

III World Search War

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Search engines are one of the most important databanks of web world if you are looking for a document, file or data. Stats shows that just 5 % of web users are using search engines when they need to find a particular data but they have been milestones of our daily life. When a user wants to buy online, search engines are major referrers and this make them very important if you are running a web business. As most popular engine is Google which has fanatics on web is getting the biggest search marketing advertising pie, if you know the search marketing is estimated 8.5 Billion \$ for 2007, you may imagine how much this sector is attractive for web giants. Contextual and paid inclusions are really working to get new customers with high conversion rates, which means advertiser is getting good ROI (Return On Investment) depending on campaign settings. Online Marketing campaigns has 3 main aspects such as Target, Market and Budget, major players are giving you options to use all campaign aspects in their system, your return back may vary with your campaign management ability. Lets give you some tips about major players then.

Google: They are the most favorite search mit and the best for advertisers with many professional features inside. Adwords are their paid and contextual advertising program which may start displaying in 15 minutes after you have run your campaign. Google has 2 different networks else than search pages, like search network and content network. Sometimes you may see a Google Search toolbar while you are surfing on a web portal, that means that web portal is connected to Google Search Network, basically integrated search toolbar, possible for advertisers to display text based ads on search network with pay per click model. Content network is normal web sites which have relevant content to search query, advertiser has possibility to display his ads as text or image ads on content network sites, as an option, you may select sites to display your image ads on pay per impression model. Ofcourse these networks are running under Google editorial and adwords policy which are strongly ruled. If your campaign is managed by an Adwords Professional, your ads spending can decrease and maximize your cost per conversion because Adwords has many features to target a campaign. Right market to right target can boost your online sales.

Yahoo Search Marketing (Formerly Overture): Yahoo is the second market holder on this area, a search network with most popular sites on web including Yahoo search pages. They have text based paid sponsored ads model, important point of Yahoo in search that they have 2 main directories of web which can effect the search engine ranking. As mentioned before Yahoo campaigns can not run in short time because of boring editorial stage, since Ireland Editors had declined my keywords many times, I gave up Yahoo campaigns. I believe Yahoo Management received many complains from users so they have launched a training program called Ambassador Certification. Program aims to train professionals with Yahoo Search Marketing features like Google Adwords but this program only serves in USA and Canada right now, probably we will be able to tell our comments when serving area is expanded into global scale, ofcourse when your cooperating partner is Kowabunga Technologies who has experience in Online marketing software and services for long years, Ambassador Certification can be succesful in SEM.

Microsoft Live Search: Finally Microsoft could not stay outside the search marketing and developed his own search technology named Live Search. As every professional I had some doubts at the beginning when Live Search was announced about the search quality because Microsoft is not specialised in search engines even they are the software leader in sector. Doubts went off when I have met an interview with Andy Edmonds and Eric Sellberg, these guys are engineers of live search technology and they have really different approaches or feautres to search marketing such as Gender selection or intention rate for buying. A fact that Microsoft has great database of web users with Messenger and Hotmail. The most popular tools of web users are providing a large data for search targeting. Another interview was with Ken Moss who is the General Manager of Live Search was also persuaded me that Microsoft's high profile project is live search in these years. We can not deny that live search is a newly borned baby yet but its promising. I personally support Windows Live to encourage the competition. Our expectation is the development team will listen user's feedback carefully and modify their system to create perfect and useful search engine. The interface of SEM is called Adcenter which was integrated banner advertising network connected text ads management.

What should Microsoft do for a startup search engine? How they can catch Google and Yahoo? What is the strong and weak parts of them? These are the most asked questions to me in the current days. In my opinion, here is the prescription for beating Google in the long run:

1) Popularity among users: Microsoft should balance this with his products and they are

already doing this. Live search is coming with new OS Windows Vista, Internet Explorer 7, Live Messenger or Office 2007, so this task is being performed right now. In the mid or long run, everybody will see a slight shift into Live Ads from Google Adwords.

2) Terms Standardisation: Since Google had discovered many new features for SEM, professionals got used to talk with terms such as quality score, keyword matching options, smart pricing, page rank. Probably Live search will have same features inside with different terms, as a professional I would like to see same terms are used in campaign management interfaces, this can bring efficient work results while tracking, analysing, reporting a campaign. Terms except the registered as trade marks (like pagerank) should be used as common industry terms.

3) Product Development: Although Google has very advanced features and do not stop development process, Microsoft is at the startup. I'm sure their product development department is working very hard in these months to catch Google's rich features, no doubt this will happen soon however user feedbacks should be used more, also it's possible to motivate people sending useful feedback. Maybe rewarding the best or most feedback senders should be a good way like giving a free Redmont trip and introduce the search development team.

4) Cooperation: Google cooperates with many popular web portals because of his 2 networks (search and content) Microsoft has competitive advantage on having cooperation partners as a tech leader and every company will voluntarily any kind of cooperation. Besides, they may offer some discount on Microsoft products for feasible cooperating partners, this would attract many new potential partners so long run walk may bring more turn back to Microsoft.

5) Pricing Advantage: If a live.com representative come up to me and request me to advertise on the Adcenter, I would ask him why I would prefer them instead of Google? I got used to run a campaign on Google and getting good conversion rates, analytical reports to improve my campaigns, this would be possible only if will have direct or indirect price advantages. This means that Microsoft has to develop some regional strategies related my most used target areas. Both of them are selling ads minimum bid as 0.05 depending on your keywords but SEM professionals should gain some more profit in case preferring a startup search engine. As minimum bid 0.04 should change many minds through Microsoft.

6) Staff Selection: Once upon a time, working at Google was a dream for a professional because they were paying good salary and benefits but this was long time ago. If you checked a job board related Google stuffing in the recent months, you will realise that Google is offering below even market rates. I guess their staff policy had changed after they sold their shares in the stock market, company is responsible against share holders now so this is a result. When Microsoft offers better salary rates, most skilled professionals will prefer to work at live.com.

7) Learning Center and Certification Program: Google has a perfect learning center in text or flash movies that describes Google technology using in lessons. Google Certification is accepted as valid sector proficiency on PPC jobs even the Google Professional examination is more difficult than expected. You need to get 75 over 100, there are 116 questions with different priorities to pass but Microsoft has not realised the importance of training the professionals yet, even their Tutorial page is not working.

8) Support Services: Every professional knows that client is not important, client is the king in today's business concept, your biggest competitor is a just a click away from you, so give us a well trained, clever that understands and quick problem solving client support representatives. Google has problem on giving speedy replies just offering Live.com not provide the low quality service.

Before forgot I would like to announce Wiki Search engine will be ready to run in the first quarter of 2007, lets see if search wars will survive with 4 players. I'm excited to see the new Wiki Search.

Finally Search Wars will get hotter in the new year, who wins? I really don't know friends and I guess nobody knows because 10 years ago if somebody should say Altavista will be beaten by a new search engine (Google) probably we would call him nuts but that happened, so why not this time?

About the Writer: Mr. Erkan Meydanlioglu has a degree in Economics and professional Online Marketing Manager, Google Certified Professional and Team Leader for more than 10 years. He is managing corporate online campaigns as individual or as team manager in Europe. Training company level marketing teams to increase sales