

Search Marketing Strategies for the Next Decade

insight

Matt Greitzer | June 2008



Depending on who's counting, the search engine marketing discipline is either seven, 10 or 12 years old. Let's all agree and say, with the authority of Wikipedia on our side, 2008 will mark the start of the second decade of marketers' concerted efforts to attract, acquire and retain customers through the search channel. In the last 10 years — the last five in particular — we've seen a flurry of activity and development in the search marketing industry. Once relegated to a niche pursuit for a small club of tech-savvy marketers, search marketing is now a key component of the marketing mix and has found its seat at the table. But search marketing *innovation* has lagged behind, focusing largely on tactical considerations: responding to algorithm changes, quality score management, link building tips... the list goes on.

While foundational to successful search marketing campaigns, the tactical considerations that have occupied the focus of search marketers for the last ten years are *not* the key elements that will power us into the next decade. Rather, search marketers who aim for success in the future will focus on strategic opportunities across their online marketing efforts that will make their search marketing campaigns better. This article, the first of a four-part series, will explore the emergence of the new strategic opportunities that will shape search marketing over the next 10 years.

To begin, consider the emergence of search-focused content strategies. In the past, advertisers (especially large ones) gave little thought to the unique needs of customers coming in through the search channel. They identified relevant keywords and drove traffic to their existing Web sites as effectively as possible. What these advertisers missed, however, was the opportunity to tailor their Web sites to align specifically with searchers' expectations. By ignoring user intent, these advertisers did not speak to searchers' needs and ultimately experienced less effective and less efficient search marketing programs.

Sophisticated search marketers now recognize the opportunity for site content focused on user intent, and tailor their Web sites and user experience specifically for customers coming in through the search channel — going well beyond landing page testing. Advertisers who employ search-focused content strategies make efforts to understand searcher intent through quantitative and qualitative data. They then assess their current Web site experience and make adjustments to content, taxonomy and site navigation based on their findings to provide a better experience for customers arriving at the site through search. For marketers outside the search industry, this may seem like the tail wagging the dog. But search marketers understand that the shift toward a search-focused content strategy is a relatively small investment that can have dramatic impact on search marketing performance.

To be fair, some search marketers have always understood the opportunity in aligning site content with searcher intent. But this practice has arguably not taken hold across the search

marketing community at large, and definitely not permeated the Web development and online marketing communities who own the Web site experience. This is starting to change. Sophisticated marketers will embrace search-focused content strategies as a standard component of both their search marketing and overall online marketing programs, and as one of the key developments that will influence search marketing success in the coming years.

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About the Author

Matthew Greitzer serves as the Vice President and Global Discipline Lead of Search Marketing in Avenue A | Razorfish. He built the search practice in New York two years ago to an industry leader today by billing over \$100M, delivering extraordinary results and compelling thought leadership to clients, growing an outstanding team of industry experts, and winning industry recognition and awards. Matt is responsible for developing clients' search marketing strategies, and manages the day-to-day operations of the search marketing business.

Prior to his current role, Matt was the Director of Search Marketing for Avenue A | Razorfish. Prior to joining Avenue A | Razorfish, Matt founded and ran Bin 55, LLC, an interactive consulting company focusing on web marketing for small businesses. Before that, Matt spent six years with Avenue A | Razorfish, ultimately serving as Director of Operations where he oversaw the account management team, and was instrumental in the design and development of aQuantive's Atlas ad serving technology.

Matt is a member of the AAAA's Search Engine Marketing Committee, and has spoken at a number of industry conferences, including Search Engine Strategies in San Jose and Chicago, Search Insider Summit in Palm Springs, and the Yahoo! Spotlight Awards. Matt was named "40 Under 40" by Crain's NY Business in 2007.

Matt is a graduate of Bowdoin College.

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