

Optimize your Search Engine Marketing budget

Research shows that general search engines are the #1 source of information for electronic design engineers, and therefore, Search Engine Marketing is becoming an increasingly important element in the marketing mix. In addition, more organizations are getting familiar with Search, which increases the competition for the available shelf space, with higher bid price and more clutter, making it harder to reach customers with your marketing message. Due to this, search in many cases now counts for a significant portion of the overall marketing budget, and efficient optimization of the search budget is critical. Here are five steps to help you on your way.

1. Although it is tempting to spread the budget equally between all the products in the portfolio, achieving a balanced impression and brand awareness, a much better strategy is to focus the whole of budget on the highest performing (best click through and conversion event score) campaigns within each of the targeted segments, and by doing this avoiding going dark. This might not be a fair treatment from a marketing allocation perspective, but in the search “world” the customer rules. If the customer doesn’t search on your phrases, click through, and take an action on the landing page, your marketing message is probably not relevant, and you’re much better of spending your budget elsewhere.

2. Even with doing all the right things you may run short of your search budget or there may be other short term marketing programs (sales programs etc.) where search could help achieving the objectives. To enable this, design your search program

to be flexible enough and encourage marketing managers to “top-up” the search campaigns. One example of this is partner (distributor) search initiatives, where working together with partners on specific key phrases, you can extend your search shelf space while keeping the message consistent and the price of the click reasonable by not competing in the bid process.

3. Search marketing is the best VOC tool. It’s probably the only real time market research tool that can guide you in understanding the customer’s vocabulary in the buying process. One way to make your program more efficient is by better target the searcher's intent. This involves getting insight into what phrases are being used in what phases of the customers buying cycle and then optimizing the content for specific phrases, and at the same time gently pushing the customer forward. Content is king, and relevant content will always improve your click through rates.

4. Leverage SEO more effectively. Organic search typically drives more and better quality traffic than paid search. As an example, Marketing Sherpa reports that there is a 55% click distribution between the top 5 organic positions. So why aren't companies spending more efforts on organic search? There are several reasons why, but organic search optimization is tedious work, which requires both marketing and technical skills, and seldom shows an immediate short term return, which is the reason why it isn't always perceived as important. In the long run, however, the ROI payoff is worth the efforts. In addition it has also been shown that organic search improves the effectiveness of your PPC campaigns and vice versa, so it's important to strike a balance, because you can't pay your way to the #1 position. Here's what you can do for more effective organic search. Use high performing key phrases in paid search to inform what organic key phrases to use and optimize. Prioritize page audits based upon page conversion and return opportunity. Maximize traffic from PR by integrating organic key phrases into your press releases. And finally, evangelize and train your content providers. If the content providers are aware of organic search benefits, and the phrases that you're trying to optimize around, and you can educate them how to write with organic search in mind, the battle is half won.

5. Improve your competitive insight. Since using search is the one thing all our customers do as part of their buying process, you need to understand how your product is represented on the search result pages. What amount of shelf space do you have, what other products are showing up, what phrases are your competitors optimizing / bidding on. This will help you achieve a level of "intelligent bidding", where you can optimize both your shelf space and resources.