

MoreSALES

In 5 seconds or less: Why Should an Executive Care about Search Engine Marketing (SEM)



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How important are Five Seconds?

Visualize your website like a football game, you need the ball over the goal line to win the conversion. There's the snap, just like football, you have only *5 seconds* to win the game:

- One Mississippi... I've landed on your website. My eyes scan the page. I'm looking for what I want.
- Two Mississippi... I'm getting concerned. There's just a lot of stuff here and I can't take it all in. This is not looking hopeful, but I click on a link that looks somewhat promising.
- Three Mississippi... OK I see you're selling stuff that I could buy, but I don't want to talk to your sales guy. I'm looking for answers...
- Four Mississippi... I check out a fact sheet, but I'm in a hurry... I have a meeting in a few minutes. The information is related, but... not really.
- Five Mississippi... I leave.

On average you have *FIVE* seconds or less to engage, interest and convert a web-site lead. So here's the question: ***Are you getting leads from your website?***

I would not be so presumptuous to say your business lives or dies in that 5 seconds, but I would say there is a lot that can be learned about your business by looking at it. You see, there are ***only two*** reasons why you are not getting leads from your new web-site:

- 1) Not enough of the right traffic.
- 2) The traffic you have is not converting.

Search Engine Marketing is not just about buying AdWords... it's about business growth, and more importantly, figuring out how your company could be better at achieving its objectives.

Now why is Search Engine Marketing (SEM) important?

People tend to think like Kevin Costner in Field of Dreams – *If I build it, they will come*. If I build a new website, I will get traffic and leads... If you're reading this, you know that statement is just not true - you're not getting many leads. For most businesses, a quick glance at their Google Analytics statistics tells us they are just not getting any traffic and have left their fate in the hands of organic search.

Take a look at this 5 question survey and see where you stand

TICK ALL THAT APPLY	
	It's expensive. If I spend \$10 a click... I'll go broke!
	I looked at the AdWords thing and got frustrated. (My ads were rejected, my ads did not perform, or selecting keywords did not make sense.)
	My ads were performing well... then performance crashed and ads started doing really bad. It just started taking up too much time.
	I tried it and it didn't work. I didn't get leads or site traffic in enough volume to make an impact.
	I had a contractor do it, but they didn't seem to know what they were doing.
	I just don't have time for this.

It's easy to guess what happened. In fact most people come to us because they don't have enough time, or don't have the technical expertise, or they are frustrated with their lack of traffic and leads. Yet, you'd not be a successful entrepreneur if you let set-backs throw you off the right path. However, I will suggest that the reason you are not seeing Search Engine Marketing (SEM...e.g., advertising on Google) as critical to you is *because you didn't yet see how it tied to achieving your goals as a business*. Yet you intuitively know businesses make money at it or you wouldn't be spending any time reading this. *In fact, businesses make an average of \$2 in revenue for every \$1 they spend on AdWords!*

Let's talk about three ideas that are essential to SEM:

1. Buying (quality) traffic is necessary to lead flow on new or low volume sites

If overall site traffic is low, there will be no lead flow. However, the same problem occurs if the site traffic is high but the quality of that traffic is low; the net effect is still a limited volume of *quality* traffic.

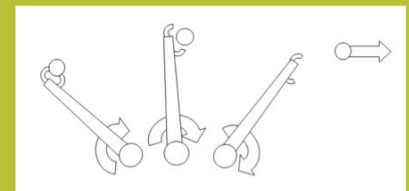
This concept of buying "High quality traffic" as part of an SEM strategy is so critical we need to look at it further. Take our example company (described to the right): Buying the keyword "actuator" is too generic (there are thousands of types). But buying ads targeting the keyword "swing actuator" would bring a bunch of consumers looking for electric gates (opening a gate or garage door). SEM is about determining how people find your type of product and specifically targeting that searcher by using the right positive and negative search terms (-gate).

Here's a silly example of what happens when people do it *wrong*: The search words 'actuator baseball -wind -cards' generates organic searches of robotic baseball throwing or hitting components; but, it also generated an ad leading to the site depicted below selling toilet brushes.

Remember... a marketer just spent \$5 to get me to click through to the below webpage. Don't make this same mistake – buy *quality* traffic, not quantity.

AN EXAMPLE PRODUCT:

Your company developed a sophisticated controller arm that throws a baseball. You call it a "swing actuator," the high-speed actuator swings the arm and throws the ball.



You will revolutionize batting practice because it can throw curves and teaches kids to watch both arm and ball movement.

Now we need to sell it.

Toilet Brush Baseball Sets Flush Actuator Bathroom Accessories

Showing 1-45 of 3 Products

- Free Shipping (3)
- In Stock (2)
- TYPE**
- Apron Panels
- Arm Mount Diverters
- Aroma Therapv



2. Traffic must CONVERT to be a lead

Imagine owning a store in a busy mall where people come only 20 feet into the store, turn around, and walk out. The traffic in this example is useless and generating more useless traffic would generate more wasted cost. That's what's happening to you every day. Ask yourself *what's wrong*. You have all these different places people can go! You have information on your products and services people could read!

Each of those places a customer could go (even the banner links to general home pages) is an "offer" in internet marketing speak. Pages with multiple offers convert 266% *LESS* than pages with exactly ONE offer.ⁱⁱ There is a direct relationship between lead flow and the specificity of your offer. Companies with only ONE landing page convert very little traffic, but those with more than 30 pages convert 7 times that rate (700% improvement)ⁱⁱⁱ. I just felt your reaction - 30!? Actually the statistics indicate that about 15 separate landing pages is important: businesses with 15 pages have a 55% increase in lead flow over those with only 10^{iv}.

Why is this critical? It's not about building ONE experience that services the needs of ALL. It's the opposite – and that's contrary to the way most companies approach the problem. There is a nuance to the way people search which puts them into a type of buyer likely to be looking for a specific type of thing. Each *type* of buyer coming has different needs and demands different supporting information so a unique landing page with messaging unique to that person's requirements might be necessary. Maybe the information required to sell the baseball actuator is different than that needed for other types of robotics or controllers – you need to find out because it affects your conversion rate.

Imagine walking into a store 20 feet and having the clerk hand you *exactly* what you want. To do this, you need to anticipate what people want, then give them a compelling offer they'll explore.

3. SEM is the ONLY way to control and experiment with the customer buying experience and figure out what works *for you*

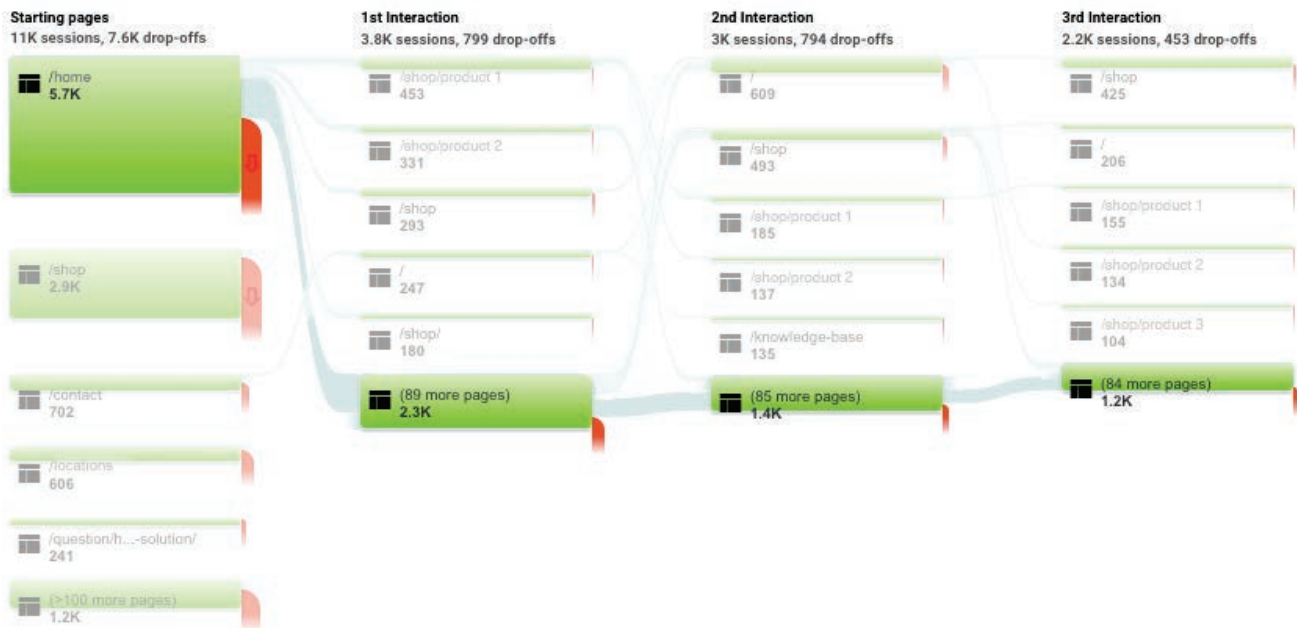
With SEM, you can buy a very specific nuance of traffic, and build a landing page designed for that *type* of buyer. Then TEST! It's called A/B testing and it is the absolute cheapest way to look at how very small nuance changes in the way you represent your product can dramatically change results. Marketing is test, test, test and SEM gives you a miniature petri dish in which to investigate messaging. It's absolutely awesome to figure out the difference in performance. This spins off a whole set of marketing activity as you find the problems or words that convert to action (sales or leads). Something as simple as changing the words "I think" to "I feel" (keeping all else the same) can statistically change the perceived persuasiveness of a page's content^v.

All these ideas center on one overall theme: *strategy*. Being clear in your mind how SEM connects to your business - and - why spending time on this benefits other areas of the business. In the internet, lead-generation world, "Strategy" cannot be some airy-fairy concept, it has to be tangible; it's a rapid and iterative process of nailing down 1) why people buy your stuff; and, 2) how we can find more people who want it.

Getting it Right – the Nuance of Analysis

Marketing is all about Fact-Based Decision Making

Here's a very frustrating problem for business owners. What they THOUGHT was going to happen doesn't. Here's a simple analysis of conversions where we asked the client to stack-rank what they thought was the customer experience in buying across their website. They ordered the content and we mapped what *actually* happened.



What people thought was the *least* important, was actually the most important for the vast majority of their conversions. Secondly, we're seeing multiple interactions here across a minimum of four pages.

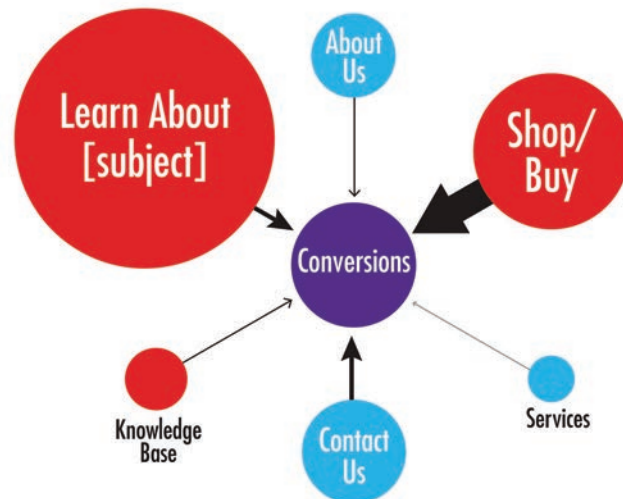
There are two very important learnings:

- 1) What we think is going to happen is often wrong. It's the facts of tracking what is actually going on that informs our strategy. In this case... the company was emphasizing the wrong messaging...
- 2) See the precipitous drop in traffic between interaction 1, 2, 3, 4. At each point in time you lose volume and fewer people can convert. This helped inform us on what content people needed to make a faster decision and get that information onto ONE page.

Expanding conversion rate is also about exploring all TYPES of conversion

This is a different customer and analysis type. Remember, SEM is ultimately about driving CONVERSION (in the center):

- The SIZE of the bubble is the volume of traffic in that content area (OPPORTUNITY)
- Red = HIGH Perceived Conversion potential on that specific page
- Blue = LOW Perceived Conversion potential on that specific page.



Now look at the size of the arrow (actual conversions they get):

- 1) The biggest area of both Opportunity and Potential conversion is getting *NOTHING*. Very weak conversion results from people coming to this site to learn about their subject area.
- 2) What they thought was not converting (Contact us) is a significant source of conversions for mobile users (70% of mobile users convert this way^{vi})

Of the three biggest sources of conversion, only ONE was well designed to achieve the results the customer intended. When we think conversion, is the site actually designed (technically and in content structure) to create a conversion?

So often the problem with lead flow is not the traffic volume – it's what is being done with that volume that matters. In this case, it was realizing that the vast majority of this company's customers were self-educators that wanted to buy from experts in the subject – and – they wanted to be educated as they purchased to feel more confident in their decision making. Bringing these two themes together meant significant lead flow change.

Most of our customers are B2B rather than B2C and a few of you will discount the above example as too consumer oriented. Don't. You may just miss your next \$1 million dollar deal. I've seen content-centric SEM strategies generate hundreds of marketing qualified leads a week for specialty businesses. When the customer is clear in their mind about what kind of content is needed, they will proactively research for it... that creates a beautiful opportunity to tap into this need through SEM.

Getting Started

“The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing.”
Walt Disney

Everyone who knows me realizes it wouldn't be a Mike Jennings paper without a Walt Disney quote – and yes... getting started means getting down to *doing*. It also means focusing energy onto practical things that make a difference:

Here are the basic steps:

Look for the obvious gains; hint: it's somewhere in site traffic and conversions

As we run our analysis and have our discussion with you, we will look for *obvious* issues and use these to frame up the first iteration of your strategy. There is no value in being esoteric or theoretical – nor is it best to start with a voluminous strategy document. Yes, having an overall sense of strategy and understanding how individual pieces will stitch together is essential, but the *action* is to pick on the obvious holes in the dam and start fixing them - *now*.

I like rapid iteration in this area where we don't try to do everything all at once: Iteration 1 might be a simplifying web pages and creating an initial conversion funnel. Iteration 2 might be a set of dedicated landing pages based on the learning from Iteration 1, Just get going - that's step 1!

Keywords: focus on QUALITY over QUANTITY

Once the obvious areas for improvement are established, keywords are invariably next. What is putting traffic onto this page, what keywords do we actually want, what do we not want. For me, this is about being as specific as possible without expecting the improbable and means hours of grinding through long-tail searches, finding the exact negative keywords that improve results remarkably, investigating competitors and seeing what google brings us when we start looking. The golden rule in SEM: the WORDS in the search signal INTENT and we use that intent to start creating ad groups and campaigns which align intent to content. This layer of activity requires us to be sleuths and intuit the way the user thinks and the intent of a user as they are entering certain types of search terms. In this way we can better determine the experience to give that user when they are on our site.

Content is King: Minimize and give people what they need

The content on your page does three things: 1) it gives people the information they need at the time they need it; 2) it improves your Google quality score; and, 3) it's an integral part of your conversion strategy. All are critically important. The trick is to determine what minimal content is necessary to get the point across – here's some examples:

- Video: Is it a mini-video showing the how actuators work? Or, is this a mini-video on how baseball actuator design has an impact on teaching players how to hit a curve ball.
- Call to action (“Offer”): is it a registration for white paper on actuators, a “contact sales” button, downloadable sales slick, or maybe a game to detect the curve ball?
- Sales Support: General quotes or endorsement on the page, product reviews, customer testimonials, warrantee terms, an industry/sports expert endorsement?

Also... the more content you put on a page, the less effective each individual piece of content becomes. It's your job to curate the content for your prospect and give each person the minimal amount of information necessary, e.g., make them just curious enough to download the white paper rather than trying to be a replacement for your sales force.

Flow and Customer Experience: Look at the flow of the site between pages

Customer experience is a broader term which generally means “put yourself in the customer’s shoes.” It’s about asking yourself what that customer is being asked to do and determining if that thing is simple and reasonable for the person to do at *that point in time*. If we’re asking them to call a sales person... that prospect needs to be at a point in the buying decision where they *want* to and *can* talk to someone; anything short of this point means the conversion will not happen. Secondly, the experience might be happening across several pages: what is a person likely doing and why are they doing it? The more effective we are in putting ourselves in the customers' shoes, the better we are at converting traffic into leads.

Taking the Strategy to the Next Level – It’s not just about ONE channel of leads, it’s about many channels working together

The First Objective in SEM is to just get started, then use the sophisticated tools out there to generate statistics, evaluate performance, refine, and constantly learn. SEM is a marketing geek’s dream because there are so many tools businesses can use to investigate, evaluate and refine their strategy and it gives CEOs a tremendous taste of how measurable effective marketing can be.

From a CEO perspective, SEM lead generation is not just about having ONE lead channel. It’s about building this as a step toward incubating many lead channels that work together and result in a continuous pipeline of leads for sustaining growth. It’s the concept of building a marketing engine and too often an initiative like SEM can be seen in isolation rather than as a strategic outcome which could take a company toward sustained growth.

This type of multi-channel marketing is built on:

- **Technology** - Foremost in here is marketing automation technology (MAT) which allows you to track lead sources, automate communicating and incubating these prospects, and determining when they are likely to be considered qualified leads our sales team should call. You may have a CRM used by your sales team for your current customers and leads, and you may have a separate email campaigner for prospecting and incubating leads by the marketing team. Now with MAT these can be the same integrated system so they all communicate and work together.
- **Changing the way you look at marketing** – Set yourself a goal where *half* the opportunities in your sales pipeline are traceable back to a marketing lead. Would this goal change the perception of what needs to be done in marketing? For many companies, this is a sizeable challenge, but, that goal also focuses marketing strategy.
- **Skills** - The right skills need to be in place to develop the strategy and keep it producing repeatable results within a defined budget.
- **Process Improvement** – Companies often need to mature and streamline the process of handling leads and the qualification of leads for the sales organization. For many companies, the first step of defining “what’s a lead we want our sales organization to call” (i.e., what’s a “Marketing Qualified Lead” or MQL). Defining this is critical as it

makes lead costs measurable (for a defined quality level), it informs us if there are missing functional pieces in our organization (do we need inside sales to pre-quality leads?), and it stops the complaint around lead quality.

Frankly, much of this comes from implementing a system that drives the right process improvements and enables the company to deliver more leads to sales – that’s a marketing automation system. For me, it’s about rapid iteration – getting results and using those results to fuel the next layer of business development. So much of rapid iteration also comes from having the right tools to efficiently deliver new services to the organization and, in turn, refine and direct strategy development. Not having a rich kit of capabilities is like being a carpenter without a tape measure... having the tools is synonymous with being able to deliver value. In marketing, the tools available are changing around all the time and you need to be constantly on the alert for new ones so you can increase the value that gets delivered for clients.

Working together

Let’s face it, most executives coming to us are B2B and looking to generate leads. Generally, there is a degree of frustration around marketing in that it is not generating tangible results – leads – which convert into new business.

Here are my suggestions for determining if you are a fit with our team:

- 1) **You’re a smaller company:** Been around more than 5 or so years and you want to get to the next level... however, you need to be frugal and can’t afford a full time marketing person.
- 2) **You’re time deprived:** Your business is growing and you want some dedicated focus on marketing to build a sales engine and increase lead flow. You want to better support your sales organization, but may be frustrated you don’t have enough time to do it.
- 3) **You’re specialized:** I like companies who are niche and we can help them be seen as the thought leaders in their domain.
- 4) **You’re frugal:** We like the action oriented that are not looking for a study – they are want operational impact. For these people, we step in to provide a bucket of capability, right-sized that capability for their business, and drive results.

MoreSALES takes care of getting clients to us - allowing us to focus on the details of the client’s needs. We continuously get accolades and responses from our customers and other businesses on what we’re doing.

Alex Rae, President
HomeGrown Hydroponics

Usually the starting point is simple - as - what caused someone to give me a call in SEM is most likely a lack of performance on their web-site. But, SEM is all about *LEADS*, and leads are a critical input to your business, the absence of which may be preventing you from getting to the next level or achieving your growth target.

Give me a call or talk to one of my associates and I’ll take a look at your website, then spend some time with you to look at what you want to accomplish and what’s preventing you from getting there.

I look forward to working together!

About MoreSALES

Every company needs more sales. For more than ten years, we've been helping customers across North America to grow their businesses. We specialize in manufacturing, distribution and services businesses which want to break out to the next level and draw on our team for a broad spectrum of needs. Each of the members of our senior advisory team has 20+ years of first-hand experience in a variety of Sales and/or Marketing roles.

By integrating your sales and marketing initiatives, we can help our customers to:

- understand your clients' needs;
- develop a comprehensive strategy; and,
- implement a plan that delivers results.

Contacting Mike Jennings

Talk to me at MoreSALES about building your marketing engine and working toward having half your sales pipeline delivered by marketing. There's no obligation and the first conversation always focuses on you, and what you want to accomplish in *your* business. If you want to reach out to discuss a few ideas from this white paper – fantastic – I can be reached at:

Mike Jennings:

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Phone: 519.620.8127

ⁱ Varian, Hal R.. *Online Ad Auctions*, American Economic Review, 99(2): 430-34. (2009)

ⁱⁱ Krista Bunskoek, *11 Stats: Why Your Landing Page Doesn't Convert*, Wishpond (2015)

ⁱⁱⁱ Marketing Sherpa [[I need the EXACT study tracked down]]

^{iv} Pamela Vaughan, *Why You (Yes, You) Need to Create More Landing Pages*, Hubspot (2012)

^v Mayer ND1, Tormala ZL., "Think" versus "feel" framing effects in persuasion. *Pers Soc Psychol Bull.* 2010 Apr;36(4):443-54.

^{vi} Adam Grunewald, *New research shows that 70% of mobile searchers call a business directly from search results*, Google (September, 2013)