search volume is affected by seasonality, media and other factors.
- Testing should occur in a period of minimum volatility, i.e. avoid holidays and seasonal peaks and dips if possible.

Now consider the following approaches to gather the data required to quantify lift versus cannibalization:

- On/off weekly: Pause paid ads for one week and then resume them. This is the simplest approach and takes the least amount of time. If there is more time, try alternating weeks.
- On/off daily: For a two-week period, alternate pausing and activating paid ads on consecutive days. This is the minimum duration required to get both “on” and “off” data for each day of the week.

To identify a baseline for organic traffic, create a third data point: either averages of organic traffic during “off” periods that bookend an “on” period or, if available, use search volume for a given keyword. The key is to come up with an approximation for cannibalization and lift, which will determine what to pay per click on PPC ads.

For example, assume that the baseline for one day of organic traffic is 100 clicks. An additional PPC ad then provides another 100 clicks. If the total of organic plus paid is 180 clicks, that means that of the 100 PPC clicks purchased, 80 were “lift” while the other 20 were “cannibalization.” The solution to minimizing cannibalization in this example is to discount the maximum allowable CPC on the brand keyword by 20 percent and adjust the organization’s bids accordingly.

But say that PPC traffic turns out to be 100 percent lift and your total clicks is 200 clicks. That will provide proof that buying brand terms is absolutely justified. A third and not uncommon scenario is to see a combined synergy between PPC and organic that results in a lift that’s higher than 100 percent; the clickthrough rate is higher when both ads are present compared to each on its own.

Another set of dials to turn is what is displayed in the PPC ad. Test calls-to-action, mentioning specific product features, branding, “official site”, etc. and measure the impact on synergy. The ultimate goal is to optimize ad creative and rebalance the company’s paid search spend based on the true, adjusted ROAS where synergy is taken into account.
Managing a Digital Marketing Team: Breaking down Organizational Barriers

While analytics and search technology now facilitate digital campaign integration, many organizations still operate with siloed marketing data and departments, creating a huge challenge to cross-channel integration and management. SEO is often managed by engineering or operations, while PPC resides within marketing (thanks to its generally larger budgets). Building an integrated digital marketing team incorporates good hiring practices, as well as an effective organizational structure and communications strategy that encourage management buy-in. Here are four ways to begin that process.

Step One: Hire a Generalist

SEM is a young industry and constantly evolving; search tactics and strategies that worked two years ago may not work now. As a result, it is more important to hire smart marketers that learn quickly and can translate ideas into actions than specialists with prior industry experience.

The leader of the digital marketing team should be someone who can understand numbers as well as understand concepts and marketing strategies. For smaller teams, the CMO or VP of Marketing could play this role. In the enterprise, a strategic manager reporting to the CMO or VP should be given this role. Skills become more important in more tactical, campaign execution positions.

To avoid political maneuvering for budget and resources, data analysts should be channel agnostic (i.e., independent of any channel team) and directly report to the CMO. This will prevent any politics regarding attribution and set up the digital team to answer important questions such as:

- How do my channels interact?
- If I do any TV advertising how long will the effect persist in other channels?
- What is the right media mix to maximize revenue?

Step Two: Eliminate Silos, Centralize Search

Maintaining separate SEO and PPC staff and departments can negatively impact the organization

Hiring the Right Analyst

Web analytics is about making and proving sound business decisions. A good analyst determines which search decisions were good...and which ones were not. Decide what the role of the analyst will be. Will this person be a leader on the digital team? Or an evangelist that advocates to management and the rest of the organization? Perhaps the analyst will provide a service to the organization and operate independently.

Web analysts must grasp sound business concepts first and data crunching second. A good analyst will understand how revenue and cost create cash flow, as well as understand how various disciplines and points on the organization chart map to either or both of these key factors. Don’t underestimate the importance of operational efficiency and process. The real value of web analytics isn’t only web outcomes and increased performance but a metamorphosis of the organization through vast improvements in processes and operations.

Secondly, figure out where the organization needs “wins” and hire a personality that will be compatible with the naysayers and win them over, knowing that their competency will make up for whatever personality mismatch results. Hire for those wins even if the personality doesn’t match – in the long run, the wins and the business are more important.
by creating inconsistent programs where different keywords are assigned different priorities and landing pages offer confused messages and branding. The solution is to centralize the search function as much as possible to encourage digital team members to work collaboratively and not competitively. One way to do this is to add a bonus structure that is based in part on individual performance, channel marketing team performance and overall marketing team performance. Ask staff to learn about emerging channels such as social media to further pollinate the cross-channel communication.

Better cross-channel communication will lead to more data sharing and improved results. For example, PPC campaigns provide a great way to quickly test creative messages and utilize the results to inform the meta data for SEO campaigns. High-performing PPC keywords and phrases should be leveraged in SEO campaigns, while underperforming terms can benefit from better PPC coverage. At the same time, when ROI or ROAS metrics make some PPC terms unaffordable, they can instead be made an SEO priority.

Step Three: Secure Management Buy-in

Securing management or client buy-in for digital marketing is critical. There is always some measure of politics involved and different levels of understanding during each phase of program or budget approval. It is crucial to have the right conversations with the right people and speak to them in a language they understand.

For example, some people love detail while others love bullet points and summaries. A VP looking for a project update will not want or even necessarily understand a 19-page email with every campaign detail. Knowing the differences across client and organizational audiences may mean the difference between getting work moved forward and having it forgotten. Factor in the audience and adapt to their needs based on how they ingest data.

Step Four: Create a Communications Strategy

A sound communications strategy includes both in-person and written tactics. Here are three

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A Fun Way to View Multi-Variate Data

Statistician Herman Chernoff introduced “Chernoff faces” in a 1973 paper where he used simple cartoon faces to display complex multi-dimensional data. Chernoff faces capitalize on the human brain’s innate ability to simultaneously recognize small differences in many facial characteristics to assess a person’s emotion or mood. Chernoff encoded each of several variables to a facial characteristic such as the nose, eyes, lips or smile to generate faces that represent data points. In this example, campaign data metrics are mapped to facial features:

The data shows the CPA in Boston is high, apparently due to the conversion rate. However, the data brings up several other questions including: How much better or worse is this performance with respect to the others? How are the high volume campaigns doing with respect to the lower volume ones? Does CPC have any connection with performance? For a quick, qualitative assessment map the following characteristics to the above metrics:

Face size = Spend
Hair length = Number of clicks
Face shape = CTR
A Fun Way to View Multi-Variate Data

Chernoff faces can be used to represent multi-dimensional data in a compact manner and are a quick way to qualitatively assess the performance of a campaign. Even without viewing the data metrics the facial expressions below intuitively tell which campaigns did well and which did not based on the perceived “mood” of each campaign. Even though the metrics represent the performance of 25 campaigns in six dimensions, it is fairly simple to pick out the good and bad performers very quickly.

One caveat: Chernoff faces cannot make quantitative assessments about data. For example, the faces show that Boston is not doing well – but without specifics. For more information on Chernoff faces and understanding how to use them in campaigns, visit the Wikipedia Chernoff face page.

communications tactics to improve your digital communications across the enterprise, with management and with clients.

1. Newsletters
A dedicated, monthly newsletter is a great way to spread news. The challenge is to get people to read it. The best approach is to apply best practices for email marketing to the newsletter. Focus on relevant information for the audience; include graphs tracking the KPIs readers watch. Another tactic is to include short-form tips and how-to articles that are just a paragraph in length but allow readers to assimilate information quickly. This makes the newsletter useful and easy to consume.

To shake things up a bit, consider adding an element of fun to the newsletter by reporting multi-dimensional data using the Chernoff method (see sidebar), which adds a human element to data results.

Don’t publish negative numbers in a newsletter that haven’t been previously discussed face-to-face with the group responsible for the data. By meeting prior to publishing the newsletter, problems can be addressed and a consensus gained on how to fix the issues. By showing all the numbers – even the negative – the newsletter will be viewed more objectively and read more frequently.

2. Executive Updates
Someone somewhere is always watching the numbers and it is better to be seen as the go-to person for data about digital marketing programs. Set up regular face-time with executives to discuss all aspects of the team’s digital campaigns and articulate the wins, challenges and opportunities. This way it is easier to manage the message and ensure that critical PPC and SEO programs stay top of mind in the executive suite. Ultimately, it is critical that management understands how this work fits into the organization’s overall strategy and direction.

3. Face-to-Face Meetings
Too many search marketers spend too much time building reports and sending them to people, when the best way to encourage those people to act is to meet with them face to face after they’ve received automated reports. This is effective relationship building and will pay dividends when critical cross-channel work items need to be completed.
This type of meeting can be as simple as stopping in the hallway or as formal as a planned session with a pre-set agenda. Discuss with co-workers which approach best fits their styles and daily schedules and try to be flexible to fit their needs.

**Conclusion**

Ultimately, well optimized and successfully integrated SEO and PPC campaigns are a powerful combination. Numerous synergies exist between PPC and SEO and virtually any type of digital marketing promotion – from launching a new product, website or microsite to maximizing tight budgets and site redesigns – will benefit by integrating and leveraging both.

Today’s search technology has made such integration possible – but not necessarily easy. The challenge is to put the organizational structure in place to support such integration. Too many brands still hold and manage staff and data in silos that fail to reap the return that integrated search can provide. The solution is to centralize the search function as much as possible to encourage digital team members to work collaboratively and not competitively. Better cross-channel communication will lead to more data sharing and improved bottom-line results.

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