

## What Are the Pieces of a Successful Search Engine Marketing Campaign?

Search engine marketing (SEM) is the art of combining search engine optimization (SEO), or on site changes, with organic and paid link building techniques to increase a web sites profile and improve its standing in search engines. Any company, from an international conglomerate to a small chain to a single designer with a home office, needs the help of SEM in the highly competitive online world. But what are the pieces of a successful search engine marketing campaign?

First, the web page itself needs to be optimized to be as appealing as possible to search engines. SEO specialists edit and clarify the content, the page titles, and possibly even the sites structure to make the site easy to navigate and to hone the sites keyword targeting.

When the site is ready, specialists get new incoming links to the site. Some of the links are free, but for fast, well targeted link building, paid links are usually necessary. Paid links can include advertising bought on web sites and in advertising networks, as well as new methods such as paid blog posts. It is important to get expert help in building links because too many links from "bad neighborhoods" (sites considered spam by search engines) can lower a sites standing, and bad neighborhoods are not always obvious to newcomers to SEO. Also, people who are new to SEM often find methods like astroturfing appealing. In astroturfing, a company employee posts comments about the company in niche blogs, pretending to be an ordinary consumer who is impressed with the company. Astroturfing looks like an excellent and legitimate way to gain attention, but blog readers easily recognize company ringers and consider their comments to be spam. The fallout from an astroturf campaign can do heavy damage to a companys online reputation. There are dozens more bad ideas that look like good ideas, so before implementing any idea, a businessperson would be wise to consult with an SEM expert.

Another important element in any link building plan is paid inclusion. Although free sites are plentiful, many desirable search engines and directories rank paying sites more highly or require a fee to be entered into the search engine or directory at all. Since the difference between sites that get visitors and sites whose links are rarely clicked can be measured in a very few ranking points, many companies find it worthwhile to edge their web sites up the listings by paying for a better ranking.

Search engine marketing is a careful balance of search engine optimization, paid and free link building, and paid directory and search engine inclusion. When all the elements work in tandem, they can boost a web site from the bottom of the search engine result pages to the top. The important part is to get the right balance, linked to the right sites, with the right experts managing.

### About the Author

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