

# 1 Lies, damned lies and statistics

If today's political spin doctors are to be believed, it seems that statistics can be used to prove just about anything. So are all statistics forever consigned to be considered, in the words of the 19th century Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli and the author Mark Twain, "Lies, damned lies and statistics"?

Surely not when the body of evidence based on statistics is overwhelming. The case relating to the value of search engine marketing on the success of online businesses is surely a case in point.

## 1.1 Search Engine Marketing - an overwhelming body of evidence

Here are just a few statistics taken from various sources that are a wake up call to businesses looking to maximise their visibility, enquiries and sales online.

### Search Engine Usage

- 81% of Internet users worldwide use search engines
- Search engine usage in the UK stands at 85% of Internet users, higher than France and Spain (83%) and the US (77%)
- In the UK, search engines receive more traffic than any other type of website, including adult websites
- Google has far away the largest share of the UK search market with 80.2%
- Google's share of search engine users is growing 2.5 times as fast as its competitors
- Worldwide, the average time spent by Internet users each month on search engines is 27 minutes equating to 93 search pages and accounting for 3.4% of total time spent online
- Many users use a search engine as their point of entry to the Internet

### Search Engine Behaviour

- 72% of people using a Google search only choose from the first page of results
- Of them, 42% will choose one of the top 5 listings
- Just 23% of people progress to the second page of results
- Only 8% will bother to look beyond the second page
- 80% of unsuccessful searches are followed by keyword refinement
- 77% of people searching choose a natural, or organic result over a Pay Per Click (sponsored) result when searching for information
- 67% of buyers choose an organic result over a pay per click result when purchasing
- When a user is purchasing, organic click-through generates a 25% higher conversion rate than a Pay per Click click-through

## Search Engine Campaigns

- 40% of organic SEO campaign users aware of their ROI achieve results in excess of 500%
- 22% of Pay per Click campaign users aware of their ROI achieve results in excess of 500%
- 62% of businesses surveyed plan to increase their search engine marketing over the next 12 months
- The main objective for search engine marketing campaign is to boost online sales, followed by building brand or business awareness
- The biggest challenge search engine marketing campaigns face is increasing competition
- The main reasons businesses use a search engine marketing agency are to improve results due to lack of their own knowledge, time and resources

You may argue the toss about some of the absolute figures, but the message is clear; if you want to tap into the vast potential of the Internet to drive your business forward in terms of online enquiries and sales, then search engine marketing has got to be a priority.

## 2 More SEO tips...

### 2.1 Talking Point

Content is king when it comes to SEO, but don't ignore your images:

- Images can be used to increase your keyword density.
- Include your keyword in the name of your image folder.
- Save your images using a keyword name. This also helps image optimisation for Google image searches.
- Don't forget to give all images an Alternative Image Tag (Alt image tag) which is a keyword focused description of the image.
- If you're using an image to create a hyperlink, don't forget to include a keyword in the anchor text.
- Follow our blog for more hints and tips here

### 2.2 Does the Google Sandbox exist and if so, what is it?

This has been the subject of fierce debate for some time. If the Sandbox is defined as a mystical holding area where websites, especially new ones, are held then no, the Sandbox doesn't exist. However, if the term Sandbox is used to refer to the 'ageing delay' that new websites experience, then the answer is yes, the Sandbox does exist.

The reality is that new websites, or more correctly new domain names, do take some time to rank well on Google. With a good (and ethical) SEO campaign this may take 6-12 months.

So why does the Sandbox exist? A large part of the way Google views websites is to do with relevancy and trust. Holding a new website back for a period allows Google to check its relevancy, but also satisfy itself that this is not a 'here today, gone tomorrow' spammers website.

What can be done? Whilst you can't avoid the Sandbox, you can use this period to prepare your website to rank as well as possible when it emerges. Start building your links; work on the amount and relevancy of your content, research your keywords. This ageing delay should be a time for consolidation and optimisation, not despair!