

Digital Marketing

strategy & tactics

Instructor Lecture Guide

CHAPTER 2

Search Marketing: Search Engine Optimization

1 or 2 sessions

Chapter Outline

- Search and search terms
- Search optimization versus paid search
- The importance of relevance
 - Links and Link performance
- Origin of search and its value to marketers
 - Indexing versus directories
- Tactics and strategies behind SEO
 - Where, how much, and why search spend is so large
- How search engines work
 - Google crawlers and optimizing pages for best results
 - Key words and key phrases
 - On page strategies—optimizing content
 - Off page SEO strategies
- Assessing the ranking and performance of your site

Key Objectives

- *Search Engine Marketing* (SEM) is the foundation of any digital marketing strategy.
- *Search Engine Marketing* is comprised of two major components: *Search Optimization* and “*Paid*” *Search* (PPC).
- SERPs returned from searches *must be relevant* to help searchers find what they are looking for.
- *Optimization* is a strategy (and art and science!) to improve website ranking and performance.
- On Page optimization is the website’s actual content and structure.
- Links are a key factor in determining page rank, part of an “Off Page” strategy.
- Creating engaging content is critical to site ranking and performance.

Teaching Notes

- **Slides 3–5:** Search and search terms. Review these terms before moving forward. Often, class members have various levels of experience with search marketing you can poll for.
- **Slides 6–8:** Search optimization versus paid search. Discuss the importance of SEO and PPC to digital marketing; then specifically Search Engine Marketing (SEM). Why do companies care about search? What different strategies do various companies use to differentiate themselves in SEO? Using examples, demonstrate the difference between “paid” search placement and organic search results (SERPS).

Center a short discussion around the concept of “Harvesting Intent” and how it relates to their customers or target audience; good opening for discussion on marketing tactics and how marketers define and understand their audience(s).

- Resource: “The Search” by John Battelle (2005) is a great classic for visual and teaching references as well as general background for students.
- From *Tools and Resources*, lots of good references here: “SEO trends, data and visualizations”; <https://www.google.com/trends>.

■ **Slides 9–11:** The importance of relevance. Why does relevance impact things like SERPs and Search terms? What does understanding search words and phrases tell you about your target audience?

We’ll go into more depth on the technical aspects of “how search works” later in the chapter; here, I explain the basics of attracting “search traffic” (creating key words for search emphasizing the concept of relevance, how we look at page results—SERPs) to assess how effective our organic search is. I also like to point out what types of ads are showing up against our keywords. This is a good place to use the Internet in your class to show real time examples.

Introduce the concept of Links and Link performance (just the basics here; we’ll continue to build on this at the end of the chapter and again in later chapters).

■ **Slides 12–17:** Origin of search and its value to marketers. Concepts of indexing versus directories—so students have a background on the origin of search. Reinforce the magnitude of spending on search, and the attributes and types of search engines; both specialized and global.

■ **Slide 18:** Discuss Search Engine Optimization (SEO), how search engines work, and how marketers can leverage search and tactically improve page rankings.

- Evolution of crawlers and bots—and how this impacted growth of search.
- The concept of “crowdsourcing” as it relates to relevance.
- Introduce concepts of selecting key words, the beginnings of manipulation of search, page rankings (we cover in more depth with visuals later in the chapter).

■ **Slides 19–21:** Tactics and strategies behind SEO—where, how much, and why search spend is so large.

- Deeper dive into Google and their “organic crawl” and optimizing pages for best results.
- Talk a few moments about the Heat Wave research study. You can use the end-of-chapter link for more detail: Travel Tripper, <http://www.traveltripper.com/blog/eye-tracking-in-2017-for-google-hotel-searches-why-the-old-rules-dont-apply>.
- How SEO and PPC (Paid Search) work together (a good place to touch on the ethics of search; white hat and black hat camps and *gaming the system*).

This is a good opportunity to introduce Google algorithms, Google development and algorithm releases. A good source for other visuals is the *Search Engine Journal*; <https://www.searchenginejournal.com/seo-guide/panda-penguin-hummingbird/> from *Tools and Resources*. Also a good time to touch on Google certifications.

- **Slides 22–25:** Introduce “On Page Strategies” taking into consideration all we’ve discussed about optimizing a website—optimizing content to improve page rank, page titles, URLs, metatags, file names, website address, and formatting signals.
 - Tie in the Long Tail effect of good optimization (more info here if that is your intent) <http://www.elliance.com/aha/infographics/long-tail-seo.aspx>.
 - Google Key words and phrases from a more technical perspective. Good place to use one of the tools in class exercises in the next section.
 - Key Word planner in *Tools and Resources* all good teaching visuals here. To provide students with a deeper reading reference, <https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo> in *Tools and Resources*.

Showing the SEO Rapper video is a fun way to pull together all these concepts relevant to SEO.

- **Slides 26–29:** Elements of a good “Off Page SEO Strategies”—strategies involving your website’s attractiveness and interaction with other sites and content.
 - Concepts of Anchor Text and its relationship with other placements.
 - Link building as a key strategy for “Off Page” optimization.
 - Key terms and topics are: inbound or back links; outbound and reciprocal links.
 - Internal links and deep links reference optimization of your site as part of a good linking strategy.
 - How link optimization is perceived by search engines.
 - Assessing the ranking and performance of your site and understanding the concepts of “page rank” and page rank scoring.
 - Link building, creating good content, finding good content—key concepts to increasing the ranking of your site.

You can spend as much or as little time again discussing the ethics of optimization. “Link baiting” and strategies for creating content people want to share and link to from their web pages.

Open Site Explorer by Moz offers visuals for checking and determining value of links:

<https://moz.com/researchtools/ose/>.

- **Slides 30–31:** Optimizing content. Discuss the basic types of content that work well at attracting links: product information, instruction manuals, directions; content must be engaging as well as functional. I tend to only touch on concepts here as Chapter 10 is devoted to inbound marketing and optimizing all types of content.
 - Beyond the basics, what are other good places to begin link building right away? Types of content already developed and on the web— linked to and from your site; trade associations, relevant blogs, or other sites of interest that complement your offering. See teaching tips for good exercises and resources here.
 - A final way to generate content and links is to have your customers and other guests create it for you. Good examples are sites like Yelp and Trip Advisor.

Class Exercises

- Keyword and link testing exercises—can be done as a group in class or as homework
 - for Keyword exercises, use the Google Trends tool and/or the Adwords Keyword planner
 - for Link exercises, use OpenSiteExplorer or Google Advanced Search filters
- Students can select a website or instructor can provide. (If group project companies have been assigned, suggestion is to use these.)
- Compare keyword ideas using *Google Trends* and identify:
 - Higher traffic keyword
 - Geographical differences if any
 - Note rising keyphrases and relate to content on page
- Use Google Adwords Keyword Planner to take keywords and
 - estimate search volume per month for U.S. (or other geography),
 - estimate Cost per click (CPC) against a sample budget (\$10,000/month),
 - estimate traffic based on CPC and budget (# of clicks).
- Key Word Density Analysis: Use this tool <http://tools.seobook.com/general/keyword-density> or Key Word Density Tool from SEMRush.

The keyword density analysis is a way to compare your site's keyword profile as the search engine sees it with your desired keyword targets. It's also a great way to see where you stand compared to competitors. You'll need a domain to examine—a group project “client company” works very well. You may have previously determined a set of keywords the company wishes to rank highly for—words or phrases that when searched should indicate potential customers (for example: “best digital cameras”). Use this list for comparison to the results.

- To start, enter the domain name for analysis into the tool. It will return a list, sorted by frequency of appearance, of the various keywords and phrases that appear on the domain in question. For comparison, enter one or more competitor domains and analyze them as well.
- Next, compare the domain to your target list.
 - Do the target keywords appear in the analysis? What's there and what's missing?
 - Do the target keywords appear in the competitor's analysis? What keywords does the competitor appear to be trying to rank highly for (for example “cheap” or “best”)?
 - What keywords appear on the domain analysis compared to the competitor analysis? Compare and contrast to the target domain. Note the differences in positioning. What does this say about the domain versus the competitors?
 - What kind of content needs to be created to improve this (using the missing keywords)?

(*Advanced*) Describe a strategy to create content that will add desired keywords to the website and could work to improve the search ranking for the desired keywords.

- Use Moz.com and the OpenSiteExplorer.com to identify and review links to a domain. (Suggest group project company domain and/or competitor for comparison.) Discuss using this to identify sources for PR and marketing outreach (blogs, etc.).

- Discussion: If the baseline based on this tool is x links, what strategies could you use to generate more links? What is the benefit? Discuss the value of # of links versus quality of links based on traffic and relevance.

Tools and Resources

- SEO trends, data and visualizations; <https://www.google.com/trends>.
- SEO guide; <https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo>.
- Google Web Master Console and Tools; <https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/home?hl=en>.
- Google development and algorithm releases: the *Search Engine Journal*; <https://www.searchenginejournal.com/seo-guide/panda-penguin-hummingbird/>.
- Release notes on Google algorithm releases; <https://moz.com/google-algorithm-change>.
- Google Keyword Planner; <https://adwords.google.com/KeywordPlanner>.
- WordPress SEO Tools; <https://wordpress.org/plugins/wordpress-seo>.
- SEO Rapper Video—great tips on design and execution of a good SEO strategy; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fnSJBpB_OKQ.
- Inbound Link strategies; <https://moz.com/researchtools/ose>.
- OSE link building opportunities; <https://moz.com/help/guides/research-tools/open-site-explorer>.
- Alexa Page and Traffic Rank tool; <https://www.alexa.com/siteinfo>.