

SEO

What is it and why do so many companies get it wrong?



I must get a dozen e-mails every week from Companies touting their expertise in “SEO” and why I should hire them to do SEO for my clients....even though we already provide that service for our clients!

As a virtual agency model (www.mccabegroup.com) specializing in the Industrial B-2-B manufacturing space I have come to realize just how poorly the term SEO is used and why so many (repeat so many) so-called experts show up on line, in your e-mails, in my e-mails and calls to my Company.

For those of you who aren't that familiar with SEO, have faith, many of these “SEO” Companies don't get it either and it creates a negative image for those Companies who actually do get it, and do it right.

What is the general perception of SEO and why is it generally misunderstood?

Google ad words and Google ad strings...
if you ask most people who are not familiar with SEO this is their perception of all they need to do to increase their Google rankings and thus their market presence in being listed high up on a search page.

And, for the most part, high rankings on a Google search is a true statement and is the ultimate goal for any Company looking to attract customers. But, getting these higher rankings and stronger presence over your competitors is much more than just buying words/strings that you think your customers and prospects would search to get to you.

There's a science behind the algorithms that Google uses to rank Companies. And there's a methodology on how to maximize your exposure and therefore Google presence in the marketplace. The good news is that while it's not an exact science it does allow you to compete on an even playing field with Companies of varying sizes. The not so good news is that the Google model is dynamic and constantly changing/ tweaking the model (sometimes weekly) so the uninformed or non-Google experts are left behind just when they think they have it all figured out.



The following is taken from a Google editor's blog that I think puts a perfect spin on their view looking from the inside out as to SEO:

“We as a company spend a lot of time thinking about search engine optimization, or SEO. No small wonder, given that search is at the core of our business.

Of course, there are plenty of other ways to drive traffic to your website. Paid media, social posts, and display advertising are just a few. But, when done well, SEO can provide an important — and cost-effective — strategy for organic growth. In fact, the latest research from web analytics company Parse.ly shows Google Search accounted for around half of external referrals to the publishers in its network this past year.

To really get the most out of SEO, though, it's important to stay on top of the latest Google Search updates. That's no different for us internally. We at Google own 7,000 websites that are managed by hundreds of product and marketing teams all over the world. Over 200 changes are made to these websites every single day, all of which could potentially affect a site's SEO. When it comes to how Google sites appear in Search, they receive the same treatment as any other site on the web, and our teams follow the same external guidelines provided to webmasters.”

So, what does all this mean to you when trying to understand and implement an SEO strategy?

There are, of course, a myriad of answers.

A typical Google approach to grow your presence on their site is broken down into two main categories: Organic Growth and Paid Growth. Organic growth is the “long game” with slow and steady implementation of website analytics, updating/changing page headers, search words/strings and CONTENT. Paid search is just what it implies, you buy ad words or ad strings (short phrases to describe your product/service) to jump up the rankings so when someone searches a word/string that best describes who you are and what you do, your Company comes out on top....but at a cost. Two issues effect that approach: first, you come up above the organic search titles and it shows as an ad. This can have a negative effect on the viewer as many times they bypass any paid ad listings and jump right to the organic listings below them. Second, it’s a paid strategy and as long as you are willing to maintain that ranking (which will depend on others bidding for the same spot), it will cost you to stay in that illustrious spot for each day you pay for it. And, the worst news-- once you decide you don’t want to pay for that spot anymore you drop off the top of the ad page and most likely altogether off the first page of the search.



Your presence and level of ranking is all predicated on how much you are willing to spend to get that 1-2-3 spot on the search page.

Why Paid SEO Search Works and When to Consider Using this Approach

Paid search (which includes listings and sidebar ads) is a very successful tool when you want to get out of the gate quickly and have an immediate impact on your target audience. Your presence and level of ranking is all predicated on how much you are willing to spend to get that 1-2-3 spot on the search page. So it’s that instant gratification and visual acceptance that you are getting eyeballs on your Company for as long as you are willing to pay for it. It works well but only for the amount of time you are willing to invest in keeping it high up on a search page. This is a great approach for Companies new to an industry or Companies competing against much larger competitors who want to try and level the playing field by getting viewers to click onto their site. In reality though it’s not sustainable as there will always be Companies willing to outbid you for these coveted spots and it becomes an open ATM when you have limited resources to maintain a steady ranking.

Why Organic SEO Makes Sense

Organic SEO is definitely a long play where you slowly but surely build your Google presence through a combination of intelligent changes to your website page titles, and CONTENT...lots of content and feeding the SEO engine often. When done properly this approach works to move you up the rankings through a measured and steady process to get you to the first page of the Google search listings. If done correctly you will maintain that high listing for an extended period of time because the algorithms based upon your content will sustain your rankings far longer than paid SEO search...unless of course money is no object.

Why CONTENT is the Key

You can buy all the google ad words/strings you like but if you want to grow your rankings organically (which is the best way to approach the SEO model) you need to go well beyond just using key words/phrases in you page headers, or in your text on your website. You need to include relevant information that will be scraped by Google to determine what your Company is all about. It's about understanding how Google reacts to certain content to move the rankings dial in your favor. It's here where a lot of Companies drop the ball and fall well short of what is needed to improve their Google rankings.

Too many times Companies will add words/strings to parts of their website, maybe even add relevant text behind a photo (metatags) or use a key words too many times on the site where Google actually dismisses these as irrelevant. Knowing how Google works and having an SEO expert/team on your side are the real keys to a successful SEO strategy. And it all starts with producing relevant CONTENT.

It's no secret that gathering information, photos, video etc... is a time consuming and laborious task. If everyone did it then Google searches would be a lot more crowded at the top, so thankfully many Companies are either too lazy, or more accurately short-staffed to maximize their SEO efforts.



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The SEO Commitment

Before you dip your corporate toe into the SEO waters you need to understand and commit to having a dedicated person or team responsible for creating the content that your SEO team will require.

It's not just about the words/strings. It's about understanding how Google works and maximizing strategies to effectively work the Google model. Hiring an SEO Company that says it can write and produce content is one approach but ultimately they need access to your internal point of contact/team to generate input for the content. It can be expensive and certainly time consuming to educate someone outside of your Company as to what you do (especially if it's technical in nature) so they can write/produce intelligent content that they know will enhance your Google search presence.

Then there's the approach whereby you assign an internal team to work with your external SEO team to generate all the content/photos/videos, etc...that they require to advance your SEO presence. Many times the reality of that

approach fails because that person/team simply doesn't have the time to accomplish what is being requested when they have a full plate with their primary responsibilities at the Company... so it never gets done.

Ideally, a Company should work with SEO Companies that have Google experts on staff and who are aggregators with a strength in your Company's products/services. They would be responsible for providing the content wish list, what specifically is required, and what resources are needed both internally and externally. For example, if information is needed on the pros and cons of Plastic Extrusion, the SEO team would initiate the background information, gather data resources and then work with the internal team for validating the article, generating photos and/or graphics, and if possible generate a simple video (as easy as using an iPhone/iPad) to create a wide range of Google-friendly content to post up on your website, social channels and other external search engines.

Note: With so many SEO Companies beating down your door you want to make sure that whomever you select to partner with has the expertise and knowledge to understand the ins and outs of the Google search model. A great example of this requirement happens to be with our Company whereby we have a team whose sole purpose in life is everything Google. With daily/weekly changes in how Google utilizes your website data, and how it can affect your current SEO process (yes, what you initiated 2 weeks ago can be irrelevant today), it is imperative to have a partner who follows the Google changes that effect rankings on a daily basis. Our team travels the country attending Google sponsored seminars, workshops and maintains updates on everything Google to ensure we are always at the forefront of what drives the best Google strategy for our clients.

THIS is how to build a strong, sustainable and cohesive SEO strategy and will ensure a high level of SEO success for your Company.

**For Help in SEO-driven Strategies
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