

# Everything I Know about Marketing I Learned from Google

Aaron Goldman

## Book Everything I Know About Marketing I Learned From Google

Aaron Goldman  
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### Recommendation

Companies can learn a lot from Google's top marketing masterminds. Google dominates the online world with the most desirable Internet product – search. With its numerous products and services, Google operates in 36 languages, including Chinese, Hindi, Kyrgyz and Klingon (from *Star Trek*). Internet business expert Aaron Goldman distills Google's marketing magic into basic principles any company can use to increase sales. Goldman seems equal to the intellectual superstars at Google, although he admits he made a costly mistake when he turned down Google's pre-IPO offer to become its Chicago advertising sales rep. *BooksInShort* recommends his savvy book as prime reading for all marketing professionals.

### Take-Aways

- Google's remarkable success makes its marketing tactics worth studying.
- Online searchers prefer editorial content to promotional messages. Interweave the two to get your audience's attention.
- Help your customers to help themselves. Build a community around your brand.
- The more you test your content, the more effective it can become.
- Complexity confuses, so keep things simple.
- The best time to capture the buying interest of people online is when they search.
- Plan your online commercial messages by exploiting the available data. "Track everything."
- Format your "unique selling proposition" as a pithy slogan, like Google's "It's all about results."
- Responsible companies that do civic good also do well in business.
- Promote your company's story.

### Summary

#### Follow the Leader

Google is the Internet's king of marketing. Its relatively young brand is now more valuable than that of any other corporate entity. Google earns profits of \$8 billion on annual revenue that exceeds \$20 billion. It holds \$25 billion in cash. The company's mission makes it plain: "Organize all the world's information, and make it universally accessible and useful." Apply the following 20 "Googley" lessons to improve the way you market your company and its brand:

1. **"Relevancy rules"** – Google succeeds because its search results are relevant to its customers, who use those results to make decisions about what to buy, read, investigate and so on. Your company must become relevant to your customers. Help them solve their problems. Enable them to make better decisions. Make the best possible mousetrap they can buy. Apple is a master at this exercise. The company created its own filter ("Apple is cool") and runs all its marketing through that filter. What's your company's filter?
2. **"Tap the wisdom of crowds"** – Google's algorithm ranks the search results it retrieves for customers (via its internal PageRank program) according to how popular these pages are with Internet users. The more links that reach each page, and the quality of these links, the more popular the page on the Internet – and the higher the page ranking. Google relies on the wisdom of crowds. Online, your brand is your platform. Put the impetus of crowds to work for your company. "Help them help themselves." Think community, not customers.
3. **"Keep it simple, stupid"** – Google's home page is a model of simplicity. Apply this principle to your operations, including your brand and your marketing, which should involve a "simple unique selling proposition." Keep your webpage uncluttered. Google's Website Optimizer can help.

4. **“Mind-set matters”** – The best time to market to people is when they are in the mood to buy. Often, this is when they search for product or supplier contact information. Interweave editorial content with “commercial content.”
5. **“Don’t interrupt”** – People who are actively engaged with online content – news, videos, podcasts and social interaction – have no interest in your commercial message. They see your advertising as an interruption. The most effective opportunity to sell occurs when online users search for something. Plan ads for keywords that do not directly relate to your products, but represent prospects that you want to reach.
6. **“Act like content”** – If your website is overtly commercial and largely content-free, Google’s search algorithm will not rank it highly. To attract the maximum number of searchers, offer meaningful content. The more specialized information is in relation to searches, the better. Take a tip from Funny or Die, an agency that creates humorous online videos for advertisers. Its series for Absolut vodka generated half a million views.
7. **“Test everything”** – Google exhaustively tests everything it puts online, including its logo, its “AdWords reporting interface” and the colors of its toolbars. Comprehensively check all your important online components, including keywords, advertising copy, landing page, and so on. Bryan Eisenberg, author of *Always Be Testing*, says, “In the marketing world, you either test or die.”
8. **“Track everything”** – Such Google tools as “AdWords, DoubleClick and Google Analytics” can determine if your ads work because they depend on objective data. Interpret this data properly, and you can count on the results. Numerous data points are trackable, such as, for example, “exposure, interaction” and “conversion.” Various non-Google technologies, provided by “Kenshoo, Atlas, Omniture” and other vendors, track your online advertising results. Google pays close attention to ad tracking via its Quality Score, which measures how relevant keyword advertising is to users. Thus Google ensures that it presents only the most relevant ads to searchers.
9. **“Let the data decide”** – When it is time to make decisions at Google, data carries the most weight. Google is the ultimate search company and a remarkably savvy media operation. But more than anything else, Google is an engineering firm; engineers care most about objective statistics, and Google thrives on its genuine reverence for facts. As *Mad Men*, the hit TV show, indicates, ad agencies didn’t pay much attention to research during the 1960s. But now, with so much sophisticated online advertising information available, responsible advertisers should rely on hard data – not their own tastes, judgments, instincts or even experience – to make crucial decisions.
10. **“Brands can be answers”** – Google believes strongly in brands. “Brand affinity is hardwired and fundamental to the human condition,” says Google’s Eric Schmidt. Brands represent “trust, authority and reputation.” When people search, they want answers to specific problems: “What movie to watch? What restaurant to visit? What car to buy?” Reputable brands solve these problems. To make your brand the answer to your audience’s problems, provide search ads in “95 or fewer characters,” the Google limit. Start with a “Twitter pitch” of 140 characters and whittle that down. Jon Raj, formerly VP of advertising at Visa, says, “While most brands like to think they are the answer, whether they are depends on the question.”
11. **“Your unique selling proposition (USP) is critical”** – Sum it up as a slogan. Google’s slogan for its AdWords offering, “It’s all about results,” is a great motto. It encapsulates in four words everything that makes Google an attractive buy for online advertisers: “accountability, performance, return on investment.” Other memorable, effective catchphrases are: Alka Seltzer’s “Plop, plop, fizz, fizz, oh what a relief it is!”, Apple’s “Think different”, BMW’s “The ultimate driving machine”, Burger King’s “Have it your way” and Energizer Batteries’ “It keeps going and going...” Your USP should motivate the consumer to buy. It should be universal, “timely and timeless.”
12. **“Your competition is broader than you think”** – Google’s competition includes Yahoo, Microsoft, Apple and – as counterintuitive as it first may seem – Adobe. Like Google, Adobe offers Web analytics products. AT&T competes against Google in directory assistance. Kodak offers online photo sharing. Rand McNally provides mapping services. Google also vies directly with numerous other firms in other areas. Before you create your advertising and choose your mix of media, think carefully about all your competitors in every market segment. The research firm comScore can help you evaluate your rivals. Investigate their websites to find out how many daily visits they receive, what their customers are buying and how that affects your market share.
13. **“You can learn a lot from a query”** – Since 2005, Google has provided its users with the aptly named “Personalized Search” service. This enables Google to refine users’ searches based on their previous searches. It includes search-location specificity according to your computer’s IP address or your “default location” for Google Maps. Additionally, as you type in your search term, Google offers instant recommendations. You can use search engine marketing (SEM) data to enhance your marketing, target your primary audience, develop competitive intelligence and much more.
14. **“Sex sells”** – The Internet has always been an attractive venue for pornography. Studies indicate that four out of 10 Internet visits involve pornography sites. Google research shows that one out of five mobile searches concerns sex. A user who typed the word “sex” in the Google search box in February 2010 would have received 574 billion hits. Each year for the past five years, GoDaddy has run multimillion-dollar Super Bowl ads that feature sexy women in scanty attire. According to home video recording and research pioneer TiVo, these ads pay off in a huge way. If you decide to go sexy with your advertising, carefully consider how your primary audience will react. Collect data before you embrace such a campaign.
15. **“Altruism sells”** – Google’s highly publicized credo is “Do no evil.” This corporate messaging provides brilliant public relations, signaling that Google wants to be a force for good in the world. Many other companies also pursue altruistic activities, hence the remarkable recent growth of green marketing. What good does your company do? How many people know about it?
16. **“Show off your assets”** – As its mission statement indicates, Google wants to become the basic information resource for the entire world. This is why, as of 2009, Google has scanned 10 million books that users can search. In 2006, Google began scanning US streets via its fleet of “Street View cars with cameras mounted on top.” The next year, it started to scan telephone messages, and it purchased Imaging America to secure aerial photos. Follow Google’s example. Digitize your corporate informational assets. Share them as widely as possible. It’s a great way to do good and publicize your firm.
17. **“The more shelf space, the better”** – What if your local supermarket’s cereal aisle displayed only one brand, Cheerios? Nobody but the General Mills brand manager and Cheerios fanatics would opt for that scenario. Google seeks to ensure that their search results always please users. So Google online advertisers can purchase only one ad listing for any given keyword search. Thus Google avoids having the same company clutter up search results pages with similar ads. To get around this shelf space restriction, purchase alternate keywords for your various ads.
18. **“Make your company a great story”** – Everyone loves Google’s story: Two Stanford PhD students develop the PageRank search system (originally termed “Backrub”). Only a few years later, their company is the Internet’s most successful search engine. And a few years after that, Google evolves into a wildly popular company with almost 20,000 full-time employees. It’s a great tale, and the smart folks at Google tell it every chance they get. What’s your company’s story? Have you documented it? Are you getting out the word on the growth and audience you’ve developed? You should. It’s great PR.
19. **“Don’t rely on search engine marketing alone”** – Google certainly believes in SEM, but at the same time it utilizes traditional advertising media to promote its products and services, for example, by buying media space for Super Bowl advertising. Research indicates that nearly seven out of 10 online users engage in their searches because of the influence of prior traditional advertising, most notably on television. If Internet advertising king Google relies both on conventional advertising and its online promotions, your company should do the same.
20. **“Future-Proofing”** – Google is the ultimate search entity, but in the future, searching for information will not be as important as the utility of information. This is where apps come into play: They find the information you need, and then put that information to use on your behalf. As apps become dominant and ubiquitous,

your intent – what you want to do with information – becomes more critical than data. Gord Hotchkiss, president of Canadian search marketing company Enquiro Search Solution, explains how: “Imagine if there were an app that could keep my master intent in mind for the entire process. It would know what my end goal was, would be tailored to understand my personal preferences, and would use search to go out and gather the required information.” Google could provide the internal search infrastructure that apps need to perform this work. This would place Google deep in the background of a search application’s activity, but that is not a desirable position for the company. Or Google could become an apps or platform provider, thus delivering search information in the context of the user’s intent.

## Machines Talking to Machines

Some other high-tech developments to come include embedding radio frequency identification (RFID) in “products, possessions, pets, and people,” making everything and everyone instantly findable. New technology may lead to implanting miniature, unseen computers in a variety of products. “The boundary between information and objects is blurring.”

“In just over 10 years, Google has become the world’s most valuable brand, consistently dominating its category and generating \$6 billion in revenue per quarter.”

Information architect Peter Morville explains that objects will “consume their own meta data.” To illustrate the practical effect of this, your automobile, your refrigerator, or other machines and appliances may communicate with each other without your involvement. Such an “application programming interface” (API) economy will represent a radical change.

“When I search on Google, if the information’s not there, it doesn’t exist.” (Keith Kaplan, North American president, Adconian Media Group)

Google, a smart, heads-up organization, will find a way to adjust to this new landscape and to capitalize on it. Be ready to do the same.

## About the Author

**Aaron Goldman** is the chief marketing officer of Kenshoo, a digital marketing software firm.

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