

Lease or Buy – How Search Tactics Are Like Choosing Your Next Home

If you're in the market for your next home, you might be thinking about all the features your place should have. Will there be hardwood floors or carpet? A fireplace? Granite countertops in your kitchen? All of these features are important to you having the kind of living experience you desire. But first, you'll need to think about the kind of place that's right for your budget, lifestyle, and long-term planning.

Would you prefer to get just what you want, maintained by a third party? Leasing is probably right for you. You don't own anything at all, but your monthly expense covers the kind of place you'd like, and you don't have the upkeep involved in maintaining a property, lawn, or pool. But are you looking to build personal wealth through real estate? If so, paying on the principal and growing equity every month is the right choice.

Decisions on your website and approach to the search tactic are eerily similar.



SEM versus SEO – Which One's Right for You?

SEM

SEM, or search engine marketing, is just like leasing your apartment or condominium. You are “renting” a spot on a search engine results page, appearing in front of an audience that's using the right keywords to see your brand within their results. You paid for those eyeballs, and hoped for the click from the user. They may have converted as new business—the ideal outcome—but at the end of the day, you don't own anything. You've benefited from the tactic because you drove revenue, and you may now have a loyal customer. But your website traffic is no better for having rented that spot on the SERP. You'll have to rent it again tomorrow to replicate the results.

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SEO

SEO, or search engine optimization, is the long term, equity-based approach. Unlike renting ad space, you're making small changes to your site over time and improving on the site's performance in search results. These changes allow your site to perform better for google, yahoo and bing, and appear more relevant to the questions asked during a search. Changes to the site's content, tagging, link strategy and other factors will, over time, drive a better organic search performance.

Most Campaigns Blend SEO and SEM for Long- and Short-Term Gains

SEM is for instant gratification. If you need sales now, bidding on keywords to appear in the right search engine results will drive new site traffic immediately. But you'll spend on SEM consistently over time to achieve similar results. When SEO is also used, your site begins to drive some of that traffic on its own, reducing the need to SEM spending in the longterm.

So how do you know how to create your budget? What percentage of your marketing budget should live in search? And what other tactics pair well with search activity, amplifying the overall performance? This is where your account executive can provide great support. A seasoned professional that has seen tens, perhaps even hundreds of marketing campaigns and is responsible for strategies driving results, can make recommendations with integrity for your specific circumstances. Here are a few things you'll talk about when planning your campaign.



What is the on-site experience that the user will have, post-click?



What is the average sale price, and lifetime value of a new customer?



What specific conversions are you hoping to drive?



What geographies are you pulling from for your goods or services, and are there "pockets" you'd like to target (beyond those you have)?



If you have a collection of goods and services, which are most lucrative? Which are the most frequently used?

After a discovery session that unpacks these elements and others, your account executive will be prepared to research audience sizes and prepare recommended budgets by tactic. Those audience sizes will give you both a sense of how much audience there is, and together you'll determine what percent of that audience you hope to reach.

Together you'll decide: is it time to rent, or buy, or both?



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