



Search Marketing

Search Marketing **SEO**

Search Marketing **Pursuant**

Search Marketing **Timing**

Google Search

I'm Feeling Lucky

SEARCH MARKETING:

Positioning the Right Message at the Right Time

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Redefining fundraising.



SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING (SEM) AND ITS ROLE IN FUNDRAISING

As an organization, you want to be innovative and challenge the status quo. You've heard social media is the "buzz" right now, but you're struggling to figure out how to easily measure an ROI. Riding alongside social media is one of the few marketing channels that have consistently grown over the last few years, despite the economic downturn: Search Engine Marketing (SEM).

SEM can be broken down into two main categories with the same objective—gaining visibility in the search engines.

- *Paid placements* are run through an auction-based system (e.g., Google Adwords, Yahoo Search Marketing, and Microsoft adCenter) where businesses bid on keywords and only pay if a user clicks on an ad. Ads are placed in a shaded area on the page, and attract 20 to 30 percent of all clicks.
- *Organic results* are the free results listed in the search engines, and they account for 70 to 80 percent of all clicks. Results are generated by a proprietary algorithm that focuses on two key metrics: inbound links to your website, and the content structure on your website.

Search Engine Marketing is becoming a major player in marketing budgets. Experts are predicting that this \$13 billion industry will double by 2014. And despite the recession, SEM shows absolutely no signs of slowing down.

Search engines are unlike most tools on the Web. They're a resource that's driven by a unique intent. Someone wants to find something, learn something, or even buy something. And like all businesses, there is a conversion process that takes place with each user.

If you learn to position your ads strategically and in alignment with the donor conversion process, you'll find that SEM can be an incredible support—or even a stand-alone—fundraising channel.



DONOR CONVERSION PROCESS IN SEARCH

There is a vast difference in how you approach Search Engine Marketing in the nonprofit sphere compared to the for-profit arena. While it's entirely possible to convert someone on their first touch in many product-focused businesses, the likelihood of someone donating to your organization the first time they interact with your brand is slim.

Take the online shoe mogul Zappos, for example. Say you search for “puma shoes size 12.” Don't be surprised when you find Zappos in either the sponsored (paid) or organic (free) listings. The user clicks on the ad, likes the shoes, and clicks the buy button. The buyer isn't investing in Zappos psychologically—he or she is investing in a pair of shoes.

Most fundraisers realize that nonprofits have a different type of “sales cycle.” The audience has to be introduced to the brand, engage with it, and then invest. Prospects aren't buying shoes here; they're investing in YOU. There is an intricate process, and it nearly always starts with a name. Don't discount the importance of this in your search marketing campaigns. Aligning your search efforts with the searcher's place in that process is key to your success.

UNDERSTANDING THE INTENT

Nearly all search queries can be broken down into three main categories and each one provides different opportunities to fundraisers. It's important to understand where to align your conversion strategy and how it relates to your bidding strategy and ad placement.

TRANSACTIONAL

User is looking to buy a product or service.

Example query:
“airline tickets from Dallas to Chicago”

INFORMATIONAL

User is looking for information about something.

Example query:
“what is the cost to check a bag on AA?”

NAVIGATIONAL

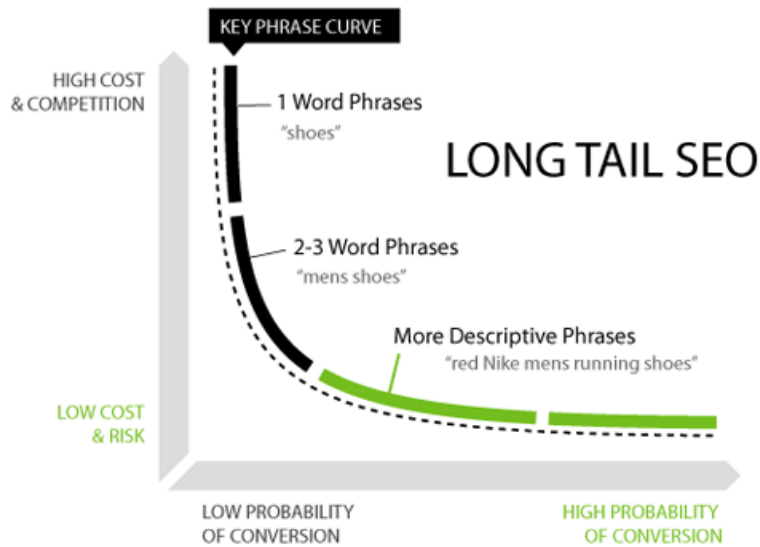
User is looking for a specific website.

Example query:
“American Airlines”



TRANSACTIONAL

For-profit organizations focus the majority of their attention on transactional intent searches. Nearly every search marketer in the for-profit arena has an unhealthy obsession with a theory conceived by Chris Anderson and described in his book *The Long Tail*. The theory suggests that while generic products have a high search volume, money is best spent on keywords with more specificity—the “Long Tail keywords.”



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Some niches like Greek, athletics, and universities have a very premium-focused fundraising strategy. If that’s the case for your organization, learn and embrace the Long Tail theory. Buy ad placements on keywords that are related to your premiums: Greek merchandise, season tickets, or university apparel.

PPC BIDDING STRATEGY:

ROI optimized cost per click = (profit margin on product) x (conversion rate for keyword)

KEYWORD STRATEGY:

Bid on Long Tail product keywords. Short Tail queries will yield high costs and a low conversion rate.

GOAL:

Donor Acquisition



INFORMATIONAL

Despite the fact that reports have indicated 70 to 80 percent of search queries have informational intent, most search marketers consider them useless.

Far too often these informational queries are dominated by news websites and blogs that make their money off of ad revenue. But it's becoming more apparent to users that the quality of this content has significantly diminished on these websites. The creators of these websites understand that success isn't measured by the quality of their content, but rather by the sheer volume of traffic that their sites receive.

As with everything, there is a value exchange that takes place with content. Either you are the product (being served with advertisements), or you're paying for the product.

When you have content that is of higher quality than other news websites and blogs in your niche, you're in a great position to acquire names. Bid on informational queries that are relevant to your niche, and then push them into an engagement campaign that leads to a resource offering in return for their name, email, and other relevant information.

PPC BIDDING STRATEGY:

ROI optimized cost per click = (value of an email address) x (conversion rate for keyword)

KEYWORD STRATEGY:

Bid on informational keywords that are relatable to the resource you're offering—not the engagement campaign.

GOAL:

Name Acquisition



NAVIGATIONAL QUERIES

For direct response fundraising, navigational queries are the most powerful of the three categories for donor acquisition. Users who are searching for your brand have a higher likelihood to donate (being already aware of your brand), and it's quite possible they've already engaged with your organization.

PPC BIDDING STRATEGY:

ROI optimized cost per click = (average gift) x (conversion rate for keyword)

Long-term optimized cost per click = (value of lifetime donor) * (conversion rate for keyword)

KEYWORD STRATEGY:

Bid on your brand name and related terms. Add the following negative keywords and other low converting keywords to your SEM campaign: *jobs, directions, and contact.*

GOAL:

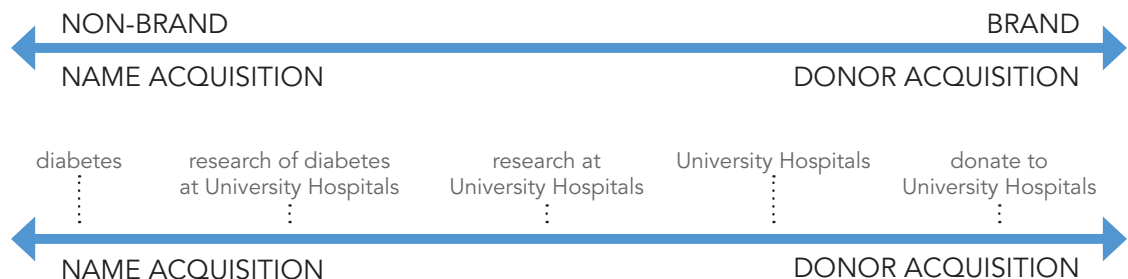
Name Acquisition + Donor Acquisition

THE BRAND METRIC

This donor conversion process has to be met with a strategic keyword and ad placement strategy. And in the words of Avinash Kaushik, "Never let your ads write checks that your website can't cash." Our strategy is simple: Keep your eye on the brand metric.

For every search campaign we've ever been involved with, data has indicated one common thread—**the closer a search is to your direct brand name, the more likely the user is to donate.** Someone who is searching for your brand is obviously aware of your organization, and it's possible they've even engaged with you in the past. These are the prospects that have the highest likelihood to donate to your organization.

However, don't undervalue these non-branded searches. They're actually an incredible opportunity to get more eyes on your organization. Looking for a way to acquire new names? This is it.





DONOR ACQUISITION CAMPAIGNS FOR SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING

Rule #1: Don't send people to your home page. Just as you shouldn't send email appeal recipients to your home page, you shouldn't send search engine traffic there either—especially when you're paying each time someone clicks on your ad. Instead, create a landing page with a compelling case for support that clearly defines what the donor's gift will do.

NAME ACQUISITION CAMPAIGNS FOR SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING

While acquiring email addresses from current donors is a great way to grab the low-hanging fruit, having a name acquisition engine that acquires people who could have an interest in your organization is essential for a healthy fundraising program.

Name acquisition via search marketing is designed to attract those who might not be familiar with your brand but share a passion for what your organization represents. This leads to potential conversion into a donor downstream.

GREAT WAYS TO ACQUIRE NAMES:

- **White Papers, Webinars, and Other Resources:**

One of the most common types of searches is for information. If you have exclusive content that a person can't find elsewhere on the Web, don't be afraid to ask for a name and email.

- **Engagement Campaigns:**

Do you have a quiz, survey, or petition that could be relevant to a large volume of people? These are not only great ways to acquire a name, but they're also an amazing transition to a direct ask.

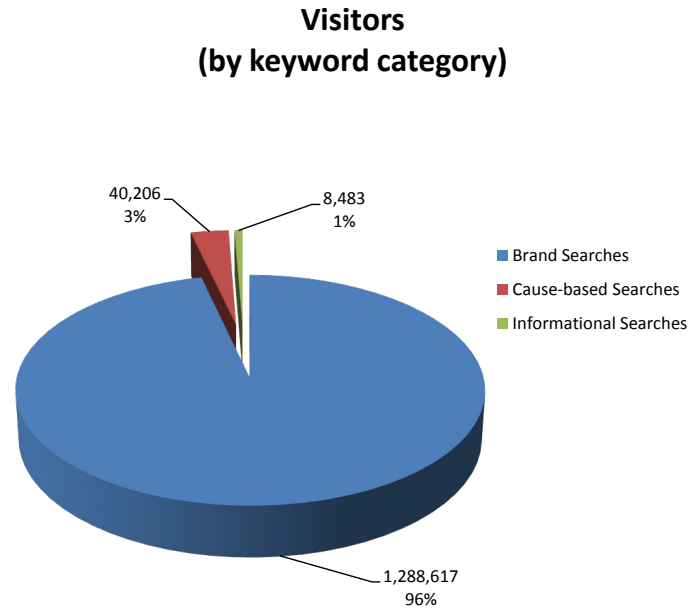
- **Contests and Sweepstakes:**

People are naturally self-centered. They want to receive something valuable at little or no cost to them. Therefore, contests are a great way to acquire names, especially when you integrate a social component into the campaign.



THE POTENTIAL

One of the many offerings in search marketing at Pursuant is an audit of your current website. In a recent ISS, Pursuant found that 96 percent of all organic visitors were driven from brand-familiar keywords to a large media organization. These branded keywords are excellent ways of acquiring donors. You might have a significant volume of brand searches coming to your website as well. Utilize them. Bid on your own brand keywords and send people to a direct response landing page. You might be surprised by how much revenue you're currently leaving on the table.



WHAT'S NEXT?

Before you start developing a line item for search, consider the brand metric. How many people are actually searching for your brand? Why are they searching? Are they looking for directions? Or do they legitimately want to donate? These are all questions that you have to ask yourself when it comes to donor acquisition via search.

Name acquisition is a must. It's essential for your program health to have an engine of new names coming through your system. With the development of resources, contests, or other campaigns, you can begin to acquire names and start the conversion process from a name to a donor.