



SEO AND PPC: THE CAKE OR THE ICING?

AN INTEGRATED MARKETING AGENCY'S INSIDER PERSPECTIVE ON SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING

For integrated marketing and advertising agencies and their online marketing centric clients, an [online marketing strategy](#) is the most important component of the holistic marketing approach. Yet when it comes to [search engine marketing \(SEM\)](#), the transitioning importance and the decision of investing resources in [search engine optimization \(SEO\)](#), versus pay-per-click (PPC) advertisements, has yet to be clarified to most search engine marketing users. In order to paint a clearer picture of search engine marketing, one must think of SEM as cake. It is wise to focus the best ingredients on the batter, as this becomes the foundation of the recipe or SEM strategy. The icing is of course also a strong component, however it is merely a topping to what must become an efficient and scalable integrated marketing mix.

In this metaphor, SEO is the cake while PPC is the icing. To put it more bluntly, if a company's website doesn't have SEO proficiency, it is almost certain that its PPC ads will not make up for the shortfall. This fact is becoming much clearer to marketing and advertising leaders as the struggle to attain the highest possible impact on search users is increasing due to growing online marketing competition and impact across all industries.

When considering the transitioning importance of SEO over PPC, one must consider:

- Which search engine marketing strategies will generate the strongest ROI with the most efficiency.
- Which SEM methodology merits the most marketing and advertising asset allocation.

These are the questions, as a leading integrated marketing agency, [FabCom](#) strives to answer definitively each and every day. It is from the front-line battles across all industry sectors the insights within this white paper are revealed.

The Icing: Online PPC Advertising Programs

As an experienced top online marketing agency, it has become clear to our **industry experts** that the risk in investing in search engine marketing rests within the icing. While paid ads provide for quicker returns than organic search results, they require more money in the long-term while creating initial ROIs that are usually unsustainable for most companies. As a strategically focused research-based online marketing agency, we help our customers realize the true long term and short term costs PPC requires as well as the reoccurring investment every time their online campaign budget is reached.

Many search engine marketing agencies and their clients will find the initial PPC investment was successful but not sustainable or scalable. The return of an additional investment within PPC can be increasingly uncertain. The likelihood of an ad sustaining its initial success rests in its ability to compete with the competition's unforeseen added efforts such as raised bids, higher page recognition, better quality scores, and more relevant content. For example, though an ad was ranked number one for one search query, it could be likely that it will not make the cut for the next one.

The reason for this? Google's PPC ad algorithm re-evaluates an ad's relevance compared to others every time a search is generated, and if the campaign daily budget has already depleted by the next search query, an ad may not be able to participate in the bidding. Therefore, when it comes to PPC ads, a strong sense of uncertainty remains in the sustainability and scalability the investment will yield. This conundrum requires deep understanding of a cornucopia of variables and ninja level best SEO practices to navigate properly.

The Cake: SEO for Integrated Marketers

As an integrated marketing agency with a strong focus on search engine marketing we have discovered great gains for clients by placing organic search as the foundation and basic recipe of SEM efforts. Furthermore by focusing on multi-channel integrated marketing solutions, integrated marketing experts can synthesize the need for smarter investments in SEO. This SEO strategy is now empowered by our customer's customers, depending more heavily on organic results to fulfill their search intentions.

This notion was recently verified by GroupM and Nielsen whose research demonstrates search engine users tend to completely bypass paid ads with an overwhelming 94% clicking on organic versus paid results. When companies focus their search engine marketing budget on PPC, at the very best they would be making contact with 6% of their intended audience, assuming they have the budget to outbid their competition and buy all the available resources. The ability and likelihood of most companies having enough resources of making an impact on 6% of search engine users is extremely minimal, as ads have a high risk of getting lost in the noise of the overwhelming number of online competitors.

Moreover, Forrester Research recently published that the top three organic positions on Google earn 61% of clicks—meaning that just the top 30% of the first search results page earns over half of ALL clicks. Therefore, as an integrated marketing agency with a strong background in search engine marketing, we recognize companies investing in SEO are investing in relevant content to ensure their business is ranked high enough to earn the attention and loyalty of customers and their piece of that 61% cake.

Content Marketing as a Foundation for Online Marketing

In essence, the mere presence of a company's site on an organic search results page increases the site's value and therefore will bring in more traffic and potential customers. However, a scalable impact on ROI cannot be achieved without a strong focus on hyper-relevant content. Hyper-relevant content focused on targets' search intent can be considered as the flour and sugar in the SEM recipe, and a cake baked without these essential ingredients will simply fail. This entails management of on and off site marketing and advertising optimization strategies. Not only does a company's website need to attain the utmost relevance to search intentions, their .com's assets' content such as blogs, press releases, case studies, and media need to be optimized and syndicated with matching search intents.



The Growing Importance of Search Intent for Search Engine Marketing

As Google continues to tweak its search algorithms, search engine marketing is becoming more and more centered on speed and accuracy in order to better serve search engine users. Just in the past few months, Google has entirely changed its search algorithm to the Hummingbird approach. In order to better serve users in the context of results accuracy, Google is reinforcing a stronger effort with its Hummingbird update on interpreting the search intent of user queries.

Consequently, this stronger focus on search intent and the relevancy of search results rewards sites that may not necessarily have significant authority but have highly relevant content in regards to a user's search intent. In simpler terms, the popularity of a site is no longer enough to determine its domination over other, smaller sites—a site must also be filled with relevant content, as was depicted previously in the flour and sugar metaphor.

While Google has just recently dramatically heightened its focus toward relevant content, experienced integrated marketing agencies and leaders in online marketing have been taking the same methodology and integrating it across all marketing channels for over two decades. The methods instilled behind the marketing strategies at FabCom deploy hyper-relevant content that are designed to improve reach and ROI of online as well as offline campaigns. Moreover, as a top online marketing agency, we empower our clients to establish highly personalized and relevant dialogue with customers in order to generate more hyper-relevant content ROI throughout all marketing channels, including SEM.

PCC + SEO: Integrated Online Marketing Strategy

Although a content development investment will take longer to manifest a return than an instant PPC investment, the rewards will be greater and far more scalable and sustainable. Nevertheless, an experienced and expert search engine marketing agency knows that a cake without icing is not achieving its full potential. An integrated marketing agency with a ninja focus on online marketing channels is a strong asset to those who wish to deploy both PPC and SEO investments. As optimized SEM is one of the foundations of integrated marketing strategies, we understand that using PPC to complement SEO increases the credibility of a business. If a business is ranked both organically and in paid search, it will likely be perceived as more trustworthy by search users, thus building brand

recognition, awareness, and reliability. PPC is also an effective way to reinforce an SEO strategy by allowing a business to advertise for last minute promotions and events. Therefore, when used with strategic timing it is an effective way to leverage an ad campaign to showcase products and services that may not be visible from the organic listings. By blending SEO and PPC together, a company stands a bigger chance of silencing the noise of its competitors and generating the desired traffic to their site.

Taking everything into account, whether a business is using SEO, PPC, or a combination of both, it's the quality of ingredients in the cake that will have consumers value one online experience over another. By thoroughly understanding their target audience they are able to use integrated SEM methodologies as a sustainable and scalable ROI strategy for their business.

The Baker: Integrated Cross-channel Marketing Teams

A strategic and research focused marketing methodology is essential across all marketing channels in order to generate the highest possible ROI. As an ROI centered marketing agency, our approach is driven by a multi-channel marketing process that focuses on research, strategy, and high-impact hyper-individualized segmentation messaging. While we've highlighted the risk of investing in paid SEM vs. organic, an integrated marketing agency that focuses on establishing multi-dimensional audiences with hyper-relevance messaging and integrating that concept across all marketing channels lowers the risks associated with search engine marketing.

SEM is just one piece of the integrated marketing strategy puzzle. However, the importance of integrated SEM marketing should not be minimized or go unnoticed. Just as flour and sugar blend together to create a cake, marketing channels can work together to generate a dynamic marketing strategy with superior ROI results—the trick is finding the right baker that will know what to do with those ingredients. The marketing and advertising agency that is selected to fulfill a company's SEO and PPC goals must be chosen wisely by the company. We have provided some insight into choosing the best marketing and advertising agency that will fulfill those search engine marketing expectations.

Expectations of a Top Marketing and Advertising Agency

- Understands and respects company's vision.
- On the same page when it comes achieving SEM goals and the tactics necessary to get there.
- Strategy presented to each client is different based on industry sector, competitive environment, and the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that each client is facing.
- Recognizes that SEM results cannot be established in a matter of weeks unless it is done poorly.
- Design strategies understanding that search engine marketing is a long-term ongoing process that requires a strong commitment to individualized customer behavioral, demographic and psychographic research as well as consistent integrated marketing strategies.
- Fully comprehends and communicates clearly the time, effort, and resources needed to fulfill measurable goals.
- Suggested online marketing strategy is based on a holistic outlook and is supported by and reflects other marketing channel strategies.

Warning Signs

- Failing to view customers as individual organizations that may not fit into a cookie-cutter SEM strategy
- Willing to make a promise or a guarantee BEFORE they've done research on the industry, company, products, and competition
- Can guarantee a specific top ranking within a specific number of days (chances are their tactics are not sustainable and lack research-backed strategies)

About the Author

Brian Fabiano is the CEO and founder of FabCom, a full-service strategic integrated marketing and advertising agency with offices in Scottsdale/Phoenix, Los Angeles, Seattle and O'ahu. He is a nationally recognized innovator, advertising and marketing industry leader, author and speaker, whose insights in dynamic **cross-channel cross-media messaging**, **business intelligence**, **strategic planning**, **positioning**, **brand mapping**, and **segmentation/database marketing** are sought by corporations and trade associations alike.

He is now working on his second book on the convergence of technology and marketing strategy, after the resounding success of his first book, *Neuromarketology: How to Develop, Implement and Manage Dynamic, Real-Time, Cross-Channel Marketing Campaigns that Generate Astonishing ROI*. This is the second book in the planned trilogy and will delve deeply into the connection between Neuromarketology™ and the contemporary convergence of artificial intelligence, **dynamic messaging**, and Distributed Customer Experiences™, driven by Blockchain technology.

FabCom is a full-service strategic marketing, PR, and advertising firm

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*Amortized for media billings as calculated in the Phoenix Business Journal Book of Lists.

