The Importance of SEO

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Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of improving a website’s position in search results. This is done by adding content to your site that includes keywords or phrases users commonly enter into a search engine when looking for a site. Site structure, navigation, coding, and naming conventions are also important to consider when optimizing a website to improve its placement in search results. Results found through SEO are often called organic, natural, or algorithmic search results.

SEO is often confused with search engine marketing (SEM). SEM is a rather broad term that simply means using search engines to promote your website and increase its traffic. The term SEM encompasses search engine optimization, paid listings, and other search-engine related services and functions that will increase exposure and traffic to your website. Paid listings, or pay per click (PPC), will have a cost associated with the act of clicking on a search engine result. These are the sponsored text ads that you might see below or to the right of your search query when using Google, Bing, or Yahoo. In comparison, SEO is more focused on website optimizations as well as offsite optimizations via a linking strategy. Simply, SEO is a subset of SEM.

Why is SEO important?

SEO is important because if your website is not optimized, it will not rank highly in search engine results, and potential customers looking for you on the Web will not find you.

Search engines evaluate websites’ content, and the sites with the most relevant content rank highest. To determine which have the most relevant content, Google and other search engines look for sites with content that is updated regularly. In addition, the number of times a particular word appears in a site’s content can improve its placement in search results when a person’s search includes that word. Engines also consider the number of links to your site. Sites that are frequently linked to from other sites are placed higher in search results.

Search engines also evaluate sites based on their architecture. A site that is structured for easy readability and flow ensures that search engine “spiders” can effectively crawl the site and index what they find. A well-designed site must not only be pleasing to the eye, it must also offer a positive user experience and still be clear enough for spiders to fully index it. A fully indexed site can help your site rank higher in search results.
Benefits & Considerations

**BENEFITS OF SEO**

- Potential for high ROI since long-term costs can be considerably less than other marketing efforts
- Essentially free traffic if the site is created with the searchers' ease of use and search engine indexing process in mind
- People trust SEO results more than SEM results: Studies have shown that more than twice as many people click on an organic SEO listing than on a paid SEM listing
- Increased awareness of your product/offering
- Visibility – potential customers can easily find their way to your website
- 24/7 marketing – your company can be found via the Web day or night, 365 days a year!
Conclusion

With SEO, patience is key. It takes time to find the perfect mix of onsite and offsite optimizations. Once you find the perfect mix, you will see results that may be fruitful for a long time.

Keep in mind that, although you are not paying per click, you will need to invest time to achieve results. That is why SEO is typically more of an investment in the beginning and levels off later. Once you achieve good page ranks and are able to maintain your position, you will begin seeing an increase in visits and, ultimately, leads. But only with time and patience will you get to this point.

If you need leads today, then SEM is the better option. SEM allows you to achieve top placement in hours instead of months. However, the cost of SEM can fluctuate every day, and to stay competitive and maintain traffic levels you must keep paying for placement. And if you discontinue your campaign you can expect your increase in leads to drop.

By contrast, a well-optimized SEO campaign can provide longer-lasting results at a more efficient cost.

So what to do? Our advice: Do both.

We suggest using a combination of SEM and SEO. Use the short-term advantages of SEM to identify keyword phrases that produce quality leads and conversion. These keyword phrases can then be implemented into your SEO for longer-lasting results. Whatever combination of SEO and SEM you decide upon, when done correctly, both are sure to improve your website’s performance and your business in general.
About Heartbeat Ideas

Heartbeat Ideas creates indelible brand experiences for an increasingly digital world. A privately held, full service agency, Heartbeat is committed to technology-enabled research, strategic planning, creative design and messaging, innovative media solutions, and analytics. A set of five proprietary research tools enables Heartbeat to mine competitive and audience insights from the complexity of the digital landscape, while the agency’s versatile engagement process flexes to meet the needs of both traditional and digital environments. Founded in 1998, Heartbeat Ideas’ clients include:

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