

The basics of SEM, SEO and PPC – answers to some common questions

What is SEM?

Search Engine Marketing or SEM is a range of marketing techniques used to increase a website's visibility on search engines and directories so that it will attract visits from its target audience. SEM includes SEO, PPC or a combination of these and other search related activities.

What is SEO?

Search Engine Optimisation or SEO is the process of improving the volume and quality of traffic to a website from search engines, therefore increasing the website's ranking. It takes time to build and maintain a good SEO campaign but the results are worth it. SEO uses a combination of techniques, such as modifying site content, structure and code using relevant keywords, link building and utilising web standards.

What is PPC?

Pay Per Click Advertising or PPC is an advertising technique used on websites, especially search engines. The advertiser pays an agreed amount for each click delivered to their site from a link or listing on a website or search engine. In the UK, Google AdWords and Yahoo! Search Marketing are the main providers of PPC services.

What are Keywords and Keyphrases?

A keyword or keyphrase is a word or a series of words used by search engines when searching for relevant web pages. For example, if someone was looking for a cookbook, they would type in the keyword "cookbook". Before your website is optimised, it is important to choose the correct keywords and keyphrases, as there is no point in optimising your website for keywords or keyphrases that no one searches on.

Our website has just gone live – why can't I find it on search engines?

The internet is a very crowded place and as there is no central location to find information, users rely primarily on search engines to find what they want. If your website has been optimised and has been created using web standards, then your website should be going through the process of being indexed by the search engines. Search engines are constantly crawling the web for new websites and are continually adding new websites to their indexes. If your website has not been optimised or does not have any quality inbound links, then your chances of gaining good rankings are significantly reduced.

We have just had our website optimised – why can't I find it on search engines?

SEO is something that takes time and needs to be consistent. Search engines give rankings based upon many factors, such as age, quality of content, appropriateness of keywords and keyphrases and links. For example, if a website has been online for a year and has had consistent content, high quality links and has not done any underhanded tactics to try and rank higher, the search engines will give rankings to this type of website over a newer website, as the search engines trust the older site.

How can we get an immediate result?

The only way your website will be ranked immediately is by using PPC. However, PPC does not grow organically like SEO and your ad will only be shown at the times you choose to pay for it. If you have the budget for both PPC and SEO, then it is best to do both in tandem, so that you get the immediate results from PPC and the long term sustainable results from SEO.

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