

Search marketing for small business

Search engines are one of the primary ways people discover services, businesses, organisations, and activities.

Glossary - The first section is a customised glossary of key terms. These are essential to understand, so review them carefully.

Basic search marketing process - The second section outlines a practical process for using search marketing to achieve results without needing a budget. While search marketing can get quite complex, I've focused on the core concepts and tasks that will make the biggest impact.

Essential glossary

Search marketing

- The practice of increasing leads and sales generated through search engines

SERP - Search Engine Results Page

- The page displayed by a search engine after a user does a search
- Google and other search engines will present different results based on the information it has collected on you from your search and browser history
 - Use a 'private' or 'Incognito' browser window to remove your bias on your search when auditing the search results

Search snippet

- The brief summary or preview of a webpage shown on the SERP, usually including the page title, URL, and short description.

SEO - Search Engine Optimisation

- Optimising your website structure and content to increase your rank on the SERP and also control how your Search snippets displays
- Commonly used to refer to "Search Marketing" which includes more

Organic search ranking

- The position your website appears in the unpaid SERP (e.g., position #3 on page 1)
- Takes time to build and is often viewed as more trustworthy than paid ads

Paid search ranking

- You pay to list your website high on SERP
- Good short-term strategy while building organic ranking
- Managed on Google via **Google Ads** (formerly known as Google Adwords)
 - You place a bid to be displayed on a keyword SERP
 - You are charged when a person clicks on your link - **pay-per-click (PPC)**
 - This is an auction so you will be charged at the highest rate the market is willing to pay for that keyword at that time.

Local SEO

- Targeting location-based searches to reach people in your town or surrounding area.
- Setting up your **Google Business Profile** is a priority: business.google.com

Target search terms

- The specific words or phrases you want your website to rank highly for in the organic SERP and Adwords.
- Often referred to as **keywords**, the term 'search terms' is more accurate as it encompasses entire phrases, which are important to target.

Search term competition

- The level of competition for ranking on the same keyword or phrase, measured by volume, budgets, and resources.
- Search terms that generate profitable leads and sales will be more competitive
- Competitiveness can be assessed by referencing the adwords 'pay-per-click' auction cost and also reviewing the SERP to assess the quality of websites ranking

Low-competition search terms

- These search terms typically have low or no search volume, making them useful only when highly relevant or targeted to a local audience.
- Easy to achieve high rankings over time by applying basic Search Marketing principles.

High-competition search terms

- "Legal Service" keywords can cost up to \$70 per click on Adwords
- Ranking for competitive search terms is very complex that requires a specialist Search Marketing Agency and dedicated budget over a long period of time

Indexing

- Your webpages need to be indexed in order to be included in a search
- An index is a searchable database of website pages that a search engine uses—rather than searching the live web—making the process much faster and more accurate.
- Search engine technologies use bots to crawl (scan) the internet, **indexing** web pages and any updates. These bots create a simplified version of each page and store it in the index, along with other data used to generate search results.

Lets get started

Create a Google Business Profile

- business.google.com

Your profile will display in Google Maps searches, a widely used method for discovering local businesses and services.

- Google Maps results are also displayed above the standard results on a google SERP that includes location based search terms such as 'Yarram'
- This is essential for a location based business and still important for business without a location
- Google Business Profiles are viewed as an "authoritative source" by search engines and AI, helping to increase your relevancy.
- Use your Google Business Profile to collect reviews, enhancing your trustworthiness for people, search engines, and AI systems.

Create a Google Search Console account

- search.google.com

This set of tools helps you to optimise the indexing of your website as well as providing useful reporting such as:

- The current indexing status of your pages
- errors that are preventing your pages from being indexed
- Tracks visits from Google Search including the search terms used and your most visited pages.
- websites that link to your webpages

You can request specific pages be indexed, re-indexed or removed from the index.

Add your XML Sitemap to your Search Console

- XML Sitemaps help search engines index your website more effectively by distilling your website into an easily digestible format.
- Submitting your XML sitemap to Google improves the volume and frequency of your page indexing.
- Refer to your website documentation on where to find or generate your XML Sitemap.
- WordPress automatically creates your XML Sitemap at <https://yourwebsite.com/wp-sitemap.xml>
 - https://gippsland.au/sitemap_index.xml
 - https://actionskills.au/sitemap_index.xml

Create your “target search terms” list

Create a spreadsheet of possible search terms

Start by brainstorming search terms and phrases your target audience may use to find you. Ask people from this audience to help you, as well as friends and associates.

Audit your list

Professional search tools that include search term planners are very powerful. They are expensive and their free offer is usually minimal.

- <https://www.semrush.com/pricing/>
- <https://ahrefs.com/blog/starter-plan/>

Google’s Keyword Planner is free to use:

- <https://ads.google.com/aw/keywordplanner/home>
You may need to add a credit card as Google is trying to onboard you for ads. You won’t be charged unless create an Adwords campaign

Use the “Discover new keywords” to help you generate more search terms for you to consider.

Use the “Get search volume and forecasts” to audit your search terms.

- Review the volume of average searches to assess if they are worth targeting
- Review the Cost per click to assess competitiveness
- Test changing the location filter from Australia to your state or region. This will give you more specific statistics, however searching Australia is good for identifying patterns in low volume search terms
- Add this data to your spreadsheet

Prioritise your list

Rank your search terms using all the following criteria

- Relevant
 - Your terms need to be relevant to your audience needs, business, product or service. No point ranking #1 for veterinary supplies when you are a carpenter.
- High search volume
 - The higher the volume of searches, the higher the traffic potential if you can rank for the search term
- Low/medium competition
 - More likely to be able to rank for these terms

You may need to revisit the planning tools to help with this process

Research your competition

Do a search for your target keywords and review the sites that rank well.

- Try to understand why they rank well
- Plan how to deliver a website and content experience that exceeds what competitors offer.

Integrate your search terms into your website

Primary search term(s)

Search engines are looking for the best website or webpage on the internet for your search term. Yes, there are many tricks, but as search engines evolve, their primary goal will not.

Create the best website or webpage on the internet for your search term including relevant and useful content.

Your home page generally has the ability to rank higher than other pages so plan how to include your most important search terms on your home page.

We will discuss the technical format and structures later.

If you are establishing a new website, consider including your search terms in your domain name. Google denies that it helps but from my experience it clearly improves ranking.

If you have an old domain name, this will have much more authority than a new domain name which can take a few years for google to respect it.

Supporting search term(s)

Create a page or post for each search term you want to target and create the best page on the internet for these search terms.

Plan how these pages are relevant to your website and how they will fit within your site navigation. Hyperlinking between pages using your search terms is recommended.

Create your content

Yep, the best content on the internet.

Structure your content correctly

Semantic markup

Structure your content so it can be understood by robots such as Google bot to help it index your website. This approach increases comprehension for humans, allowing people to scan quickly to gain the same comprehension as reading copy.

This document has been structured semantically:

- Use headings in a hierarchy
 - Heading one is the page title. There is only one Page title
 - Heading twos are used to divide your pages into sections
 - Heading threes are used to divide these sections
 - Smaller headings may be used to further dive content
- Use bullet lists where possible
- Short paragraphs only

Please refer to part of my previous webinar on Search Marketing where i explore semantic markup and optimising copy in more detail.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tO-J970hvaQ>

Test your website

Audit your website's "core web vitals" using **Google Lighthouse**. These core vitals are search structure, performance, best practice and accessibility.

- Google considers these "core web vitals" in its search algorithm and will penalise websites with low scores
- Google Lighthouse is built into Google Chrome Browser
- More info: <https://www.semrush.com/blog/google-lighthouse/>

Optimise your meta and open graph tags

Ranking on search results is a great achievement, and now we need to entice the user to click on your snippet link through to your website.

If you don't configure these tags, search engines and social apps will guess the content to present and may present it poorly.

Meta tags control how your search snippet displays in the SERP and need to be optimised for conversion (increase clicks to your website).

- This is your mini sales pitch and needs to be done well
- Include your search terms to help ranking

Open graph tags control how your website is displayed on social media and related apps when your webpage is shared.

- Optimal presentation will increase interactions and sharing on the social platform.
- Sharing on social media signals to search engines that your webpage is quality content worth sharing, Increasing your ranking potential

Where do I edit these tags?

- Your website will have settings to edit meta and open graph tags or you may need to install a plugin

Social media is showing an old version of my Open graph tags when shared

- You will need to clear FaceBook's cache here:
<https://developers.facebook.com/tools/debug/>
- LinkedIn has one too: <https://www.linkedin.com/post-inspector/>

Share your pages on your social media accounts while you are here to double check your presentation. Sharing on your socials is important for search ranking.

Re-index your site

Go back to your Google Search Console and request your home page and key pages be re-indexed with your updates and new pages.

Update your Google Business Profile

You will have refined and improved your messaging while including your search terms through this process.

Build Authority

So you have produced the best website on the internet for your search terms, now prove it.

Reviews

Build reviews on trusted review sites such as your Google Business Profile.

Backlinks

When a website links to your website, it signals to search engines that your site is of high enough quality to link to, which increases your authority ranking and potential.

Backlinks are so important that some Search Marketing companies buy websites with high authority and lease backlinks to their clients. This generates higher fees for these companies and produces results for their clients.

Ideally the link itself will include your search terms. Also watch out for "no follow" tags in the link as it signals to search engines to ignore the backlink in context to authority.

- If you have colleagues or business associates, consider if it is appropriate to ask for a back link.
- Websites with high authority such as Government websites, Universities and mainstream media are very valuable to build your authority as their backlink is highly respected.
- Research websites that will likely add your site such as local and industry business directories.
- There are many directories that want to charge you to add your link:
 - Ignore these sites unless you can prove their authority benefit
 - Yellow pages have authority for example
 - Search to find evidence of authoritative sites
- You don't want to be linked from a dodgy website

Social media

Re-share your content on your socials and encourage others to also share it.

Content marketing

On your website - continue to produce pages and/or posts related to your search terms for your website.

- This builds the diversity of search terms that can generate leads as well build trust in your expertise of your subject.
- Search engines love websites that continually add new quality content.
- Ensure you share your new content on social media

Guest Posts - reach out to influential media websites, blogs or industry websites to offer to produce guest posts on your area of expertise which are your search terms.

- Ensure this includes a link to your website without “no follow” tags
- This generates direct traffic to your site in addition to the SEO benefits

Review and improve

Search marketing is an ongoing process of improvement:

- Continue learning the craft
- Check where you are ranking on the SERP
- Review the sites ranking above you again to try and work out what they are doing better
- Review your data in search console and other tool for areas of improvement

There is a lot to learn so we have started with the basics. For a more detailed guide please refer to:

- moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo