



**LEONARDO DA VINCI - TRANSFER OF INNOVATION**

# **ONLINE MARKETING**



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## ONLINE MARKETING

### 1 Introduction

The Internet has led to a more and more linked environment, and the evolution of Internet usage has resulted in the decreasing distribution of old-style media. Marketing in this linked environment and using that connectivity to market is online marketing.

Online marketing embraces lots of strategies, but what underpins successful online marketing is a user-oriented and consistent approach to these strategies.

#### 1.1 Internet, URL, IP, domain

In its simplest form, the Internet is a group of linked documents or objects. Hyperlinks are what link these documents.

A hyperlink is a link from one page (document) on the World Wide Web to another one. It comprises the uniform resource locator (URL) of the linked-to document, which defines where on the Internet a document is. It is what you write in the address bar of the browser because it is the address of that document on the Internet.

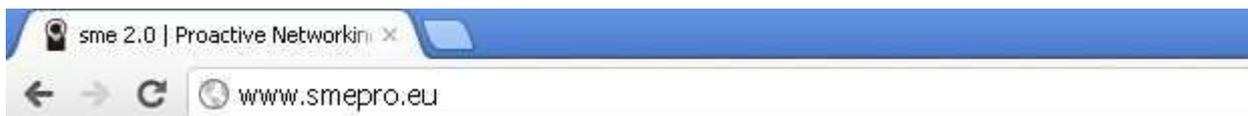


Figure 1: The uniform resource locator

A URL provides information to both web browsers and users. URLs contain domain names, which translate to Internet protocol (IP) addresses. All web sites correspond to an Internet protocol (IP) address, which is a structured series of dots and numbers indicating where it is physically situated. When you write a URL into the address bar of a browser, the DNS record shows where the document is that you are connected to. Lots of domains can translate to the same IP address.

*An example from SME 2.0 project:*

Domain name: `http://smepro.eu`

IP address: 87.229.26.238

*A domain name looks like this:*

`http://www.domainname.com`

But much more information can be included in that. Domain names carry the following information:

*subdomain.domain.tld/directory*

*Domain:* The registered domain name of the website.

*Subdomain:* A domain that is part of a bigger domain.

*TLD:* The top-level domain, top in the hierarchy of domain names, also known as the domain extension.

*Directory:* A folder in order to organize content.

The TLD can show the country in which a domain is registered and give information about the nature of the domain:

*.com:* The most frequent TLD.

*.hu, .co.uk, .uk, .ie, .it:* These TLDs show country information.

*.org:* Used by NGOs.

*.gov:* Used by governments.

*.ac, .edu:* Used by academic institutions.

Domain names must be registered, and usually there is a fee for doing so.

## 1.2 Access the Internet

Users connect to the Internet and access content in many different ways. When it comes to the physical connection to the Internet, there are a number of options:

- Dial-up
- 3G (third-generation mobile and wireless connection)
- Wi-Fi and WiMAX
- Broadband
- ADSL (asymmetric digital subscriber line)

And that list will continue. The devices that consumers use vary from mobile phones and small handheld devices to notebooks and desktop computers.

For some users, Internet is mainly a communication channel, and their online activity is concentrated on their emails, while for others it may be a research network, with search engines playing a large role in their online experience. Having such a varied audience means that there are many methods available to marketers when it comes to online marketing.

## 2 Using email as a marketing tool

Email marketing is a tool for customer relationship management. Used efficiently, this extension of permission-based marketing can give one of the highest returns on investment of any online marketing activity. Email marketing is a type of direct marketing that utilizes electronic tools to deliver commercial messages to an audience. It is one of the oldest and yet still one of the most powerful of all online marketing tactics. The efficiency comes from the fact that it is the following:

- Very targeted
- Massively cost effective because of a low cost per contact
- Can be customized on a mass scale
- Entirely measurable

Additionally, chief strength email marketing is that it takes advantage of a customer's most frequent touch point with the Internet: their inbox. Email marketing is a tool for creating relationships with both current and would-be customers. It should maximize the retention and value of these consumers, which should finally lead to better profitability.

### 2.1 Email marketing methods

If you consider marketing as communicating with recent and would-be customers, you will see that all emails that are sent from your organization should be considered as part of your universal email marketing strategy. What are the ways that, as a customer, you might receive e-mails from e.g. an online retailer (eBay, Amazon)?

**Transactional emails:** When you place an online order, there will be a number of emails that you get, from confirmation order to notification of shipping.

**Newsletters:** These are emails that are sent to provide information to customers. They do not certainly carry an overt promotion but instead ensure that a customer is in regular contact with the firm. These build relationships and foster trust between consumers and firms/brands. Newsletter are also referred to as retention-based emails, these may include promotional messages but should be focused on providing information, geared at building a long-term relationship with the consumer.

**Promotional emails:** Should a retailer have e.g. a summer sale, they will send an e-mail relating directly to that promotion. They always feature a call to action and are designed around an exact aim.

**Other examples:** emails to suppliers, communication with affiliates

All letters sent out can be used to carry a marketing message.

## 2.2 Email campaigns

### 2.2.1 Planning

The first part of an email campaign should include the planning of the goals you want to achieve. Email marketing is being used as a method to help you achieve those aims.

Promotional emails usually have a direct aim:

1. Users purchase something
2. Users download a guide
3. Users ask further information

Newsletters focus on long-term aims, and so your *key performance indicators* become more important here.

An effective email campaign is most likely to be the one geared at retaining and creating a long-term relationship with the consumer.

### 2.2.2 Definition of email list

Doing an effective e-mail campaign requires that a business has an up-to-date database, a list of subscribers who have agreed to allow a firm to send them emails with marketing messages.

Consent must be clearly given by all users to whom e-mails are sent. Companies that abuse this can put their reputation in risk, and in lots of countries legal action can be taken against firms that send unsolicited emails or spams.

There are a many of ways to attract prospects to opt in to a database but a signup form on a website of the firm is key.

### 2.2.3 Inventive implementation

Emails can be written and viewed as *hypertext markup language* (HTML) emails or as text emails. Bear in mind, however, that occasionally HTML emails are rendered as text emails.

Text emails are the simple ones—text only, as the term suggests. If you have a computer with Windows operation system and you open up Notepad and type there, then you will be forming a text file. These emails are smaller and simpler.

HTML-based e-mails can be more spectacular. These e-mails can have images, different fonts, and hyperlinks. It's maybe what you've had in mind through this section when we have referred to email marketing.

It is compulsory to have an unsubscribe link on all business emails. Interactive emails are best created with lightweight HTML capability allowing the email to open rapidly. This supports to capture the reader's attention before he/she moves on. The construction must allow users to scan and navigate the email simply.

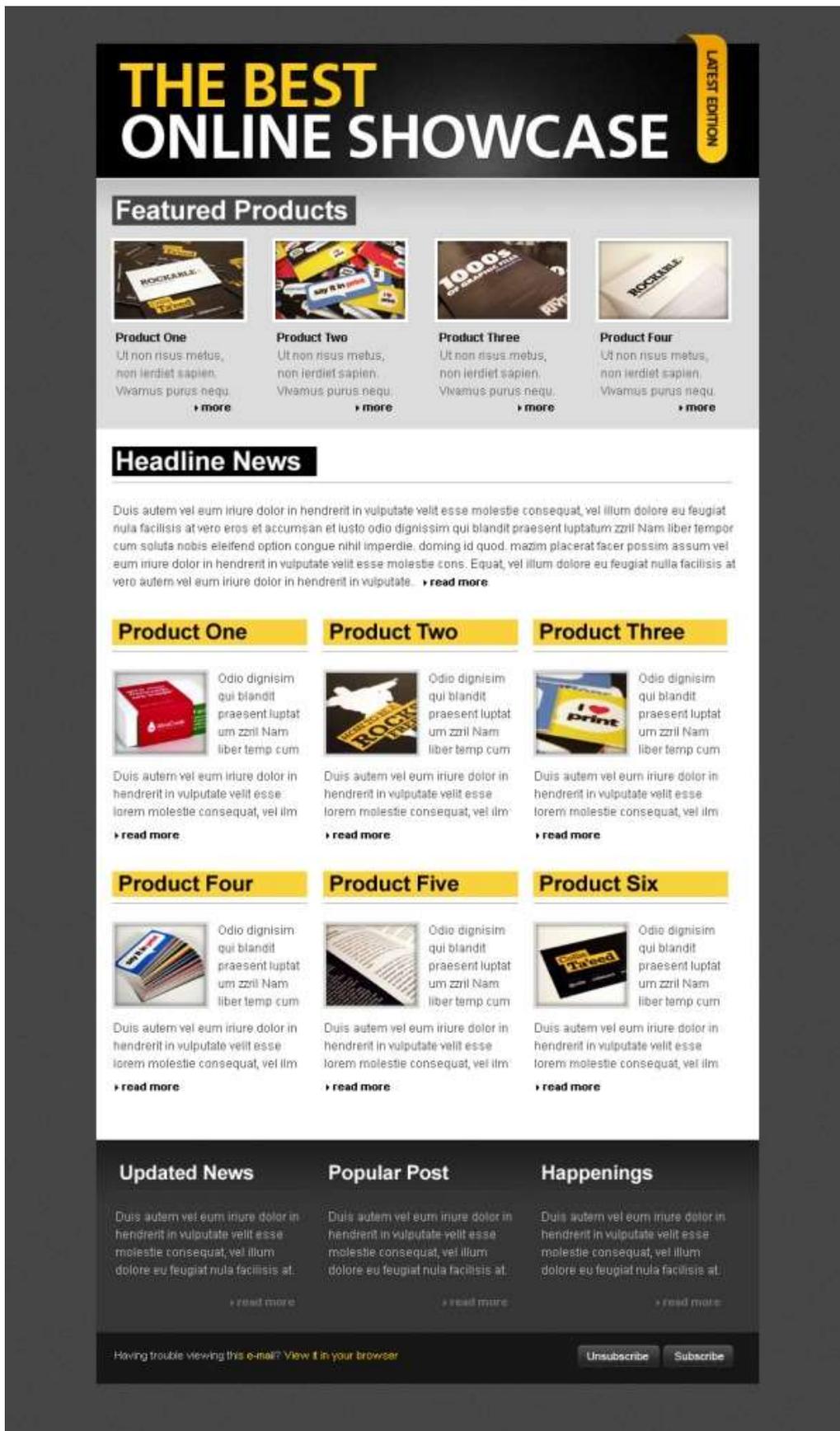


Figure 2: A HTML-based email template

## 2.2.4 Write content

Significant and precious email content is necessary to ensure the success of an email marketing campaign. Valuable text is informative and should address the problems and needs of users. It is imperative to recognize that the reader determines the value of the content, not the producer.

Effective email campaigns deliver value to their readers. It can vary from campaign to campaign. Newsletters can offer e.g. humour, study, info, promotions. Stay away from words like "cheap", "order now", and "reduction". These can be marked as spam by the readers.

## 2.2.5 Display test

An email client is software or a program that are usable to read and write emails. Some are web-based, like Gmail, Yahoo, Freemail (in Hungary), but there are also lots of software-based email clients, like Outlook, Thunderbird etc. The same email could look dissimilar in these applications, and there are spam filters in these programs too. Platform compatibility control and spam filter tests can be run here: <http://litmusapp.com>.

## 2.2.6 Personalization of emails

Some applications (SendBlaster, Printshop Mail Suite, e-Campaign 9, Bronto, Group Mail Free etc.) of email marketing allow mass customization. Even modest personalization can lead to better results.

A segmented database of users can allow customization by demographics or buying history.

## 2.2.7 Deployment

By making valuable content, launching the correct frequency, testing an email for display, an email vendor should be able to ensure an outstanding delivery rate. Emails should be delivered at regular times, but the ideal time for best outcomes must be tested.

Email reputation can determine whether or not your email is regarded as spam. It is determined by the judgment of the *Internet service providers* (ISPs), the antispam activists, and the recipients. The sender's Internet protocol (IP) address and/or sending domain can influence the reputation. If another email sender uses the same server that you use, and he/she is a spammer, you could be reputed as a spammer too by an ISP or a third-party provider.

(Spam is the use of email and other systems to send uninvited bulk messages.)

If sender's score doesn't fall within the ISP's thresholds, the sender's e-mails can arrive in the bulk folder, be quarantined, or be sent back to the sender.

Becoming a successful email marketer needs perpetual list cleansing. A good marketer must have a current up-to-date list to achieve good deliverability via reputation.

*How to improve your reputation score:*

1. ISPs propose several sender's authentication standards such as Sender ID, sender policy framework (SPF), and Domain Keys. It's worth using them.
2. Keep your database clean.
3. Eliminate hard bounces after three deliveries. (High bounce rate can lead to spammer status. Bounce rate signifies the percentage of visitors who enter the site, but "bounce" (leave the site) rather than continue viewing other pages within the same site.)
4. Reply to complaints and execute unsubscribe requests.
5. Try to gain explicit permission to send emails without any deceit.

## 2.2.8 Interaction

All interactions via email should be regarded as the part of the email marketing activity of a firm. Automatic emails (confirmations and office replies) are all opportunities to engage with consumers.

## 2.2.9 Performance indexes

Tracking, analysing, and optimizing are keys to be successful. Email tracking systems provide statistics in a user-friendly way.

*Key performance indexes:*

- Number of emails sent
- Number of emails opened: An email can be delivered, but that does not automatically mean it was opened.
- Number of bounced emails
- Unsubscribes: Numerous loss of subscribers is a major indicator that you misunderstood the needs of your subscribers.
- Pass-on rate: High pass-on rate (or forwards) shows that your list values the emails enough to regularly share with others. "Forward to a friend" link in all e-mails can increase it.
- Click-through rate: When a user clicks through to a website, it can be simply measured as a percentage against number of delivered, opened, or sent emails. It reveals which content or promotion was the most attractive for the subscribers.

## **3 Online adverts**

Online advertising includes ads on search engine results pages, ads placed in emails, and other methods in which advertisers use the Internet.

The main goal of advertising is to increase revenues, but also aims to raise brand awareness.

One of the main benefits of online display adverts is that they are not limited by geography or time. Online ads are also much more interactive than offline ones.

Online display advertising can include hyperlinked images, video, sound, and lots of other technologies.

### **3.1 Objectives of advertising**

Online and offline advertising has the same objectives.

#### **3.1.1 Strengthening brand awareness**

Awareness of a brand or a product is a central long-term objective for any marketer. Once consumers know about the brand, the marketer has taken the first step toward gaining the consumers' trust and patronage.

Online, creative ads or banners are mainly visual and ideal for promoting brand collateral.

#### **3.1.2 Generating consumer demand**

Advertising often needs to convince customers about what they would like and why they would like it.

#### **3.1.3 Satisfying customer demand**

It is essential for the marketer to show the customer how their actual brand or product will best meet that need.

#### **3.1.4 Driving traffic and sales**

Online marketing needs to drive traffic and sales in the long term. But online adverts also drive traffic and sales in the short and medium terms. Contrasting with offline advertising, online advertising can turn the potential customer into an actual buyer right there and then.

#### **3.1.5 The key differentiator**

Online activities can be highly tracked and measured, and it makes possible to target advertisements and to accurately track and gauge the efficiency of the advertisements.

## **3.2 Types of display advertisements**

There are lots of methods and tools to display adverts online, the most popular types are the following:

### 3.2.1 Pop-ups and pop-unders

These adverts pop up, or pop under in a new, smaller window, if a page is being viewed. You can see a pop-up right away but will see a pop-under after you close the browser window. These were very showy in the first period of online advertising, but because of audience irritation there are now "pop-up blockers" in web browsers. It's advisable not to use them anymore.

### 3.2.2 Interstitial banners

Interstitial banners are presented between pages on a website. As you click from a page to another, you are shown this ad before the next page is shown. Sometimes you can close the ads.

### 3.2.3 Map advertisement

A map advertisement is advertising located within the online mapping applications, such as Google Maps.

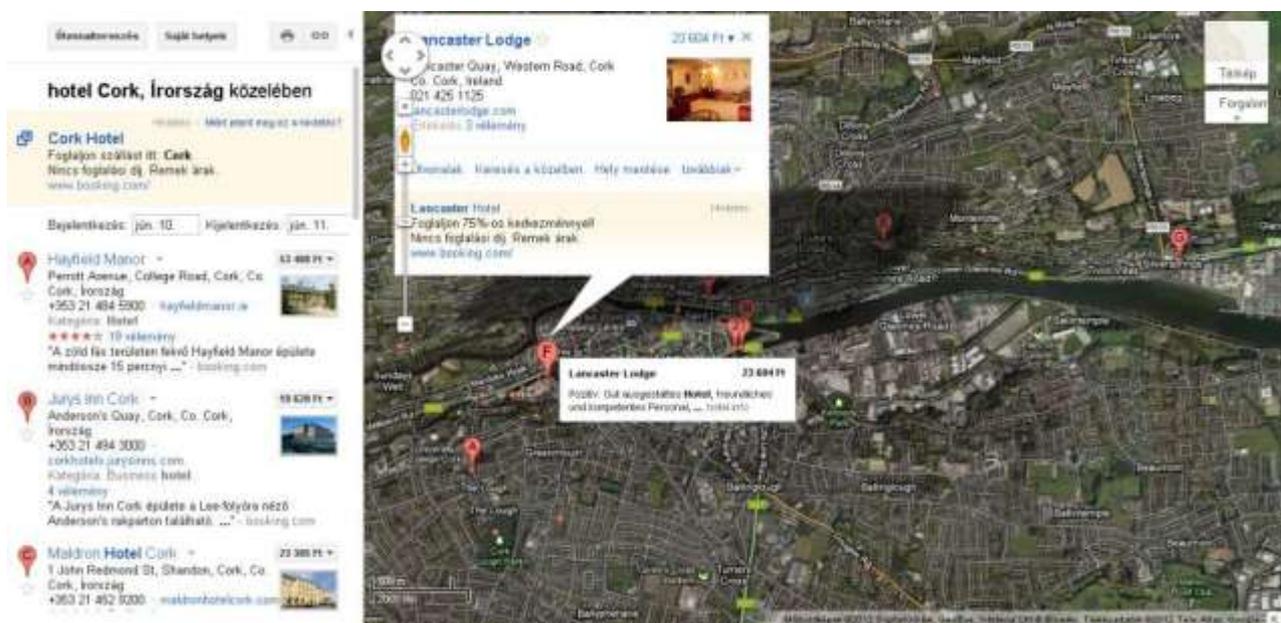


Figure 3: Google map showing an ad

### 3.2.4 Floating advert

A floating advert appears in a layer over the page for a few second. The user can often close it. Floating ads are usually produced with dynamic hypertext markup language (DHTML) or Flash. The animation often finishes by disappearing into a banner.

### 3.2.5 Wallpaper advert

A wallpaper advert modifies the background of the page being viewed.

### 3.2.6 Banner

A banner is an image or an animated picture shown on a website to advertise something. A static banner is usually a graphics interchange format (GIF) or a Joint Photographic Experts Group (JPEG) image, but banners can also be based on Flash, video, JavaScript, Ajax, jQuery etc. The viewer often can interact and transact within the banner.



Figure 4: Banner sizes (altlab.com)

### 3.3 Payment models

There are several different payment models for display advertising.

### **3.3.1 Cost per impression**

Cost per impression (CPI) means that the advertiser pays always when the advert appears on a page. The most usual method of referring to this model is cost per mille (CPM) (mille = thousand). An email campaign is normally priced so when brand awareness is the main goal.

### **3.3.2 Cost per click**

Cost per click (CPC) means that the advertiser only pays when his/her advert is clicked on by an interested party. CPC advertising is related to paid search marketing, or pay-per-click (PPC) advertising. Banners can be priced so when the goal is to drive traffic. It is also sometimes used in affiliate marketing, when the goal is to drive traffic to a new Web site.

### **3.3.3 Cost per acquisition**

Cost per acquisition (CPA) means that the advertiser only pays when an advert delivers an acquisition. Acquisition may be when a user is filling in a form, downloading a file, or buying a product. CPA is the optimal way for an advertiser to pay because he/she only pay when the advertising is certainly successful.

### **3.3.4 Flat rate**

Possessors of lower-traffic sites seldom can sell banner space at a flat rate, at a fix cost per month irrespective of the traffic or number of clicks.

### **3.3.5 Cost per Engagement**

Cost per engagement (CPE) means that advertisers pay only when a user engages with the advertisement unit. Engagement means a user interacting with an advert in any lots of ways, including viewing, sharing, voting, commenting, reviewing, playing a game, or taking a poll. It is an emerging technology and very popular on social networking sites (such as Facebook).

## **4 Affiliate marketing**

Affiliate marketing is used widely to promote Web sites, and affiliates are rewarded for every visitor, subscriber, or customer provided through their efforts. Because of this, affiliates are sometimes viewed as an extended sales force for a Web site. Affiliates are paid for performance, so affiliate marketing is also referred to as performance marketing.

The core of affiliate marketing is a simple process:

- An affiliate refers potential customers to a merchant's Web site.
- Some of those customers perform a desired action.
- The merchant rewards the affiliate for each desired action resulting from the affiliate's referral.

However, there are many different ways an affiliate might market a merchant's offering, there are many different types of action that can be rewarded, and, most importantly, there needs to be some way of keeping track of the whole process.

### **4.1 Action and reward**

Affiliate marketing can be used to promote any type of Web site—there just needs to be an agreed-upon action that will result in an affiliate earning commission. Different types of merchants will have different required actions. The actions and the types of commission can be summarized in the following:

1. Cost per action (CPA). A fixed commission for a particular action.
2. Cost per lead (CPL). A fixed commission for a lead (i.e., a potential sale).
3. Revenue share (also cost per sale [CPS]). An agreed-on percentage of the purchase amount is awarded.
4. Cost per click (CPC). A very small part of the affiliate marketing mix, where the merchant pays a fixed amount for each click-through to their Web site.

## 4.2 Tracking: the lifeline of affiliate marketing

The key to affiliate marketing is being able to track the whole process, from potential customers being sent to a Web site to completed action, so that the merchant is able to award the correct affiliate with the correct commission. This really is the crux of affiliate marketing.

Specialized affiliate tracking software is used to track affiliate campaigns, and this is usually supplied and supported by the affiliate network. Often, the merchant and the affiliate will also use their own tracking software to make sure that there are no major discrepancies.

Affiliates send traffic to merchants through links or uniform resource locators (URLs), and the tracking software allows each affiliate to have a unique identifier in the URL. These links set a cookie on the customer's computer, which allows the software to track the sale.

When the customer completes the required action on the merchant's Web site, the cookie will allow the tracking software to collect the information needed to award the commission. For example, if a customer were to use an affiliate link to purchase a gift from a merchant (using the same URL as before as an example), the following information would be collected:

- Referring URL and affiliate
- Total sale amount for commission
- Date and time of sale
- Unique order number of sale

All this information will allow the merchant to confirm that the sale is valid, as well as the amount of commission that is due, without ever releasing any of the customer's personal information.

Affiliate tracking software collects information even if no action is completed. This is vital to the affiliates and to the merchants to see where they can optimize their campaign.

Information collected includes the following:

- Impressions
- Clicks
- Conversions

All this information helps to build up data in order to strengthen the campaign.

Affiliates will use this information to determine the success of their marketing efforts. Remember that affiliates invest money into marketing various merchants, and they only get rewarded on commission. An affiliate will use the above information to determine whether or not to promote a merchant and how much they should invest in promoting a particular merchant.

Merchants can use the information on their campaign to determine how best to optimize. For example, if a particular type of banner seems to do better than others, they could use that to improve other banners that they offer.

## 4.3 How do affiliates promote merchants?

Affiliates are online marketers who are paid on a performance basis. Every type of marketing strategy will be found in the affiliate world, and affiliates can often be seen at the forefront of breaking technology and applying it to marketing strategies.

The basic aim of an affiliate is to send targeted traffic (that means customers who are very likely to perform the desired action) to a particular merchant's Web site. Affiliates may promote as many merchants in as many industries with as many tactics as they wish, but usually affiliates will start to specialize.

Most of the tactics will be the same as those that the merchant employs but will reach a different part of the Internet population. Effective tracking takes care of any overlap and will help a merchant to adjust their spending for a most effective return on investment (ROI). The main types of affiliates can be broken up into the following:

- Personal Web sites
- Content and niche sites
- E-mail lists
- Loyalty sites (points or cash back or charitable donations)
- Coupon and promotions sites
- Comparison shopping (see also PPC [pay-per-click] advertising)

- Search affiliates (search arbitrage)

Affiliate marketing came to the fore as a way for personal Web sites to make money, though this now forms a small part of the marketing mix. Affiliate marketing does still provide some income for these Web sites. However, we will focus on those endeavors that are created purely for affiliate marketing.

Content and niche sites are Web sites created around a specific topic, and any products promoted will carry affiliate tracking. For example, an affiliate might create a site dedicated to digital cameras, with tips and downloads to help you get the most out of your camera. It could review a number of different cameras and offer links to purchase those cameras online. All those links will be affiliate links.

Seasonality is also an important consideration for content sites. Web sites can be created specifically for Christmas, Mother's Day, and many more key retail seasons.

Some affiliates run large opt-in e-mail lists, and they market particular merchant offers through their e-mail newsletters. Some renegade affiliates use spam e-mail to promote merchant offers, but as affiliate marketing has matured, there are usually terms and conditions to prevent such promotion.

As affiliates earn a percentage of a sale, some affiliates "split" this with the customer and create cash-back or points-based shopping sites. There are also some that donate a percentage of the commission to a charity.

Some of the most successful affiliate marketers are those who promote various merchants through paid search PPC advertising on search engines. These affiliates seek to find the highest earnings per click (EPC) for the lowest cost per click (CPC), this is also referred to as search arbitrage.

## 4.4 Affiliate networks

As well as the affiliate and the merchant, there is generally a very important third party in the affiliate marketing mix—the affiliate network.

While some small affiliate programs and some very large affiliate programs (such as Amazon Associates) are run by the merchant, most merchants opt to use an affiliate network to provide most of the technical solutions required for an affiliate program.

Affiliate networks provide tracking solutions, reporting on programs to both affiliates and merchants, hosting of creative banners, commission payment options, and support to both affiliates and merchants. Affiliate networks have many affiliates, and many merchants, signed up to them, so they are ideal sources for recruiting affiliates if you are a merchant or for finding merchants to promote if you are an affiliate. Affiliate networks provide a one-payment solution to merchants, as the merchants will be invoiced for all the commission collectively owed, which is then dispersed to the affiliates.

Affiliate networks usually charge the affiliates nothing to join. They can charge a merchant a setup fee, which will cover the cost, making sure that the tracking solution is successfully integrated, and can charge a monthly management fee, depending on the level of support offered to the merchant. Affiliate networks usually charge the merchant a percentage of the commission earned by the affiliate (called a commission override), so that there are incentives for the networks if they perform well. As a rough guide, this is typically 30 percent of the commission rewarded to the affiliate.

## 5 Search engine marketing

Every day, all around the world, millions of people use search engines to find content on the Internet. Search engines are Web-based programs that index the Web and allow people to find what they are looking for. "Search," or "search marketing," is often used to refer to the industry that has built up around search engines.

### 5.1 Search engine optimization

Google, Yahoo! and now Bing are all well-known international search engines. Google is by far the leading player in the market.

#### 5.1.1 Organic search results

Organic search results are the primary product of a search engine. These results are the listings generally found on the left-hand side on the search engine results pages (SERPs). They are not influenced by financial payment and are therefore also called natural search results. Organic search results need to be

consistently reliable to attract (and keep) users. Google's growth and success as a search engine can be directly linked to its superior search algorithm, which returns highly relevant organic results.

## 5.1.2 Paid search results

Paid search, also known as pay-per-click (PPC) advertising, involves the displaying of sponsored results alongside the organic results. Advertisers bid for placement and pay the search engine when their advertisement is clicked on. Paid search results must be distinguished from organic results, since paid placement introduces bias. PPC advertisements are usually displayed at the top and on the right side of the SERPs. Search engines attract and keep users through organic search, but they make most of their money from paid search.

## 5.1.3 The importance of search to a marketer

As search engines have become essential to a Web user's Internet experience, so has search become essential to a marketer. Search is important for a number of reasons:

- **Search is goal oriented: people use search to find the things they want and need:** The Internet is a highly competitive environment, with literally billions of pages in existence. So how does anyone find the page they are after? Web users find what they need primarily via search. Search drives targeted traffic (and therefore sales) to Web sites. A Web search is a signal of intent from a Web user.
- **The search industry is big:** The daily search-volume numbers are in the hundred millions.
- **To be found, you must be visible:** If you want your Web site to generate a significant amount of traffic, then it needs to be listed on the major search engines and listed high up enough to be seen. Statistics show that users are not likely to view listings beyond the first thirty results, with the top six (above the fold) listings enjoying the lion's share of clicks.
- **Top of search equates to top-of-mind awareness:** Beyond traffic, a high-ranking Web site is valuable for brand perception. Web users often perceive search engine results as an indication of authority. Search visibility promotes brand recognition and research has shown that search engine listings can stimulate brand recall by a three-to-one margin.
- **People trust organic search:** Research has shown that people find organic results more relevant and more trusted than paid search results.
- **Catch potential customers at every phase of the buying cycle:** Most purchases are subject to a buying cycle. At different points in that cycle, prospects are searching with different key phrases. Give them what they want at each phase, and they will keep coming back until they are ready to buy. In addition, they will be ready to buy more quickly because information is the best way to shorten the buying cycle.
- **Many people have a search engine as their browser home page:** Often, the home page of a browser is set to a search engine. Many users enter URLs (uniform resource locators) into the search engine instead of the address bar of the browser—meaning that even if they know the URL of a Web site, they are finding it through search.
- **A three-way relationship: search engines, webmasters, and users:** Search engines, Internet users, and Web site owners are involved in a symbiotic, three-way relationship. Each party depends on the other two to get what they need.
- **Users want to find what they are looking for on the internet:** Web users use search engines to lead them to Web sites, and they favor search engines that deliver the most relevant and useful results.
- **Search engines want to make money from selling advertising:** The more users they have, the more advertising search engines can sell. Therefore, search engines must list their results according to relevance and importance in order to attract and keep users. In turn, search engines favor sites that are relevant and useful to users.
- **Web site owners, webmasters, and online marketers want search engines to send traffic to their site:** Web site owners want search engines to send traffic their way. Therefore, they need to make sure that their sites are relevant and important in both the eyes of the search engines and the users.

## 5.1.4 What does a search engine do?

Search engines have four main functions:

- They crawl the Web (via spiders).
- They index the Web documents and pages they find.

- They process user queries.
- They return ranked results from the index.

A search engine is made up of a number of parts working together:

- A crawling spider, also known as a Web crawler, robot, or bot, is an automated indexing program. It goes from page to page, following links and indexing or recording what it finds.
- The index is what the spider creates. It is a “library” of pages on the Internet, and it consists of tens of billions of pages. The search engine creates databases for keywords, so it knows where to go to when a user enters a query.
- The engine is the part that does the actual searching. Users input a search query by typing a keyword or key phrase into the search bar. The engine then checks its index to find relevant pages and delivers them ordered from most relevant and important to least relevant and unimportant.
- The SERP (search engine results page) is the ordered listing of results for the user’s query. A SERP contains a description and link to the result.

## 5.2 Search engine marketing

Search engine marketing (SEM) has two parts: search engine optimization (SEO) and PPC advertising. These correspond to the two types of search results.

SEO aims at improving a Web site’s ranking in the natural search results. PPC advertising involves bidding for placement in the paid search results section of the SERP.

Both SEO and PPC advertising are based around the same fundamental concept: keywords.

### 5.2.1 Keywords: making sense of it all

Keywords, or key phrases, are what a user enters into a search engine query to find Web sites. Both SEO and PPC advertising involve selecting the keywords that are relevant to a company’s Web site and are used by potential customers. SEO aims to have a Web site rank in the natural results for its target keywords. In PPC advertising, the advertiser bids on desired keywords to achieve rankings in the paid results.

The following two chapters deal with the two divisions of search engine marketing: SEO and PPC.

## 6 Search engine optimization

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the practice of optimizing a Web site so as to achieve preferred ranking on the search engine results pages (SERPs).

Search engine optimization (SEO), also called organic or natural optimization, involves optimizing Web sites to achieve high rankings on the search engines for certain selected key phrases.

This is achieved by making changes to the hypertext markup language (HTML) code, content, and structure of a Web site, making it more accessible for search engines, and by extension, easier to find by users. These are also known as on-page factors. SEO also involves off-page factors—these generally build links to the Web site. Activities to increase links to a Web site, including social media and Web public relations (WebPR), are considered off-page SEO.

SEO is an extremely effective way of generating new business to a site. It is a continuous process and a way of thinking about how search engines see your Web site and how users use search engines to find your Web site. It’s search psychology.

SEO is a fairly technical practice, but it can easily be broken down into five main areas:

- A search engine–friendly Web site structure
- A well-researched list of key phrases
- Content optimized to target those key phrases
- Link popularity
- Emerging trends

## 6.1 Search engine–friendly web site structure

Search engines encounter two kinds of obstacles:

- Technical challenges that prevent the search engine spider from accessing content
- A competitive marketing environment where everyone wants to rank highly

To ensure that search engines can access your content, you must remove technical barriers. Those who wish to achieve the best results must follow best Web development practices.

## 6.2 Well-researched key phrases

Key phrases are the very foundation of search. When a user enters a query on a search engine, she uses the words that she thinks are relevant to her search. The search engine then returns those pages it believes are most relevant to the words the searcher used. (See later.)

Search engines have built a sophisticated understanding of semantics and the way we use language. So, if a user searches for “car rental,” the search engine will look for pages that are relevant to “car rental” as well as possibly “car hire,” “vehicle hire,” and so forth. Search engines have also built up knowledge around common misspellings and synonyms and common related searches so as to try to return the best results for a user.

Because of this, it is crucial that Web sites contain content with keywords that are likely to be used by their target audience. Web sites need to appear when their potential customers are searching for them.

As a Web site owner, or the marketer for a Web site, we need to build a list of some of the terms our potential customers are likely to use to find the things we are offering. A big part of keyword research is understanding search psychology. When we build our key phrase or keyword list, we are tapping into the mental process of searchers and putting together the right mix of keywords to target.

## 6.3 Optimizing content for key phrases

Once keywords and phrases are selected, we need to ensure that the site contains content to target those key phrases. We must ensure that the content is properly structured and it sends signals of relevance. Content is the most important part of your Web site. We must create relevant, targeted content aiming at our selected key phrases. Content already has several roles to play on your site:

- It provides information to visitors.
- It must engage them.
- It must convince them to do what you want.

Now it must also send signals of relevance to search engines. You need to use the keywords on the content page in a way that search engines will pick up and users will understand.

Each Web page should be optimized for two to three key phrases: the primary key phrase, the secondary key phrase, and the tertiary key phrase. A page can be optimized for up to five key phrases, but it is better to have more niche pages than fewer unfocused pages. Here are some guidelines:

- **Title tag.** Use the key phrase in the title and as close to the beginning as possible.
- **H1 header tag.** Use the key phrase in the header tag and as much as possible in the other H tags.
- **Body content.** Use the key phrase at least three times, or more if there is a lot of content and it makes sense. Aim for about 350 words of content, but don’t overdo it! That could look like spam to the search engines.
- **Bold.** Use tags around the keyword at least once.
- **Alt tag for an image.** Use the key phrase at least once to describe an image on the page.
- **URL (uniform resource locator).** Use a URL rewrite so that it appears in the URL of the page.
- **Meta description.** Use it at least once in the meta description of the page. It should entice users to click through to your site from the search engine results page (SERP).
- **Meta tags.** Use the keywords in the meta tags to provide context to the search engines.

- **Linked anchor text to another page.** Don't use it when linking to another page on your site. The anchor text describes the page being linked to, and so could dilute the relevance of the page you are linking from.
- **Domain name.** If possible, use the key phrase in your domain name, although favor usability or memorable domain names.

### 6.3.1 Optimizing Images

Images should also be optimized with the relevant keywords. Search engines cannot see images, so rely on the way that an image is described to determine what the image is about. Screen readers also read out the image descriptions, which can help visually impaired readers to make sense of a Web site. Lastly, images are sometimes also shown on the SERPs, and of course one can also search images using most of the major search engines.

Just as an image can help emphasize the content on a page, it can also help search engines in ranking pages, provided the image is labeled correctly.

Here are some ways to optimize images with key phrases for search engine optimization (SEO):

- Use descriptive filenames.
- Use specific alt tags and title attributes for the images.
- Meta information can be supplied in the image file. Make sure this information is relevant.
- Use descriptive captions, and keep relevant copy close to the relevant image.
- Make sure the header tags and images are relevant to each other.

SEO is both a science and an art. Focusing on writing quality content while sticking to a few guidelines when it comes to tags and URLs is the best way to ensure results. Remember, you want search engines to rank you highly for your content, but you also want to ensure that the content is a pleasure to read.

Adding fresh content that carries brand values regularly to your site will also encourage the search engines to crawl your site more frequently.

Use your Web site and its pages to establish and reinforce themes. Information can always be arranged in some kind of hierarchical structure. Just as a single page can have a heading and then get broken down into subheadings, a large Web site can have main themes that get broken down into subthemes. Search engines will see these themes and recognize that your Web site contains rich content.

## 6.4 Link popularity

Links are a vital part of how the Internet works. The purpose of a link is to allow a user to go from one Web page to another. Search engines, doing their best to mimic the behavior of humans, also follow links.

Besides allowing search engine spiders to find Web sites, links are also a way of validating relevance and indicating importance. When one page links to another, it is as if that page is voting or vouching for the destination page. Generally, the more votes a Web site receives, the more trusted it becomes, the more important it is deemed, and the better it will rank on search engines.

Links help send signals of trust. Signals of trust can only come from a third-party source.

Links help validate relevance. Text links, by their very nature, contain text. The text that makes up the link can help validate relevance.

### 6.4.1 What does a link look like?

Here is the hypertext markup language (HTML) code for a link:

```
<a href="http://www.targeturl.com/targetpage.htm">Anchor Text</a>
```

"http://www.targeturl.com/targetpage.htm" is the page that the link leads to. "Anchor Text" is the text that forms the link.

The link sends a signal that the target URL (uniform resource locator) is important for the subject of the anchor text.

There is a lot more information that can be included in this anatomy, such as instructions telling the search engine not to follow the link or instructions to the browser as to whether the link should open in a new window or not.

```
<a href=http://www.targeturl.com/targetpage.htm rel="nofollow">Anchor Text</a>
```

The instruction `rel="nofollow"` can be included in links when you don't want to vouch for the target URL. Search engines do not count nofollow links for ranking purposes. It was initially introduced by Google to try to combat comment spam.

## 6.4.2 Not all links are created equal

Of course, not all links are equal. Some sites are more trusted than others. So if they are more trusted, then links from those sites are worth more. Likewise, some sites are more relevant than others to specific terms. The more relevant a site, the more value is transferred by the link. Well-known and established news sites, government sites (.gov), and university domains (.edu) are examples of sites from which links can carry more weight.

Search algorithms also consider relationships between linked sites. By analyzing various things, the engines try to determine if the links are natural links or if they are manipulative, artificial links created solely for ranking purposes. Manipulated links are worth very little compared to natural links and may lead to a drop in search engine rankings.

The search engine algorithm will also determine the relevancy of the referring Web site to the site being linked to. The more relevant the sites are to each other, the better.

## 6.5 Emerging Trends

SEO (search engine optimization) is a constantly evolving activity. As the search engine algorithms become more sophisticated, they assess Web sites in more complex ways to arrive at suitable search results. There are significant changes on the horizon in how search engines will index and present their results. These changes are aligned with a goal of sorting through the exponentially increasing amounts of data available on the Web and giving users better and more targeted search results, which they will find useful.

There are four strong emerging trends for SEO:

- Localization
- Personalized search
- Usage data
- Real-time search

These four trends are making optimizing Web sites for search engines even more complex.

### 6.5.1 Localization and Personalization

The first two trends revolve around how the search engines are trying to accommodate the geographic and personal preferences of a user so as to present them with the best contextual results. By localizing, the search engines are presenting information in the language and geographic context of the user.

In personalizing search, the search engines are trying to align with what they have determined would be more appropriate for that specific user. Personalized search targets users' preferences on two bases: explicitly and implicitly.

Explicit personalized search is based on an interpretation, by the search engines, of data and information the users provide directly to search engines, such as location, age, language, and gender.

Implicit personalized search is based on data and information search engines gather by analyzing users' behavior. Search engines will track the pages users frequently visit or how they use certain sites—such as Gmail or bookmarking sites. Based on this, the search engines will predict what a user is probably interested in and tailor the results it presents to that user accordingly.

Surveys suggest that users are generally in favor of personalization and are willing to trade personal information to benefit from better-quality results from the search engines. Large search engines, like Google, are even offering end users the opportunity to tell them what results they like—through the

launch of user feedback mechanisms such as Google Search Wiki. This kind of functionality allows the user to tell search engines what results they like or don't like and would like to see (or not) again.

To optimize a site properly, factors like personalization and localization need to be taken into account and the site needs to be honed to do the following:

- Adapt to how the search engines will measure and index the sites
- Adapt to how users will expect to be presented with contextualized information

## **6.5.2 Usage data**

Search engines want their results to be highly relevant to Web users to make sure that Web users keep returning to the search engine for future searches. And the best way to establish relevance to users—how they use Web sites, of course!

Usage data are the most effective way of judging the true relevancy and value of a Web site. For example, if users arrive on a Web site and go back immediately, probably it wasn't relevant to their query in the first place. However, if a user repeatedly visits a Web site and spends a long time on the site, probably it is extremely relevant. When it comes to search engines, relevant valuable sites get promoted, and irrelevant sites get demoted.

### **6.5.2.1 How do search engines access these data?**

Search engines use cookies to maintain a history of a user's search activity. This will include keywords used and Web sites visited from the search engine. Search engines gather data on the click-through rate of results and on bounce rates.

Most search engines also provide other services, all of which can be used to gather data relevant to search. For Google, some examples of these services include the following:

- Google AdWords
- Google AdSense
- Google Analytics
- Google Web Site Optimizer
- Google Checkout
- Google Toolbar

It no doubt plays a part in search engine rankings, and that contribution is set to grow. So what does this mean for SEO? When it comes to a Web site, SEO must do the following:

- Be valuable enough to attract both visitors and links naturally
- Retain visitors and make sure they return to the Web site
- Convert visitors

### **6.5.2.2 What Not to Do**

Black-hat SEO refers to practices that attempt to game the search engines. Should a search engine uncover a Web site that is using unethical practices to achieve search engine rankings, it is likely to remove that Web site from its index.

Google publishes guidelines for Webmasters, available through Google's Webmaster Central (<http://www.google.com/webmasters>). As well as outlining best practice principles, Google has supplied the following list of precautions:

- Avoid hidden text or hidden links.
- Don't use cloaking or sneaky redirects.
- Don't send automated queries to Google.
- Don't load pages with irrelevant keywords.
- Don't create multiple pages, subdomains, or domains with substantially duplicate content.

- Don't create pages with malicious behavior, such as phishing or installing viruses, trojans, or other malware.
- Avoid "doorway" pages created just for search engines, or other "cookie cutter" approaches such as affiliate programs with little or no original content.
- If your site participates in an affiliate program, make sure that your site adds value. Provide unique and relevant content that gives users a reason to visit your site first.

The bottom line: design Web sites for users first and foremost, and don't try to trick the search engines.

### **6.5.3 Real-time search**

Google offered a new feature called real-time search. It's designed to further increase the optimal user experience with search and follows earlier features on Google search engine results pages (SERPs), which now regularly include images, news items, videos, and shopping listings. With real-time search, Google now displays a dynamic function in its SERPS, where you can see the latest mentions or URLs published on the Web, related to your search term.

This is ideal for social media and microblogging purposes, and Google has partnered with the likes of Twitter, MySpace, FriendFeed, Jaiku, Identi.ca, and other online businesses to offer this initiative. It opens up a number of opportunities and increases the importance of a strong social media presence to augment your search engine marketing efforts.

### **6.5.4 Tools of the trade**

There are a number of tools available to assist with SEO. Some are made available by search engines, and some are developed by agencies and individuals who specialize in SEO. Most are available for free.

#### **Google webmaster tools**

URL: <http://www.google.com/webmasters>

Google provides guidelines to Webmasters and tools to help ensure your Web site is being indexed.

#### **Quirk SearchStatus**

URL: <http://www.quirk.biz/searchstatus>

Quirk SearchStatus is a Firefox extension that allows you to easily view key SEO information related to the page you are visiting. As well as linking to Alexa and Compete rankings and a Whois look up, Quirk SearchStatus will highlight keywords on a page and allow you to easily access link reports from each of the major search engines.

#### **Tools from SEOBook.com**

URL: <http://tools.seobook.com>

SEOBook.com provides a number of tools that assist any SEO. For example, Rank Checker is a Firefox extension that allows you to save a number of keywords and to perform regular searches on them, giving you the ranking of your chosen URL for each keyword in the search engines selected. They also have tools to help with keyword discovery.

#### **Tools from SEOMoz**

URL: <http://www.seomoz.org/tools>

SEOMoz provides a wealth of articles and forums, as well as excellent SEO tools and guides. Some are free, but become a "PRO" member to access them all.

#### **Keyword discovery tools**

There are a number of tools available, some free and some that require a fee, to assist with keyword discovery. Some include Trellion's Keyword Discovery Tool (<http://www.keyworddiscovery.com>) and Wordtracker (<http://www.wordtracker.com>).

#### **Online forums**

Webmaster World (<http://www.webmasterworld.com>) is frequented by SEOs and Webmasters aiming to stay current with latest trends and search engine updates.

## Google's free search engine optimization guide

URL: <http://www.google.com/webmasters/docs/search-engine-optimization-starter-guide.pdf>

Google provides a free starter guide, useful for anyone new to SEO.

## Google insights for search

URL: <http://www.google.com/insights/search>

This provides valuable information about search terms you may want to target for SEO purposes. It also provides regional interest (i.e., by geography) for search terms, which is increasingly important as search engines move toward localization and personalization in their search focus.

## Pros and Cons

Optimizing a Web site for search engines should entail optimizing the Web site for users. Done properly, it should result in a better user experience, while ensuring that search engines index and rank the Web site well.

However, it can be tempting to focus on the technicalities of SEO while forgetting that both robots and humans need to read the same Web site. One should not be sacrificed for the other.

Search engines update their algorithms regularly. Each update is an attempt to improve search results but can result in loss of rankings for some Web sites, depending on the update. A contingency plan, such as a prepared PPC (pay-per-click) campaign, needs to be in place to cope with a sudden drop in rankings.

As with any eMarketing practice, SEO should not be the only focus of eMarketing efforts. It works best when part of a holistic eMarketing strategy.

# 7 Pay per click advertising

Pay-per-click (PPC) advertising is an advertising system where the advertisers pay only for each click on their advertisements.

While it is most often used as an advertising system offered by search engines, such as Yahoo! and Google, it can also be used for banner advertising.

PPC advertising is keyword based—this means that it is based on the search term that a user enters into a search engine. A search term can have one word or be made up of many words. Sometimes a multiword search term is referred to as a "key phrase" or "keyword phrase." Advertisers target those keywords for which they want their advertisement to appear.

For the advertiser, the beauty of PPC advertising on search engines is that their advertisements are displayed when potential customers are already expressing intent—they are searching for a product or service. It allows advertisers to present their offering to a potential customer who is already in the buying cycle.

## 7.1 How it works

Each of the three major search engines (Google, Yahoo! and MSN Bing) has its own pay-per-click (PPC) advertising platform, namely, AdWords, Yahoo! Search Marketing, and adCenter. While the basic process remains the same for each one, there are some differences. With PPC advertising, the advertiser does the following:

- Creates the content for an advertisement
- Selects the keywords for which that advertisement should appear

Chooses the maximum amount they are willing to pay for a click on the advertisement (this amount can be unique to each keyword they have selected for an advertisement)

The search engine algorithm does the following:

- Checks the advertisement for compliance to editorial guidelines
- Displays the advertisement for relevant search queries
- Determines the rank, or position, of the advertisement based on the advertiser's maximum bid and the relevance of the advertisement (which includes factors such as click-through rate [CTR], ad copy, keywords, and landing-page relevance to the search)

## 8 Social media

Blogs, wikis, social bookmarks, and tag clouds: these are new words for new things and new ways to use words. You may be living in the world of social media, but to many it's a jumbled jungle with no clear structure.

The many facets of social media are also called Web 2.0, consumer-generated media (CGM), participatory media, and new media.

Most simply put, social media are media (from written to visual to audio to audiovisual) that are designed to be shared. Sharing means it is easy to comment on, it is easy to send, and there are no high costs associated with viewing the media. Because of the connected nature of the Internet, it means sharing, commenting, and viewing can all be tracked and measured.

The Internet, and the software developed to run on it, has made it simple for anyone to publish and distribute content. It has also made it simple for anyone to access that content.

The realm of social media is about collaborating, generating content, sharing, and most of all, connecting.

### 8.1 How it works

Social media have changed the world we market in and can be used as an integral part of an online marketing campaign. Social media are all about the ways that we create, connect, and share online.

#### 8.1.1 Bookmarking and Aggregating: Sharing Things You Like

If there are Web sites, you visit often or you would like to keep as a reference to come back to, it is easy to use your browser to "bookmark" them. This means that you store the URL (uniform resource locator) so that you can locate it again easily. It also gives you a personal library of Web sites that you can store on your computer.

Social bookmarking sites, however, allow you to store these links online, use tags to describe them, and share these lists with other users. Some of these sites let you submit URLs that other users vote on, while others allow you to use the saved tags to browse through the lists and libraries that have been generated.

Web sites that want to encourage users to submit content to bookmarking and aggregating sites use "chicklets." These are buttons placed around the content that make it easier to submit and share the article.

These services allow you to see what the community of Web users finds useful, interesting, or humorous. You are able to find other users with similar interests to yours and explore Web sites that they have found that you might not have come across yet.

Social bookmarking allows like-minded people to share interesting and relevant content with one another easily. It can also be an excellent tool for members of a company or organization to earmark relevant Web sites and articles. Content submitted to a social bookmarking or aggregating site can dramatically increase traffic to a Web site and expose the site to many new eyeballs.

One such site, Delicious (<http://delicious.com>), was designed to be a site that would help Internet users organize online media in a quick, easy-to-access, and user-friendly format. Now owned by Yahoo! the primary function of Delicious is to allow users to store all their bookmarks online and then to access those bookmarks from any computer anywhere in the world. Compared to other social bookmarking sites, Delicious is more of a community-based tool, as it allows others to see your bookmarks. Essentially it lets you identify other people whose interests and concerns parallel yours and grants you access to all of their bookmarks as well.

Check out <http://delicious.com/quirkemarketingtextbook> to see some of the URLs we think are relevant to your online marketing studies and career.

Digg (<http://www.digg.com>), Muti (<http://www.muti.co.za>), and Reddit (<http://www.reddit.com>) are sites where users submit content that other users can then vote on. Popularity, based on votes, moves the submitted content up and down lists that are available on these sites. Submitting and voting requires registration, but there are many people who visit these sites to get an overview of content that is "hot."

Appearing on the top of these lists generates a huge increase in traffic for content sites, so much so that servers can crash if the leap in visitors is unexpected. Getting into the top listings is a prize eyed by

many a marketer, but any attempt to manipulate listings usually backfires and can generate plenty of community backlash.

The communities around these sites differ demographically, and this is reflected in the content. For example, Digg is technology focused, while Reddit tends to have more general news.

StumbleUpon (<http://www.stumbleupon.com>) lets you explore the Web through your interests, based on how other Web users tag content. Users select categories of interest and bookmark URLs in those categories. You can then choose to “stumble” through the Web using the category of your choice. The service will randomly show you a Web site that has been submitted to that category.

StumbleUpon allows users to explore the Web based on the taxonomy applied by other users. Instead of looking to search engines for relevance, users are instead appealing to the knowledge of a community.

Technorati (<http://www.technorati.com>) started life as a real-time blog search engine but has since evolved to incorporate other forms of user-generated content, including images and videos.

Technorati's core is a tag-based index that allows users to conduct searches on topics that interest them. Contributors are able to tag their individual posts, and the better a post is tagged, the better its chance of being picked up by a relevant search. Instead of contributors being separated into categories, the content of each individual post is indexed. Technorati not only searches the blogs of subscribed members but also operates as a normal search engine.

Technorati can also be used to keep tabs on Internet buzz, both to monitor online reputation and to see what trends are emerging.

### **8.1.2 Bookmarking and Aggregating as Marketing Tools**

Seeing how users categorize your content will give you an idea of how your Web site and company are perceived by your audience. It might be remarkably different from how you think they see you. Look at other Web sites that are tagged like yours. You might find new competitors and new ideas.

You can also use these services to share what other URLs your company finds interesting. This can be a useful resource to add to an online press room as well as a utility that fanatics of your company would get really excited about.

To create link love and traffic, investigate what sort of content your target audience loves voting for and create that content. A word of warning: never submit content and then vote yourself. It's one sure-fire way to incur the wrath of these communities.

Organic growth is the only way to succeed here. It might take time as you build your reputation and worth among the community, but the end result can be very worthwhile. As a content provider, make sure you have the appropriate chicklets added to your content to make it easier to share.

## **8.2 Content sharing: create and share**

YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com>) may be the first content-sharing site that comes to mind, but users share images, audio, and information as well as video. If it can be created, then it can be shared. There are many sites that facilitate free sharing of videos, images, and audio, and they are exceptionally popular. From Flickr to YouTube, they have all tapped into the fact that we love to create content for others to view.

The key word here is “free”: there are no fees for joining, whether you are uploading content or viewing content (although premium paid-for memberships can allow access to further features). This means that these sites attract an enormous audience.

Many of these services also encourage distribution of their content. YouTube allows videos to be embedded easily into other Web sites, and Flickr has generated a number of applications and widgets that allows the images to be shown all over the Web (and even printed onto cards and stickers via <http://www.moo.com>).

Most of these Web sites rely on advertising to support the free services they offer, and some have a premium paid-for membership version, which is without advertisements.

### **8.2.1 Video sharing**

YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com>) is essentially a Web site that, by using Flash technology, allows users to upload, view, and share videos with the rest of the connected world. These videos can range from music, movie, and television clips to homemade amateur videos and vlogs, or video blogs.

YouTube is a complex site offering numerous features, yet it is simple to use. While it is possible for unregistered users to watch most of the publicly available videos, a quick, straightforward registration process allows members to upload an unlimited number of clips, comment on and add video responses to them, and subscribe to content feeds that catch their attention and interest. Frequently enhanced functionality and clever features on YouTube continually push this site to deliver bigger and better services to its ever-increasing user base.

Many marketers have adopted the opportunities afforded by YouTube. There are two aspects of marketing through YouTube: self-promotion of people and products, such as music videos, movie previews, interviews, video advertisements, and sponsored advertisements, supplied by Google AdWords.

The medium of online video sharing also means that conferences are able to generate a far larger audience than ever before. The companies that sponsor or run these conferences are able to engage with a larger audience by making freely available videos of the various sessions held. TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design; <http://www.ted.com>) and Nokia's Nokia World are excellent examples of organizations that increase interest by making their remarkable presentations available for free.

### **8.2.2 Knowledge Sharing: The Wiki**

Essentially, a wiki is a piece of software that users can create and edit online, using simple markup language via a Web browser. They support hyperlinks and have a simple text syntax for creating new pages and links between internal pages. In its most basic form, a wiki is a Web site that supports user collaboration through a variety of functions.

There are numerous types of wiki software available that share the following characteristics:

- Create and update documents. Wiki users have the ability to create and update documents easily.
- Review versions. Most wikis store each version of a document. This functionality makes it easy for users to view the various modifications that a document has undergone over time.

Build community-oriented tools. Most wikis provide users with an ability to engage in some form of discussion about the documents on which they are collaborating.

Wikis can be open to all, such as Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia.org>) and Wikitravel (<http://www.wikitravel.org>); they can be open to or aimed at certain communities only, such as Geek Dinner attendees (<http://geekdinner.pbwiki.com>); or they can be private and open only to individuals within an organization. Internal wikis are exceptionally useful for creating knowledge bases within organizations and companies.

### **8.2.3 Content Creation and Sharing as Marketing Tools**

Content-sharing sites, from video to photos to music to knowledge, provide marketers with a snapshot of how users interact with and perceive their brand. Most of the sites have really simple syndication (RSS) feeds available, where marketers can keep a tab on mentions of their brand.

These sites and services allow marketers the opportunity to capitalize on the creativity of their consumers to further amplify their brand. By making content easily available and removing restrictions on use of that content, companies can nurture creative interactions that are likely to spread.

Wikis can be used when creating an event with a network. Encouraging users to interact allows them greater connection and ownership of the outcome and provides a tool for on-going communication.

## **8.3 Crowdsourcing: unleashing the power of the online community**

A term first used in Wired magazine back in 2006, crowdsourcing has become a powerful and cost-effective method of achieving business goals through the use of the masses. Simply put, business and corporations invite the public to submit ideas and innovations for new and existing products in exchange for a one-off or a small percentage of future royalties.

Social media have spurred on this innovation and have allowed the business world to tap into the consumer psyche with little financial outlay.

### **8.3.1 Connecting: Social networking**

Social networking refers to the forming and substantiating of online social networks for communities of people. The communities are people who share interests and activities or are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others. The building of these social networks requires the use of software. Social networking is all about using the tools of the Internet to connect and build relationships with others. Social networking sites such as Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>), MySpace (<http://www.myspace.com>), and LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com>) allow users to create personal profiles and then interact with their connections through sharing media, sending messages, and blogging. Social networking sites not only allow you to interact with the members of your own virtual Rolodex but also allow you to extend beyond your personal network.

Social networks have created new meaning for the term “friend,” as many connections exist solely online. In the realm of social networking, it is unnecessary to have met someone in order to connect with them. Personal profile pages remove much of the anonymity of the Internet. Users of social networks reveal a great deal of information about themselves, from basic demographics such as age, gender, and location, to nuanced and detailed lists of likes and dislikes. Although explicitly made known to a user’s connections, users are also divulging this information to the networks, and hence to the networks’ advertisers. Users tend not to be aware of the data that are amassing regarding their online profiles, and it takes features such as Facebook’s Beacon to reveal just how much information users are making available.

Social networks can be general, such as Facebook, or niche, such as LinkedIn (<http://www.linkedin.com>) or Dopplr (<http://www.dopplr.com>). LinkedIn is a network for professionals. Members connect to others that they know professionally and are able to recommend members that they have worked with. Dopplr is a social network for frequent travellers. Members can share their trips and make plans to meet up when schedules overlap.

Many social networks, including Facebook, Orkut (<http://www.orkut.com>), and MySpace, have opened up their platform to outside developers, allowing the development of applications for the members of the social networks. Generally, use of an application requires a member to allow the application developer access to their personal information.

#### **8.3.1.1 Social Networking as a Marketing Tool**

Social networks, free for their members, tend to rely on advertising for their revenue. Because of demographic information collected by the social networks, advertisers are able to target their advertisements to a particular audience.

Applications are another way to market products. Creating a useful application that is relevant to a product can expose a whole new audience to a company’s offering as well as allow the company to collect detailed information on their users.

Profiles are not limited to people. Bands, for example, have found immense success creating MySpace profiles and using the profiles as a means of connecting with their current and potential fan base.

Facebook pages provide a venue for an online presence for groups, organizations, and small businesses.

Marketers can also use social networks to identify how users are perceiving or interacting with their brand and open up new avenues of communication with them. For example, if you are marketing a bar, look to see how many people are using a social network to organize events at your bar. Find a way of rewarding those who are bringing you extra customers.

Social networks are also an avenue for members to voice frustrations and annoyances, and these should be closely watched by marketers to gauge sentiment.

## **8.4 Creating content and opinion: blogging and podcasting**

Everyone has an opinion, and the Internet allows for everyone to share their opinion. Blogs and podcasts have emerged as social media that are being embraced across the Internet population.

### 8.4.1 Blogging

A blog is a Web site where entries (blog posts) are typically displayed in reverse chronological order. Blogs usually allow for comments on blog posts. A typical blog will feature text, images, and links to other blogs and Web sites related to the topic of the blog. Blogs range from the personal to the political and everything in between. They can be written by one person or by a group of people. Some are aimed at the blogger's immediate family and friends, and others rival leading newspapers in terms of reach and readership. Blogs are mostly textual but can be composed solely of images, videos, audio, or any combination of these.

The power of blogs is that they allow anyone to publish and share ideas, and anyone can read and respond to these. They have given consumers and companies a voice, and blogging has opened up a world of information-sharing possibilities.

The basic elements of a blog post are the following:

- **Author.** The person who wrote the blog post.
- **Blog-post title.** The title of the blog post, which is usually used to create a unique URL, or permalink, for the blog post.
- **Tag.** The categories used to describe the blog post and aid services such as Technorati in categorizing blog posts.
- **Comment.** Comments left by readers of the blog that are shown with the blog post.
- **TrackBack.** A notification of other blogs linking to a post, often displayed below the blog post.

Some other elements of a blog include the following:

- **RSS feed.** A way for readers to subscribe easily to the blog.
- **Categories.** Blog posts can be grouped into categories by their topic.
- **Blogroll.** A collection of links to other blogs or Web sites commonly read or used by the blogger.
- **Archives.** Previous posts that remain available for visitors to search through. Archives are usually categorized by date.

RSS readers can be integrated with an e-mail client, can work offline, or can be online only. Some are free, and some are not. Look at your e-mail client to see if you can set one up there, or try <http://www.bloglines.com>, <http://www.google.com/reader>, or <http://www.feedException.com>. Find the one with the features that suit your needs.

RSS readers are a useful way to keep up to date with blogs, as most supply an RSS feed of their posts. Still confused? Take a look at [http://commoncraft.com/rss\\_plain\\_english](http://commoncraft.com/rss_plain_english).

Whether blogging as an individual or a company, plenty can be gained from the process. You can do the following:

- Create an online identity
- Create a voice for yourself or your company
- Promote engagement with your audience
- Create a community

### 8.4.2 Blogging and SEO

Search engines value regular, fresh content, and by blogging you can create just that. The more you post, the more often search engines will spider your site looking for additional, relevant content. Basing your blog on your keyword strategy created in the search engine optimization (SEO) process can also aid your Web site in ranking for those key phrases. Blogs, by their social nature, can also increase the incoming links to your Web site. Using a blog platform that has been designed to be search engine friendly is crucial to harnessing the SEO power of blogging. Some features of SEO-friendly blogging software include the following:

- Each blog post should be assigned a unique page that can be easily accessed and indexed by the search engines. This is called a permalink.
- Pages should be able to be tagged with keywords relevant to your SEO strategy.

- Each post should be able to have its own unique metadata (title, description, and key phrases).
- Social-bookmarking functionality should be built in.

### 8.4.3 Corporate blogging

Blogs can be very successful marketing tools. They are an excellent way to communicate with staff, investors, industry members, journalists, and prospective customers. Blogging also helps to foster a community around a brand and provides an opportunity to garner immediate feedback on developments. This is an audience made up of players key to the success of a company: that makes it important to get blogging right.

Generally the tasks that a blogger undertakes include:

- Writing posts
- Replying to comments from readers
- Monitoring other blogs within the industry
- Keeping up to date with the latest industry news
- Building relationships with other bloggers in the community
- Commenting on other blogs

For corporate blogs, it is important to outline a strategy and establish guidelines before starting the blog, especially as there will most likely be a number of contributors. Transparency and honesty are important, but companies also need to be aware of sensitive information being blogged. If there are “no go” areas, they need to be clearly defined to the parties involved. While certain topics can be restricted, ultimately the bloggers should be granted the freedom to express both negative and positive points of view about the approved topics.

Positive claims are more believable if the blogger is able to express negative views as well. For example, Robert Scoble in his popular blog <http://www.scobleizer.com> admitted that the Firefox browser was better than Microsoft’s Internet Explorer. Robert Scoble was an employee of Microsoft at the time. This honesty gave him a credible voice, and so his positive views on Microsoft are respected by the community.

Corporate blog content should be:

- Industry relevant
- Appealing to your target market
- Transparent and honest
- Personal and entertaining
- Related to what’s going on in the blogosphere
- Posted regularly

### 8.4.4 Promoting blogs

Longevity rests in the hands of the blogger, but here are some tips to raise the profile of a blog:

- **List the blog in blog directories.** While they are not as popular as search engines, many Internet users do in fact visit them while looking for information. Examples include Google’s Directory (<http://www.google.com/dirhp>) and BlogCatalog (<http://www.blogcatalog.com>).
- **Ping Web services with updated content.** Sites like Ping-o-Matic (<http://pingomatic.com>) and Feed Shark (<http://feedshark.brainbliss.com>) offer a service whereby they ping multiple Web services, blog directories, and search engines to let them know that a blog has fresh content.
- **Use TrackBacks.** If a blogger writes a new entry commenting on, or referring to, an entry on your blog, and both blogging tools support the TrackBack protocol, then the commenting blogger can notify your blog with a “TrackBack ping”; the receiving blog will typically display summaries of, and links to, all the commenting entries below the original entry. This allows for conversations spanning several blogs that readers can easily follow.

- Participate in the blogosphere. You cannot expect anyone to engage on your blog if you are not engaging on theirs. It is all about fostering a sense of community.
- Make use of aggregators. Examples of aggregators include Technorati, Amatomu, and Afrigator.
- Use traffic-generating tools like MyBlogLog. The MyBlogLog (<http://www.mybloglog.com>) widget allows you to see who in the MyBlogLog community has visited your site and they can see if you have visited their site in return.

### **8.4.5 Microblogging**

Microblogging is a form of blogging that allows a user to publish short text updates, usually limited to two hundred characters that can be viewed by anyone or restricted to a specified community as specified by the microblogger. This can be accomplished using various communication tools such as instant messaging (IM) via the Web, text messaging on your mobile phone, and even a Facebook application. Microblogging can also refer to the publishing of short posts using a limited number of images, audio, or video files. Currently, the most popular text microblogging service is called Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com>), which was launched in July 2006. Other similar sites include the likes of Jaiku (<http://www.jaiku.com>), Identi.ca (<http://www.identi.ca>), as well as Yammer (<http://www.yammer.com>). Examples of rich media-based microblogs include Tumblr (<http://www.tumblr.com>), Strem (<http://www.strem.us>), and Soup (<http://www.soup.io>). On Twitter, posts are called tweets and are limited to 140 characters. Despite frequent disruptions to Twitter's service, its users are fiercely loyal. These posts are usually short thoughts or URLs to interesting articles.

### **8.4.6 Blogs as a marketing tool: listen and engage**

Blogs are powerful because of their reach, their archives (information is seldom deleted and is thus available long after it has been posted), and the trust that other consumers place in them. For a marketer, they present opportunities to learn how others perceive your brand and to engage with your audience. Some brands get this right; some get it wrong.

Above are some guidelines for corporate blogging, but marketers do not need to be bloggers to use this tool. As with all other social media, blogs provide a snapshot of audience sentiment regarding a brand. Marketers can also listen to blog activity around competitors in order to gain market insights.

Although blogging is the best way to respond to and engage with bloggers, companies can also interact with bloggers by commenting on relevant posts. Demonstrating the capacity to listen to bloggers, and then respond using the same medium, can reap tremendous benefits with this community.

### **8.4.7 Podcasting**

A podcast is a digital radio (or video) program downloadable from the Internet. Podcasts started as audio blogs. People then figured out a way of distributing them using the same RSS feeds that were being used to distribute blog post information. It was then possible to subscribe to a podcast. Suddenly you could listen to a whole range of programs and voices whenever and wherever you wanted. It was radio without a station telling what you could hear and when. Just as blogs have allowed people to become writers without having to deal with a media channel controlled by someone else, podcasting has allowed anyone who fancies it to become a broadcaster.

With the right kind of "podcatching" software on your computer, the latest edition of any podcast you subscribe to is automatically downloaded every time you log on. Most people use iTunes. Go to <http://www.apple.com/itunes/store> for more information on podcasting and a huge list of available podcasts. You can listen on your computer or transfer the file to an iPod or any other kind of MP3 player. You don't have to have an iPod to listen; the name came from the fact that the iPod was taking off at the same time and the "pod" (play on demand) part fitted this new medium. Podcasts are usually free.

### **8.4.8 Creating a Podcast**

Podcasts are usually recorded and edited using home equipment and done for the love of it. There is specialized podcasting software available like Apple's Garage Band or QuickTime Pro. These packages make it quite simple to record, mix, and format the audio files correctly. Just like bloggers, though, many podcasters are trying to figure out ways of making money from their podcasts and turning listeners into revenue.

Many people are producing music podcasts. This has meant a huge move to circumvent traditional rights issues about downloading music from the Internet. There is now a large body of music that is classified “podsafe.” This has either been composed especially for podcasts (as jingles, etc.) or the artist has specifically decided that they want their music to be available via the Net for all who want to hear it.

## 8.4.9 Podcasts as marketing tools

Podcasts offer an incredible opportunity for marketers. The bottom line is that you now have a way of getting content to your target markets without having to persuade a media channel to carry it or to pay huge advertising rates.

Podcasts have the following traits:

- **Targetable.** You can create highly relevant, niche content and then promote it to a specific target market.
- **Measurable.** You can see exactly how many downloads and subscribers you have.
- **Controllable.** It’s your content.
- **Responsive.** Set up a blog alongside your podcast, alter content according to the comments, and you are actually having a conversation with your market.
- **Boundary free.** It’s the Internet.
- **Relatively inexpensive.** They don’t cost a lot to maintain.

However, the content must have the following traits:

- **Excellent quality.** Like anything on the Internet, it is just as easy to unsubscribe as it is to subscribe. Quality content is what keeps listeners coming back.
- **Real.** While there is value in having product or service information embedded in a Web site, there is no point at all in producing an audio version of a company brochure as a regular podcast. Consumers are losing faith in the content of traditional media. Even if editorial is not actually paid for, much of the time it has been influenced in some way by advertisers. Although there are podcasts that carry advertisements, people can fast-forward straight past them, and the chance of real success lies in branded content.

This is not about advertising or even just product information. It is about coming up with ideas for real programs that, through informing or entertaining, enhance your customers’ experiences of your brand.

Viral marketing

Viral marketing is a form of word-of-mouth marketing that aims to result in a message spreading exponentially. It takes its name from a virus because of the similarities that marketers aim to emulate:

- It is easily passed on.
- The number of people who have been “infected” grows exponentially.

## 8.5 Web site development

Web development and design are at the heart of successful online marketing, yet many marketers do not understand the importance of laying solid foundations here. Like building a house, solid foundations are key to stability, longevity, and even scalability. Developing a Web site involves more than choosing colors and header images.

### 8.5.1 Usability

Designing a site for best usability means that users don’t have to figure out what to do; they are just able to do it.

Use standard conventions, such as links that are distinct (blue and underlined is standard), menus top or left, and the logo in the top left-hand corner. Search boxes are usually on the top of the page and should use standard wording such as “search” on buttons. Following standards for important elements that are familiar to Web users means that they know immediately where to look for or how to use them. Important elements (such as menus, logos, colors, and layout) should be distinct, easy to find, and consistent throughout the Web site.

The information architecture of a site is crucial to usability. Topics and categorization should flow from broad to narrow and should be built around users' needs and not company structure. An intuitively designed structure will guide users to their goals.

The site map should be available from every page and should clearly show the information architecture of the Web site. Dynamic site maps can be employed so that the site map is updated automatically as information is added to the Web site.

As well as carefully thought-out information architecture, the navigation should guide users easily through both top-level and deeper pages. Navigation should also let users know where they are in the site (especially since not all users arrive via the home page). Breadcrumb links, clear page titles, URLs (uniform resource locators), and menu changes all help show the user where she is.

Accessibility makes Web sites easy to use and easy to scale. In some countries, accessibility is a legal requirement of government Web sites. Some key points of accessibility include the following:

- Ensuring that the Web site and all its functions are compatible across a range of browsers, including text-only and mobile browsers
- Making sure that the Web site is functional to users who might have a disability. Some ways of doing so include the easy increasing or decreasing of text size and using meaningful descriptive tags in the code for when the site is accessed through a screen reader.
- Not designing for high-bandwidth users only but instead making sure that low-bandwidth users do not have to wait for heavy page loads to access your Web site (unless you have a good marketing reason for keeping those users out)
- Having a search box (that works) available

Content needs to be written so that users can grab the information they need in as little time as possible. Text can be made more easily readable by doing the following:

- Highlighting or making bold key phrases and words
- Using bulleted lists
- Using paragraphs to break up information
- Using descriptive and distinct headings

On the page, use an inverted pyramid style, or newspaper style, for your copy. The bulk of the information should be at the top of the page to make for easy scanning.

There are some key "don'ts" when it comes to building a user-friendly Web site:

- Never resize windows or launch the site in a pop-up.
- Don't use splash pages. These are pages at the entry to a site that are usually animated and contain some variation of the phrase "click here to enter this site."
- Never build a site entirely in Flash—most search engine spiders cannot even crawl Flash sites.
- Don't distract users with "Christmas trees" (blinking images, flashing lights, automatic sound, scrolling text, unusual fonts, etc.).

Usability and accessibility guidelines are useful for checking that all elements have been dealt with. Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Information Services and Technology provides a usability checklist online at <http://ist.mit.edu/services/consulting/usability/guidelines>.

## **8.5.2 Search engine visibility**

Search engine traffic is vital to a Web site; without it, chances are the site will never fulfill its marketing functions. It is essential that the search engines can see the entire publicly visible Web site, index it fully, and consider it relevant for its chosen keywords.

Here are the key considerations for search engine optimization when it comes to Web development and design.

### **Labeling things correctly**

URLs (uniform resource locators), alt tags, title tags, and metadata all describe a Web site and its pages to both search engine spiders and people. (And don't worry: these words are all described for you in what follows.) Chances are, clear descriptive use of these elements will appeal to both.

## URLs

URLs should be as brief and descriptive as possible. This may mean that URLs require server-side rewriting so as to cope with dynamic parameters in URLs. Does that sound a little heavy? The examples below should make this clearer.

## Alt tags

Have you ever waited for a page to load and seen little boxes of writing where the images should be? Sometimes they say things like "topimg.jpg" and sometimes they are much clearer and you have "Cocktails at sunset at Camps Bay."

Since search engines read text, not images, descriptive tags are the only way to tell them what the images are, but these are still essentially for users. Text readers for browsers will also read out these tags to tell the user what is there. Meaningful descriptions certainly sound a lot better than "image1," "image2," and "image3."

## Title attributes

Just as you can have the alt tag on an image hypertext markup language (HTML) element, you can have a title attribute on almost any HTML element—most commonly on a link. This is the text that is seen when a user hovers over the element with the mouse pointer. It is used to describe the element or what the link is about. As this is text, it will also be read by search engine spiders.

## Title tags

Title tags, or what appears on the top bar of your browser, are used by search engines to determine the content of that page. They are also often used by search engines as the link text on the search engines results' page, so targeted title tags help drive click-through rates. Title tags should be clear and concise (it's a general rule of thumb that all tags be clear and concise, you'll find). Title tags are also used when bookmarking a Web page.

## Meta tags

Meta tags are where the developer can fill in information about a Web page. These tags are not normally seen by users. If you right click on a page in a browser and select "view source," you should see a list of entries for "<meta name=".

These are the metadata. In the past, the meta tags were used extensively by search engine spiders, but since so many people used this to try to manipulate search results, they are now less important. Metadata now act to provide context and relevancy rather than higher rankings. However, the meta tag called "description" often appears on the search engine results page (SERP) as the snippet of text to describe the Web page being linked to.

## Search engine-optimized copy

When it comes to Web development, the copy that is shown on the Web page needs to be kept separate from the code that tells the browser how to display the Web page. This means that the search engine spider can discern easily between what is content to be read (and hence scanned by the spider) and what are instructions to the browser. A cascading style sheet (CSS) can take care of that.

The following text styles cannot be indexed by search engines:

- Text embedded in a Java application or a Macromedia Flash file
- Text in an image file (that's why you need descriptive alt tags and title attributes)
- Text only accessible after submitting a form, logging in, and so on
- If the search engine cannot see the text on the page, it means that it cannot spider and index that page.

## 8.5.3 Design

With the foundations of usability and search engine visibility in mind, it is time to turn to making it all presentable with the design of the Web site.

Looks may not matter to search engines, but they go a long way toward assuring visitors of your credibility and turning them into customers.

Every Web site needs to be designed with clear goals (or conversions) in mind. Conversions take many forms and may include the following:

- Sale. Where the user purchases a product online using a credit card
- Lead. Where the user submits contact details and asks for more information
- Sign-up. Where the user opts in for e-mail marketing newsletters
- Download. Where the user downloads a file from the site

Before designing a Web site, research your audience and competitors to determine expectations and common elements to your industry. Mock up every layer of interaction. This means that before any coding begins, there is clear map of how the Web site should work. It's all about foundations.

### **Design to establish credibility**

Here are some of the cues that visitors use to determine the credibility of a Web site:

- Place phone numbers and addresses above the fold. This assures the visitor that there is a real person behind the Web site and that he or she is in easy reach.
- Create an informative and personal "about us." Your customers want to see the inner workings of a company and are especially interested in learning more about the head honchos. Include employee pictures or profiles. It puts a face to an organization.
- Feature genuine testimonials on each page. This is a great way to show potential customers what your current customers have to say about your organization. Trust is vital, and this is one way to encourage it.
- Feature logos of associations and awards. If you belong to any relevant industry associations or have won any awards, feature them. Not only does this go a long way to establish your credibility, but it will show that you're at the top of your game and a notch above the competition.
- Link to credible third-party references. This is a way to assert your credibility without tooting your own horn.
- Keep content fresh and updated. This shows that you are knowledgeable and up to date in your industry.
- Ensure that your site is free of errors. Spelling and grammar mistakes are exceptionally unprofessional, and while the large majority of readers may not pick up on them, the one or two who do will question your credibility.
- Include a portfolio of past work. Give your Web site visitors examples of your previous work to show what you are capable of.

Design also affects the accessibility of a Web site. You need to take into account screen resolutions, as designing for the biggest screen available could leave many of your users scrolling across and down to see the Web page. Subtle shading, background colors to text, and fancy fonts can also mean that many users cannot even see your Web site properly.

### **Using Cascading Style Sheets**

A cascading style sheet (CSS) is defined by W3C (World Wide Web Consortium) as "a simple mechanism for adding style (e.g., fonts, colors, spacing) to Web documents."

In the early days of the Web, designers tended to use tables to lay out content for a Web page, and many Web sites still do so today. However, different browsers, and even different versions of browsers, all support code differently, resulting in Web sites that only work on certain browsers or bulky code needed to cope with all the different versions.

The W3C (<http://www.w3.org>) was created in 1994 and since then has been responsible for specifications and guidelines to promote the evolution of the Web, while ensuring that Web technologies work well together. The Web Standards Project (<http://www.webstandards.org>) launched in 1998 and labeled key guidelines as "Web standards." Modern browsers should be built to support these standards, which should vastly reduce cross-browser compatibility problems, such as Web sites displaying differently in different browsers.

Web standards include the following:

- HTML (hypertext markup language)
- CSS (cascading style sheet)

- XML (extensible markup language)
- XHTML (extensible hypertext markup language)
- DOM (document object model)

CSS is standard layout language. It controls colors, typography, and the size and placement of elements on a Web page. Previously, Web developers have had to create instructions for every page in a Web site. With CSS, a single file can control the appearance of an entire site.

CSS allows designers and developers to separate presentation from content. This has several key benefits:

- Sites are easier to maintain and update and are more accessible.
- Content may be updated easily by someone who is not a Web designer or developer.
- Global changes can be applied quickly and easily.

CSS can also do the following:

- Reduce bandwidth and page-loading times
- Increase cross-browser compatibility

To see CSS in action, visit <http://www.csszengarden.com>, where you can make a single HTML page look very different, depending on which one of the many designer-contributed style sheets you apply to it.

### Using a content management system

As the name implies, a content management system (CMS) is used to manage the content of a Web site. If a site is updated frequently and if people other than Web developers need to update the content of a Web site, a CMS is used. Today, many sites are built on a CMS. The CMS can also allow content of a Web site to be updated from any location in the world.

A CMS can be built specifically for a Web site, and many Web development companies build their own CMS that can be used by their clients. A CMS can also be bought prebuilt, and there are many open-source, prebuilt CMSs available, some of which are free.

A CMS should be selected with the goals and functions of the Web site in mind. A CMS needs to be able to scale along with the Web site and business that it supports, and not the other way around.

Of course, the CMS selected should result in a Web site that is search engine friendly.

Here are some key features to look out for when selecting or building a CMS:

- **Meta and title tag customization.** The CMS should allow you to enter your own meta tags and fully customize title tags for each page.
- **HTML tag customization.** The CMS should allow for full customization of HTML tags, such as nofollow links. See Chapter 6 "Search Engine Optimization" for an explanation of nofollow links.
- **URLs.** Instead of using dynamic parameters, the CMS should allow for server-side rewriting of URLs (uniform resource locators). It should allow for the creation of URLs that have the following characteristics:
  - Static
  - Rewritable
  - Keyword rich
- **Customizable navigation.** A good CMS will allow flexibility when it comes to creating the information architecture for a Web site. For the purposes of adding additional content for search engines, a CMS should not require that all content pages be linked to from the home page navigation. This allows content to be added for SEO (search engine optimization) purposes, without adding it to the main navigation.
- **301 redirect functionality.** It is imperative that a CMS offers the ability to put in place 301 redirects to prevent penalization for duplicate content on different URLs.
- **Customizable image naming and alt tags for images.** A good CMS will allow you to create custom alt tags and title attributes for images.

- **Robots.txt management.** Ensure you are able to customize the robots.txt to your needs, or that this can at least be managed using meta tags.
- **Content search.** Make sure you are able to include a useful site search.

## 9 Tracking and collecting data

Currently, there are two main technology approaches for collecting Web analytics data: log-file analysis and page tagging.

Log-file analysis software reads the records, called log files, on the Web server, which record all clicks that take place on the server. Web servers have always stored all the clicks that take place in a log file, so the software interprets data that have always been available. A new line is written in a log file with each new request. For example, clicking on a link, an Ajax call, or submitting a form will each result in a new line being written.

Page tagging, on the other hand, sends information to a third-party server, where statistics can be generated. The browser executes JavaScript code that communicates with the tracking software, creating page tags.

Pixel tracking can be used to track e-mail campaigns. Here, a tiny, transparent pixel is placed in the e-mail. When you load the images in the e-mail, you will also load the tiny image that tracks your activity.

### 9.1 Log-file analysis

In terms of log-file analysis, you should know the following:

- Log files are normally produced by Web servers, so the raw data are readily available. Page tagging, however, requires changes to the Web site.
- Log files are very accurate—they record every click. Page tagging can be less accurate. If a user's browser does not support JavaScript, for example, no information will be captured.
- Log files are in a standard format, so it is possible to switch vendors and still be able to analyze historical data. Page tagging is proprietary to each vendor, so switching can mean losing historical data.
- Log files record visits from search engine spiders—useful for search engine optimization.
- Log files record failed requests, whereas page tagging only shows successful requests.

### 9.2 Page tagging

In terms of page tagging, you should know the following:

- JavaScript makes it easier to capture more information (e.g., products purchased or screen size of a user's browser). You can use log-file analysis to capture this information, but it will involve modifying the URLs (uniform resource locators).
- Page tagging can report on events, such as interactions with a Flash movie, that log-file analysis cannot.
- Page tagging can be used by companies that do not run their own Web servers.
- Page tagging service providers usually offer a greater level of support. This is because it is a third-party service, whereas log-file analysis software is often managed in-house.

Because of the different methods of collecting data, the raw figures produced by the two services will differ. Sometimes, both are used to analyze a Web site. However, raw figures not matching up should not be a problem. It is through interpreting these figures that you will be able to understand how effective your online marketing efforts are.

## 10 Acknowledgements

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Rob Stokes and the Minds of Quirk (2010): eMarketing: The Essential Guide to Online Marketing, v. 1.0, Flatword Knowledge, <http://www.flatworldknowledge.com/pub/emarketing-essential-guide-onl/223363>

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