

SEO Evolution

Search Engine Optimization Is All About Your Content Now

– Jeff Kenyon, Vice President, Media II, Inc.

“In 2010 we witnessed the most profound evolution the marketing world has seen in fifty years or more. The pace of change is not going to lessen.”

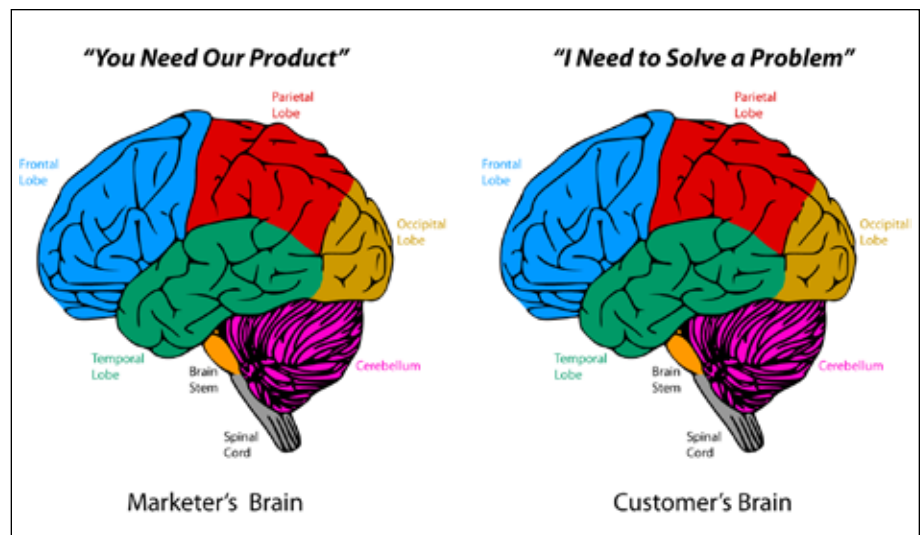
– Forrester Research

Just when you thought you were beginning to figure out the html coding, metatags and keywords necessary to optimize your website, the rules have changed. It’s no longer good enough to have good coding on your website to get ranked highly by Google and the other search engines. It’s all about the content now.

The Shift from Outbound Marketing to Inbound Marketing

Traditional outbound marketing includes advertising, direct mail and posting your data sheets on your website – shouting out to the world that you have the best product and here’s why. Guess what? No one’s listening anymore. Customers have learned how to block out advertisements, email blasts, cold calls and most outbound marketing activities. Because, the internet has enabled them to easily find a solution to their problem when they actually need the information. Forrester research shows that 90% of purchasing decisions begin online. Ford reported that 84% of new car sales were the result of customers doing online research before they entered the showroom.

Your best prospects, those who are actively engaged in a purchase decision, are doing their homework online and looking for a solution before you even know they are interested in your products. Are you being found?



Search Engine Optimization

SEO is more important than ever because if your website isn’t optimized, Google won’t rank you very highly, and your customers won’t find you. The fact is, the search engines have done a good job of evaluating websites for content-rich information and the sites with the most relevant content rank highest. Google looks for websites that have lots of fresh content, that are updated regularly, and have high keyword density for the search terms used. Inbound links have become an important ranking factor and the new social media sites that have discussion boards and high activity levels rank the highest for inbound links.

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Think about the customer who's looking for a solution to their problem. Sure, they'll go to several of the major websites that show up on the Google search results page, but they're also going to social media sites that offer peer-reviewed information about the problem they are trying to solve. Technical white papers, application notes, design guides, eBooks, tutorials, case studies, webinars, blogs and more are good examples of seemingly independent information that is highly respected. Why trust the marketers when they can get comments, feedback and referrals directly from their peers who may have already experienced similar situations. When an objective discussion board or technical information site links through to your site, that referral carries a lot of credibility with the search engines and your customers.

Content is King

Today's buyers need content that makes them smarter and more knowledgeable than their competitors. Businesses that provide this kind of content will win. If you have good resourceful, educational information on your website (not the promotional kind), then your best prospects will network and refer that information to others. The key to success is to write content that provides valuable information they can use to solve their immediate problem. You want to become a trusted partner for them, and the more valuable your information is, the more trusted you become.

Your site will not be found online without valuable content, and you will not rise to the top of the search without people linking to your content because it is so valuable. Focusing your content on what the customer wants is more important than writing about what you have to sell. Remember, your customers are looking to solve a problem. Talk WITH your customers, not AT your customers.

Getting Found

So you've got great content – your marketing job isn't done yet. Best practices for SEO and content development are only as good as your ability to make that information available to prospects as they search for a solution. PR news releases are a great way to disseminate information because so many good electronic news sources will provide your site with inbound links from reliable sources. The release itself becomes valuable content for your site, and because your news is posted on so many highly-trafficked sites, it usually ranks high on Google.

News releases used to be written for the press, but today they perform much better as a tool to help customers find your information on the Internet. We also encourage you to participate in professional discussion groups and social media networks to listen to your customers and share in their experience with your company.

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Create an Enewsletter with good meaty content and distribute it to your database of customers and prospects on a monthly or quarterly basis. If you have valuable information that helps them improve their job, they will share that with their peers.

Start a Pay-per-Click advertising program with Google to make sure your website is seen for some of the most strategically important search phrases. If you can't beat your competition with organic search engine rankings, then you can write very targeted ads that have a high click-through percentage for prospects who are searching for your specific product. Manage these programs for cost-effectiveness by selecting the time of day, days of the week, and geographic regions your ad message appears. It's cost-effective, online targeted marketing and when done right, it really works well.

Summary

In 2011 you will need to have the coding, the content, and the social networking to get full optimization from your website. With this, you will have an unprecedented opportunity to communicate directly with your customers. Today's marketers can and should be publishers of useful, relevant information. Inbound Content Marketing has become an important brand-building strategy. We can help.

About the Author

Jeff Kenyon has held senior marketing communications management positions for several Fortune 1000 companies and marketing communications agencies over his 25-year career. He is skilled in brand development, management and optimization, as well as marketing strategy development and deployment. He has led the industry in capitalizing on new Internet advancements to increase selling opportunities for clients. He is vice president of Media II, Inc., a business-to-business marketing communications company that offers advertising, public relations and Internet marketing support for a wide range of manufacturing and service companies.



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