Maximizing Website
Return on Investment:

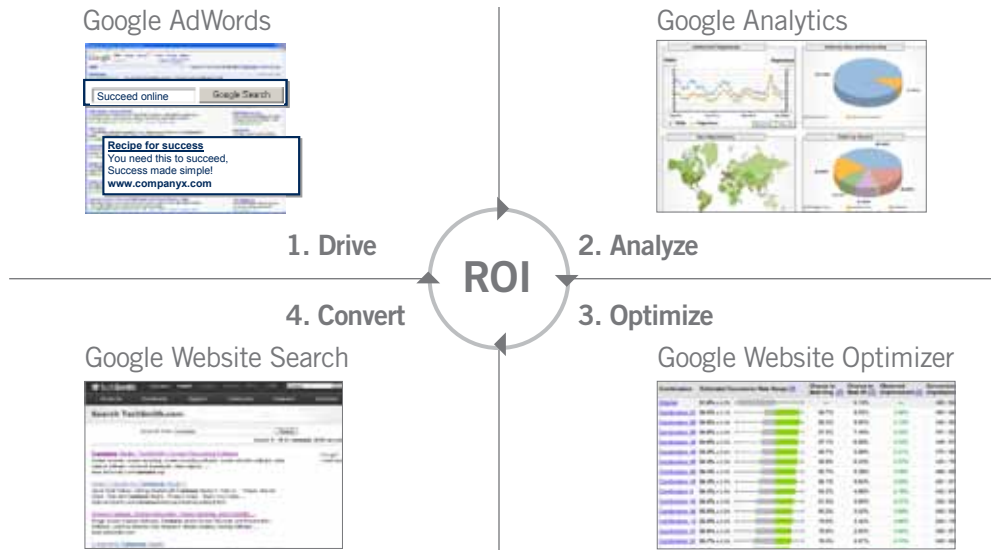The Crucial Role of High-Quality Search

Google

Websites: Creating a well-oiled lead tool

A smoothly functioning website is an effective presales tool for an organization, helping site visitors to understand the company's products, services, or solutions, and encouraging them to take the next step as an educated, qualified lead with the company's salesforce. Given that a qualified lead for a big-ticket item like enterprise software can be worth thousands of dollars, it is essential that a website works effectively and its performance as a lead generating tool is monitored constantly.

To maximize website return on investment (ROI), Google advocates a proven, methodical approach involving four steps:

1. **Drive traffic** through activities such as search-based advertising and website promotions.

2. **Analyze traffic** to understand where visitors come from and how they interact with the site.

3. **Optimize 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

Google AdWords

Google Analytics

1. Drive

ROI

2. Analyze

4. Convert

3. Optimize

Google Website Search

Google Website Optimizer

For both non-transactional and transactional webites, this iterative process can be used to continually track site ROI and increase revenue, 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:

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 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

Google Website Optimizer Google's free website testing and optimization 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 web lead 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, 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-to-leads and sales of up to 20%, sometimes within days of implementing search on their sites. However, the returns are impressive even if the growth is lower. A conversion-to-lead 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.

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 Calculation: How increasing web conversions boosts the bottom line

	High Traffic Site	Medium Traffic Site	Low Traffic Site
Site visits per month	50M/mo	5M/mo	500K/mo
Total annual sales revenue generated from web leads	$600M/yr	$300M/yr	$200M/yr
Total # leads conversion from web per month	2.5M/mo	100K/mo	5,000/mo
% web lead conversions to sales	20%	10%	7%
Avg. revenue per sale	$100	$2,500	$50,000
Total $ increase in annual revenue with 5% increase in web lead conversions	$30M/yr	$15M/yr	$10.5M/yr
Total $ increase in annual revenue with 20% increase in web lead conversions	$120M/yr	$60M/yr	$42.2M/yr

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

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 center. 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

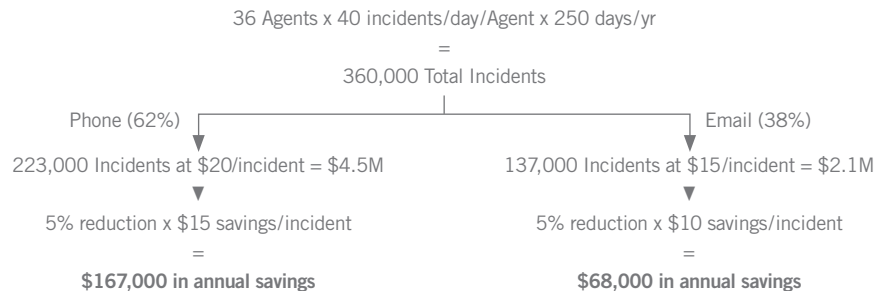**Facts**

• Average cost of phone support is $20 per incident, email support is $15 per incident, while self support cost is $5 per incident[7]

• 62% of contact center interactions are via phone[8]

Assumptions

• Google Website search solutions have resulted in reduced calls and emails to contact centers 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.

36 Agents x 40 incidents/day/Agent x 250 days/yr
=
360,000 Total Incidents

Phone (62%)   Email (38%)

223,000 Incidents at $20/incident = $4.5M   137,000 Incidents at $15/incident = $2.1M

5% reduction x $15 savings/incident   5% reduction x $10 savings/incident
=   =
$167,000 in annual savings   **$68,000 in annual savings**

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%.

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 realized a 30% reduction in inbound support emails within the first week of implementing 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 adresses 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 centers, optimizing the efficiency of data management and energy consumption – both of which translate to lower costs. Hosted solutions can be customized to any organization's branding requirements and easily linked to existing websites. On-demand indexing allows organizations to get pages indexed quickly, further lowering the barriers to entry. This option is ideal for organizations 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, organizations can also elect to use a plug-and-play search appliance – the Google Search Appliance – that is deployed on premise, yet minimizes 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 organization 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 organizations 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 organization:

> "The Google Search Appliance is easier to set up than your home PC."
>
> **Patrick Gardella**
> IT Department
> Discovery Communications

- 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.

- Google Site Search offers the legendary quality of Google search in a hosted solution. It enables users to customize the look and feel of their website to meet branding requirements.

Website Search Options

	Google Search Appliance	Google Site Search
Google search quality	X	X
Customization features	X	X
Crawling and Indexing Control	X	X
Secured Search	X	
Support	Online and Phone	Online/Phone (Direct)
More Information	www. google.com/gsa	www. google.com/sitesearch

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, organizations are looking to deploy solutions that provide substantive and fast ROI. Google search solutions provide organizations 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 organization's website into a powerful tool that yields substantial, lasting, and highly measurable returns.

Google