Search Marketing 2010: 5 Trends You Cannot Ignore

Once again, the Web is changing. Here are the top 5 secrets to staying on top of your game.

In the world of online search marketing, there’s one thing that does not change: your need to make efficient, effective marketing buys.

But everything else is in constant flux. And without a firm understanding of what’s changing – and what those changes mean – marketers can waste precious dollars chasing the wrong customers with the wrong messages at the wrong time.

The key to success is understanding customer behavior through quality analytics. In 2010, however, the analytics landscape itself is changing. New channels have led to new behaviors, forcing marketers to keep up with a dizzying array of possibilities.

Based on our work with thousands of marketers at over 1000 organizations across the globe, we’ve narrowed that list to the five most important changes you really need to know about. By being alert to a shifting landscape, and taking measures to seize new opportunities, you can stay ahead of the search marketing game.

1. Google isn’t the only PPC play anymore, by far
Change: Alternative search marketing options

Of course Google remains the giant in online advertising. But if your search budget concentrates exclusively on Google, you may be neglecting important markets. In China, where Google has ended its local services, Baidu is the biggest, fastest-growing player. And for younger audiences (and many older ones too), social media sites are where the real action is. Today, both Facebook and MySpace offer PPC advertising; the former, in fact, is in a neck-and-neck race with Google for number one most trafficked site.

Action step: Consider deeper demographic buys

Some years ago, Google was challenged by a competing search network that offered demographic fine-tuning as part of its appeal. It didn’t go far.

Now social media sites such as Facebook and MySpace offer a similar value proposition: the ability to hyper-target your audience by age, interest, geography, education, marital status and more. This time, they have the reach to make their value viable.

If you haven’t done so already, consider exploring the deeper demographic opportunities made available through social media search.

2. Real-time search expands results reach
Change: SEO counts everywhere

Like an online vacuum cleaner, Google and Bing’s real-time search capabilities rapidly suck in the latest updates from blogs, Twitter and social media sites like Facebook. Consequence? Even casual communications can have a major impact on your organic search results.

Action step: Optimize all your communications

You need to cast a wider net over your entire approach to online messaging, including:

- Using the keywords that are critical to your business in Tweets, blogs and online forums
- Adding click-through URLs, with tracking codes, to your updates
- Testing landing pages to be sure that your message, and your navigation pathways, are clear to all your visitors

3. All the clicks count
Change: The “last click” is no longer the only one that matters

Until recently, the click-through that counted was the one immediately preceding the conversion or sale. Keywords that didn’t contribute to the “last click” were “invisible” and dismissed as unproductive. But there’s a growing appreciation for the value of clicks (from search or referrals) that were pursued before the customer reached their decision to transact.

Each of these preceding clicks is an “assist” that forms an important part of the online sales process. Transactions with the last visit being a “brand” search may have been initiated from generic terms and/or various PPC sources. Some of these “unsung heroes” may have contributed to $000’s of sales and need to be identified, budgeted for and optimized.
Action step: Watch the entire buying journey

Take another look at your key-words. Even if they are not part of the last click, they may play crucial roles as the assists you need to help visitors along their buying journey.

4. Mobile search is on the move

Change: Expanded mobile search ad features

On the mobile Web, customers are searching as they are shopping. That urgency, combined with explosive smart phone sales, makes mobile search a top priority for any marketer. In response to the growing demand, Google has made significant changes you need to know about:

- Search ads may now include imbedded phone numbers mobile users can “click dial”
- AdSense has expanded to the mobile Web with both plain text and graphical advertising
- Google has added CPM (cost per thousand impressions) to the PPC advertising option

Action step: Take advantage of changing technologies

Be sure your search management technologies have the ability to monitor and manipulate all the potential powers of mobile Web advertising and SEM.

5. Integration is the real key to search success

Change: Bidding and rankings are just the beginning

For too long, SEM efforts have begun and ended at the same points: keyword research and rankings (for either SEO or PPC bids).

SOCIAL MEDIA TARGETING INCREASES VISITOR REFERRALS BY 40%

Chicago Internet marketing firm Marcel Media turns social media into a secret weapon for its clients. To target demographics difficult to reach through mainstream channels – such as college-bound teenagers and their parents – Marcel Media makes prudent keyword buys relevant to the consumer’s entire buying cycle on social media venues, such as Facebook and MySpace. As a consequence of precise targeting and careful social media/SEO integration, Marcel Media has won dramatic 25% lead increases for its clients, and has expanded fan bases and visitor referrals by nearly 40%.
Now there’s growing awareness that successful SEM means managing an entire stream of efforts that begins with research, continues with optimizing bids and refining ads and their delivery, pursues landing page optimization, and engages customers in timely, relevant interactive communications.

Key point: Unless every step in the SEM conversion process is optimized, money spent on bids may be dissipated by weak efforts further down the stream.

**Action step: Optimize the entire search stream from research to interactive marketing**

The 2010 approach to search engine management integrates all of your efforts into one suite of activities that can be easily managed and monitored for maximum effectiveness. An integrated approach helps you:

- Identify and target the most appropriate audiences
- Discover and bid upon the best keyword options
- Master and monitor results, trends and performance metrics
- Design, test, and personalize landing pages to attract and hold visitors
- Optimize your site for efficient navigation and maximum persuasiveness
- Engage customers with customized messages (such as re-marketing emails or ads) triggered by behaviors and loaded with timely, relevant content

By completely integrating SEM end-to-end, marketers can close the loop and capture the true, full value of every search process.

**SEE THE POWER OF INTEGRATION FOR YOURSELF**

For just one example of the power of integration, take a moment to see how targeted messaging campaigns, triggered by visitor behaviors, can help you capture more value from every prospect and customer interaction. Then learn more about how search marketing can be integrated into your online presence by talking to a Unica expert at +1-781-839-8000 or email unica@unica.com.

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**ABOUT UNICA**

Unica Corporation (NASDAQ: UNCA) is the recognized leader in marketing software solutions. Unica’s advanced set of enterprise marketing management and on-demand marketing solutions empowers organizations and individuals to turn their passion for marketing into valuable customer relationships and more profitable, timely, and measurable business outcomes. These solutions integrate and streamline all aspects of online and offline marketing. Unica’s unique interactive marketing approach incorporates customer analytics and web analytics, centralized decisioning, cross-channel execution, and integrated marketing operations. More than 1,000 organizations worldwide depend on Unica for their marketing management solutions.

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