Marketing Your Restaurant Using Search Engines

Five Reasons Why You Need To Do It

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As a restaurant owner, it is important that you are able to get your brand to as many people as possible. You'd like to tell them about the great food they'll eat, the good service they'll receive and reasonable prices they can expect to pay.

What if there was a way to reach out to an audience that's interested to hear what you have to say? What if that communication is actually cheaper than the traditional approach? What if it is also allows you better control? Search engine marketing (SEM) is such a method that will get the word out, in the way you need.

Advertising with search engines is known by different names. It is also called sponsored search and search engine advertising. The most popular programs are offered by Google, Yahoo!, and Microsoft. Some offer Pay per Click (PPC), where the advertiser is only charged when a user clicks on the ad, also known as Cost per Click (CPC). Others use a Cost per Impression (CPM) model where advertisers are charged for impressions or each time an ad is shown on a web page. Ads can take many forms, including text, banner ads, video ads, map ads, and even audio ads.

Advertising based on a keyword search could take place through a search engine such as google.com, or a search engine partner site, such as shopping.com. For example, Google offers a service called AdWords, which allows companies, for a small fee, to have a link to their website featured when a user searches a specific keyword which the company specified.

Many search engines (e.g. Google, Ask.com, Yahoo! Search) have partner websites with specific content. The websites agree to let the search engines place content-specific advertising on their website, in return for a fee. The search engine then finds companies interested in advertising on websites with their desired content. For example, an online dog food retailer might have their advertisement placed on a site about dogs. Both of these advertising formats allow advertisers to target specific users with certain interests. Generally these advertisements are paid for based on either a pay per click campaign or an impression based campaign.

SEM is defined as the process and strategy of using search engine results as an advertising vehicle. This may include improving rank in organic listings, purchasing paid listings, or a combination of methods all designed to increase visibility, clicks and, of course, leads and orders.

We'll give you five reasons why advertising your restaurant within a search engine makes sense and how to go about making the most of this new tool.

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Reason #1: **More customers – find them online!**
And advertisers must go where consumers are in order to reach them. And more and more, consumers are online. By the end of 2002,Nielsen/NetRatings tallied the worldwide Internet population at over half a billion people, and eMarketer projects that number will go up to over 709 million in 2004.

Recently, the market research firm, The Kelsey Group forecasts that the local search segment will grow from $3.4 billion in 2005 to $13 billion in 2010, with online classifieds growing from $12.3 billion to $18.1 billion. Your business is local and your advertisements have to be local. Now, more and more, location-specific searching is increasing in traffic and conversely, advertisers are spending more and more on getting their brand where the user is looking.

What about restaurants, specifically? That's surely more amenable to traditional advertising, right? In a McDonald's 2002 Cross Media Optimization Study conducted by ARF Research Authority, Dynamic Logic and Marketing Evolution, 27% of McDonald's Grilled Chicken Flatbread Sandwich campaign target market between the ages of 18-49 with online access were barely affected by the campaign's TV spots.

In the month of September, 2006, approximately 7,000 searches were made for the search term "pasadena restaurant" on Yahoo! alone. If you add in searches using related terms, that number reaches about 10,000 in a month. Multiply this by 3 to get all the web searches for that same term. So, every day you've got approximately 1000 people trying to find a place to eat in Pasadena. This means that people are continuously looking for restaurants online – recommendations, reviews, locations, menus, etc. Web users expect this type of information to be available and accessible.

Most likely users are already searching for, writing about and talking about your restaurant. Turning these users into customers can be done if you speak to them on their terms and where they are. This is important for many reasons.

Reason #2: **It's cheaper**
More and more studies are coming out that demonstrate that the cost of acquiring customers using SEM is considerably lower. In a recent study done by Paper Jaffrey & Co. report found that search engine marketing was found to be the most cost effective method of acquiring customers. In this study, search engine marketing was estimated to around $8.50 for each acquired customer, compared to Yellow Pages at $20 and online display ads at $50.

Standard mailers, yellow pages, print ads in the paper are not bad but they cost a heck of a lot more when you compare them to online advertising. The cost of a click, that is, some one is interested in your advertisement, can range from 10 cents to 20 cents. This is significantly cheaper than paying 30-40 cents for a print ad per impression.

Getting your advertisement out there is cheaper but don't forget to get a website so that web users can learn about who you are. Remember, having an ad online is as important as having the web presence to follow it.

Reason #3: **Ready, aim and shoot**
Restaurants are continuously dependent on reaching new customers while keeping the loyal ones happy. Reaching out to interested consumers is the "Holy Grail" in marketing. Every advertising medium will claim to better reach your target audience. While this may be true in the broadest sense, some are better at it than others.

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Search engine marketing is a <u>pull</u> approach rather than a push approach to marketing. You are better able to pull your audience into what you're offering them instead of pushing information at them when they may not need it. With pull marketing your chances of making that brand connection with a potential patron is much better.

Unlike any other media, the search engine provides a unique ability to provide the 30-second commercial as well as the feature-length infomercial version at the same time. How? Users are interacting with the medium – they control how and what they read. You don't have to cater to just the lowest common denominator. If a user just wants a fast food sandwich place within 5 miles of their office, they search for quick-serve restaurants with their zip code and they choose the first one on their screen. Someone else might be planning a family get-together and wants to know about the ambience, the cost, parking, and the menu (can't forget about cousin Joey and his allergies) – this type of search is more involved and the user may explore several options before locking onto something.

So keep in mind that users are not one-dimensional – they don't only eat at sandwich stores, nor do they only arrange family get-togethers. People change their moods, try new things and branch out. One day, you're eating lunch with your colleagues, the next time you need a quick place to feed the kids after soccer practice and on Friday you're having a quiet dinner with your husband.

The Internet lets users control what information they need <u>when</u> they need it. So, getting a coupon in the mail is nice but they'll forget it (and you), when it's time to eat. Online searching is convenient, need-driven and context-based. Getting yourself in front of consumer in this context is pull marketing not push.

Reason #4: **Track, learn and adapt**
The interactive nature of online search allows users to control what they are looking for. And, you have the ability to understand what people are looking at. Which advertising campaign works, which users are actually listening to you and which promotions are bringing you customers. You track these numbers similar to how you can measure the oil in your car. If you're low, you refill it – sometimes you need to get an oil change. Controlling your advertising effort should be as simple as using your car and it can be with the vast array of tools and services that are available to help you. Most search engine providers already provide account management tools that allow you to track your advertising effort.

The real-time nature of the Internet allows you to gauge your financial investment and your financial risk as it is changing. In turn, this allows you to adapt your strategy to the needs of your customers and the current situation of your business. You can introduce a new menu item in an online promotion, and run a new ad to attract attention to this promotion. When the restaurant is under construction, you can scale down your advertising dollars and save your effort for the right time. You can change your advertisement content when you need to. Your promotions can be shown when and how you want. This flexibility at minimal cost is not possible in any other medium.

Reason #5: **Don't forget the "Joneses"**
Yes, admit it. Keeping up with the latest trends and staying competitive is critical to your success. As much as you know that you offer great food with quality service at reasonable prices, no one is listening if you do not use the medium that everyone is listening to. Your competitors are already there and it makes good business sense that you are there as well.

If you're thinking you're hip because you have a website, you're getting there, but the latest new must-have is not a web-site, it's the *traffic*. And traffic is important because traffic means business. How do you get

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traffic and stay ahead of the guy next door? Remember there are over 100,000,000 websites so getting someone to show up on your website is not going to happen unless you tell them about it.

Just like you do with traditional communication, you have to get the word out – you have to advertise, make a splash and get heard and seen. Your competition is already doing this - it's about time you invest some money and effort to do the same for your business. Search engine marketing is the best way to keep current with the trends in the restaurant business while keeping your investment reasonable.

So, although keeping up with the Joneses may be a social problem, staying ahead of your competitors is not – it's your livelihood and your business! Using all the tools that allow you to stay connected with your customers is critically important.

What's Next?
We hope we have presented some compelling reasons why marketing your restaurant on the Internet is a must-do on your marketing to-do list.

But before you punch in your credit card number and click on "Submit," you should ask some questions of the search engine provider before using them:

1. Can I get my restaurant's profile, menu, photographs and other useful information online and set up easily?
2. Do I pay for just clicks (CPM) or can I get something more useful before I have to pay – like a paying customer?
3. Can I easily manage my advertising budget and change it as I need?
4. Are you focused on restaurants or will I be competing with dry cleaners, plumbers and car washes?
5. What start-up fees do I have to pay to use the service? How long am I locked in before I get my return on investment?
6. What incentives do you provide users of your service so that my ads and promotions are seen?

Getting more information is easy, accessible and <u>online</u>!   We encourage you to find out more about how this powerful new approach can make your restaurant busier with high-value customers.

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You can also learn about our service for restaurateurs and restaurant-goers we've recently launched call Choizi at **<u>www.choizi.com</u>**. Our new service pays customers to eat at restaurants like yours and you only pay when you see results.

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