



## EXECUTIVE 101 IN ONLINE MARKETING FOR ECOMMERCE



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Online Marketing has developed into a very powerful tool for driving visitor traffic to your site, with several facets that need to be considered when defining or evaluating a program for your eCommerce site. This article will give you an executive-level overview of online marketing, the important components of a site online marketing strategy, and how each component works to improve your online channel performance.

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The start of any program is the keyword list. This is a collection of words or phrases that your potential customers are likely to use when they are looking for products that you want to sell. For a typical retailer there may be 300 – 400 keywords that account for the majority of searches at the popular search engines. Each search engine has a tool that will help you analyze and identify keywords. You will also want to analyze your site search logs to see what visitors at your site are looking for. A very rich source of information can be found in tools that analyze the traffic of your competitors for search terms that are driving traffic to their sites. In addition to these core keywords you may want to utilize UPCs, manufacturer's product numbers, and specific product names for at least your highest impact product offerings.

Special attention needs to be paid to terms and phrases that you have invested in as part of your brand. Trademarks and similar property must be identified to the search engines to prevent your competitors from commandeering visitors that are specifically trying to find you. To add insult to injury, your competitors can be driving up the cost of your pay-per-click campaigns when you allow them to sponsor your trademarked terms.

Once you have your list of keywords you can begin to implement components of your strategy. The comprehensive program will address the following:

1. Site organic Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
2. E-mail marketing
3. Pay-per-click campaigns (PPC)
4. Comparison shopping engines
5. Online media buy

SEO is the component that has the most potential to improve your business. It is also the most time consuming to implement and has the longest period of time between implementing changes and seeing results. The idea is that you modify your site content (and maybe its structure) so that search engines rank you highly for the keywords most important to your business. It takes time to move up in the rankings so getting this done early gets time working for you. The relative advantages of SEO are that you are not charged by the search engines for traffic that comes from this organic

evaluation, and for a large portion of the internet community the organic content evaluation is the most trusted indicator that your site is the one they are looking for.

**E-mail marketing** campaigns put relevant information in the hands of people already interested in you. The messages must be relevant and timely and the highest performing campaigns include an offer. The most important dimensions of relevancy are: recency (usually of purchase), frequency, lifetime value of customer (either number of orders or total value of sales), and category of interest. It is critical that you keep a clean list of people who want to receive your messages.

**Pay-per-click** campaigns have the most immediate and measurable impact on your top line. It is the online marketing equivalent of day trading. You can specify for each keyword what you are willing to pay for a visitor and adjust your "bids" on a minute-by-minute basis. The advantage is that you do not need to make any changes to your site; you can get immediate access to search engine visitors, and you only pay when someone navigates to your site by clicking your link in their search results.

**Comparison shopping engines** allow a visitor to select a specific product and compare price, availability, payment terms, etc. from competing vendors. This is similar to PPC in that you only pay when someone clicks your link after comparing you to other providers. The expectation is that visitors who come from this type of site are ready to buy and will convert to purchases at a high rate.

**Online media buying** puts your message in front of visitors to other sites that you believe will be likely customers. For example, if you sell auto parts you may be interested in sponsoring a banner ad at a site for car enthusiasts. There are many ways that providers charge for this type of service (usually based on either impressions or click-through).

Critical to the success of any online marketing campaign is being able to manage and measure the results. Brulant has a comprehensive team with the tools, methodologies, and discipline to ensure that your campaigns cost effectively drive visitors to your site that are likely to convert to purchasers.

