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Search Engine Keywords Selection
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Search engines are the vehicles that drive potential customers to your websites. But in order for visitors to reach their destination - your website - you need to provide them with specific and effective signs that will direct them right to your site. You do this by creating carefully chosen keywords.

Think of the right keywords as the Open Sesame! of the Internet. Find the exactly right words or phrases, and presto! hoards of traffic will be pulling up to your front door. But if your keywords are too general or too over-used, the possibility of visitors actually making it all the way to your site - or of seeing any real profits from the visitors that do arrive - decreases dramatically.

Your keywords serve as the foundation of your marketing strategy. If they are not chosen with great precision, no matter how aggressive your marketing campaign may be, the right people may never get the chance to find out about it. So your first step in plotting your strategy is to gather and evaluate keywords and phrases.

You probably think you already know EXACTLY the right words for your search phrases. Unfortunately, if you haven't followed certain specific steps, you are probably WRONG. It's hard to be objective when you are right in the center of your business network, which is the reason that you may not be able to choose the most efficient keywords from the inside. You need to be able to think like your customers. And since you are a business owner and not the consumer, your best bet is to go directly to the source.

Instead of plunging in and scribbling down a list of potential search words and phrases yourself, ask for words from as many potential customers as you can. You will most likely find out that your understanding of your business and your customers' understanding is significantly different.

The consumer is an invaluable resource. You will find the

words you accumulate from them are words and phrases you probably never would have considered from deep inside the trenches of your business.

Only after you have gathered as many words and phrases from outside resources should you add your own keyword to the list. Once you have this list in hand, you are ready for the next step: evaluation.

The aim of evaluation is to narrow down your list to a small number of words and phrases that will direct the highest number of quality visitors to your website. By "quality visitors" I mean those consumers who are most likely to make a purchase rather than just cruise around your site and take off for greener pastures. In evaluating the effectiveness of keywords, bear in mind three elements: popularity, specificity, and motivation.

Popularity is the easiest to evaluate because it is an objective quality. The more popular your keyword is, the more likely the chances are that it will be typed into a search engine which will then bring up your URL.

You can now purchase software that will rate the popularity of keywords and phrases by giving words a number rating based on real search engine activity. Software such as WordTracker will even suggest variations of your words and phrases. The higher the number this software assigns to a given keyword, the more traffic you can logically expect to be directed to your site. The only fallacy with this concept is the more popular the keyword is, the greater the search engine position you will need to obtain. If you are down at the bottom of the search results, the consumer will probably never scroll down to find you.

Popularity isn't enough to declare a keyword a good choice. You must move on to the next criteria, which is specificity. The more specific your keyword is, the greater the likelihood that the consumer who is ready to purchase your goods or services will find you.

Let's look at a hypothetical example. Imagine that you have obtained popularity rankings for the keyword "automobile

companies." However, your company specializes in bodywork only. The keyword "automobile body shops" would rank lower on the popularity scale than "automobile companies," but it would nevertheless serve you much better. Instead of getting a slew of people interested in everything from buying a car to changing their oil filters, you will get only those consumers with trashed front ends or crumpled fenders being directed to your site. In other words, consumers ready to buy your services are the ones who will immediately find you. Not only that, but the greater the specificity of your keyword is, the less competition you will face.

The third factor is consumer motivation. Once again, this requires putting yourself inside the mind of the customer rather than the seller to figure out what motivation prompts a person looking for a service or product to type in a particular word or phrase. Let's look at another example, such as a consumer who is searching for a job as an IT manager in a new city. If you have to choose between "Seattle job listings" and "Seattle IT recruiters" which do you think will benefit the consumer more? If you were looking for this type of specific job, which keyword would you type in? The second one, of course! Using the second keyword targets people who have decided on their career, have the necessary experience, and are ready to enlist you as their recruiter, rather than someone just out of school who is casually trying to figure out what to do with his or her life in between beer parties. You want to find people who are ready to act or make a purchase, and this requires subtle tinkering of your keywords until you find the most specific and directly targeted phrases to bring the most motivated traffic to your site.

Once you have chosen your keywords, your work is not done. You must continually evaluate performance across a variety of search engines, bearing in mind that times and trends change, as does popular lingo. You cannot rely on your log traffic analysis alone because it will not tell you how many of your visitors actually made a purchase.

Luckily, some new tools have been invented to help you judge the effectiveness of your keywords in individual

search engines. There is now software available that analyzes consumer behavior in relation to consumer traffic. This allows you to discern which keywords are bringing you the most valuable customers.

This is an essential concept: numbers alone do not make a good keyword; profits per visitor do. You need to find keywords that direct consumers to your site who actually buy your product, fill out your forms, or download your product. This is the most important factor in evaluating the efficacy of a keyword or phrase, and should be the sword you wield when discarding and replacing ineffective or inefficient keywords with keywords that bring in better profits.

Ongoing analysis of tested keywords is the formula for search engine success. This may sound like a lot of work - and it is! But the amount of informed effort you put into your keyword campaign is what will ultimately generate your business' rewards.