

Maximising Website Return on Investment:

The Crucial Role of High-Quality Search



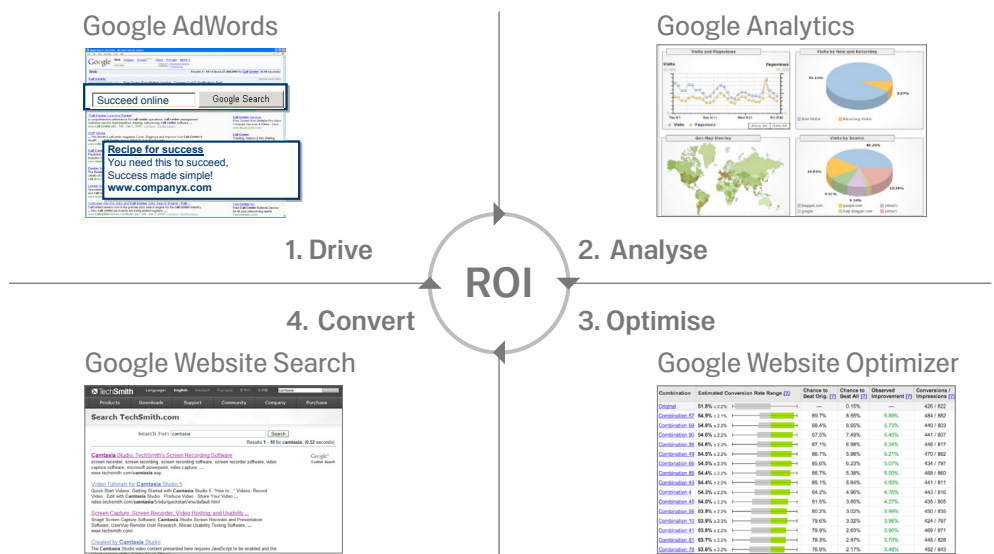
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Websites are among the most measurable marketing investments that a business or institution can make. They enable organisations to set quantifiable objectives that tie directly to overall marketing and communication goals. They also allow granular tracking of results to help ensure that marketing investments provide a timely, tangible return on investment (ROI).

To maximise website ROI, Google advocates a proven, methodical approach involving four steps:

1. **Drive traffic** through activities such as search-based advertising and website promotions.
2. **Analyse traffic** to understand where visitors come from and how they interact with the site.
3. **Optimise the site** by determining which combinations of site content and design drive the most conversions.
4. **Increase conversions** and decrease bounce rates using the intelligence gathered during the steps above. Next, using search – such as on-premise search from the Google Search Appliance (GSA) or hosted search with Google Site Search – guide your visitors to find the information they need to become active customers or otherwise engage with your website.

The Google Approach



This iterative process can be used to continually increase revenue and site ROI, creating strategic advantage and adding value to the site – to users, and to the bottom line. This “continual improvement,” which lets website owners understand and manage the productivity of data on their sites, is at the core of Google’s product and service offerings. Google provides a complete family of solutions to support this productivity, including:

Google AdWords the search-based advertising solution used by thousands of businesses worldwide to gain new customers in a cost-effective way

Google Analytics Google’s web analytics services, enabling advertisers and publishers to make marketing campaigns and websites more effective

Search is Often Overlooked as a Factor in Driving Conversions

Despite solid evidence that Internet search is key to driving conversions, most sites offer visitors sub-par search experiences. Studies suggest that 85% of site searches do not return relevant information to visitors.⁴ About 22% of site searches return no results whatsoever,⁵ and 80% of visitors abandon sites if search functionality is poor.⁶

Google Website Optimizer Google's free website testing and optimisation tool

Google Site Search and Google Search Appliance solutions for extending Google's award-winning search technology to websites of all kinds

Driving conversions: the crucial role of search

Step four, driving conversions, can be among the most challenging objectives to achieve. Why? Because, according to Marketing Sherpa's *Landing Page Handbook*: **"Visitors spend an average of just eight seconds before deciding whether or not to remain on a website."**

Whether they are looking for general information or a specific product, visitors that do not find what they need within seconds are likely to abandon a site. Studies show that website search is a pivotal factor in determining whether or not visitors will spend more time on a website and eventually take the desired action. When site navigation attempts fail, 50% of users turn to search.¹ In a study of 2,000 shoppers, 71% used keyword searches to find products.² And when customers make online purchases, 90% of them report using site search to access self-service content.³

On the other hand, companies that have implemented high-quality website search report an increase in visitor engagement, including substantially increased conversions and sales, as well as reduced customer service costs. It's easy to imagine scenarios where search might transform results. For instance, Trueways Survival School, offering survival training and Bushcraft courses, uses online search to help visitors pinpoint relevant products and speed on-site customer education. Waterfilters.net, which offers a huge inventory of water filtration supplies, has used search to reduce its bounce rate by 4% while boosting conversions by 11%. Business software solutions provider EMC Insignia increased e-commerce sales 20% since implementing high-quality website search, while at the same time decreasing customer-requested refunds by 85%.

Rapid payback on investments

In terms of ROI, high-quality site search pays off quickly. Google search customers report increases in online conversions and sales of up to 20%, sometimes within days of bringing search to their sites. However, the returns are impressive even if the growth is lower. A conversion or sales increase of even 5% is often enough to dramatically impact the bottom line for a business of any size. What's more, as satisfaction levels increase, due to increased relevancy, it's likely that customers will more readily return to a site, and recommend it to others.

Google Website Search: Increase conversions and sales

Assumptions

- Assume that high-quality website search can increase conversions by 5% by accurately delivering visitors relevant information
- Increased website conversions correspondingly increase website-generated sales
- Google website search solutions have increased online conversions and associated sales by as much as 20%

1 Jupiter Media Matrix

2 eTailing Group

3 Harris Interactive

4 Jupiter Research

5 IDC

6 Jupiter Media Matrix

“Google Site Search helps our customers access data quickly, get answers to common support questions, and find key product features. This not only helps customers; it helps our support staff worldwide as well. Our support staff can quickly find links, documentation, and common answers which help customers in the case of on-the-fly inbound calls.”

Layla Rudy
Webmaster
EMC Insignia

ROI Calculations

	Small Business	Mid-Size Business	Large Business
Employees	50	1,000	50,000
Revenues	\$5M	\$100M	\$5B
% of Revenues from Website	40%	20%	10%
Website generated Revenue	\$2M	\$20M	\$500M
% increase in web conversions	5%	5%	5%
% increase in web generated revenue	5%	5%	5%
Total \$ increase in annual revenue	\$100K	\$1M	\$25M

The other side of the balance sheet: reducing customer service costs

At the same time as companies are increasing revenues, they are also reducing costs with high-quality search solutions. Using website search, customers can serve themselves and find answers to their questions online, instead of having to send emails or call in to a service centre. Even a small decrease in phone and email support incidents due to intuitive, powerful website search can decrease customer service costs substantially.

Website Search ROI: Reduce Customer Service Costs

Facts

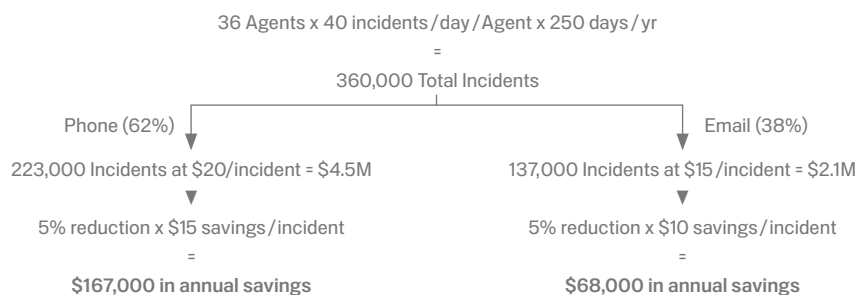
- Average cost of phone support is \$20 per incident, email support is \$15 per incident, while self support cost is \$5 per incident⁷
- 62% of contact centre interactions are via phone⁸

Assumptions

- Google Website search solutions have resulted in reduced calls and emails to contact centres by up to 30%, but assume only 5% reduction
- Assume a case of 36 agents with 40 incidents/day (based on benchmark averages)¹

ROI Calculations

At highly conservative assumptions, website search can save \$236K annually out of a total spend of \$6.6M, or a 3.6% cost reduction.



Although results may vary depending on business size and the complexity of support needs, even a 5% reduction in phone and email support incidents can save many thousands of dollars in customer support costs annually.

Many other companies are seeing reduced costs via enhanced customer service made possible by high-quality website search. In the UK, Monarch Airlines realised a 30% reduction in inbound support emails within the first week of implementing

⁷ www.contactcenterworld.com/view/contact-center-news/Help-Desk-Institute-Releases-2003-Practices-Survey.asp
⁸ HDI

“Google Site Search has been terrific, we would not have expected changing something as simple as search would have such a positive impact on use of the site.”

Peter Walker
Chief Technology Officer
Mortgages.co.uk

At Mortgages.co.uk, a leading provider of information about mortgages in the UK, deploying high-quality, hosted site search resulted in an increase in page views of 8% and a boost in visitor conversions of 16%.

search on its Internet site. EMC Insignia used in-house search to enable customer support representatives to quickly find answers to common customer questions posed during inbound calls. On Toolhawker.com, which addresses the needs of professional technicians, average customer pages per visit increased 25% after the company implemented high-quality search, translating to more meaningful time spent on the site.

Hosted and on-premise options

Several options should be considered when selecting a high-quality search solution. Hosted solutions, including Google Site Search, provide Software as a Service (SaaS) search, an alternative that is cost-effective because there is no need to deploy hardware and software locally, and because set-up takes only minutes. In addition, hosted solutions are housed in globally-distributed data centres, optimising the efficiency of data management and energy consumption – both of which translate to lower costs. Hosted solutions can be customised to any organisation’s branding requirements and easily linked to existing websites. On-demand indexing allows organisations to get pages indexed quickly, further lowering the barriers to entry. This option is ideal for organisations with limited IT resources, or who don’t want to increase the levels of hardware that they install and maintain in-house, but that still want to enable users to search a website using powerful Google search engine technologies.

Depending on specific search needs, organisations can also elect to use a plug-and-play search appliance – the Google Search Appliance – that is deployed on premise, yet minimises burden on IT staff. On-site search solutions are a cost-effective option if they include hardware, software, product updates, support, and product replacement coverage as part of the package for one price. This “one price” model eliminates expensive annual maintenance fees and removes the threat of cost over-runs. Although the solution is deployed on-premise, Google customers report that the appliance is fast to deploy, offers automatic indexing, and requires very little maintenance. On average, only one-fifth of a full-time employee’s time is required to maintain an appliance in an organisation with 55,000 employees, according to reports from Google customers.

With a high level of security, flat pricing, and advanced APIs for integration with multiple systems in an enterprise environment, the on-premise alternative is well suited to organisations that want to enable website visitors to search a relatively large number of pages or search data contained in multiple back-end repositories or product databases.

Google offers a full line of solutions for website search that meet the requirements and budgets of virtually any organisation:

- Google Site Search offers the legendary quality of Google search in a hosted solution. It enables users to customise the look and feel of their website to meet branding requirements.
- Google Mini offers the simplicity and power of Google’s search technology at a great price. An integrated hardware and software solution, the Mini offers plug-and-play installation and can be purchased online.
- The Google Search Appliance is an on-premise search solution that provides universal search: the ability to search all content through one search box, including content within web servers, intranets, file shares, databases, content management systems, and business applications.

“The Google Search Appliance is easier to set up than your home PC.”

Patrick Gardella
IT Department
Discovery Communications

Website Search Options

	Google Site Search	Google Mini	Google Search Appliance
Google search quality	X	X	X
Customisation features	X	X	X
Crawling and Indexing Control	X	X	X
Secured Search		X	X
Support	Online/ Phone (Direct)	Online	Online and Phone
More Information	www.google.co.uk/sitesearch	www.google.co.uk/mini	www.google.co.uk/gsa

While it may seem obvious, the most important consideration in selecting a website search solution, whether hosted or on-premise, is whether or not it will return relevant results quickly. If website visitors cannot find what they need within eight seconds or less, then they are far less likely to become prospects or customers. If they do get accurate, relevant results – like those consistently, quickly delivered by any of Google’s search solutions – they are more likely to engage, purchase, and be satisfied with their web experience.

Conclusion

At a time when customers are conscious of new expenditures, organisations are looking to deploy solutions that provide substantive and fast ROI. Google search solutions provide organisations with a simple way to increase revenues generated from a website and decrease customer support costs, providing solid benefits to the bottom line. Whether the goal is to increase leads and sales, decrease customer service costs, or both, high-quality website search can transform an organisation’s website into a powerful tool that yields substantial, lasting, and highly measurable returns.

