



The quickest way to get new customers: SEM

Back in your father's day, shop marketing was easy: you'd put a sign in front of your shop, and an ad in the yellow pages, and wait for customers to walk in. It was a hit-or-miss business and it took a long time to grow a steady flow of customers.

Today, shop marketing is much more sophisticated. It requires more knowledge and tools. Online marketing, for example, includes: website design, search engine marketing and optimization, email marketing, mobile advertising, social media and more.

You can't become an overnight online marketing expert any more than you can become an overnight master technician. There's a lot to learn. So instead of trying to do everything at once, focus on one marketing activity at a time.

WHERE TO START

Search engine marketing (SEM) is the most impactful place to start. SEM is basically advertising on search engines. Done in-house or with outside help, a creative SEM campaign can quickly generate measurable results for your shop. The sooner you get started, the sooner you can start bringing in new customers.

Launch your online SEM campaign in the morning, and you could start getting calls that afternoon.

SEM is basically buying ads on one of two major search engines: Google and Bing. According to Internet research firm comScore, Google controls 65% of search use; Bing has 33% share.

When you do a Google search the first few listings are paid ads. That's how search engines make most of their income. For a shop in a major market like Toronto, Montreal or Vancouver, SEM can be expensive if you want to be the number one spot. But you don't have to be the number one for every keyword.



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TRACKING RESULTS

Unlike print ads, with SEM you pay only for results — for click-throughs to your website or your phone number. You set a pre-determined bid on chosen keywords ("auto repair Toronto", for example).

SEM is measurable — you know what's working, what's not and the exact cost of every click. If you do a good job of tracking new customers in-house, you can even calculate the sales your ads are generating and your cost per new customer. But knowledge is empty unless you act on it.

In my next column, I'll walk you through the nitty-gritty of creating a good campaign. 🗣️

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