

CHAPTER 1

The Basics

The Long and Short of It

The Findability Formula is a search marketing guide for driving prospective customers to your site and delivering a user experience that converts those prospects into customers.

The formula has been crafted around two proven fundamental principles:

1. The secret to Internet marketing success is using the *right keywords* at the *right time* so that searchers can easily find you,
That is what we call *findability*.
2. You must also appropriately *connect* with your prospects at all times by providing a *relevant result* in response to their search,

That is what we call *delivering a good user experience*.

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The second principle, though often overlooked, is as important as the first. You can't just focus on being "found" and "ranked" by the search engines because *customers*—not the search engines—are your target audience. Properly focusing on your *customers'* wants and needs gets you results in terms of sales *and* search engine rankings. That's why these two principles *working together* are the secret to Internet success.

This approach lets customers win because they are getting what they want and need; it lets search engines win because they are in the business of delivering good results to searchers; and it lets *you* win, because you've cracked the findability code and are showing up with good rankings in Internet searches on relevant pages relating to your product or service. This is the "sweet spot" where searchers are converted to *buyers*. It not only improves your bottom line by generating sales, it also improves your search engine rankings.

Improved ranking means better placement on a results page, which in turn usually means more site visitors; *further* improve your visibility, and therefore, your sales. It is a perfect circle of success breeding success. Additionally, as your paid ads begin to attract more clicks, you can actually end up paying less for them.

Let's move on to defining some of the terms we'll be using throughout the book.

Definitions

Findability

What is findability?

Wikipedia's definition of *findability* is spot-on in relation to search marketing. *Wikipedia* defines **findability** as **the quality of**

being locatable or navigable; and this is exactly what you're after in the realm of search marketing.

Sometimes people confuse *findability* with *branding*, and they're two different things. The goal of *branding* is to get something (company, name, product, service) *known*. It's about name recognition and is an effort to penetrate or saturate a given market space by getting a name, tagline, or logo out there. Branding doesn't require any action, response, or feedback from the customer. In that way, it might be considered a *passive* marketing approach.

Findability is an *active* process. It requires action on the part of the company to *make itself findable* and it requires an act on the part of the customer—first by initiating a search, and then by clicking on an ad or a search result.

Findability on the web means:

Findability

Findability refers to the quality of being locatable or navigable.

At the item level, we can evaluate to what degree a particular object is easy to discover or locate. At the system level, we can analyze how well a physical or digital environment supports navigation and retrieval.

Findability is not limited to the World Wide Web. The concept of findability is universal and timeless. However, with a distributed, heterogeneous collection of several billion items, the Web does present unique and important findability challenges.

Source: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

You know how and when to appear on the *first page* of search engine results under the right *keywords* at the right time.

This book can guide you in that process.

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Keywords

A keyword is *any word or series of words* (also known as keyphrases) entered into a search box on a search engine. This term can be confusing to members of the search marketing industry, because it's used in that field to mean either a single keyword (i.e. TV) and/or a keyword phrase (big screen TV) and/or a keyword string/search string (big screen plasma TV Denver). We call all these terms keywords because in the world of search engine marketing, **a keyword is simply any term a searcher types into a search box.** Whatever people type into a search box is called a keyword—even if it's more than one word. When searchers use a long string of words in their search, we sometimes refer to the keyword as a **keyword string** or a **long tail keyword** or a **long tail search term**, or a **search string**, and we generically refer to any search term as a keyword.

Keywords are the starting point for every prospect or customer when performing a search or making a purchase online. They are how your customers navigate the search process and how the search engines deliver results pages to searchers.

Search Engines

Search engines are the aggregators and classifiers of all the information available on the web. While at one time you might have visited a library and asked the librarian for information, today's "librarians" on the World Wide Web are the search engines. Instead of asking the librarian where you might find information on, say, Yugoslavia and having her direct you to those resources, now you type in *Yugoslavia*, and the search engines respond with links to the resources on that topic available on the web. We call the search

engines' response to your query *search results*, *search engine results*, or just plain *results*.

Search Engine Results

There are two different groups of results: *sponsored results*, which is a term for results that an advertiser paid to show up on that page (through a paid search campaign); and there are *organic results*, which means the entry is there by virtue of the relevance of its web content and the repetition of certain keywords on its web pages. Getting your web site to show up in those results—and preferably on *the first page of those results*—is the science of search engine marketing.

Search Engine Marketing

Search Engine Marketing (also called *SEM* and *search marketing*) refers to marketing activities designed to increase the visibility or *findability* of a company, product, service, activity, organization or web site in search engine results. The two common methods of search marketing are *paid search* and *search engine optimization*.

Paid Search

Paid search is sometimes referred to as **pay per click (PPC)**, or **cost per click (CPC)**. With paid search, an advertiser is paying the search engines to display its ad on a particular search result page. Each time a searcher clicks on that ad, the search engine charges the advertiser's account a certain amount for each click.

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PPC is the most common term people use when they're talking about paid search marketing. When they're running ads or groups of ads, they refer to them as **PPC campaigns**.

A PPC campaign is conducted by signing up with a search engine for a PPC advertising account. The PPC programs with the three major search engines (Google, Yahoo! and MSN) are called Google AdWords, Yahoo! Search Marketing, and Microsoft[®] adCenter. For ease of use throughout this book, we usually just call the programs Google, Yahoo! and MSN.

In contrast to *natural* or *organic* search results—in which the search engines control your placement on a given page—paid search allows a search engine marketer a fair amount of control over when and where to appear in response to a search result. However, like any advertiser in any medium, you pay for that privilege.

Natural Search

Natural search results are the results that the search engines determine are the most relevant response to a keyword that a user has typed in. People refer to these results as **natural**, **organic**, and **free** because you do not and cannot pay to be included there. Natural results and PPC ads both show up on results pages, and they appear in different locations on the page.

Search Engine Optimization

Search Engine Optimization, most commonly called **SEO**, is the way in which a search marketer attempts to influence the search engines in making their determinations about what constitutes a relevant result for a search. When people refer to SEO, they are talking about the manipulation of content to improve the chances

that the search engines will recognize a web site or web page as a pertinent result—and their tendency to include it on a result page.

The “optimization” part is a strategy that involves organizing your site a certain way. It requires that you write your content in a way that optimizes your chances of the search engine finding you and giving you a good position under the search terms where you want to be found.

No matter how carefully you optimize your site for the search engines, you do not have control over whether, where, when, and how you appear on any given results page under any given keyword. That is controlled by the search engines—not by you. No matter how well you optimize your site, where and how you appear is almost completely up to the search engines. You can repeat certain keywords in your content so that the search engines recognize that search term as a good result; however, placement still rests with the search engines and the public is not privy to the intricate algorithms by which they make their determinations.

Achieving and maintaining high rankings in organic search results is a long-term and iterative process. Because of this, SEO is considered a more strategic approach to search marketing, whereas paid search is considered tactical.

Organic and PPC Placement

What people call *free listings* or *organic results* usually appear in the main and center section on search results pages and are displayed as “Search Results.” Paid ads appear under and are called **Sponsored Links** in Google, **Sponsored Results** in Yahoo! and **Sponsored Sites** in MSN. Figure 1.1 is an example of a search results page, showing PPC ads and organic results. This page is from Google.

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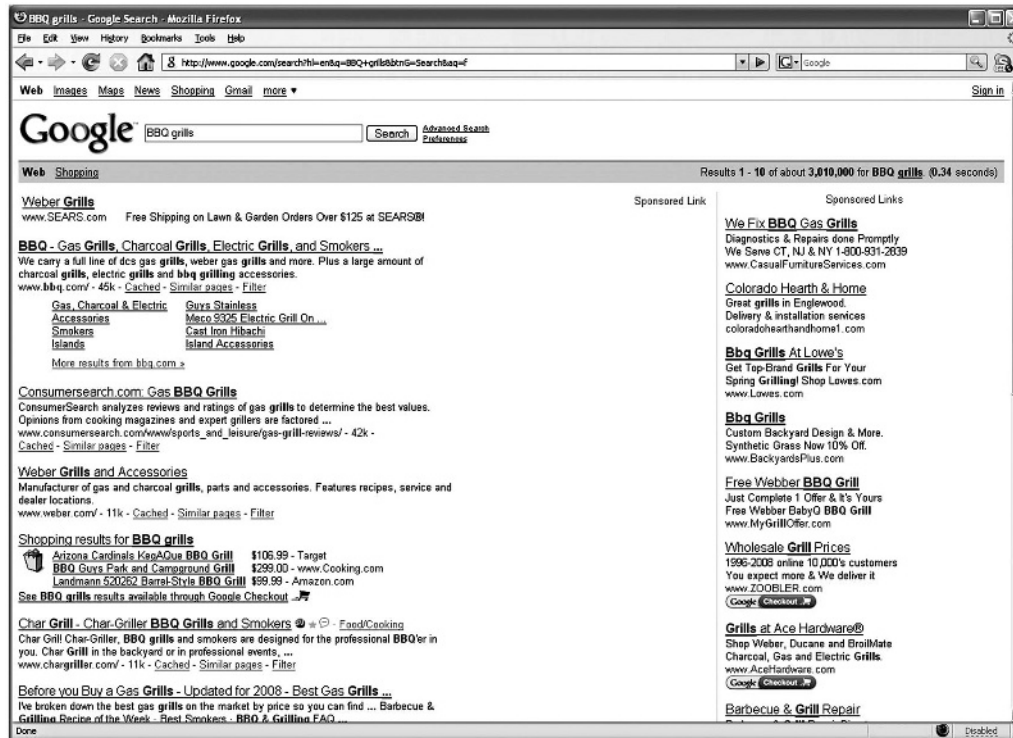


Figure 1.1 Google Search Results Page

Google screenshots © Google Inc. Used with permission.

In this example, the ads at the top and along the side are PPC or paid search ads, and the ads in the middle are natural or organic results. The location of the paid search ads can change from search engine to search engine, from keyword to keyword, and from page to page based on what the search engines determine will make them the most money.

Debunking the Free Myth

When it comes to competitive keywords, there is very little that is *free*, *organic*, or *natural* in the *free*, *organic*, *natural* listings that

show up on Page One of search engine results. To show up under “natural” results on the first page, those sites have been *deliberately* optimized in almost all cases. The only way those spots could be considered free is that Google, Yahoo! and MSN are not charging every time someone clicks on them.

If a company appears on the first page of a popular keyword, it has almost certainly invested money in getting there. It has probably hired an SEO company and a skilled SEO writer to get that position. Its web pages have likely been carefully planned and designed to position the site on that page.

There’s nothing free and little organic here. Page One placement is a result of skilled and careful manipulation. So, let’s not call those results free or organic. Let’s remove those terms from our vocabulary and refer to them instead as “SEO results”; because those listings have been deliberately optimized, probably at a cost, to get those positions.

Page One Visibility

The goal of both PPC and SEO findability is to show up on *the first page of the results*, whether we’re talking about paid search or organic search. If you end up on page 63—or even on page 3—chances are no one is going to see you. In other words, you’re not very findable.

Think about your own search habits. How often do you go past the first page when looking at results? You’re not alone. According to a study by [thinkeyetrack.com](http://thinkeyetrack.com/wordpress/?p=4) (<http://thinkeyetrack.com/wordpress/?p=4>), 87 percent of searchers studied do not bother to look beyond the first page of search results. Instead, they modify their search terms to get better results.

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Page One is prime real estate in search engine marketing. It follows the same principle as traditional real estate: it's all about *location, location, location*. As an advertiser or business owner, the power of this space can make or break your business.

So, basically, you have one page—consisting of approximately 10 organic (“natural” or unpaid) listings and from 1 to 11 paid listings—to capture a customer. That's your window of opportunity for findability. Occasionally, two pages will do the trick; certainly no more than three is feasible. Your best shot is definitely Page One. *Findability is about showing up prominently on this page under your key search terms.*

Advertiser

When we use the term **advertiser**, we are talking about the person or company conducting a paid search campaign on the Internet. You are an “advertiser” once you have signed up with one of the search engines and have activated a PPC account.

Ad

Ad is the industry term for paid search engine entries on a results page. They don't really look like ads; they look like Figure 1.2.

Free Webber **BBQ Grill**
Just Complete 1 Offer & It's Yours
Free Webber BabyQ **BBQ Grill**
www.MyGrillOffer.com

Figure 1.2 Example of a PPC Ad

Google screenshots © Google Inc. Used with permission.

Customer

We use the word “customer” to refer to anyone who performs a search in a search engine and whom you want to find your business. Learning how to properly court and “convert” your customers—through the use of keywords—is the key to search marketing success.

Conversions

The whole point of search engine marketing is for you to get new customers, not *visitors* (i.e., window shoppers). *Customers* are people who take the **desired action** on your site. Usually that means **buying** something, but not always. It could mean signing up for a newsletter, downloading a white paper, registering for a class. Whatever you want someone who visits your site to **do**, if the visitor does it, that’s called a *conversion*—you have succeeded in “converting” the visitor to a customer.

People lose sight of this all the time. They forget that conversions are the goal of marketing your business on the Internet. Not site visitors. Not “clicks.” *Conversions*. Translation: CUSTOMERS!

Search Engines—The Big Three

When we talk about search engines in this book, we are usually referring to Google, Yahoo! and MSN. These are collectively known as the Big Three search engines simply because they are the three most commonly used search engines. In Figure 1.3, you can see the relative standing of the Big Three and why we focus on them.

The bottom line is that your goal is Page One visibility under your most important keywords in all three of these search engines.

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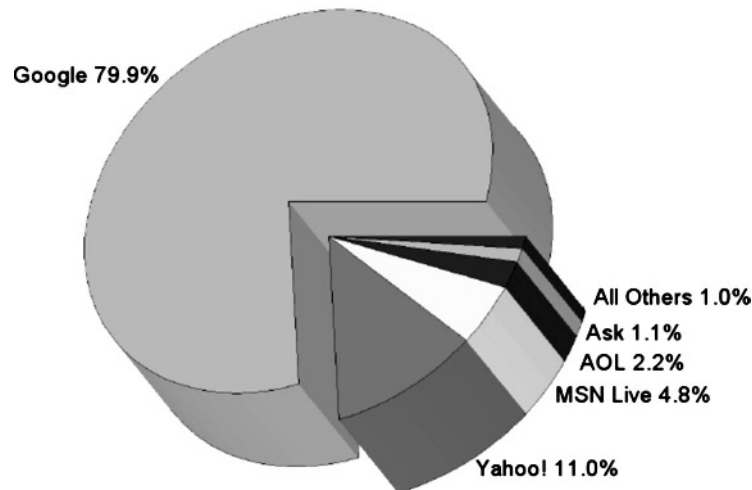


Figure 1.3 Search Engine Market Share

Source: <http://www.marketshare.com>.

Take-Aways

- The Findability Formula is a combination of using *the right keywords* so searchers can *find* you, and using them at *the right time* so searchers feel you are appropriately *connecting* with them. This delivers the optimal user experience.
- For search marketing success it is as important—if not more important—to focus on your *customers*, than to focus on the search engines.
- Focusing on customers and providing a good user experience is what converts *searchers* to *buyers*.
- The term “keyword” refers to a word or multiple words entered into a search box. *Big Screen Plasma TV* is a keyword.
- Search engine marketing (SEM) encompasses both pay per click (PPC) and search engine optimization (SEO).

- It is a myth that SEO is free. Rather, it typically requires a great deal of time or money and effort.
- Page One of search results is the only real estate that matters.
- The goal of search marketing isn't traffic, it's *conversions*—having the searcher take the desired action on your page.

Tools You Use in This Chapter

- *Wikipedia*, <http://www.wikipedia.com>

