



we simplify
the Internet

Capitalizing on the Internet Marketing Opportunity

- Why some businesses are excelling while others are falling far behind -

There is no doubt that in today's business world, having a strong online presence is important for any company. The e-business world is a level playing field, where small businesses can occupy the same amount of space and have the same impact as the big guys. However, amidst this shift to new business technologies, many companies feel overwhelmed when faced with the task of choosing the right firm to create their Internet solution and how to complement that solution with a powerful Internet marketing strategy. In this article, you will learn the all the fundamentals, trends, techniques and best practices of Internet marketing to keep up in today's fast paced e-business world.

Building an Online Presence... the ABCs of Internet Marketing

WSI (We Simplify *the* Internet) helps companies by creating Internet solutions that give them the **ABCs of Internet Marketing Success™**. The steps in the ABCs are simple: **A**dvanced Web solutions using cutting edge technology, **B**uild targeted traffic using search engine marketing techniques, and help **C**onvert more customers through effective landing page design focused on the art of conversion architecture. The following are four things you should remember when choosing your Internet business solution.

1. Your website should not cost you anything.

Your website should be a balance sheet item, not an expense to your company, and it should deliver a measurable return on investment. Most Web developers build or rebuild sites from scratch with the focus on coding only. They don't take advantage of modular development technology that supports a building block approach of functionality as a reflection of your business needs. By deploying a modular approach to building, rebuilding or enhancing your site, the developer can bring you a high quality solution at significant cost savings.

2. Your website should not remain static.

Websites should be more than simple online brochures – they should work for you, and should change as your company, industry trends, and your customers' interests change. Updating your website with fresh content encourages your customers to return to it. They are more likely to

return to your site if they know it will be a source of fresh content – they'll want to see what's new! Content such as promotions, photos, statistics, and white papers or research studies should be updated regularly in order to remain current.

Most Web developers are just that: developers. Once they have finished a site they are off to develop another one. Most businesses simply do not have the time or resources to consistently update their company's website on their own. Working with a WSI Internet Marketing Consultant ensures that your site will not be left unattended; WSI Consultants specialize in maintaining long-term business relationships and ongoing support.

3. Your website should be measurable.

You measure your sales activity and channels on a monthly basis, and your website is one of your sales channels. Knowing the number of **visitors**, not just the number of hits, is extremely important. Knowing which pages are being viewed and how long a visitor is on each page is critical information. What search engine did the visitor come through to visit your site? Did the visitor reach the site over a link from another site?

Online, almost everything can be measured: unique visitors, clicks, engagement, buzz, open rates, conversions, demographics, branding, and time spent are just a few examples of the many available metrics. Marketers and businesses like yourself embrace the very real potential of all this information – but often feel overwhelmed by mountains of data, as well as stymied by the technology that delivers the solutions.

Web analytics is a tool that is used to collect data on the behavior of website users. It is the process of analyzing the activity of people accessing a website, such as how they found the site, when they visited, what pages they viewed, what they bought or downloaded, where they exited and so on. That information is then used to help website administrators improve their websites. Below are just some of the benefits of Web analytics.

- Track and report a site's visibility (see where visitors are coming from, know the search terms they are using to find that site, etc.)
- Allow you to improve a site's functionality (see the need to improve download speeds, repair broken links, etc.)
- Determine visitor loyalty (identify returning visitors and see which products or services are the most popular with specific visitors, etc.)
- Improve overall visitors' experience while navigating through a site

Why is Web analytics so important? It's simple. If you can determine the behavior of visitors on your website, then you can make the necessary changes to your site to convert more visitors into customers. If your visitors are browsing through your site but are not performing the desired actions (purchase, download, subscribe, etc.) then the ultimate goal of having a website has not been achieved.

Keep in mind that Web analytics isn't just all about you. Competitive data can provide an apples-to-apples comparison of you to your online competitors and your industry. WSI can help provide data that enables you to gauge metrics such as the percentage share of industry visitors to your site; the campaigns competitors are running and how well they work; benchmarking search marketing; industry conversion rates and more.

As a business, you are constantly measuring yourself against your competition. How your website performs is no different. You need to know how your site ranks compared to your competitors' sites as well. Working with an Internet solutions provider rather than a website developer will give your business a competitive advantage over your competition.

4. Your website should be visible.

What good is the most interesting and measurable website if it can't be found or viewed by your target audience? Today, many countries are making Web accessibility, the practice of making pages on the Internet accessible to all users, especially those with disabilities, mandated by law. Even countries that don't have Web accessibility laws in place as of yet should be concerned with its impact. It only makes sense – studies have shown that between 10 and 15 percent of Internet users have a physical, visual or cognitive impairment that prevents them from accessing Internet resources, like your website.

Web accessibility can be accomplished through simple adjustments, such as by ensuring the site does not rely too heavily on frames. Page reading software that literally reads the text of the page out loud for users with visual impairments have difficulty reading text in frames. If your site necessarily relies on many graphics or flash components, an easy way to make it accessible to users whose computer cannot support them or those using page reading software is to make a text-only version of the site to supplement your regular site. Making your website accessible is a first step to ensuring that your site is visible.

Another key component of a visible website is its ability to be found by search engines, and, in turn, your target audience. Optimizing your website with keywords (search engine optimization, or SEO) makes finding your site easier for your clients. Include the common words and phrases that your clients would use as search terms to find information on your topic in the text of your website. The more SEO-friendly your site is, the higher it will rank in search engine listings.

While, in the long run, organic SEO is the most effective way to drive targeted traffic to your site, most sites need some help to boost their rankings until organic SEO can begin to work for you. Two effective ways to help your rankings is through pay-per-click campaigns and email marketing. Then, by working to optimize your site to make your site search engine friendly, you can work toward being found on the first page of the non-paid search results. You can boost the Web presence of your business, showing potential clients that you are up-to-date with their needs, and are ready to work for them.

Ensuring that your website doesn't cost you anything, isn't static, and is measurable and visible will help make your website work for your business, generating traffic of targeted potential clients to your site, and, ultimately, generating revenue. A basic "online brochure" simply isn't enough anymore – your website should be a complete, Internet Business solution that works for your company. Your business needs the **ABCs of Internet Marketing Success™**.

Taking a Closer Look at Search Engine Marketing (SEM)

Google, Yahoo!, MSN and AOL all have one thing in common – they all represent the first place consumers go to when they're thinking about making a purchase – a search engine. If you want to buy a living room set, for example, do you immediately rush out to the closest furniture store? Probably not. You'd most likely rush to your computer, open your Internet browser, type in your favorite search engine (if it's not already set as your default home page of course) and enter the keywords "furniture stores in (your area)", "living room sets", "living room furniture" and so on. After you hit the search button, you're presented with a list of websites related to the keywords you entered. Then you begin to explore those sites, one by one, looking for your ideal living room set.

But have you ever wondered why typing in those specific keywords resulted in the list of websites that appeared before you? They didn't show up by accident. They showed up because those companies had their websites strategically optimized to be the first sites you see as soon as you search for your keywords – a tactic called search engine marketing (SEM).

More Visibility Means More Traffic

The art of using search engines to generate more traffic to a particular website is a powerful method since search engines are the #1 way people find websites. Below is a list of the most popular search engines.

Top 10 Search Engines in the US, Ranked by Searches, May 2007 (thousands and % share of searches)

	Searches	% share
1. Google	4,033,277	56.3%
2. Yahoo!	1,540,949	21.5%
3. MSN/Windows Live	605,400	8.4%
4. AOL	381,961	5.3%
5. Ask.com	142,418	2.0
6. My Web	61,784	0.9
7. Comcast	34,908	0.5
8. EarthLink	33,461	0.5
9. BellSouth	30,122	0.4
10. Dogpile.com	26,295	0.4

Source: Nielsen//NetRatings, "MegaView Search" as cited in press release, June 20, 2007

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If your prospects are on the Internet, they're likely using one of the above search engines to find information about the products and services they're interested in. The problem is: if your

website isn't one of the first sites they see when they type in their keywords, they'll likely go to someone else – your competitor.

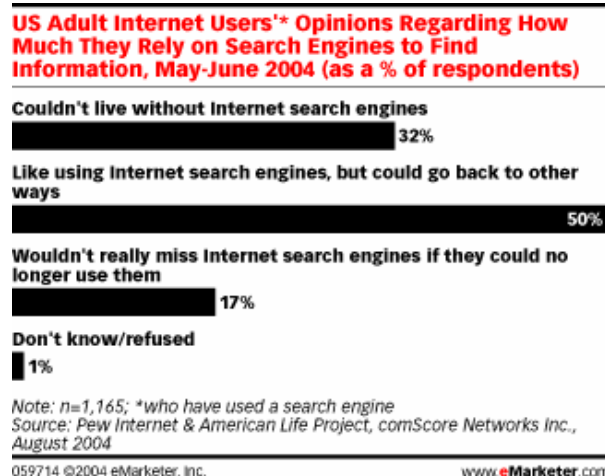
Every smart Internet marketer knows the importance of SEM, because where you rank in a search engine has a tremendous influence in the success of your Web presence. After all, if your potential clients can't find you, how do you expect them to do business with you?

Search Engine and Product Research

A survey was conducted by eMarketer.com to show the most popular online activities among Internet users. The survey results showed that:

- 93% of respondents say email usage is the most popular
- 79% of respondents say search engine usage is the most popular
- 63% of respondent say researching products and services in the most popular

Search engines have become a commodity to people, especially consumers who do research before making a purchase. According to another eMarketer.com survey, 32% of respondents said they could not live without Internet search engines.



Two of the most popular search engine marketing techniques are search engine optimization (SEO) and pay-per-click (PPC).

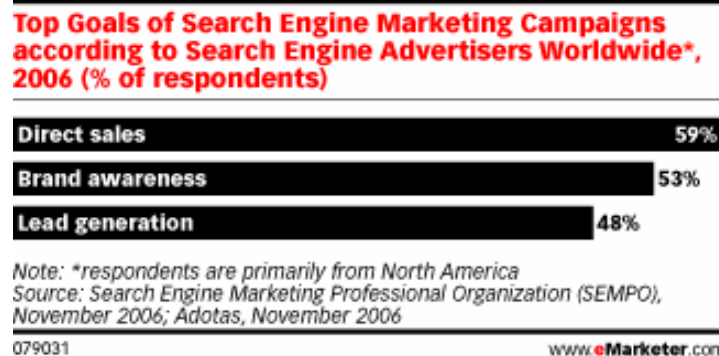
Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Search engine optimization is a method of improving a website's visibility in a keyword search, thus leading to improved volume and more traffic to a site from "organic" search results. As discussed, the higher a website is ranked in a search engine, usually the more traffic that site receives. And higher targeted traffic means more lead generation and even increased sales.

Pay-per-click (PPC)

Pay-per-click is the technique of advertising with search engines for particular keyword phrases. Advertisers are charged a small fee every time a visitor clicks on the PPC ad. In essence, website owners have the opportunity to buy their way to better positions on search results pages and attract more traffic that way.

The chart below indicates that the top goals for search engine marketing campaigns are direct sales, brand awareness and lead generation. If your business' SEM campaign is executed properly, then those goals will be accomplished.



Search engine optimization (SEO) and pay-per-click (PPC) have been the reigning buzz words of Internet marketing in the last year or two. As a business, you have probably explored these for your company as well, which is a great start. Getting your website to list on top positions in leading search engines is possibly the result of an SEO strategy working really well. Hundreds of clicks coming in to your specially designed landing page is perhaps the magic of a successful paid listing or sponsored link. The question is: how much of this is impacting your bottom-line through increased conversions and sales? If the impact is not visibly great, you are probably missing critical elements of your SEM strategy.

Define Marketing Objectives, Identify Missing Elements and Apply the Right SEM Mix

What is it that your business needs to market effectively online and enhance your revenues significantly? Maybe it's an interactive video. Could be an email marketing campaign and a monthly e-newsletter. A blog might be the one thing your company could really benefit from. How about an RSS feed or a podcast? Whatever it is you are missing, a WSI Internet Marketing Consultant can help you analyze your business' needs and guide you towards an appropriate SEM strategy.

While the goal of SEO and PPC is primarily to increase traffic to your website, the goal of a good SEM mix strategy is much more than that. Statistics as shown below from a study by Search Engine Marketers Worldwide indicate that lead generation, direct online sales and driving traffic are the leading objectives for paid search marketing.

Leading Objectives for Paid Search Marketing according to Search Engine Marketers* Worldwide, March 2007 (% of respondents)**

Lead generation	53%
Direct online sales	53%
Driving traffic	51%

Note: *companies/client-side; **respondents were from UK-76%, Europe (non-UK)-12% and North America-8%
Source: E-consultancy and Neutralize, "UK Search Engine Marketing Report 2007," April 2007

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Implementing an SEM mix strategy does a lot more than generate massive traffic to your website. It generates **targeted** traffic from an **active** audience. That means you're not just getting random people viewing your site for a few seconds and leaving. You're getting interested people viewing your site with intentions of committing your call-to-action.

Increasing Your Response Rates with Email Marketing

An important trend in marketing today is the move to email marketing. Telemarketing, once a top choice for many companies, is gradually being phased out worldwide, as "Do Not Call" legislation is being passed in many countries. Companies with lower marketing budgets need to find alternative ways to get their message to their potential customers.

Email marketing is becoming an increasingly important part of the marketing tool box for small businesses, as it is a proven method to level the playing field between them and their larger competitors. Since mass media advertising is undisputedly expensive and difficult to measure the results of, email marketing is becoming the logical choice of small businesses. It offers lower costs and a broader reach than most other marketing formats. Email marketing can help small businesses stay competitive with larger companies, since it encourages real relationships with their customers.

In today's marketing world, the common motto we hear is: "Do more with less." Some believe that marketing can be more efficient than sales. An uninterested prospect can waste valuable phone time for a salesperson, but a deleted email does not. Studies have shown that 75% of consumers prefer permission-based emails over postal mail and telemarketing (Marketingpower.com). Keep in mind that the success of an email marketing campaign is measured by the following metrics: **open rates**, **click through**, **response** and **conversion**.

1. Have the right list(s). If your prospects have no need or interest in your products and services, it is going to take a spectacular amount of convincing to get them to buy from you.

2. Have good creative. Your message and subject line must stand out from the others. Keep your creative simple but compelling, graphically pleasing and easy to understand.

3. Have a good offer. This is one of the most important elements to remember. If your offer is not compelling enough, then you are not going to sell it, regardless of how you craft your creative or how badly your prospects need your product or service.

An important advantage of email marketing is its measurability. For businesses whose marketing budgets are small, it is necessary to ensure that all funding is spent on campaigns that can be proven effective. There are many different email campaign metrics that can be measured, however, the most popular metrics are:

- Number of successfully delivered emails (delivery rate)
- Number of opened emails (open rate)
- Number of recipients who responded to the email (“click-throughs”)
- Number of recipients who unsubscribed (unsubscribes)

Know Your Audience

The first stage of planning a successful email marketing campaign should be to determine your target audience. To make an email campaign effective, you must understand what your audience truly wants and needs, not simply what you would like to tell them. Many marketers mistakenly make their message too broad, thinking that it will help them reach a wider audience. The truth is the more specifically you target your audience, the more they will relate to your message. If your product or service would best suit homeowners, don't spend your time marketing to those who live in apartment buildings. The easiest way to learn these details is by asking relevant questions on your sign-up page.

Don't Let Your First Impression Be Your Last

Even the most carefully thought-out email content will go to waste if the subject line doesn't persuade recipients to open the email. Your subject line is the first part of your marketing campaign that your audience sees, yet, more often than not, it is the least creative aspect of the entire campaign. Learning the number of opened emails sent in a marketing campaign is a testament to the effectiveness of the email's subject line. The best subject lines are short, mention your brand name, and create interest in the content. The subject line should answer the “what's in it for me” question for the recipient; it should appeal directly to them by stating the benefits of your offer or information contained in the email.

Make it Memorable

Once your email has been opened, your content must speak for itself. Just like your subject line should speak to your audience directly, your content should answer the most important question the reader has: “Why should I care?” Make your content memorable. Each email should deliver something useful to your audience, be it details about an upcoming promotion or information they would find interesting or entertaining.

An important key to email marketing success is keeping your message short. Long emails will be put aside to “be read later,” and will most likely wind up in their deleted folder. Keep it short and keep your audience interested. If you have a lot to say and don’t feel you can edit down, give a brief overview of the most interesting and relevant points, and then direct readers to your website for more information.

Determine what you want your audience to walk away with or do after reading your email, and end your email with a “call-to-action” that will prompt them to do something. Ultimately, if your email is relevant to them and keeps them interested, they are more likely to turn into your customer. After all, that’s why you sent them the email in the first place!

Tie an Offer in Your Call-to-action

As you probably know, one of the basic rules of sales is "What's in it for me" (WIFFM) principle. If you offer your prospects a trade-off, they will be more willing to give you and your business an opportunity. This is often overlooked in business-to-business marketing. But take a moment to examine the advertisements that flood the business-to-consumer market. They are filled with free giveaways, free samples and free trials. It's because it works!

Increasing Website Traffic is Only Half the Equation

There is a lot of talk in the Internet Marketing industry about increasing website traffic – after all, if your potential clients aren’t finding your site, what good is it doing you? You can only promote your business’ products and services to those who actually find you online. Because of this, many businesses spend a lot of time and money on increasing traffic to their sites through various Internet marketing initiatives, including pay-per-click campaigns, search engine optimization and email marketing. As discussed, these are all very effective ways to increase site traffic.

But, is there actually something more important than directing traffic to your site? If you only focus your efforts on increasing traffic, you’re only doing half your job. So, you can get traffic to your site... but so what? If they immediately leave your site without doing anything, the time and money you spent to get them there simply wasn’t worth it.

The answer: **Increasing Conversion.** You need to be able to convert visitors to your site into customers – either a direct sale or have them sign up for your newsletter so you can continue your relationship with them long after they’ve left your site.

Example: If 5,000 people visit your site each month, and 50 of them turn into actual customers, your website conversion rate is 50/5,000, or 1%. If each of those customers equals an average sale of \$200, your business has made \$10,000. That’s not a bad amount.

However, by increasing your conversion rate to even 100 customers out of 5,000 visitors, your conversion rate has increased to 2%. Using the same average sale amount above, you have

increased your income to \$20,000 – without increasing the amount of money you spent to get customers to your site! You had the same number of visitors, but your profits doubled!

Important factors to increase Conversion:

1. Simple design.

Simplicity is important in Web design because the more complex the design is, the harder it is for visitors to focus. Complicated flash animation or large images on sites can sometimes cause more harm than they're worth, especially if visitors to your site are unable to load them. If your load time takes too long, visitors will leave without a second thought. Be sure that the focal point of your home page and inner pages is what you want your customers to absorb the most: what your business is, why visitors should browse through your site, the benefits you can offer them and how to become a client.

2. Clearly demonstrate the benefits of your product or service.

Web surfers are notoriously fickle, so don't make them read through pages of content and decide for themselves why they should choose your business. If the benefits of your product or service are clearly outlined and backed up with sound content, they are more likely to turn into clients.

3. Include calls-to-action.

Many websites don't convert visitors into customers for one simple reason: they don't ask the visitor to take action. All pages should encourage visitors to take action – either to purchase a product or service, sign-up for your newsletter or to contact your business.

4. Use effective navigation.

Understand where on your site you want visitors to go most, and make it easy for them to get there. If the goal of your website is to encourage visitors to sign up for an e-newsletter, link to your sign-up form wherever it seems logical – don't make them search for it. Try to think like a visitor to your site, and make it easier for them to become a client, not harder.

5. Take them where they want to go

As you know, pay-per-click advertising is a great way to generate traffic to your site, but one of the most common mistakes that many companies forget to do is “take the customer where they want to go” – if the customer found you for the search term “Kodak Digital Camera” then ensure you're directing traffic to your selection of Kodak Digital Cameras, not your home page. This act alone will greatly increase your conversion rates. Sometimes it's just that simple!

After you've made these changes to your website and you've increased your conversion rate, imagine the results you'll get when you implement a marketing plan to increase traffic to your site! If you use a pay-per-click or email marketing campaign and optimize your site to make it more visible to search engines, your profits can increase even more. Using the example given above, if you increase traffic to your site from 5,000 visitors to just 7,500, just look at the results:

- 7,500 visitors with a 2% conversion rate = 150 customers.
- 150 customers x \$200 per sale = \$30,000!

That's a \$20,000 increase from what you were making in the beginning. So, you can see that just increasing the number of visitors to your site is not the answer – you need to **convert** these visitors into customers to make your Internet presence pay off for your business.

A WSI Internet Marketing Consultant Is Waiting For Your Call

An Internet Marketing Consultant from WSI can work with you to determine the unique needs of your business and provide you with an online solution and Internet marketing strategy that is perfectly suitable for you. WSI Internet Marketing Consultants have the skills, knowledge and access to the best products and services to help your business prosper online.

About WSI: Headquartered in Toronto, Canada, WSI is committed to improving the profitability of our customers through the use of leading-edge Internet technologies, delivered by knowledgeable and service-oriented Internet Marketing Consultants. WSI creates websites that work! Our solutions are affordable, flexible and robust, drive more traffic, convert more customers online and provide ongoing return on investment for our customers. WSI's years of experience in this industry have shown that an effective, profitable Internet solution is the result of careful planning, informed development and ongoing support.

To contact a WSI Internet Marketing Consultant in your region, please visit our websites at www.wsicorporate.com.

** All charts are courtesy of www.eMarketer.com.*