



Top 5 SEO Realities for Business-to-Business (B-to-B) Marketers

...and how SEM (search engine marketing) complements SEO

QUICK Q & A

Q. Is search engine optimization (SEO) underutilized in the b-to-b space? A. Yes.

Q. Is b-to-b SEO misunderstood? A. Yes.

Q. Is SEO reality, or it is more spoke-and-mirrors. A. It's a reality. And SEO is critical for b-to-b sales and marketing success. Notice, "b-to-b *sales* and marketing." SEO may just be *the* single most important tactic in driving sales leads into your organization.

Then there's SEM (search engine marketing). SEO and SEM work in tandem.

In this article you'll learn about the basics of SEO and discover the top five realities that surround SEO for business to business marketers. You'll also learn how SEM (search engine marketing) complements SEO.

First, what is SEO, or search engine optimization?

Let's see: maybe we should consult Wikipedia ... amazing, they come up on page one of Google! Maybe their site is optimized!

"Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of improving the volume or quality of traffic to a web site from search engines via "natural" or un-paid ("organic" or "algorithmic") search results. Typically, the earlier (or higher) a site appears in the search results list, the more visitors it will receive from the search engine. SEO may target different kinds of search, including image search, local search, video search and industry-specific vertical search engines. This gives a web site web presence.

"As an Internet marketing strategy, SEO considers how search engines work and what people search for. Optimizing a website primarily involves editing its content and HTML and associated coding to both increase its relevance to specific keywords and to remove barriers to the indexing activities of search engines."



The top 5 SEO realities for b-to-b marketers:

1. Without SEO, your website is just a virtual brochure that your salespeople have to “hand out”. If that’s OK by you, stop reading.
2. Men are from Mars. Search engines are from Montreal (fact).
3. SEO is not snake oil or complicated or expensive. But it needs to be managed by experts.
4. SEO is just the ignition. SEM keeps things rolling along.
5. SEO must be integrated into your sales / marketing / customer service mix. But then, you knew that, right?

Let’s explore these, one by one...

1. Without SEO, your website is just a virtual brochure that your salespeople have to “hand out”. If that’s OK by you, stop reading.

Many b-to-b marketers build a nice-looking website for the primary purpose of having a virtual brochure for their prospects: *prospects who have been contacted by a sales rep.*

Of course, sales reps can point prospects and customers to your site – your rep just gives them your url (website’s address). But that’s not how b-to-b buyers (consumers as well) go about buying things. People do research first. They try to get the best deal. And that takes homework.

And your sales reps can’t possibly even come close to contacting the number of prospects who search for your product or service every single day by using search engines such as Google, Yahoo, MSN. etc.

If your website is not optimized, it’s extremely unlikely that your site will be found on the first several pages of a search engine result. Try it: imagine you’re a prospect of your company. Now enter a two, three or four-word phrase (not a brand name necessarily, but a generic phrase; this is how people search). Look at who is on page one or two. If you’re not there, but your competition is, you need to think about SEO.

2. Men are from Mars. Search engines are from Montreal (fact).

According to the website searchenginehistory.com, “The first search engine created was ‘Archie’, created in 1990 by Alan Emtage, a student at McGill University in Montreal. Archie helped solve [a] data scatter problem by combining a script-based data gatherer with a regular expression matcher for retrieving file names matching a user query. Essentially Archie became a database of web filenames which it would match with the users queries.”

Pretty simple! Mr. Emtage realized that to enable a massive amount of script to be searchable, along with associated file



names, an “engine” of some sort was needed. Once people like Google caught on, the internet search world exploded. Google and others created massive engines that could scour billions of pieces of information and return “search results” to your desktop in less than a second.

But search engines won’t return relevant results from a website (actually, web *pages*) if the site / pages are not built properly. That’s where SEO comes in.

3. SEO is not snake oil or complicated or expensive. But it needs to be managed by experts.

SEO is more than ten years old now. At first, SEO was indeed a technical, complicated tactic; that is, trying to figure out – and stay ahead of – the search engines and their ever-changing algorithms.

Here are a few FACTS you should know about search engine optimization:

A) Optimization is not voodoo: it’s a defined set of technical and non-technical things you need to do to your site to make it “found” by the search engines. Search engines have rules; you need to play accordingly.

B) SEO does not have to be expensive. It does not (in most cases) require a total re-design of your website (after all, creative design is always costly). To be SEO-ready, most sites require some creative and navigation tweaking, but not a creative overhaul. SEO costs? Here are two of the more common models out there for *typical* websites:

1) pay a one-time optimization fee that usually also includes keyword analysis and some basic tweaking of navigation and design ... this can range from \$3,000 to \$5,000, and typically offers an option of monthly SEO maintenance (recommended) that may be \$250 to \$400 per month

2) A contract that lasts at least six months whereby the SEO firm tackles just about everything that SEO needs, from keyword analysis to design, links, submissions, content management, reporting and on and on ... here you are typically paying \$2,500 to \$6,000 per month on a multi-month or year-long contract.

C) A website that is optimized works as a website should: it *organically* (meaning, without PPC or “pay per click” ads) draws visitors who are looking for your products or services. Why do you think some sites are always organically on page one whereas others on page 17? It’s not luck; it’s SEO doing its thing as it should.

D) SEO should be a key component of your marketing plan. It must be an ongoing tactic, since SEO is a living, breathing thing. It’s not “SEO-and-we’re-done.”

E) “Don’t try this at home” ... SEO experts are called “experts” for a reason. It’s like going to a specialist if you have a problem; you want the right people doing the work, and these people are charged with staying current in their field. Most firms that list “SEO” in addition to 15 other things they do (notably, design and web development firms), do not truly know SEO.

F) SEO is measurable, search engine by search engine; keyword phrase by keyword phrase. This allows you to track results and modify your SEO specifics.

G) SEO does take some time, but not all that long; expect to see initial meaningful, measurable results in three to four months, and some very nice results – if your SEO is done right – within six to nine months.

4. SEO is just the ignition. SEM keeps things rolling along.

Search engine optimization jump-starts your web presence. It ensures your web pages are found by the search engines, and



thus by those who query. SEO is a combination of technical necessities (code, primarily) and the right (meaning, relevant) content on your pages. That's the simple explanation: SEO is your ignition, if you will.

Now comes another key component: the wheels that keep you rolling. SEM (search engine *marketing*) is like those wheels. You need good wheels and you need to keep them balanced.

You know what marketing means . . . you know that marketing is not defined by one tactic such as a brochure or a trade show or a sales tool or an ad. SEM is the same, and like marketing, SEM is only limited by your imagination.

Search Engine Marketing defined

Many people define SEM as pay-per-click advertising: driving people to your site with keyword-targeted ads on Google and other sites. But it's far more than that. ***SEM is utilizing a wide range of marketing tactics to drive traffic to your website, ensure a positive visitor experience, and generate "conversions"***. (More below on conversions.)

Think about SEM this way: find ways to get them to your site, then find ways to market to them once they're there.

Here are some important SEM (search engine marketing) tactics to consider:

CONTENT: SEO experts will help you create "search content". But you can't stop there. You need to continually add content and change content. Why? Because search engines are very smart, and they love sites that are evolving; they don't like sites that get stale. Of course new content has to be purposeful and relevant. Surely you have new products, services, recognitions, case studies and solutions, right?

KEYWORD TRACKING: Your SEO people should help you track the performance of your site, by page and by keyword phrase. Adjust accordingly.

HOW-TO's, PDFs, FREE DOWNLOADS: Offer information that is of value to your customers and your prospects: how-to pages, white papers, refreshed Q&A pages.

E-MAIL MARKETING: How can this be part of SEM? Simple: your e-mail campaign, whether simple e-mails or e-newsletters, should drive people to your existing – and to new – pages on your site. This lifts traffic and improves your rankings in the search engines' eyes.

PAY-PER-CLICK (PPC) CAMPAIGNS: PPC campaigns, one of the most common SEM tactics, can drive web traffic, elicit sales leads and help with your optimization. Use PPC to kick-start your SEO. PPC ad campaigns can be set up quickly, can have modest or aggressive daily budget limits, can be modified on the fly, and are measurable with built-in analytics.

BLOGS AND FORUMS: Creating a simple blog (even one that does not attract a lot of participants) can help you a lot with your SEO. Search engines like it when you post news, add keywords to the post and point the post to one of your web pages. It's also fairly simple to set up a blog on your website that allows interaction.

ONLINE VIDEO: Yes, video. Yes, YouTube. Even in the b-to-b selling environment, people love to watch videos – so they get a lot of views. (Of course, relevant, informational content). Videos on your website generate interest and traffic, and videos in turn can help you promote your brand and your website address.

INBOUND LINKS: Search engines like it when sites point to your site. No need for a lot of traffic; just the fact that they point helps with SEO. Keep your link building effort up, but make sure the sites are relevant to your business.



5. SEO must be integrated into your sales / marketing / customer service mix. But then, you knew that, right?

At this point in this article you should have realized that SEO does not operate in a vacuum. Nor is it a one-time fix. SEO needs to be integrated into your marketing mix and into your sales strategy. Virtually everything you do marketing-wise and sales-wise should include your website.

Think of your website as the heart of your marketing effort: you need to keep it healthy, feed it, exercise it.

Same with sales: use your website to elicit sales leads, educate customers and prospects, maybe even entertain. And call on your salespeople to report on competitors' sales, marketing and web-based tactics so you can counter with your own.

CONCLUSION

Well, it's pretty simple: **SEO is a reality today**. It's your ignition, with SEM being your wheels. Things change. You've adapted to other changes in your business or in your marketing career; it's time to change to a "search" driven organization. After all, "search" is also a reality – a big one. It's the way people start their buying process.