
P A R T 1

The Basics of Search Marketing

You are ready to go. You are motivated. You are just itching to dive into search marketing. But where do you start? The basics, that's where.

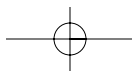
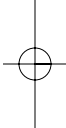
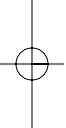
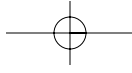
First, in Chapter 1, "Why Search Marketing Is Important . . . and Difficult," we examine what search marketing is all about. We look at the way search usage is exploding and why search marketing is so valuable to your organization—how it can drive visitors to your Web site. You will be convinced that your Web site cannot ignore Web searchers any longer. But before being overcome by irrational exuberance, we also take a cold look at why some companies find search marketing so hard to do—and why the larger your Web site, the tougher it is.

Building on that overview, Chapter 2, "How Search Engines Work," dives into how search engines work—what happens when someone is looking for a word, where the results on the screen come from, and how *your* Web site can show up right on that search results page. You will take a guided tour of the leading search engines and learn which ones to pay attention to.

That sets the stage for Chapter 3, "How Search Marketing Works," where we dig into search marketing methods. We teach you the three basic search marketing techniques, pointing out the benefits of each, so you can start thinking about which ones are most important to you. We also explain how each technique works and review which search companies you will work with for each one.

We wind up Part 1 with Chapter 4, "How Searchers Work," where we peek inside the mind of the searcher. Find out what these folks are *really* looking for when they type in one or two words. Learn to use your knowledge of searchers to your advantage.

Regardless of what job you have now, by the time you complete Part 1, you will have all the background needed to be a search engine marketer. You will know the terminology and the concepts. You will be ready to learn how to create your very own search marketing plan.



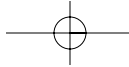
C H A P T E R 1

Why Search Marketing Is Important . . . and Difficult

Search marketing. Perhaps you've heard this term kicked around, but you don't know what it means. Or, if you do know, you don't know where to start. As with anything new, if you take it step by step, you can learn it. A systematic approach can lead to search marketing success in any organization.

When a searcher types a word into Google, finds your home page, and clicks through to your site, you have attracted a visitor from a search site. If you do nothing at all, searchers will still find your site—sometimes. To maximize the number of searchers coming to your site, however, you must take specific actions to attract visitors to your site from search sites. That's **search marketing**. This book shows you how to become a **search marketer**. This chapter covers the following topics:

- *Web search basics.* What do we mean when we talk about “Web search”? You might think you know the basics already, but it is important that you *thoroughly* understand search fundamentals as you start your search marketing career. The advanced topics you need to learn will come more easily if you do not skip over the basics. In this chapter, we describe several different types of search, we introduce the leading search sites on the Web, and we talk about what makes them successful.
- *Search and your marketing mix.* You are probably not reading this book as an academic exercise—you want to know how to get more visitors to your Web site. You already spend your marketing budget on other ways to entice people to visit. How do you reallocate some of that budget to fit search into the mix? In this chapter, we demonstrate the huge opportunity of search marketing and show why you need to make room for it in your company's marketing mix.



- *The challenge of search marketing.* Attracting searchers to your site is appealing, but it's harder to do than you might think. And the larger your Web site is, the more difficult it can be. In this chapter, we explain why so many Web sites struggle to attract search visitors. But don't worry. The rest of this book shows you how to overcome these challenges.

Before examining the promise and the challenges of search marketing, we need to explore what we mean by Web search.

Web Search Basics

You know search is important. You want to attract search visitors to your site. You are reading this book because you expect to learn what you need to know so your site succeeds at search marketing. And the most fundamental fact behind what you already know is that more and more Web users are searching.

Congratulations on spotting the trend! Your intuition that search usage is growing is correct. Seventy-six percent of all Web users performed at least one search in January 2004, totalling 114 million Web visitors to search sites. Fully 64 percent of Web users employ search as their *primary* method of finding things. The top three search sites account for more than 5 percent of all Web site visits!

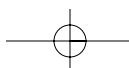
Beyond the numbers, search is becoming a cultural phenomenon. If you have never "Googled yourself" (searched for your own name in Google), I bet you are going to do so now. Even people who do not use the Web have heard of Google and Yahoo! The Web is growing in popularity every year, and search is growing right along with it. And younger market segments cannot be reached as easily through traditional advertising, because teens and young adults now spend more time online than watching television. When you add it all up, your Web site cannot ignore the increasing importance of search to your visitors.

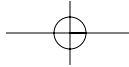
But that does not make you an expert in how to *do* search marketing. You might not know the first thing about how to get your site into the top search results. Maybe you heard that your competitors are succeeding at search marketing—and one of your customers told you that your site cannot be found. You want to fix it, but how?

Despite how little you might know, you need to learn just two things to get started:

- *The kinds of search results.* When a search site responds to a searcher, different kinds of search results display. To begin your search education, we explain each type of display.
- *Where searchers go.* You might have a favorite search site, but not all searchers use what you do. Some search sites are even specific to a particular region or country. You need to understand which search engines are the most popular so that you can focus on them in your marketing efforts.

Let's begin with an overview of Web search results.





Kinds of Search Results

When we talk about search, we are actually referring to two distinct ways that search results land on the screen, as shown in Figure 1-1:

- *Organic results.* Also known as **natural** results, organic results are what made Google famous. Organic results are the “best” pages found for the words the searcher entered. When people refer to **search engine optimization** (SEO), they are talking about how you get your site’s pages to be shown in organic search results. Organic search is what most people think of when they talk about Web search, and searchers click organic results 60 percent of the time. Searchers trust organic results, and therefore organic search must be part of your search marketing program. It can take time to succeed at organic search, but your time investment will pay off in the long run.
- *Paid results.* This term refers to a variety of revenue-generating activities by search sites, encompassing both paid inclusion and paid placement. **Paid inclusion** guarantees that a site’s pages have been catalogued by the search site, so that they can be returned when they closely match an organic search. **Paid placement** allows a Web site to pay to have its page shown in response to a particular search word entered, regardless of how closely the page matches what the searcher entered. Paid search programs are the quick fix to attracting searchers to your Web site, and search marketers are responding. The paid search market hit \$2.9 billion in 2004 and is expected to nearly double to \$5.5 billion by 2009.

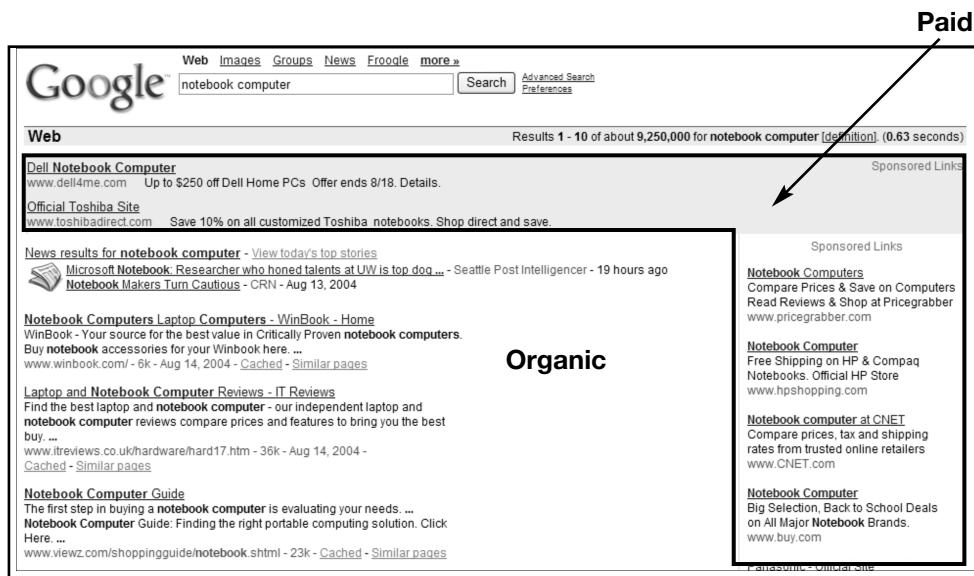
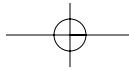
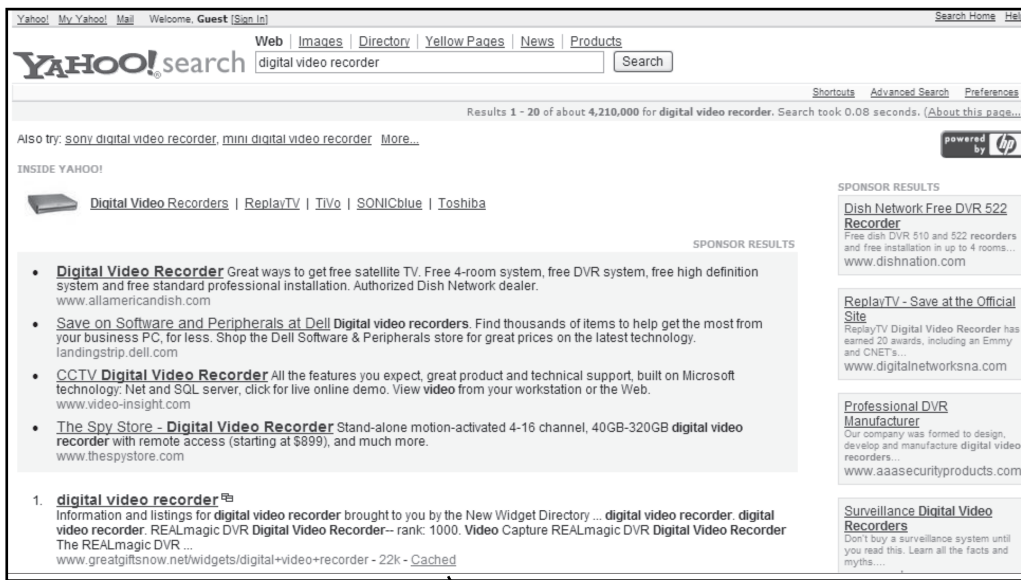


Figure 1-1 Types of search results. Google’s results page has always separated paid from organic results, but other sites have at times combined them.



Another form of paid search is known as **paid listings** or **directories**, as shown in Figure 1-2. Directories are manually maintained classification systems that list Web sites according to each subject category that describes them. Directories are maintained by human editors who examine every Web site submitted to them by the site owner and decide under which subject a site should be listed. You can see in Figure 1-2 that an editor decided to list Tivo's company Web site under the Digital Video Recorder category. (Because the results are created manually, search geeks and other technologists do not consider directories to be a kind of search, but Web users do.)



When you click on the category link from the search results page, you are shown the directory listings for that subject (Digital Video Recorders in this example).

Like the search results page, a directory page contains both sponsored (paid) results and the "Site Listings" compiled by the directory editors.

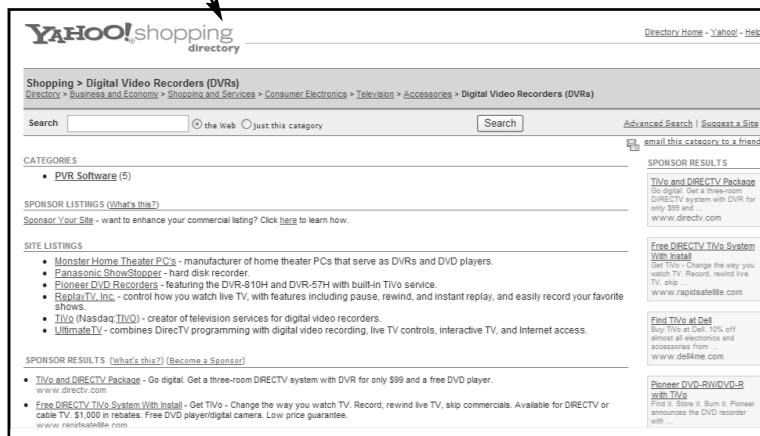
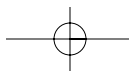
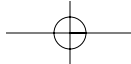


Figure 1-2 Directory listings. Yahoo! adds a directory listing showing the subject category that matches the result, giving the searcher one more choice.

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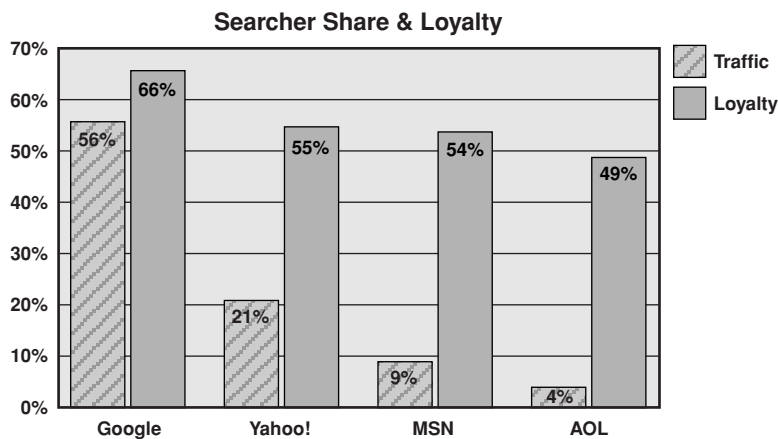


Search engine marketing (SEM) is a broader term than SEO that encompasses any kind of search results. SEM is everything you do to raise your site's visibility in search engines to attract more visitors. Regardless of what term you use, search marketing is a critical way for your site to attract new visitors.

Now that you have learned about the types of search results, we can survey the most popular search sites around the world. In this book, we refer to search sites such as Google and Yahoo! as **search engines**.

Where Searchers Go

If you have a favorite search engine that you use all the time, you might not realize how many other search engines people use. Some search engines operate in just one country or one region, and others do nothing but help people comparison shop for products. Each search engine is competing vigorously for its share of this growing business, but searchers are beginning to show brand loyalty, as Figure 1-3 shows.



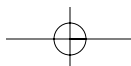
Share of Traffic: The percentage of all searches that occur on this search site.

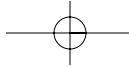
Searcher Loyalty: The percentage of searchers that search again at the same search site, rather than switching to a new search site when their first search does not find what they are looking for.

Figure 1-3 Searcher share and loyalty. Google leads widely in share of searches and searcher loyalty.

Sources: OneStat (May 2004) and iProspect (April 2004)

Among worldwide search engines, Google and Yahoo! are currently the two top competitors, but the landscape can change quickly. As late as 2004, Yahoo! and Google were partners! Let's look closely at the worldwide leaders in search and at leaders within particular countries and regions.





Google

A **googol** is a mathematical term for a 1 digit followed by one hundred 0s, and served as the inspiration for the Google search engine name, signifying the immense size of the search index it searches. Founded in 1998 by Stanford graduate students Larry Page and Sergey Brin, Google (www.google.com) has become so well known that "Googling" (searching for) someone's name has even been mentioned on popular TV shows.

Like many Web businesses of the 1990s, Google started small and grew as the Web exploded. Unlike many of the dotcom companies of that era, Google resisted going public until 2004, and eschewed advertising, preferring to grow through word of mouth. Google has been such a wonderful search engine that this strategy has worked. Google is used by more than 80 million searchers a month—40 percent of all Web users—tops of any search engine. Google is one of the five most-visited Web sites in the world, offering results in 35 languages—with half of its visitors from outside the United States.

Google started by offering the most relevant organic results that the Web had ever seen, which is still its most striking feature. The I'm Feeling Lucky button that takes you directly to the first search result testifies to the confidence Google has in its organic search capability. Google, like others, has a huge number of pages in its search index—more than four billion—but seems to find the right one for each search.

Unlike some competitors, Google has kept its business focused on search, never straying too far into the territory of a portal, the way Yahoo! and others have offered news, weather, shopping, and other services. Google has always made its money through forms of paid search, allowing advertisers to purchase space on the results page based on what search words were entered. Over the years, Google has grown into one of the largest paid search companies in the world.

For the search marketer, Google is the 800-pound gorilla of the industry. You cannot ignore Google in your search strategy for organic or paid campaigns. But Google is not the only search engine in town. Although Google is the most popular search engine in the world, it receives fewer than 40 percent of all searches, as shown in Figure 1-4. You must include other search engines in your plan to maximize the benefits of search marketing.

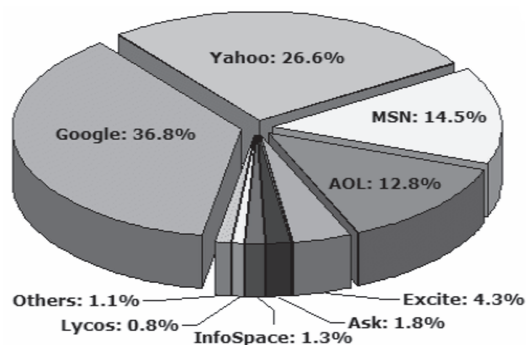
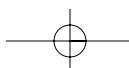
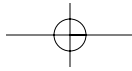


Figure 1-4 Share of searches. Google is the leader, but has less than 40 percent of the total share.

Source: comScore MediaMetrix qScore (May 2004)





Yahoo!

Yahoo! (www.yahoo.com) is one of the most-visited sites on the Internet, but its visitors do a lot more than search. Yahoo! is a leading portal, offering news, e-mail, shopping, and many other functions to visitors who register. The Yahoo! search engine is the #2 search engine in the world, with more than one fourth of all searches, but Figure 1-5 shows the difference in focus for Yahoo! and Google.

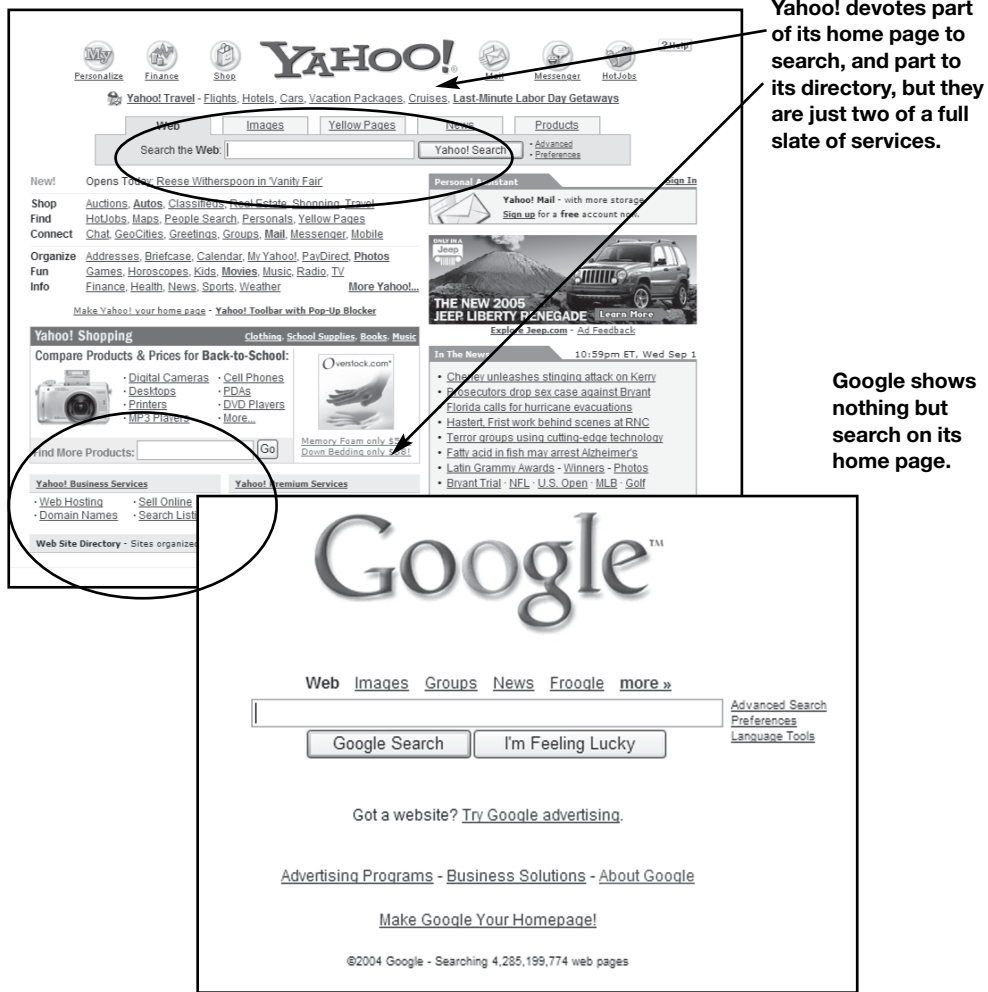
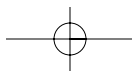
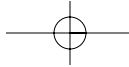


Figure 1-5 Yahoo! and Google company focus. Google is “all search, all the time,” whereas Yahoo! is a “full-service portal.”

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Yahoo! is one of the oldest Web companies around, founded in 1994 by Stanford Ph.D. students David Filo and Jerry Yang. Yahoo! began as a Web directory—initially free to any company in its list—but later Yahoo! began charging a fee for each listing. Yahoo! quickly became a popular destination as its editors catalogued the growing Web, site by site, into its subject hierarchy. Yahoo! visitors believed they could find every Web site about any subject in just a few clicks.

When Yahoo! began offering organic search capability, it licensed the technology from other companies—at one time licensing Google's search technology. In 2003, Yahoo! shifted gears, acquiring several organic and paid search companies so that it could control its own technology. Yahoo! suffered no major drop-off in popularity, attesting to its search quality. If Yahoo! Search does not match the popular buzz of Google, it seems plenty good enough for its loyal users.

Yahoo! has more than three billion pages indexed, but trails Google. More significantly, Google leads Yahoo! in total searches each month, especially outside the United States. Yahoo! Search is offered in fewer languages and lags far behind Google in countries where they go head to head.



Yahoo! is a force within the United States, but its share of searches varies widely in other countries. U.S. search marketers must target Yahoo! as part of their plans, but marketers elsewhere should analyze the leading search engines in their country before finalizing their plans. Yahoo! should be targeted in countries where it handles a high percentage of total queries, but that needs to be decided on a country-by-country basis.

Although Google and Yahoo! get the lion's share of attention, other excellent worldwide search engines should also be targeted by search marketers in their plans. Although you will get less traffic from these engines than from Google and Yahoo!, it all adds up.

MSN Search

The Microsoft Network (MSN), Microsoft's answer to America Online's service, was launched in conjunction with the Windows 95 operating system, but has steadily trailed AOL in popularity despite Microsoft's dominance of the PC software business. MSN has not cracked 10 million members, compared to AOL's 30 million.

MSN Search (www.msn.com) is ranked third in the search race by most counts, with about 14 percent of all searches worldwide, but Microsoft has long tried to increase its share of searches. Microsoft introduced new technology for MSN Search in early 2005, and is rumored to be developing a new search facility built in to a future version of the Windows operating system. Windows users would then be able to search their own computer, their company's servers, and the Internet within the same search. Today's MSN Search, in contrast, looks a lot like the others, as Figure 1-6 shows.

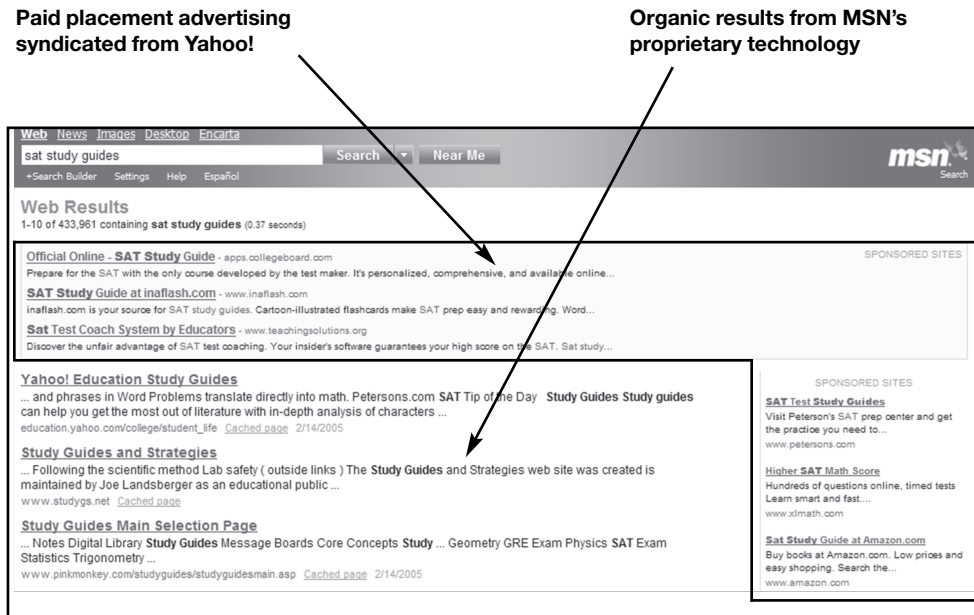
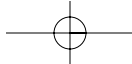


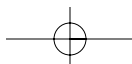
Figure 1-6 MSN Search results. Like most competitors, MSN returns both organic results as well as variations of paid listings.

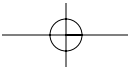
Worldwide search marketers must focus on MSN Search because of the sizable number of visits you can attract to your site—14 percent of all searches. MSN currently uses its own search technology for organic search and syndicates Yahoo!’s Precision Match technology for its paid search.

AOL Search

Now part of media giant Time Warner, America Online (founded as Quantum Systems in 1985) was an online company before most people knew what the Internet was. AOL was the original portal, gradually making its proprietary service more and more Web-oriented over the years. Still notable for its ease of use, AOL is the world’s largest Internet service provider (connecting people to the Internet), offering online access to more than 30 million people.

AOL Search (search.aol.com) is used mostly by AOL users, but that is still a lot of people—adding up to more than 12 percent of total Web searches, good enough for fourth place worldwide. AOL has a partnership with Google, so search results on AOL Search are nearly the same as for Google (for both organic and paid search), as you can see in Figure 1-7.





Worldwide search marketers need not do anything special to target AOL searchers—going after Google will get you AOL, too. In Chapter 2, “How Search Engines Work,” we discuss the various relationships between search competitors, of which the Google-AOL relationship is one of the most prominent.

The figure shows two screenshots side-by-side. The top screenshot is from AOL Search, and the bottom is from Google. Both search for 'boston celtics jerseys'. Annotations with arrows point to specific elements in both results pages.

AOL Search Results:

- Sponsored Links:**
 - Basketball Uniforms Fast - Low prices, fast delivery for team uniforms. Youth, women, men sizes. sportssteam.com
 - Boston Celtics Jersey - Find your favorite NBA jerseys with fast delivery and great prices. Store.NBA.com
 - Boston Jerseys - Buy Boston Red Sox World Series Championship merchandise here. www.FansEdge.com
 - NBA Authentic Jerseys - Wear the Same Authentic Reebok Game Jerseys As The Players on the Court. www.jersey-joe.com
- Matching Sites:**
 - Boston Celtics Pro Shop Celtics Jerseys Hats T-Shirts Collectibles ... 1985-86 Boston Celtics Home (White) Throwback Jersey From Mitchell & Ness, ... Reebok Boston Celtics YOUTH Personalized Replica Home Jersey ... http://www.newenglandusa.com/General_Store/Main/celetics.html
 - Boston Red Sox Pro Shop Red Sox Apparel Boston Red Sox Tickets ... *NEW Boston Celtics fans visit our new Celtics Pro Shop. ... Curt Schilling Boston Red Sox Replica White MLB Jersey w/World Series Patch ... http://www.newenglandusa.com/General_Store/Main/red_sox.html [More results from www.newenglandusa.com]
 - Compare Prices and Read Reviews on Boston Celtics Jerseys at ... Epinions has the best comparison shopping information on Boston Celtics Jerseys.

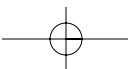
Google Search Results:

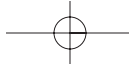
- Sponsored Links:**
 - Authentic NFL Jersey's Up To 80% Off Authentic Jersey's Over 100 NFL Jersey's to Choose From www.urbanwear4less.com
 - Boston Celtics Jersey Find your favorite NBA jerseys with fast delivery and great prices Store.NBA.com
 - Boston Jerseys Buy Boston Red Sox World Series Championship merchandise here www.FansEdge.com
 - NBA Authentic Jerseys Wear the Same Authentic Reebok Game Jerseys As The Players on the Court www.jersey-joe.com
 - Boston Celtics Jerseys
- Organic Results:**
 - Boston Celtics Pro Shop Celtics Jerseys Hats T-Shirts Collectibles ... 1985-86 Boston Celtics Home (White) Throwback Jersey From Mitchell & Ness, ... Reebok Boston Celtics YOUTH Personalized Replica Home Jersey ... www.newenglandusa.com/General_Store/Main/celetics.html - 66k - Cached - Similar pages
 - Compare Prices and Read Reviews on Boston Celtics Jerseys at ... Epinions has the best comparison shopping information on Boston Celtics Jerseys. Compare prices from across the web and read reviews from other consumers on ... www.epinions.com/Sports_Apparel-Jerseys-Team_Boston_Celtics - 30k - Cached - Similar pages
 - Fogdog Sports - Boston Celtics: Boston Celtics Jerseys Shop for Boston Celtics Jerseys products at Fogdog.com and choose from Fitness Apparel, Golf, Winter Sports, Table Games and more! www.fogdog.com/sm-boston-celtics-jerseys-fi-703832_cp-1198304.html - 23k - Cached - Similar pages

Annotations:

- Two boxes on the right side of the AOL screenshot contain text: "The ads are the same—the source is Google AdWords." and "The listings are the same—the source is Google's organic results." Arrows point from these boxes to the corresponding sections in both screenshots.
- Arrows also point from the AOL sponsored links to the Google sponsored links, and from the AOL matching sites to the Google organic results.

Figure 1-7 Google or AOL? AOL's results are nearly the same as Google's for the same search.





Ask Jeeves

Founded in 1996 as a “natural language” search engine, Ask Jeeves (www.ask.com) allows searchers to ask the Jeeves character a question (“What is the population of India?”) and get an answer, not just a list of documents containing the words. This approach yields good answers to popular questions; because it depends on human editors selecting the best answers, however, it does not work well for more esoteric subjects the editors did *not* handle. In recent years, Ask Jeeves has acquired several organic search engine companies and built a search engine many believe is the closest rival to Google in quality. Figure 1-8 shows a sample results page from Ask Jeeves that melds question answering with strong organic search results.

Provides the best pages and adds complementary results under “Related searches”

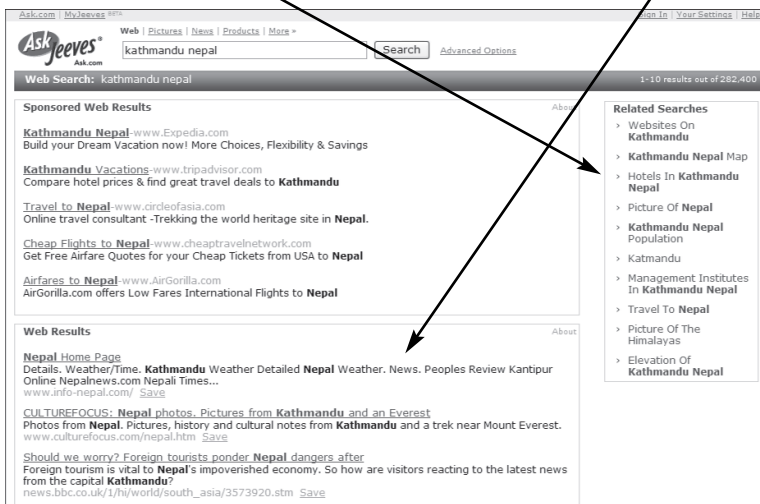
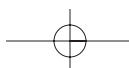


Figure 1-8 Ask Jeeves search. Ask Jeeves treats Katmandu as a location, returning links to related topics in addition to regular search results.

To gain market share, Ask Jeeves also acquired Excite, one of the original Internet portals and still a popular search site. Today, Ask Jeeves attracts more than 6 percent of all searches, when you add up the visits to all of its properties. Worldwide search marketers can reach Ask Jeeves searchers through Google’s paid search (which Ask Jeeves uses), but need to pay attention to Ask Jeeves organic search results, too. Ask Jeeves has been growing in popularity; so although it has a relatively small share of searches today, it bears watching.

Metasearch Engines

Metasearch engines provide a way of searching multiple search engines, with the expectation that searching several different engines will provide better results than any one alone. Unfortunately, it does not, and relatively few searchers use metasearch engines.



Some metasearch engines, such as HotBot (www.hotbot.com), merely show a search input box and ask the searcher to choose which engine to search with. HotBot has its own search engine (using Yahoo! search technology), but also provides results from Google and Ask Jeeves.

More complex metasearch engines actually search multiple search engines at the same time and mix the results together on the same results page. InfoSpace (www.infospace.com) searches Google, Yahoo!, Ask Jeeves, and several other search engines. InfoSpace actually owns several metasearch engines that work this way, including WebCrawler (www.webcrawler.com) and Dogpile (www.dogpile.com), but none of these metasearch engines draw many searchers.

Search marketers do not need to concern themselves with metasearch engines—if you are listed in the worldwide search engines, the few searchers who use metasearch engines will find your site, too.

Local Search Engines



Until now, this discussion has focused on search engines that cover the whole world, but many popular search engines attract searchers from a local area—just one country or region. If your site attracts visitors from several countries, you might want to include **local search engines** in you plans. But before we look at a few local search engines, keep in mind that often a worldwide search engine is also the local search engine leader. For example, Google is the #1 search engine in the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, and Australia. Figure 1-9 show two typical local search engines, Onet.pl (www.onet.pl), Poland's leading Internet portal, and Seekport (seekport.co.uk), a new search engine popping up in several European countries.

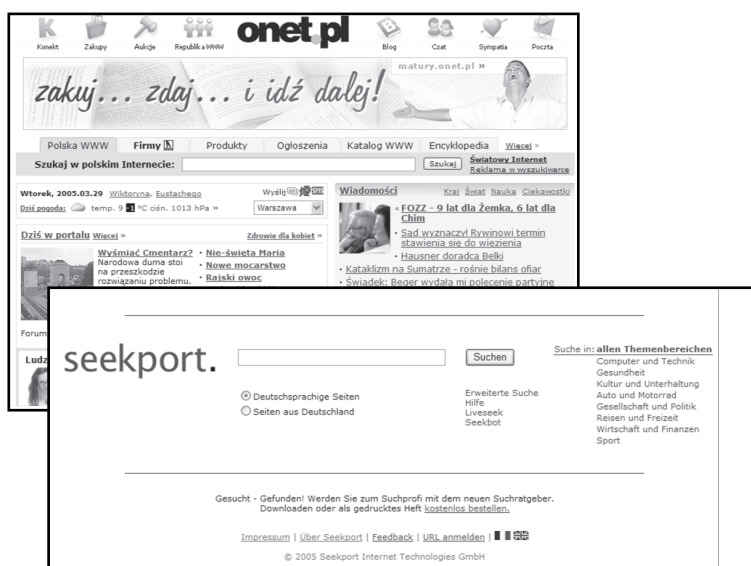
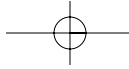


Figure 1-9 Local search engines. Onet and Seekport are just two of the many local search engines that search marketers need to know.



Beyond search engines that operate in just one country or region, **local search** also refers to searches that operate within a geographic area—even inside a city. Yellow Pages sites, such as Verizon SuperPages, are the most common U.S. examples of local search engines. But worldwide search engines, including Yahoo! and Google, also use local search technology that detects the use of geographic terms in searches and finds results related to that area. So, a search for “Newark electrician” might find contractors in that city. But because not all searchers use geographic terms, and because those terms are frequently ambiguous (Newark, *New Jersey* or Newark, *Delaware*?), search engines are beginning to automatically detect the physical location of the searcher (using knowledge of the Internet’s physical layout) and use that information in the searches.

Shopping Search Engines

One of the fastest-growing areas of search marketing is **shopping search**. Shopping search engines allow comparison of features and prices for a wide variety of products, and customers are flocking to them. Just 9 percent of all Internet users worldwide used a shopping search in 2002, but that grew to 15 percent in 2003 and continues to rise.

Consumers like comparison shopping search engines because they allow simultaneous comparison of similar products across many purchasing factors, such as price, reviews, and availability, as shown in Figure 1-10. Shopping search engines cover a wide range of consumer products, including electronics, office supplies, DVDs, toys, and many others. Internet users who visit shopping sites already have a good idea of what they are looking for, with price and availability often determining from whom they buy.

Sort by any of the variables to see which merchant has the best price, availability, or merchant quality rating.

Price Comparisons 10 Listings

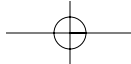
Seller	Price	+ Tax	+ Shipping	= BottomLinePrice	Availability	Seller Rating
etroics.com Featured Merchant Merchant Info	\$221.94				Yes	★★★★★ 1486 Reviews
ABE'S OF MAINE Featured Merchant Merchant Info	\$222.00				No	★★★★★ 1809 Reviews
CRITCHFIELD Featured Merchant Merchant Info	\$299.99				Yes	★★★★★ 251 Reviews
Aurora Acoustic Inc. Merchant Info	\$229.90				Yes	Not Rated Add a Review
GlobalSuperSale	\$244.00				Yes	★★★★★

Price + Tax + Shipping = BottomLinePrice

Enter Zip Code to calculate "YOUR" shipping, tax, and BottomLinePrice.

→ Zip Code: Go

Figure 1-10 Shopping search engines. PriceGrabber, like any shopping search engine, has a product comparison page searchers can sort multiple ways.



To take advantage of shopping search engines, search marketers should ensure that no data is missing for products. For example, make sure you provide availability data (in stock, ship within two weeks, and so on) for your products. If you do not, when shoppers sort the product list by availability, your products will fall to the bottom of the list. Figure 1-11 shows the leading shopping search engines. If your site sells products available in shopping search engines, do not ignore this opportunity. We review specific strategies in more detail in Chapter 14, “Optimize Your Paid Search Program.”

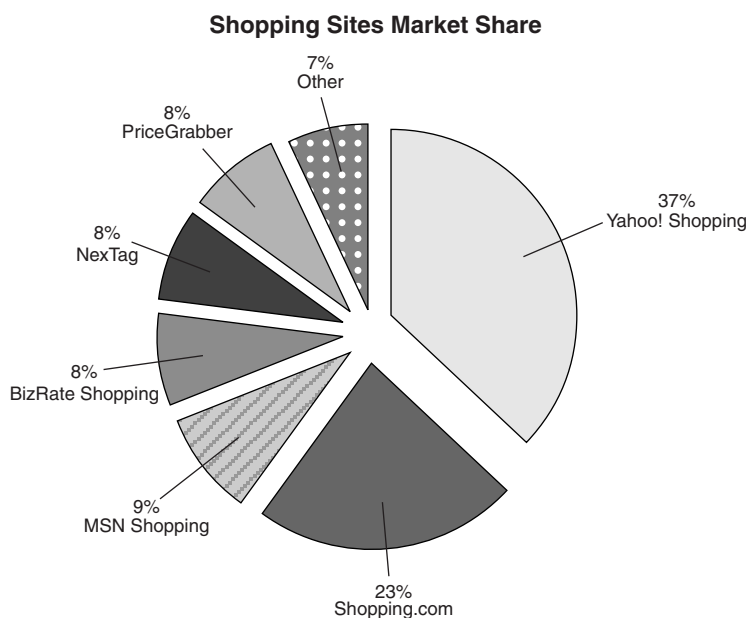
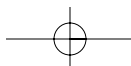


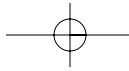
Figure 1-11 Shopping search market share. Yahoo! Shopping and Shopping.com are the leaders.

Source: Hitwise Research (October 2003)

Specialty Search Engines

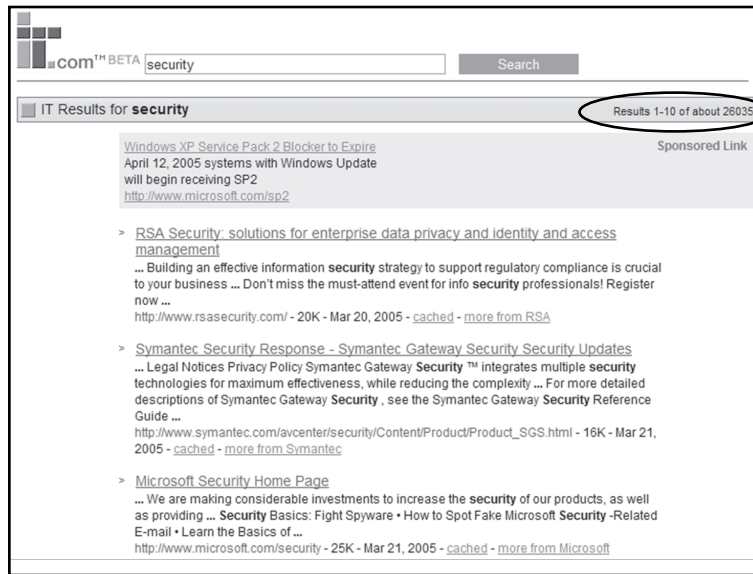
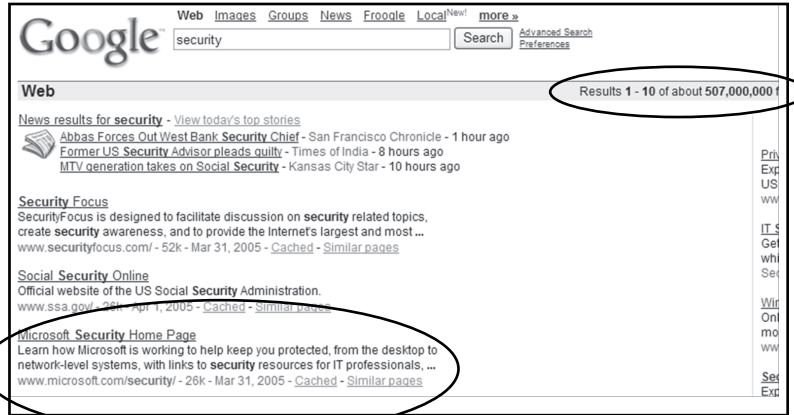
Whereas shopping search engines locate a wide range of products, **specialty search engines** focus on just one or two product categories. Figure 1-12 shows a great example of a specialty search engine that focuses on information technology solutions. Because the content is limited to pages about a specific subject, the searcher receives more relevant results.





When IT managers search for “security” in Google, they get news stories and several top results that have nothing to do with what they are looking for.

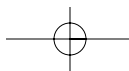
It’s not Google’s fault—“security” has many meanings— but IT managers must scan down the page to find the first relevant result. Even searching for “IT security” doesn’t help because “it” is such a common word.

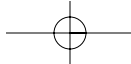


At IT.com, IT managers get a screen full of relevant results, because the content is limited to the subject of information technology.

Notice that Google has 237 million results compared to IT.com’s 300,000. It’s amazing that Google’s results are as good as they are.

Figure 1-12 A specialty search engine. IT.com carefully limits its search results to IT solutions, providing more relevance to its niche market than Google can.





Most industries have at least one of these specialty engines, but consumer marketing has specialties, too. For example, the search facility at CNET (www.cnet.com), the computer and electronics site, shows products (as shopping search engines do), but also shows subject category matches and matching Web pages. So, searchers for “digital cameras” get a list of cameras along with their CNET reviews. This blend of product content, reviews, and comparison shopping is a near-perfect environment for electronics product marketers.

Search marketers should research the specialty search engines that cover their product lines, because specialty searchers are ready to buy.

Search and Your Marketing Mix

Now that you know a little bit about Web search, let’s see why it should be part of your Web **marketing mix**—the advertising and other expenditures that your business allocates in its marketing budget. When we use the term *marketing mix*, we want you to think broadly—beyond what folks traditionally consider marketing. If your Web site is part of a for-profit business, then selling products is exactly what you do, but even nonprofit businesses have some kind of marketing mix—a budget that is allocated in various ways to attract visitors to the site to do something. If it is not to buy a product, it might be to donate money, or vote for your candidate. Whatever your Web site’s purpose, search marketing should be part of the budget for attracting visitors to your site.

Your competitor’s marketing mix might already include paid search; after all, the share of advertisers’ budgets devoted to search marketing increases each year. Some businesses fund organic efforts from marketing budgets, too (whereas others use technology budgets for organic search). U.S. paid placement is expected to continue growing faster than any other sector of online advertising, at 17 percent a year, as it rises from an estimated \$2.4 billion in 2004 to nearly \$5 billion in 2009 (as shown in Figure 1-13).

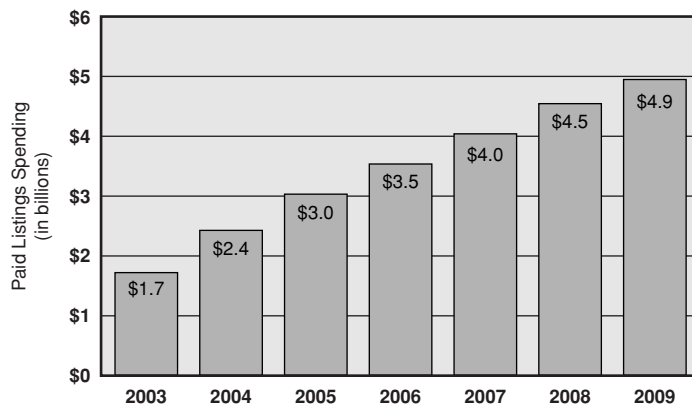
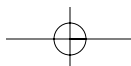
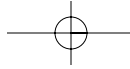


Figure 1-13 U.S. paid placement spending. Paid placement continues to grow, albeit more slowly than in years past.

Source: JupiterMedia (July 2004)





A BRIEF HISTORY OF WEB SEARCH

Search technology predates the Web by more than 20 years; after all, computers were first used to catalog documents and retrieve them in the 1960s. But although search technology grew to handle databases of thousands and later millions of documents within large organizations, nothing prepared the search industry for the size of the World Wide Web. For the first time, billions of documents could be included in a single search, and search technology was not initially up to the task.

The first popular solution to this new Web search problem was not really a search engine at all. A small California company began to manually categorize every site on the Web in 1994, listing each site in a subject taxonomy that Web visitors could use to find what they were looking for. At first, it had no real search capability—visitors could merely find the desired subject and get to the home pages of sites about that subject—but it was a popular way to find things on this new World Wide Web. Thus began the first Web directory, called Yahoo!.

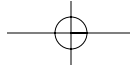
At the same time, true search solutions began to emerge. WebCrawler, Excite, Lycos, and others began examining each page of every Web site and allowing searchers to look for any word on any page. But no real leader emerged until late in 1995 when Digital Equipment launched the AltaVista search engine. AltaVista differed from the rest; it delivered strikingly more relevant results than its predecessors. For the first time, searchers could find what they were looking for in one or two searches, with the best results near the top of the list. Almost overnight, the Web world was abuzz with news of this magical new way to find Web sites.

For more than a year, Web users argued over the relative merits of Yahoo! Directory versus AltaVista search, but in 1997 two new choices emerged. Ask Jeeves developed a question-answering interface that provided access to answers to hundreds of thousands of commonly asked questions, such as “How many inches are in a meter?” that no directory or search technology could handle. Goto.com also made its debut in 1997, offering a unique system for advertisers to bid against each other for every search word, with the highest bidder receiving the #1 ranking for his page. Goto.com (later renamed Overture) launched the paid search industry.

But Web search changed forever in 1998 with the launch of Google. Google was able to find hundreds of millions (now billions) of pages on the Web while providing much better results than other search engines. Google eschewed the question answering of Ask Jeeves, instead improving on the search-oriented approach of AltaVista, and at first it had no directory or paid placement. But it worked—searchers were struck by how frequently Google seemed to find the exact right answer at the top of the list. Searchers soon abandoned AltaVista in droves for the new favorite.

Google has continued to innovate, by introducing the first search toolbar for browsers, by steadfastly separating paid search results from organic on its results page, and through new paid search techniques. Google introduced the AdSense paid search program, which combines both bidding and the popularity of an advertisement to decide which one is #1.

Yahoo!, which once used Google as the organic search that complemented its directory, has now made an about-face, acquiring several organic search companies to form a new organic Yahoo! Search (replacing Yahoo!’s use of Google) in 2004. Yahoo! acquired Overture (formerly Goto) for its paid search, rebranding it as Yahoo! Search Marketing Solutions in 2005. Google and Yahoo! are now the two largest competitors in the search market, but a little history shows how quickly that can change, as anyone associated with AltaVista can attest.



But the rise of search marketing is not just a U.S. phenomenon; it is a worldwide trend. European marketers already spend 13 percent of their online ad budget on paid search and expect it to increase to 15 percent by 2005. The picture in Asia is also striking; for example, China's paid placement spending is expected to increase fivefold by 2006 and Japan's by 560 percent by 2008. Around the world, search marketing expenditures have grown dramatically in recent years. Let's look at why.

Prospective Customers Use Search

One of the most basic reasons to spend your scarce marketing budget on search is that searchers buy products: Of all searchers, 33 percent are shopping, and 41 percent of Web users use search to find Web sites to research a purchase. Lest you think that not enough people are online for search marketing to be worth your while, note that total Web users passed the 300 million mark worldwide in 2004. As simple as it sounds, your customers are on the Web, and they use search to buy. Your site must be found by these searchers who are ready to buy.

Think about the new way that people purchase products. They no longer call your company to have you mail them a brochure. They "Google" your offering ("verizon wireless"). Or maybe they look for your competitor's ("sprint"). Or they search for its generic name ("cell phone service").

If your company's Web site is not listed in the first few search results for these searches, you're out! You are out of the customer's **consideration set**—the group of companies that will be considered for the customer's purchase. If you are not in the customer's consideration set, you have no chance to make the sale to that customer.

Even if the goal of your Web is not online purchase, your customers must find you to learn about your offerings, download information, or find the location of a retail store. Searchers are far more qualified visitors to your site than someone who clicks a banner ad, for example, so attracting search visitors is just good business.

The main reason to make search part of your marketing mix is that that's where your customers are, but there are other reasons.

Search Marketing Is Cost-Effective

Beyond your customers' use of search, the case for including search in your marketing mix is compelling for another reason: Search marketing expenditures are a good value.

European marketers report that they pay approximately €2 (euros) each time a searcher clicks their paid listings, and 55 percent regard that cost as "relatively cheap." Seventy-six percent of marketers believe paid search is better than banner ads for achieving their business goals, and 80 percent of businesses surveyed are satisfied with the return on investment for search marketing expenditures—35 percent are *very* satisfied. In fact, search marketing has the lowest cost per lead of *any* market method, as shown in Figure 1-14.

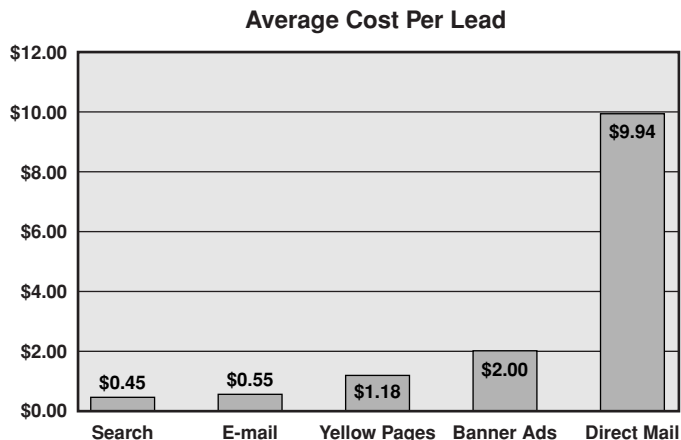
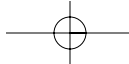


Figure 1-14 Comparing advertising value. Search is the leader in return on advertising investment.

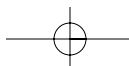
Source: Piper, Jaffray & Co. (March 2003)

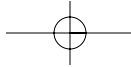
Why is this important? Because if you want to start spending money on search, you need to stop spending on something else. When you understand that search is the most effective way to spend your scarce marketing dollars, you should be able to easily make the tradeoffs required to reduce some existing budgets (direct mail, perhaps?) to find the money for your new search expenditures.

Search Marketing Is Big Business

You can tell a new marketing technique is taking off by noticing the number of consultants that hang out their shingles to help you do it! Several kinds of firms are involved in search marketing:

- *Search consultants.* A brand new kind of consultancy has sprung up in the past several years, variously known as SEO consultants or SEM consultants. These new firms, led by iProspect, Fathom Online, and Global Strategies International, handle search marketing and nothing else.
- *Traditional advertising agencies.* At the other end of the spectrum are the old-line advertising agencies that have been around for years. Just as firms such as Young & Rubicam and Ogilvy & Mather handle TV, radio, and print advertising, in recent years they have taken on Web advertising. Starting with banner ads, they have now moved into search marketing, too. Some ad agencies handle paid search only, whereas others offer SEO consulting for organic search, too.





- *Interactive advertising agencies.* In between the two extremes, interactive agencies handle anything online, ranging from search marketing to banner ads to e-mail campaigns. Sometimes these agencies are subsidiaries of the traditional ad agencies, such as OgilvyInteractive, whereas others, such as Avenue A | Razorfish, are smaller, independent firms.

All of these firms are competing for your growing interactive marketing budget—almost 3 percent of all advertising spending in 2003. Your organization might already work with one of these companies, or might be looking for a search marketing partner. What is most important at this point is your interest in allocating part of your marketing budget to search, because you will soon see that achieving success is rather challenging.

The Challenge of Search Success

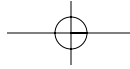
Now that you know the basics of Web search, and you know how big a marketing opportunity it is, it must be time for a reality check: Search marketing is *not* easy to do.

And, unlike most marketing efforts, the bigger you are, the harder it is. We know that in marketing, size has inherent advantages. The bigger the budget, the more advertising you can buy, the more free media coverage you can coax, the better a public relations person you can hire, and on and on. But search marketing is different.

Companies with well-known brand names assume it is easy for their Web site to rank highly in search results, but John Tawadros (of search marketing firm iProspect) explains that “the field is more equal. Just because you’re a big name doesn’t mean much to the search engines.” In fact, well-known brands have lots of competition for search rankings, both from their competitors and from their allies—many resellers rank highly for well-known brands. Amazon may rank well when a searcher searches for “sony dvd player”—possibly even higher than Sony’s Web site.

It is actually easier in some ways for small Web sites to succeed in search marketing than large ones. For instance, fewer people need to know what to do, and the whole Web site is managed one way by one team. As soon as your site is large enough that you hear some telltale conversations about separating your team or even your site into multiple parts, then search marketing has just gotten tougher:

- *We need multiple teams of specialists.* “The copy writers and the HTML coders really should be in different departments. . . .”
- *We need multiple product sites.* “Each product line should really run its own separate Web site. . . .”
- *We need multiple audiences.* “We should really have different user experiences for consumers than for our business customers. . . .”



- *We need multiple countries.* “It is really easier for everyone if the Canada and the U.S. sites are separate. . . .”
- *We need multiple technologies.* “We decided to keep using the Apache server for the marketing information but we are putting all of the commerce functions into WebSphere. . . .”

Make no mistake—those preceding conversations are actually the sweet sound of success! Your Web site has grown too large to be run in the old simple way. Good for you that your site is growing and needs to be managed differently, but it makes search marketing much more difficult, for many reasons. Let’s look at each of these situations and see what can go wrong for search marketing.

Multiple Specialist Teams

As soon as your Web team grows to more than about a dozen employees, people will start thinking about splitting the group into multiple teams and eventually several departments. No matter how you split things up, you will start to see communication problems that did not exist before.

If you divide the group by specialties, maybe the Webmasters, JavaScript programmers, and system administrators go into the Web technology group, and HTML coders, copy writers, and graphics artists form a Web creative group. That works well for most tasks, because, for example, each copy writer can work closely with the other copy writers to set standards and ensure that the writing is consistent across the site.

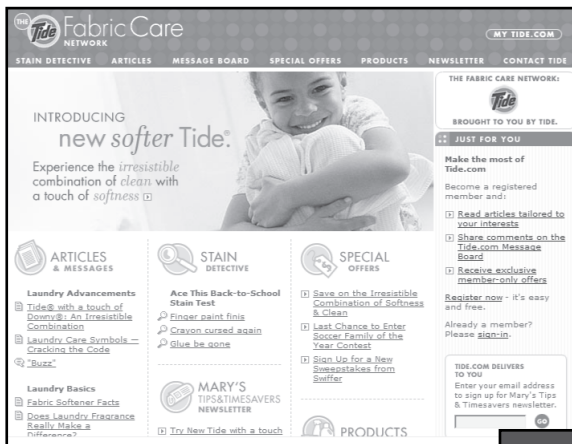
Unfortunately, search marketing gets more difficult precisely because it cannot be handled solely as a specialty. Your specialists must understand what they are personally required to do to make your search marketing a success. Your JavaScript programmers must place their code in files separate from the HTML files. Your copy writers must use the right words in their copy. Your Webmasters must choose the right naming convention for your pages’ URLs (Uniform Resource Locators—the Web page addresses that start with www).

The key point you need to understand is that search marketing is a team effort and that medium-to-large Web sites have multiple teams that must work together for your search marketing to succeed. Oh, and one more thing: None of these specialists will be focused on search marketing—*that’s* your biggest challenge.

Multiple Product Sites

Your organization might be so highly decentralized that your customers do not even think of your separate products as coming from the same company. How many of you know that Procter & Gamble make Crest toothpaste, as well as the Cheer, Gain, and Tide laundry detergents? And how many even care? P&G’s customers do not need to know what company makes these products—they know the brand names, and that is enough. And if they need to learn more about the new

whitening ingredient in Crest, they are much more likely to go to www.crest.com than www.pg.com. So, Procter & Gamble created separate Web sites for each major brand, as shown in Figure 1-15.



Tide: www.tide.com



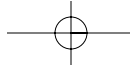
Cheer: www.cheer.com



Gain: www.gainlaundry.com

Check out these pages on the Web yourself. As different as they look in black and white, it's even more striking in full color. Tide is orange, Cheer is blue, and Gain is green.

Figure 1-15 Multiple product sites. Three Procter & Gamble laundry detergent home pages look like they are from completely separate companies.



And each Web site might get its own team. There might be a Crest Webmaster, a Cheer Webmaster, a Gain Webmaster, and a Tide Webmaster, with the other specialists divided by product, too. Multiple product sites foster excellent communication among the specialists assigned to each product, but can create a situation in which there may be almost no communication *across* products.

For most Web tasks, this might not be problematic, but for search marketing, it can be. The Tide, Cheer, and Gain sites should each be found when searchers look for “laundry detergent”—but the respective teams might be fighting over those searchers rather than working together.

To lead search marketing across P&G, you must coax these disparate product groups to sometimes collaborate instead of always competing. Perhaps they should team up to create the ultimate “laundry detergent” page that showcases each of their products. This is harder to pull off than it sounds, because collaboration might violate the competitive corporate culture.

Alternatively, the three detergent marketers might pool their search knowledge so they *each* rank in the top ten. Moreover, this technique squeezes some competitors off the front page (because P&G has three listings out of ten). P&G marketers might warm to this approach because it is similar to how they stock supermarket shelves with multiple products to control the shelf space. None of these separate Web teams need to collaborate for other Web tasks; for search marketing, however, they do—that’s *your* problem.

Multiple Audiences

Perhaps your company is highly customer-centric, conducting all sales and marketing based on audiences, or market segments. So, you have a Web site for large business customers, another for small-to-medium customers, and a third for consumers, even though they buy many of the same products. Of course, each of these sites can be run by separate teams that might not need to work together with the other sites’ teams. (Are you starting to see a pattern here?)

Separate, audience-focused Web sites can be an effective way to communicate with your customers, because you can tune your marketing message to each audience’s unique needs. Large businesses might want more customized service, whereas smaller firms might be willing to take a one-size-fits-all solution to their problem—these differing needs can be addressed with somewhat different offerings that are described differently on your Web site.

IBM sells the same computer software and servers to several different audiences, but large customers might have negotiated special pricing based on volume and special configurations, whereas small customers are more interested in ease of installation and service. So, the same underlying technology might be sold *à la carte* to large businesses but as a packaged “solution” to small businesses. To follow through on this strategy, IBM offers large customers discounted pricing in one part of its site, and markets solutions to smaller businesses elsewhere, as shown in Figure 1-16.

IBM's home page has separate links for medium businesses, large businesses, and other market segments. Clicking each link leads to a home page tailored for just that audience.

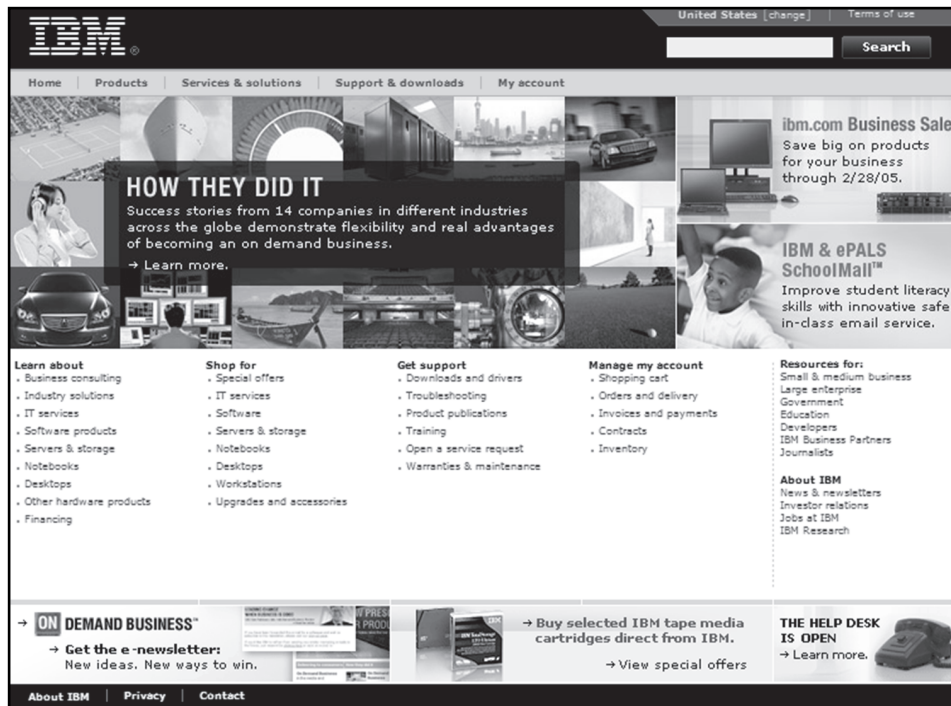


Figure 1-16 Multiple audience sites. IBM uses different marketing messages for different audiences, with a different area of its Web site for each.

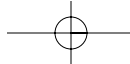
And dividing this Web site based on customer size usually works well—until you consider search marketing. Unfortunately, when a prospective IBM customer searches for “Web commerce” in Google, there is no way to know whether the searcher has a small Web site that needs a turnkey solution or is from a large company wanting to purchase and run its own commerce software on its server. Neither the large company group nor the small company solution group is focused on search marketing, and so—say it with me now—“you will have to do that.”

Multiple Countries



Another common way to divide up a Web site is by country, and like all the other ways discussed so far, it makes a lot of sense. (That’s why companies do it!) Your company probably does not sell the same exact products in every country, so it makes sense that each country might have its own Web site for customers in that country to visit. Each country might have different languages, currency, cultural norms, laws—it is easy to understand why Web sites are so frequently divided this way.

But this clever organizational idea, once again, hurts search marketing efforts. Some searchers use country-specific search engines, but many use global search engines, such as



Google. What happens when a Canadian searcher enters “four-slice toaster” into the global search engine? Google might be able to determine the language of the query as English, but there may be excellent English-language pages on toasters in the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, the United States, and many other countries. Your company might also have excellent matches for all of those countries—each toaster page is similar to those in the other countries, but is specific to the country. (It shows the toaster that conforms to UK electrical standards and is priced in British pounds, for instance.) Google might just show the UK pages, even though it is not the one the Canadian searcher wants, and suppress the rest as being “similar pages.” If the wrong country page displays, your visitor cannot buy your product easily—he might be asked to pay in British pounds when he has Canadian dollars in his wallet.

You can see that if your corporate Web site is divided by country, you might find Web teams responsible for different countries battling to capture searchers with the same query—they want their pages to “win” so that your other country pages are the ones suppressed. Worse, you might have well-known brand names, such as Coke, that are used in many countries regardless of language. How do you know which country those searchers want? Figure 1-17 shows how Coca-Cola handles this problem on its home page, but your company could face this problem for hundreds of brand names that cannot all be listed on your home page.



The home page has a prominent button to drive navigation to Coke country sites.

Clicking the button leads to a country selection page that can take you where you want to go.

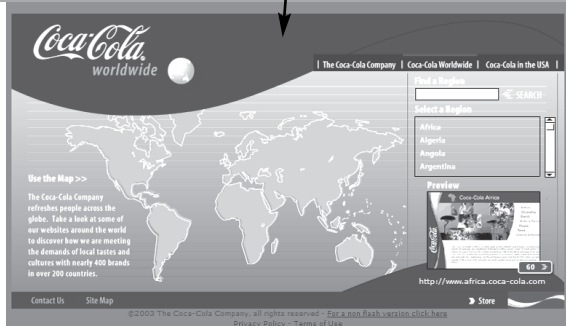
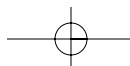
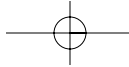


Figure 1-17 Handling country sites. Coca-Cola highlights country selection on its home page to get searchers and other visitors to the right place.





Once again, there may be no incentive within your company for different country teams to collaborate on search marketing—they are not required to work together on most other things. All together now: “It’s your job.”

Multiple Technologies

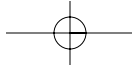
Until now, this discussion has focused on the problems of multiple Web teams driven by the choices your company has made about how to organize. However, another problem grows as Web sites grow: the technology menagerie. A Web site can employ a dizzying array of technology:

- *Content management systems* help authors create and store the content for each page.
- *Web servers* display pages on the visitor’s screen.
- *Application servers* run programs for the visitor to perform tasks on your site (such as viewing an appliance’s service records).
- *Commerce servers* display your merchandise and enable visitors to purchase.
- *Portals* display content based on the visitors’ interests (such as showing items for sale that are related to items already purchased).

Each of these components (and more) needs to be carefully configured to support your search marketing efforts. This configuration is complicated when your Web site has been pieced together across a large organization, however, because your site probably uses *different* components in each part of the site. So, your multiple product sites (or audience sites or country sites) might each have its own team using different technologies to run each site. In the initial rush to get every part of your company on the Web, a divide-and-conquer strategy might have ruled the day, with each division doing its own thing. Unfortunately, you are paying for that now, because every combination of technology that displays a Web page must be configured properly to make search marketing work.

The more technology combinations you have, the harder it is to get them all working for search. Frequently, you need to coordinate multiple changes to fix one problem because, for example, the content management system and the portal are both contributing causes. And (by now you are waiting for it), none of these technical specialists will think search marketing is part of *their* job—it is *your* job to get them to fix each problem.

If you find that your Web site suffers from the technology menagerie or any of the other problems listed here, don’t despair. We show you how to solve each one.



Summary

Since the rise of the Web in the 1990s, more and more of your customers have turned to the Web, and more specifically to Web search, to find what they are looking for. Most searchers are clicking organic search results, although some are selecting paid search listings. Regardless, your Web site cannot ignore these searchers without losing them to your competitors. By focusing on searchers as part of your marketing plans, you *will* raise your sales (or raise whatever your Web site's goal is).

But paying attention to searchers takes more work than you might expect. To maximize your search marketing success, you cannot focus on just one or two search engines. Search engines come in many flavors and colors, ranging from worldwide sites to single-country engines to specialized shopping searches. Depending on your business, we discuss later how any or all of these might be key parts of your search marketing plan.

It is even more complicated for some organizations because the larger your Web site is, the more elusive search success can be. Large Web sites have multiple teams split by technical specialty, product line, country, and other organizational boundaries. Your company's organizational structure might be perfectly aligned for its overall goals, but can fracture search marketing.

Organizational splits hurt search marketing precisely because search marketing cannot be treated as a specialty performed by just one department. Rather, successful search marketing efforts pervade your entire Web organization, transforming jobs all along the way. Do not worry if you cannot imagine how you will persuade all these folks to change the way they do their jobs—we show you how.

Your multiple Web teams fail at search marketing because of their search ignorance—ignorance that can be overcome only through knowledge, knowledge that must start with you, the search marketer. The following chapter examines what a search engine actually does. As you learn how search engines work, you will be better prepared to train your far-flung Web teams to transform their jobs and to take advantage of the huge search marketing opportunity.

