Search Marketing For Small Business

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In Partnership With The Federal Way Chamber of Commerce

What Is Search Marketing?

- When looking for goods or services in an area, many consumers turn to search engines like Google or Bing for information
- Strategies like search engine optimization (SEO) and pay-per-click ads (PPC) allow businesses to gain higher ranking and better visibility in search engine results pages (SERPs)
- 76% of people who search on their smartphones for a local business visit a business within a day (source)

Anatomy Of A Search Engine Results Page (SERP)

Search Query

Paid Search Results (PPC)

Local Pack

Organic Search Results (SEO)

How To Get There

Search Query

Google Ads

Google My Business

Website SEO improvements, links to your site

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

To rank pages in search results, Google looks at several broad categories of factors:

1. Technical SEO (does your site work for humans and robots?)
2. On-site relevance factors (keywords, content, etc.)
3. Links to your site from other sites
4. User experience (site speed, errors, mobile-friendliness, etc.)

To achieve better ranking in search results, you need to improve each of these factors as much as you can.

The process for updating these factors is different depending on how your website is hosted. Contact your website designer or web host for more information.

Technical SEO

Before a search engine can evaluate your site's content, it needs to be able to process the information on your site. Checking your technical SEO helps ensure that your website is accessible by users and machines.

Robots.txt – A small text file that always resides at www.example.com/robots.txt. Provides instructions on which pages should be crawled by search engines.

Sitemap – An XML file that usually resides at www.example.com/sitemap.xml. Must be in the root directory of your website, but can be named something besides "sitemap." Contains a structured-data list of all the URLs on your site. Helps search engines create a more comprehensive index of your site.

404 Errors – If a user tries to go to a URL on your site that no longer exists, they will get a "404" error. Sites with excessive 404 errors will be indexed less by search engines. Fix 404 errors by setting up a 301 redirect from the broken URL to a functional one.

Technical SEO: Robots.txt

A robots.txt is a very sensitive file and should only be modified if you have a good understanding of what you are doing. If you want to make sure that search engines can crawl all of your site, you can use this as your entire robots.txt file:

```
User-Agent: *
Disallow:
```

For a more thorough explanation of what a robots.txt file can do, see this article:
https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/6062608?hl=en

Robots.txt testing tool:
https://technicalseo.com/tools/robots-txt/

Technical SEO: Sitemaps

Many modern content management platforms (like Wordpress) will automatically generate a sitemap for you – you may already have one on your website.

If you don't have a plugin that can do this work for you, or if you just want to make one yourself, there are several programs that can help you generate a sitemap. This is my favorite: https://www.screamingfrog.co.uk/seo-spider/

This tool is free for up to 500 URLs, which should cover most small business websites. The tool does a lot more than sitemaps, but the sitemap tool is excellent.

Sitemap code example:

```
<!-- Generated by Screaming Frog SEO Spider 8.3 -->
<urlset xmlns="http://www.sitemaps.org/schemas/sitemap/0.9" xmlns:xsi="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema-instance"
xsi:schemaLocation="http://www.sitemaps.org/schemas/sitemap/0.9 http://www.sitemaps.org/schemas/sitemap/0.9/sitemap.xsd">
  <url>
    <loc>http://www.shawnlivengood.com/</loc>
    <lastmod>2017-12-10</lastmod>
    <changefreq>daily</changefreq>
    <priority>1.0</priority>
  </url>
```

Technical SEO: Site Errors

For site error diagnosis and monitoring, Google has an excellent (and free) tool called Google Search Console.

You'll need to verify ownership of your site, but once you set up the tool you'll have access to a variety of reports that will help you find 404 errors, indexation errors, and get data on what queries people are using to find your site (and your average search ranking for those queries).

SEO
On-Site Factors:
Title Tags

What are title tags?
Short text descriptions that describe the content of the page. Often appear in the link text of search results, and in the text of a browser tab.

Why are title tags important?
Keywords in title tags can have an impact on a page's search engine results ranking. Title tags also signal to a user that they will find what they are looking for on a page, improving click-through rates.

Title Tag Best Practices
50-60 characters, use 1-2 key phrases that are both relevant to the page content, and are search terms you want to rank for.

More info: https://moz.com/learn/seo/title-tag

SEO
On-Site Factors:
Meta Descriptions

What are meta descriptions?
Text descriptions that describe the content of the page. This is the text that often appears below the link in search results.

Why are meta descriptions important?
Keywords in meta descriptions do not influence search engine ranking, but an appealing meta description can get users to click on your result more often.

Meta Description Best Practices
50-160 characters long. Include information related to your target search queries that is relevant to the page content. Write it like ad copy that will encourage a user to click.

More info: https://moz.com/learn/seo/meta-description

SEO
On-Site Factors:
Page Content

What is page content?
Text, image, and video content that appears on your website.

Why is page content important?
High-quality content is perhaps the most influential SEO ranking factor. Search engine algorithms love high-quality content, and users are more likely to share and link to content that is the best for that topic.

Page Content Best Practices
Look at the top search results for the keywords you want to rank for. Try to create better content than what they have. Don't limit yourself to text – use photos, images, video, etc.

More info:
https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/7451184?hl=en

SEO
On-Site Factors:
Structured Data

What is structured data?
Special code markup that is visible to search engines, but not users. This code tells search engines what type of data is in the code – things like addresses, phone numbers, businesss hours, etc.

Why is structured data important?
Structured data helps search engines find critical info about your business on your website, and distribute that data to other systems that display that data (e.g. Google Maps)

Structured Data Best Practices
Use structured data markup formats like Schema.org or JSON to identify business name, address, phone number, business hours, and other data. Check your structured data completeness with
https://search.google.com/structured-data/testing-tool/u/0/

More info:
https://developers.google.com/search/docs/guides/intro-structured-data

SEO Links

Obtain links from relevant, reputable organizations in your area:
- Businesses you associate with (suppliers, customers, partners, etc.)
- News media
- Chamber of Commerce
- Professional organizations
- Charities you sponsor

When it comes to links, **quality is better than quantity.** It's better to get one link from a reputable organization than a thousand links from spam websites. **NEVER EVER PAY FOR A LINK DIRECTLY.**

SEO Links

Bad Link:

Comments

@Bikesgearlab, Hey thanks for your comment... It's a great example of a link scheme, because it clearly has nothing to do with my post and is entirely self serving. Good Job!

Written by You
1 minute ago

Reply | Edit

Hey Guys,

I am here to introduce my bikes review blog.I'm try to contribute all kinds of bike reviews.I hope this blog are very very important bikes rider.Please check it just one click. https://bikesgearlab.com

Have A Nice Day

Written by
Bikesgearlab
8 minutes ago

Comment spam

Reply - 0 +

Image source: https://www.konstructdigital.com/seo/nofollow-link-attributes-sponsored-and-ugc/

SEO
Links

Good Links:

Piperlea Chico, a dental hygienist and director of the school-based dental program at Hudson Headwaters Health Network in New York, said that 2,000 to 2,500 children near the Adirondack Mountains had been treated annually since the program began nearly four years ago.

Link source: https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/14/us/school-closings-children-dental-care.html

Example of a good "sponsor links" page:
https://www.tasteoftacoma.com/sponsors

SEO
User Experience

User experience is very important for SEO. Search engines and users expect websites to:
- Load quickly
- Work well on a variety of devices (mobile and desktop)
- Be easy to use and navigate

Check site speed issues on your site with this tool:
https://developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed/insights/

Check the mobile experience of your website with this tool:
http://responsivetesttool.com/

SEO Checklist

1. Robots.txt file allows search engines to crawl your site.
2. Have an XML sitemap on your site at www.example.com/sitemap.xml. This sitemap should contain all pages on your site that you want to be crawled.
3. Verify your site in Google Search Console and check for 404 errors. Fix any 404 errors by setting up 301 redirects.
4. All title tags on your pages should be unique, specific to the page content, and optimized.
5. All meta descriptions on your pages should be unique, specific to the page content, and optimized.
6. Use structured data to mark up important business information – name, address, phone number, hours, etc.
7. Make sure your site loads quickly, and works well on mobile devices.
8. Page content is informative and user friendly. Look at the top search results for the keywords you want to rank for. Try to create better content than what they have. Don't limit yourself to text – use photos, images, video, etc.
9. Get links to your site from reputable local organizations (newspapers, business associations, etc.)

Local Business Listings

If you sell goods or services in a specific area, local business listings are incredibly important. Local listings often get high prominence in search results in the "local pack" and enhanced search results.

Google pulls location data from multiple sources, but it prefers to get the data directly from the business via Google My Business.

Local Pack

Rating ▾ **Pizza** ▾ **Price** ▾ **Hours** ▾

Papa John's Pizza
3.7 ★★★⯪☆ (112) · $ · Pizza
3411 6th Ave
Delivery: Now · Ends 11PM
✕ Dine-in · ✓ Takeout · ✓ No-contact delivery

Farrelli's Pizza, Tacoma
4.2 ★★★★☆ (700) · $$ · Pizza
3518 6th Ave
👤 "Ordered **Delivery** through ..."

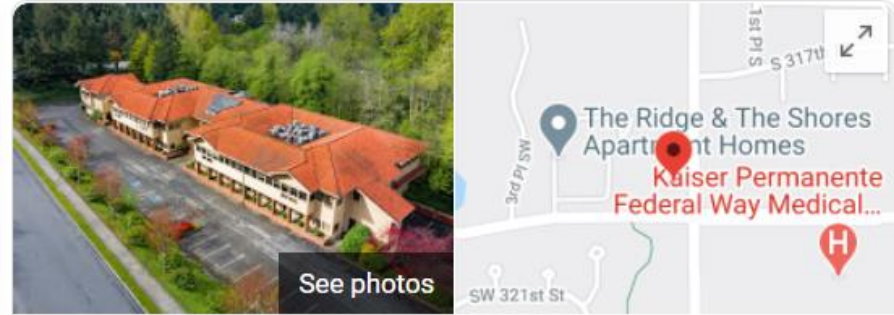**Papa Murphy's | Take 'N' Bake Pizza**
4.3 ★★★★⯪ (339) · $ · Pizza
1201 S Union Ave Suite 4
✕ Dine-in · ✓ Takeout · ✓ Delivery

→ View all

Enhanced Search Result

See photos

Greater Federal Way Chamber of Commerce

Website   Directions   Save   Call

5.0 ★★★★★ 7 Google reviews

Chamber of commerce in Federal Way, Washington

Address: 31919 1st Ave S #202, Federal Way, WA 98003

Hours: Closed · Opens 9AM Mon ▾

Phone: (253) 838-2605

⚠ Hours or services may differ

Suggest an edit · Own this business?

Know this place? Share the latest info

Local Business Listings

The first step is to claim your listing. You can do this by signing up via the Google My Business website, or by searching for your business and clicking "Own this business?" in the enhanced search result:

⚠ Hours or services may differ

Suggest an edit | Own this business?

Local Business Listings

Once you have claimed your listing, there are a few things you'll want to improve:

- Make sure all of your critical business info (business name, phone number, address, website, hours, etc.) is correct.
- Write a detailed description about your business that highlights your products and services.
- Add 5-10 high-quality photos of your business. Things like the location, employees, customers, services, and products are all great things to highlight.
- Check your business category to see if it's the best fit available.
- Encourage customers to leave a review for you on Google and other business listing platforms. High amounts of reviews and high average review scores really help with search visibility!

Local Business Listings

Google My Business is the most important local business listing to get right, but you should also claim and optimize your listing on these platforms if you have time:

Yelp
Bing Places For Business
Apple Maps

You can use the exact same business data you put in Google My Business. Consistency is a good thing when it comes to local business listings!

Pay Per Click (PPC) Ads

Getting results in SEO takes time. Investing in pay-per-click ads is a great way to get instant visibility in search results.
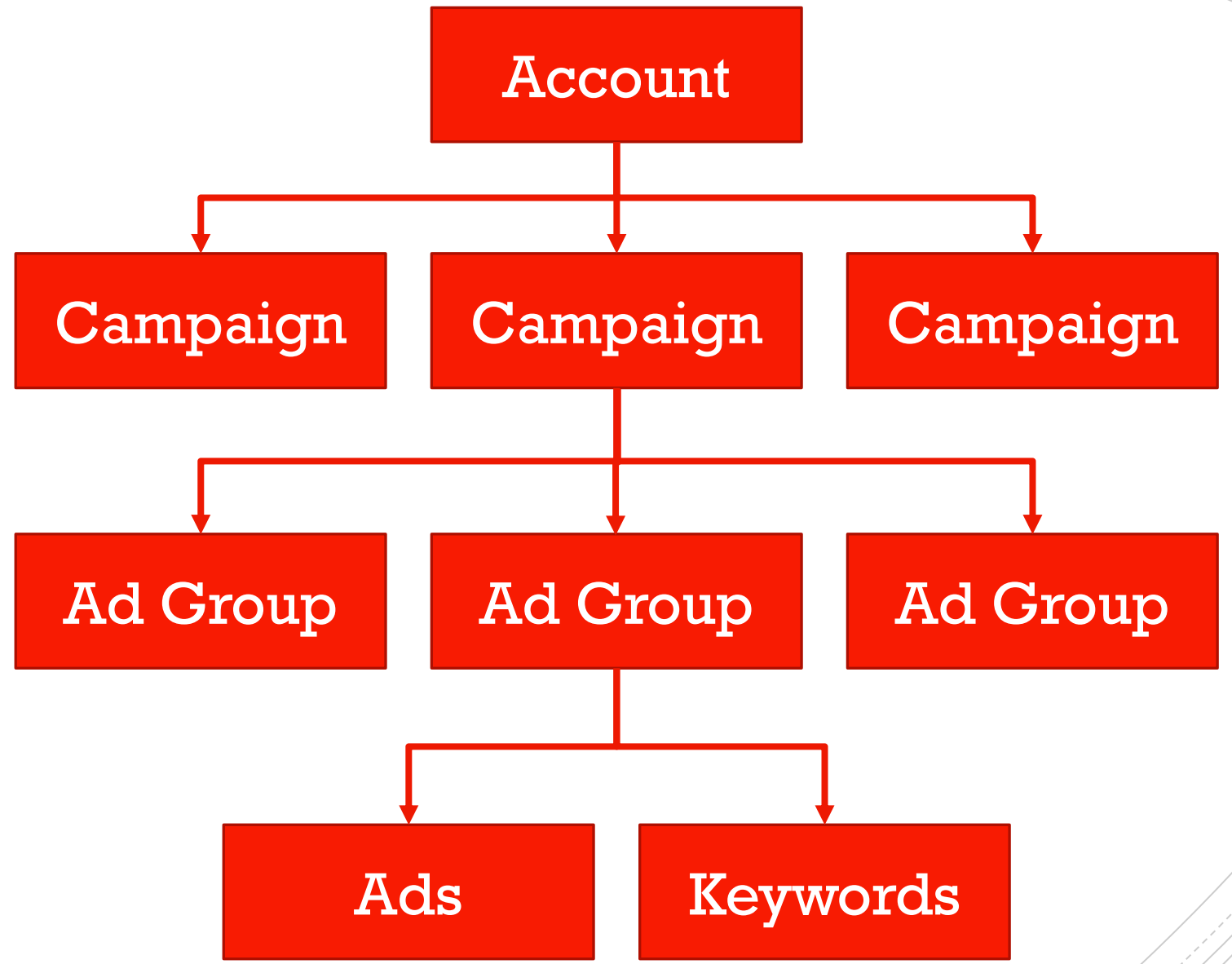
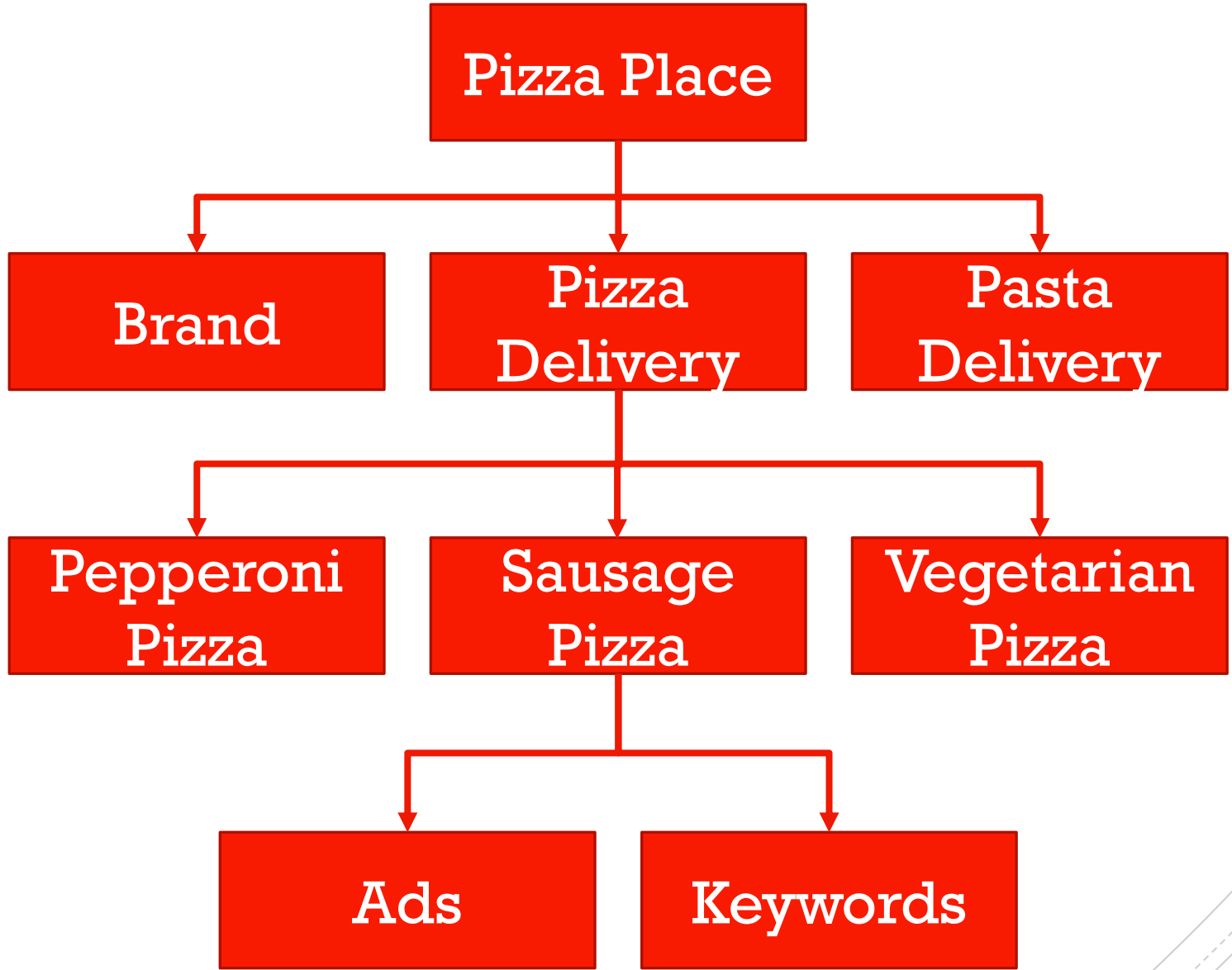There are two main platforms that are worth buying PPC ads in:

Google Ads
Bing Ads

PPC Account Structure Example

Pizza Place

Brand | Pizza Delivery | Pasta Delivery

Pepperoni Pizza | Sausage Pizza | Vegetarian Pizza

Ads | Keywords

Local PPC Best Practices

1. Target ads only in your service area. You can use metro area, city, zip code, or set a specific radius around your location.
2. Set up a "Brand" campaign that contains keywords related to your business name.
3. Set up several "Product" and/or "Service" campaigns that contain keywords and ads related to what you offer.
4. Use phrase and exact match keywords at first – broad match keywords can drive a lot of irrelevant traffic.
5. Write compelling ad copy that shows what you offer, and explains why a customer should choose you instead of a competitor.

Note: this process is VERY SIMPLIFIED for brevity's sake. Learn more about how Google Ads works here:
https://support.google.com/google-ads/answer/6349091?hl=en

Next Steps

1. Claim and optimize your Google My Business Listing
2. Use the SEO Checklist to find opportunities to improve your website
3. Start a Google Ads account to promote your business (remember to ONLY target your service area)
4. Keep learning about search engine marketing!

Q&A

Thank you for your time and attention!

Slides available at
www.shawnlivengood.com/projects.html

Appendix: Learning Resources

To learn more about SEO:
https://moz.com/beginners-guide-to-seo

To learn more about Google Ads:
https://landing.google.com/academyforads/faq.html