

# 7 Advanced Steps to Effective Search Marketing

The **7 Steps** Found within This Guide Will Assist You to Achieve Your Objectives with Balance and Precision.



BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

## LEARN HOW TO:

- Generate more response volume (sales, customers, orders, leads, traffic)
- Do it more cost effectively
- Make the company look good (in other words ...build the brand)

# INTRODUCTION

If you're a professional engaged in Search Engine Marketing (let's call ourselves Smarketers), chances are you're always looking for insight and tools to help you manage your program more productively. Let's face it: Smarketers have a difficult job to do. We get a lot of questions. We juggle many priorities. We have to measure success in many diverse ways. So we've designed this guide to help you understand some of the proven principles and robust tools that are available, and the best ways to use them to continually improve your campaigns.

Smarketers responsibilities can generally be summed up with three statements:

- Generate more response volume (sales, customers, orders, leads, traffic)
- Do it more cost effectively
- Make the company look good (in other words ...build the brand)

Of course, you typically have a wide range of data sources to help you do your job, from search engine campaign data and internal reports to third-party providers or analytical tools. The tricky part is knowing how to implement that data into actions. This guide is designed to help you do just that. It will provide you with an overview of best practices and proven steps for success. It's broken down into seven logical steps. Follow these steps, and you just may see some impressive results to call your own.

## The seven steps are:

1. Refine Keyword Bids
2. Target Ideal Positions
3. Optimize Ad Copy
4. Select the Right Keywords
5. Use Specialized Matching Options
6. Leverage Contextual Campaigns
7. Monitor Against Click Fraud

## STEP 1. REFINE KEYWORD BIDS

The most obvious variable in paid search campaigns—keyword bids—is often the most neglected, or at least not leveraged to its full potential. Maximum bids are often set at a general, estimated level, and then largely forgotten. To be fair, many Smarketers do return to their campaigns regularly to adjust bids, but they often lack the precise knowledge to know exactly how their volume and efficiency will be effected at different bid levels. The most successful Smarketers are continually testing multiple bids and monitoring their effects. Armed with this information you can get a read on the ideal bids, search engines, campaigns, groups, or keyword levels.

Volume is the easiest metric to monitor, particularly since - each of the engines have readily-accessible reports on clicks. Makes sense, that's how they make their money! Most Smarketers also have internal reports that can be compared to search engine-reported clicks. The granularity of visibility (paid vs. natural, google vs. yahoo, campaign A vs.

B, keyword search vs. contextual, unique visitors vs. total clicks, etc.) determines the level at which business decisions can be made.

To determine efficiency, metrics must be established to track desired behavior or actions. This can be addressed with internal or third-party analytics. Because conversions are further down the acquisition funnel than clicks, the numbers are smaller, and more time is needed to generate the level of data necessary for statistical significance. The critical exercise is to combine the cost data from the search engine with the conversion data from analytics tool to monitor the efficiency at the different bid levels.

This exercise can take place at any level of keyword hierarchy, but you should keep in mind that as the keyword volume decreases, the time it takes to see the impact increases. Bid automation tools can expedite this process, but handing the reigns over to a robot requires good data integrity and an especially detailed definition of criteria and resulting actions.

## NET TAKEAWAY: ←

If your most important goal is to maximize volume, you'll want to maintain a cost per acquisition (or other efficiency metric) at a certain level. If your current maximum bid is \$2.00, you could test bids of \$2.10, \$2.50, \$3.00, and \$5.00. Watch your traffic at each of the given levels, and determine where there is the most change. If there is a significant traffic boost at \$3 and virtually no incremental lift at \$5, your next round of bid should start with \$3 and work downward. But if you still see lift at \$5, your next test should start at \$5 and work upward. Once you have a feel for the traffic breaks, set your bids there long enough to get a read on efficiency.

## Omniture SearchCenter Integration:

A bid management solution such as Omniture SearchCenter allows you to automate this function. You can establish a business rule that maximizes volume with a maximum CPC of \$5.00, for example, and SearchCenter will periodically check the keyword price to see if it needs to be adjusted. You can also set an efficiency threshold, based on the deep metrics that are already being measured in SiteCatalyst. The value of the automation is that the tool will drive the bid to the target instead of you, and you'll have more time to manage your keyword program more efficiently.

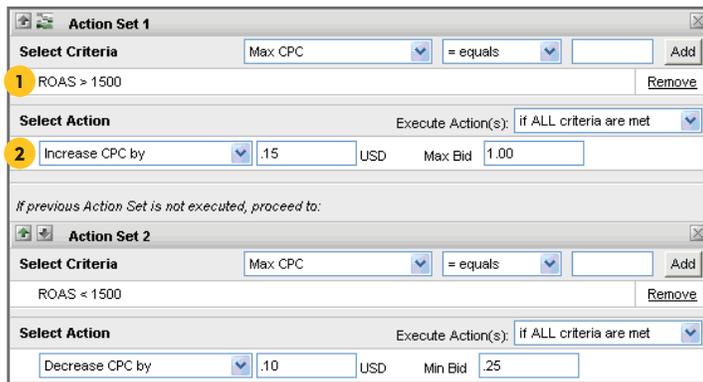


FIGURE 1: Rules can be automated based upon performance

## STEP 2. TARGET IDEAL POSITIONS

Because of its highly visible nature, managing based on position, or the ranking of a keyword's listing on a search engine results page (SERP), has traditionally been a popular technique. Position has a dramatic effect on traffic, since viewership declines as the listing continues down the page.

Position importance varies slightly from one search engine to another. Google "rolls-up" listings with high Ad Rank from the right hand column of the page to the top of the main list. MSN SERPs do something similar, and Yahoo! duplicates some ads at the bottom of the natural listings. Listings in these positions can have dramatically higher click through rates than if they were in the standard ad space, and targeting them can impact campaign performance significantly. **Watch the efficiency at the higher traffic levels** to ensure it remains in acceptable ranges.

By viewing the other search listings on your results pages, you'll get a good idea of what messages a user has already been exposed to, and can position your offer accordingly. And it doesn't just impact your activity with your competitor's listings; you can also make decisions about how to interact with your own natural listings, and choose how to synergize or rely on only paid or only natural listings.

**NET TAKEAWAY:** ←

The desire to enhance your brand means you want to be #1 on several specific keywords. Find the bids that will get you there, but don't forget to look at the other listings. Reinforce what your natural listings might not say.

**SEARCHCENTER INTEGRATION:**

SearchCenter had recently provided a feature that allows the position that the ad is displayed to be affected based upon the amount of CPC applied to the keyword. It makes a change based upon the distance from the target that you selected. So in an automated fashion the system can seek a particular performance target such as position 1 or 2 and adjust the CPC to arrive at that position.

Keyword Cost	ROAS	Search Avg. Position
\$3,885.12	1,353%	3.0
\$1,398.71	1,967%	2.5
\$1,948.96	1,386%	3.4
\$2,909.69	911%	1.7

**FIGURE 2:** Bids can be reviewed based upon position

If you want to view the performance, you would scan through the search engines to see which keywords are ranking as you've anticipated, and then make changes to test alternatives. You can download the performance data to a spreadsheet and model the performance or sort the keywords to suit your needs. Using an integrated Web analytics product can be very helpful in that it provides powerful viewing tools to see good and poor performing keywords.

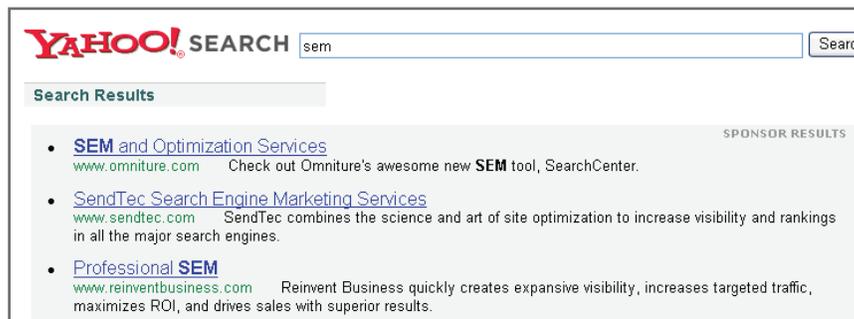
You can save a lot of time by automating and using bidding rules. Omniture SearchCenter provides a new feature called Performance Targeting which simplifies the "goal" that a marketer seeks whether it is position-based or CPC based performance. A simple rule would check the performance of a keyword. If it does not meet a particular requirement, it could be disabled. If the keyword is significantly distant from the target, it may require a sizeable allotment of CPC change. If the keyword is close to the target, only a small variance in CPC will be required to get to the optimal position. The idea is to **target a level of performance and direct CPC changes where it is needed.**

**STEP 3. OPTIMIZE AD COPY**

Ad Copy is one of the most flexible tools available to help you reach your goals. It dramatically influences volume, conversion, and branding—the Smarketers triple threat. Because of the very small textual area available to work with, it forces you to be clear on your goals.

The goal of an ad is to assist a searcher, and help him find an answer or a solution to a specific problem. For a marketer focusing on traffic maximization, it's all about the hook—the one thing that will draw searchers in immediately. A free offer is often an easy way to do this. But promising a quick fix also works well. A leading question that will draw searchers onto the next page can help keep searchers engaged. Look at the competition, and figure out what they aren't doing. **Look for opportunities to distinguish yourself** or fill a gap. All of these questions will help you write copy that pulls. The added bonus is that on Google, you can actually drive down your CPC by improving CTR because it raises your Quality Score.

You can tell a lot about a website by the tone of the ad copy. Or at the very least, searchers are going to try. But this is more than just a chance to flash your tagline (e.g., WalMart—Always low prices). Are you the direct source, or are you a distribution partner that adds value (e.g., Nike). Maybe there are key terms you'd like to associate yourself with- (e.g., SES and Omniture). Remember, since you only pay if they click, window shopping is free to you!



No discussion of ad copy can be complete without at least a mention of dynamic copy. This feature is a lifesaver for larger keyword lists because it not only allows you to be more relevant on a broad list of keywords, it also seems to have a significant role in improving Quality Score (higher rankings with lower bids). Just be careful and ensure that your copy always makes sense with your keywords - using exact match here is a good idea.

**NET TAKEAWAY:** ←

The need to demonstrate efficiency means you always need to focus on end results and ROI. Ad copy is the perfect place to prepare, self-select, or qualify your traffic. If your target is businesses as opposed to individuals, state that upfront in your copy. If you are driving online sales, you might mention that a credit card is required. Eliminate words in your copy that drive high clicks but attract the wrong kind of visitor, and you'll begin to see a decrease in your costs relative to your sales.

**Omniture SearchCenter Integration:**

Determine efficiency of Ad Copy by Product, Revenue, and Keyword based upon ROAS or CPA.

As a Smarketer becomes familiar with the performance of the ad copy, he or she can make changes and test new options. This is an iterative process. Knowing the performance of the ad is one issue, measuring that performance is something else.

Reporting Date: July 2006		
Text Ad by Keyword	ROAS	Impressions
HP Products Find and purchase all kinds of HP products.	2,549%	585,068
1. pda hp ipaq	4,306%	4,752
2. hp ipaq pda	3,656%	119,529
3. hp pda	2,621%	92,412
4. hewlett packard pda	1,476%	201,500
5. pda hp	1,468%	166,875

**FIGURE 3:** TextAd performance can be viewed by keyword

Because Omniture SearchCenter is tightly integrated with a leading Web analytics product, Omniture SiteCatalyst, it allows you to compare performance of one attribute based on another attribute. You can run a Text Ad report and then “break it down” by keyword to see which ones were the most productive for that ad. Conversely, you can run a Keyword report and then “break it down” by Text Ad to see which Text Ads were the most productive for that Keyword. If your company has a shopping cart, you can show which were the most popular products that were purchased (or not) from that ad. This procedure can be performed for all information captured by the Web analytics system. Products, Revenue, and Costs can be analyzed using this methodology.

Sometimes you can’t anticipate the impact that a keyword will have on your products. But Omniture SearchCenter can tell you which keywords generated the sale. Some Smarketers define this as either the first clicked keyword, the last clicked keyword, or a combination of keywords.

Details			
Landing Page by Products		Revenue	Cost of Goods
1.	<a href="http://www.electronicplus.com/">http://www.electronicplus.com/</a>	\$384,782	143,126
1.	Apple Power Mac G4 933	\$98,896	31,687
2.	Apple PowerBook G4 550	\$41,398	29,815
3.	Sony VAIO GRX570 Notebook	\$22,499	13,949
4.	Sony VAIO GRX550 Notebook	\$15,399	7,828
5.	Other	\$206,589	59,847
2.	<a href="http://www.electronicplus.com/pcs">http://www.electronicplus.com/pcs</a>	\$322,126	120,694
1.	Apple Power Mac G4 933	\$62,098	19,896
2.	Apple PowerBook G4 550	\$22,999	16,564
3.	Sony VAIO GRX550 Notebook	\$21,999	11,183
4.	Apple PowerBook G4 667	\$15,000	12,261
5.	Other	\$200,031	60,790

FIGURE 4: Combine Natural Keywords with Paid-Search Keywords

#### STEP 4. SELECT THE RIGHT KEYWORDS

Smarketers must have a broad set of keywords that will help drive customers to their Web site. If the inventory is too small with limited search popularity, it won’t generate a significant presence. If it’s too large, the keywords will lose their relevance. **The best mix of keywords is a combination of awareness keywords and purchase-ready keywords. But what is the best mix?**

Start by asking yourself what keyword you would use if you were looking for your product or service. But, since you have an inherent bias, expand your research and ask other people as well. As those people that are part of your target audience—they’ll have the most insight and provide the best responses.

Then, scour the content of your own Web site, and that of your competitors. Look at offline content as well. What do they all have in common? What keywords appear most frequently? What are the most obvious ones? What are the “opportunistic” ones?

Still stumped? Try keyword suggestion tools (such as found at Yahoo! and Google), search engine tools, third parties compilers, or even a good old-fashioned thesaurus for ideas. The key is to explore all of your options, and continue to evolve your list.

#### NET TAKEAWAY: ←

If your goal is to increase visibility, make sure you’ve got the right keywords. Use a variety of sources to find the most relevant keywords, including competitive websites, search engine tools, and offline content. Query your Web analytics product and determine which keywords your customers are currently using to get to your Web site. Omniture SearchCenter can assist in the generation of keywords. A simple report in SiteCatalyst can help you to review the natural keywords that were used to drive customers to your web site. The keywords can be reviewed as candidates to extend your paid-search campaign. Many studies have concluded that a well-executed paid-search campaign combined with good SEO rankings can significantly increase the chances of your ad being clicked.

Natural Search Keywords	Revenue	Keyword	Revenue
computers	\$64,933	Content Network	\$61,930
electronics	\$59,194	hp ipaq pda	\$30,970
the sims vacation	\$12,818	find pda	\$28,196
viewsonic computer monitors	\$10,784	apple computer	\$27,973
samsung computer monitors	\$10,589	pda organizers	\$27,490
computer networking	\$10,321	pda keyboards	\$26,817
sony pdas	\$10,084	computer printers	\$26,154
norton systemworks	\$9,439	sony computer	\$26,106
digital cameras	\$8,849	pda gps	\$25,694

✓  
CANDIDATE  
KEYWORDS FOR  
PAID SEARCH

FIGURE 5: Combine Natural Keywords with Paid-Search Keywords

#### STEP 5. USE SPECIALIZED MATCHING OPTIONS

Depending on the search engine, keywords can be matched in several ways. It’s important to have a basic understanding of the most common ones, and how you can use them to your advantage.

Google keywords may be matched in four primary ways: broad, phrase, exact, and negative. Google offers an informative tutorial, but it boils down to this:

1. Broad matching casts the widest net
2. Phrase matching requires a query that includes the exact phrase
3. Exact matching requires that a query match exactly
4. Negative matching excludes undesired keywords from broad/phrase matches

A few other Google matching terms you should know:

- Expanded match is Google’s automatic inclusion of synonyms, misspellings, and plurals, and applies only to broad matched keywords.
- Embedded matching is a combination of negative matching with an exact or phrase keyword against a broad-matched keyword. This basically allows you to buy all permutations of a keyword except that keyword.

Google’s system now allows an advertiser to traffic broad, phrase, and exact matches individually. This facilitates complex bidding, creative application, and tracking.

Yahoo has a matching system that is somewhat similar, but has a few significant differences:

- Standard matching (similar to exact matching from Google) allows just one bid for each keyword.
- Standard (exact) matches are always displayed first on the results page. This means that though you may choose to have a less sophisticated campaign for ease of management, a competitor with a more comprehensive list of standard matches may have the advantage.

#### NET TAKEAWAY: ←

If you notice that some of your broad-matched words are not generating the returns that you need, go back to the basics. By using the search engine’s keyword suggestion tools and a little common sense, you may be able to find permutations that might be irrelevant. Add those keywords as negative matches, and see how that impact results.

### Omniture SearchCenter Integration:

Omniture SearchCenter uses the same matching criteria found in each of the engines, so there's nothing new to consider. However, as with other strategies, the closed-loop reporting makes getting the match-type performance data much faster and smoother. Wouldn't it be nice if you had direct access to all of your search engine data within one source? With Omniture SearchCenter, you do.

### STEP 6. LEVERAGE CONTEXTUAL CAMPAIGNS

The keyword foundation which search engines are built on extends naturally to non-search advertising opportunities, such as Google "AdSense" and other contextual marketing platforms. While there are many similarities, it is important for Smarketers to remember that contextual advertising touches consumers in a very different mental state. Instead of being in a results-oriented "find it" mentality, they are in a more passive, browsing mode. Instead of being the primary focus, contextual ads are at best incidental, and compete with a potentially diverse gamut of equally relevant keywords.

Fortunately, the industry has now evolved to the point that contextual campaigns can be managed independently of search campaigns. This allows for unique bidding, budgeting, creative treatment, and even unique tracking. Smarketers can now deal with the generally lower click through rates and customize user experiences to motivate a more passive, browsing audience. Many companies find great success trafficking their contextual programs independent from search, and also organizing them differently.

An important and powerful detail to note is that at times you may not want your ads to appear on specific sites that may be "relevant" from a technical perspective. You may find sites, for example, that are negative towards your product and damaging to your brand. In Google AdSense you could choose to exclude any domain from delivering your ads. On the other end of the spectrum, there may be specific sites that you want to target. Google calls this "site-targeting" and is currently testing it with some advertisers on a CPM basis.

#### NET TAKEAWAY: ⬅️

When you need to immediately increase sales from your Web site, start by mirroring your standard search accounts as contextual accounts. Don't be surprised to see different kinds of CPC's than what you are used to. Remember that you're not just competing with other people bidding on the same keywords, but with completely different keywords that may be on the same pages.

### Omniture SearchCenter Integration

Omniture SearchCenter can tell you how productive your content network is performing. A separate line item summarizes all content network keyword traffic.

Details		
Keyword	Revenue	Keyword Cost
Content Network	\$52,583	\$3,885.12
apple computer	\$27,508	\$1,398.71
pda organizers	\$27,011	\$1,948.96
hp ipaq pda	\$26,521	\$2,909.69

FIGURE 6: Content Network Impact on Campaigns

### STEP 7. MONITOR AGAINST CLICK FRAUD

Click fraud is on the rise, and now has several different meanings and applications. Click fraud is defined as inappropriate clicking of ads to drive up the cost to the marketer. Another interesting term is traffic quality which is defined as abnormal qualified traffic. This may or may not be illegal, dishonest, or even undesirable. The point is that you want to understand aberrations in your metrics and then find and remedy suspicious activity. Problems and issues to watch for:

- Larger than normal increases in impressions
- Larger than normal increases in clicks
- Significant discrepancies between clicks as reported by search engines versus other systems
- Significant drop in conversion rates
- Dramatic increases in costs, either rate or volume, without corresponding explanations.

At the first sign of problems, you should take corrective measures on your own by adjusting your campaign settings. The search engines are generally very responsive and anxious to ensure the quality of their control systems, and they should be immediately informed of any potential abuse. Any supporting data that you can supply them, particularly log files, is likely to bolster your cause and facilitate a timely resolution.

#### NET TAKEAWAY: ⬅️

If your efficiency goals aren't being met because volume has increased by 50% while sales have remained flat, take action. Isolate the keywords that are driving the increases, compare them across search engines to **see whether the increases might be legitimate**. Click spam traffic can be easily diagnosed from a wide variety of information including IP address, activity time stamping, visit frequencies and regional information. This information is common within a Web analytics solution.

### Omniture SearchCenter Integration:

Many of these issues are difficult to identify and verify. It requires time and attention to determine that a problem exists, and to quantify the extent of the problem. Omniture SearchCenter contains many features that display performance variances for all of the keywords. You define a threshold for performance and if it goes above or below this mark, the report colors it in red and green. You can then download information from Omniture SiteCatalyst to get a detailed look at the problem. Many times you can find issues by running a report that lists the top 10 visitors, and how many times they came to the site by keyword to see if someone is misusing the advertisement.

Details							
Search Engine by Keyword	20 Jun. 2006 - 26 Jun. 2006 CTR	13 Jun. 2006 - 19 Jun. 2006 CTR	Change	20 Jun. 2006 - 26 Jun. 2006 Impressions	13 Jun. 2006 - 19 Jun. 2006 Impressions	Change	
1. Google	9.99%	10.36%		5,271,206	6,292,585		
1. laptop sony	11.45%	11.45%	0.00%	5,448	7,718	2,270	
2. toshiba laptop computers	12.12%	12.12%	0.00%	11,286	14,355	3,069	
3. pda gps	11.30%	11.54%	0.24%	72,633	90,786	18,153	
4. computer accessories	10.29%	10.17%	-0.11%	54,873	81,676	26,803	
5. toshiba satellite laptop	9.80%	9.80%	0.00%	1,818	4,545	2,727	
6. gateway laptop	12.12%	12.12%	0.00%	4,224	4,488	264	
7. computer equipment	12.60%	11.93%	-0.67%	24,265	32,041	7,776	

FIGURE 7: TrueClick reports can be monitored and assessed

## CONCLUSION

Today's Smarketers are faced with more issues, but also more opportunities than ever. And with new and innovative tools at your disposal, you can be better equipped than ever to meet the challenges head on and increase your success. And no matter what type of company, what your goals are, or how sophisticated your Search Engine Marketing program, you'll benefit from regularly reassessing each strategy area. In fact, the most sophisticated Smarketers know the secret of non-diminishing returns. Learn more on your second round of optimization than your first, more on the third round than the second, etc. and you'll be in a position to constantly optimize. Certainly, you will come away from this with an understanding of the tremendous flexibility of paid search engine marketing as a tool to meet your marketing objectives. Happy Smarketing! ■

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