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marketing

Business-to-Business Search Engine Marketing Guide

April 2006

Introduction

Recent research provides compelling data on how B2B buyers use search engines extensively.

The studies also indicate that B2B marketers have been slow to embrace search marketing activities.

This gap between buyer behavior and marketing priorities presents an opportunity.

B2B marketers engaging in search engine marketing efforts are able to support their brands online, reach highly-qualified prospects, generate leads, and ultimately... drive offline transactions.

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B2B Buyers DO Use Search Engines

First Online Place that US B2B Internet Users Would Look to Find Out More about a Product or Service, 2004 (as a % of respondents)

Search engine	63.9%
Known manufacturer of the product	18.9%
Portal for the industry	6.6%
Independent consumer review site	5.3%
E-Commerce site that sells the product	3.1%
Other	2.2%

Search engines are the #1 way B2B buyers find information online.

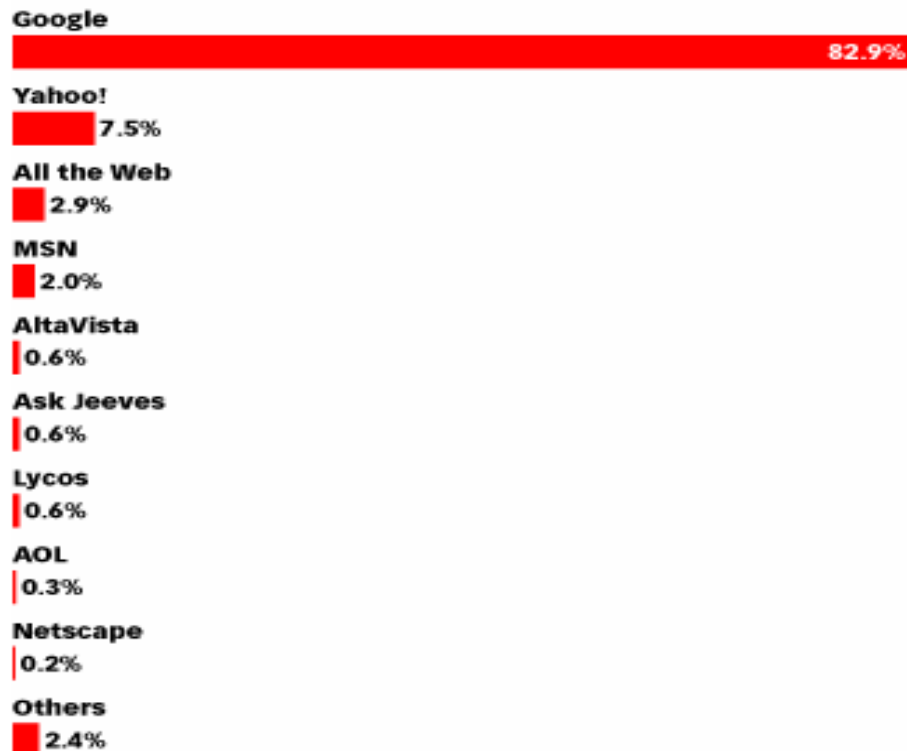
Note: n=1,500

Source: Enquiro, MarketingSherpa, October 2004



Which Engines Do B2B Buyers Prefer?

Preferred Search Engine among US B2B Internet Users, 2004 (as a % of respondents)



Note: n=1,500
Source: Enquiro, MarketingSherpa, October 2004

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Vertical Search Engines Are Growing

B2B Industry Search Engines:

- ThomasNet.com (industrial)
- KnowledgeStorm (business technology)
- Business.com (general business)
- BitPipe & IT.com (information technology)
- Scirus (science)

General search engines such as Yahoo and Google are also developing vertical capabilities.

Thomas Publishing announced that next year, it will discontinue the print version of the Thomas Register and deliver the data solely on the internet. (June 2005)



When Do Buyers Use Search Engines?

When during Buying Cycle US B2B Internet Users Use a Search Engine, 2004 (as a % of respondents)

Very early in research (little knowledge of product or service)

46.2%

Later in research phase (some idea but wanted comparisons)

30.2%

Knew exactly (wanted to find best place to buy)

12.3%

Knew exactly (wanted reviews/articles)

11.3%

Note: n=1,500

Source: Enquiro, MarketingSherpa, October 2004

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This reflects the prolonged B2B buying process.

41.5% of respondents said they *start* using a search engine anywhere from two to 12 months in advance of purchase.

Source: Enquiro, MarketingSherpa survey (October 2004)



What Are B2B Buyers Looking For?

- 68%** want to find **links to supplier websites**
- 68%** want to find **product catalogs**
- 55%** want a **consistent format for supplier information**
- 51%** want the ability to **search locally**
- 50%** want to **search by manufacturer, distributor, service company.**

Source: Industrial buyer surveys (2004)



Buyers Use BOTH Natural & Paid Listings

- **45%** of B2B buyers prefer organic listings but will respond to sponsored links.
- **22%** of respondents click on the first relevant listing, regardless of its type.

Source: Enquiro, MarketingSherpa survey (October 2004)



Search Marketing Impacts Offline Results

Types of Searches Conducted

65%	Information, reference, research-oriented
35%	Commercial, commerce-oriented

"Search cannot be thought of as solely a direct response marketing tool, especially in highly considered product categories where search activity can precede a purchase by as much as 60 to 120 days."

- James Lamberti, VP comScore Networks

Search engines drive highly qualified prospects to websites.

Significant benefit is derived from brand building, market positioning, online interactions, lead generation, and ultimately... offline transactions.



Search Ads. More Effective Than Trade Pubs

- B2B buyers use search engines more often than traditional media.
- Search ads are more effective than trade ads throughout the entire buying cycle:
 - Research phase: Search **used 30% more often** than trade publications.
 - Consideration phase: Search **used 21% more often** than print pubs.
 - Purchase phase: Search **used 62% more often** than traditional media.

Source: Google-Millward Brown study, 2005

B2B Marketers - Slow to Embrace Search

- **46%** of BtoB Magazine's top 100 advertisers "showed only nominal search engine optimization" efforts or ignored it all together.
- Not surprisingly, of these top advertiser websites, with little or no optimization, only **5%** appear in the first 100 listings.
- For one B2B segment – manufacturing – only **15%** of marketers run paid search advertising campaigns.
- **50%** of B2B marketers say they *plan to start* search marketing programs sometime during 2005 or early 2006.

Source: Research study by Oneupweb and SVM E-Business Solutions (2004 / 2005)

Summary of Findings

- **B2B buyers DO use search engines extensively.**
 - Search engines are the #1 way B2B buyers find information online.
 - Buyers use search engines more than traditional media throughout the entire buying cycle.
 - Buyers prefer natural listings, but also respond to paid ads if relevant.

Summary of Findings (cont.)

- **B2B marketers are just beginning to embrace online marketing**
 - Top B2B advertisers are not very visible on search engines because they are not engaging in optimization or advertising.
 - Marketers are still focusing on traditional channels such as trade shows and trade publications.
 - Budgets are starting to shift to internet-based endeavors in general, and search engine marketing in particular.

Recommendations for Marketers

- **Savvy B2B marketers should capitalize on the opportunity gap:**
 - Follow buyers' behavior. Shift marketing funds online.
- **Use search marketing to:**
 - Build a brand
 - Differentiate and uniquely position your company
 - Help prospects research and compare products/services
 - Move people through the buying cycle
 - Generate leads

How We Can Help

1. Contact **SMARTSEARCH** marketing
2. Request your **Visibility Scorecard**™.
 - Find out how many searches are conducted every month that are directly related to your business.
 - See how visible you are when people search.
 - Discover how your competitors are positioned on search engines.
3. Request a comprehensive, customized search engine marketing proposal for your business.

Why SmartSearch Marketing?

1. We have a successful track record serving B2B clients.
2. We work with companies in many sectors, including: manufacturing, high-tech, healthcare, and professional services.
3. We understand the unique marketing challenges B2B companies face:
 - Complex, high-consideration products and services.
 - Longer sales cycles.
 - Generating qualified leads that ultimately convert to sales.
 - Measuring multiple website actions (conversions) that ultimately lead to offline purchase.



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