

HOW TO SEM

Often wrongly used interchangeably, SEO and SEM are two different marketing channels that businesses can use to reach their target audiences on search engines.

What's the difference between SEM and SEO?

- Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is an essential tactic for brands that want to drive website traffic and grow their online visibility. Search engine marketing (SEM) is a digital marketing strategy used to increase the visibility of a website in search engine results pages (SERPs). Search engine marketing is also alternately referred to as paid search or pay per click (PPC).
- Arguably, they both sound like the same thing, but in reality, these are two very different approaches to becoming visible on the SERPs.

Many brands use paid search to increase brand awareness, increase the number of email sign-ups, to generate leads and convert visitors to customers.

- Overall, the main difference between SEM vs. SEO is that SEM is a *paid* strategy and SEO is an *organic* strategy.

Why is SEM Important?

- With an increasing number of consumers researching and shopping for products online, search engine marketing has become a crucial online marketing strategy for increasing a company's reach.
- In fact, the majority of new visitors to a website find it by performing a query on a search engine.
- In search engine marketing, advertisers only pay for impressions that result in visitors, making it an efficient way for a company to spend its marketing dollars. As an added bonus, each visitor incrementally improves the website's rankings in organic search results.
- Since consumers enter search queries with the intent of finding information of a commercial nature, they are in an excellent state of mind to make a purchase, compared to other sites such as social media where users are not explicitly searching for something.
- Search marketing reaches consumers at exactly the right time: when they are open to new information. Unlike the majority of digital advertising, PPC advertising is non-intrusive and does not interrupt their tasks.
- Results are immediate with SEM. It is arguably the fastest way to drive traffic to a website.

How SEM Works?

- Search engines use complicated algorithms to ensure the most relevant results are returned for each search, including location and other available information.
- In paid search advertising, sponsored ads appear at the top of and on the side of search engine results pages to gain more visibility and prominence than the organic results.
- Let's say that you are a customer looking for a product or service online. You go to a search engine and type in your search terms (also known as keywords). In your search results page, you will come across various company ads whose keywords match the keywords in your search.



- These ads appear in prominent locations on the page - along with the other search listings that match your keywords. The paid listings are highly relevant to your specific search, making it likely that you will click on them.
- SEM networks are self-serve operations. Once a marketer selects a network, he or she can get a campaign up within a short period of time.

When setting up a campaign within an SEM network, the marketer is prompted to:

- Conduct keyword research and select a set of keywords related to their website or product.
- Select a geographic location for the ad to be displayed within.
- Create a text-based ad to display in the search results.
- Bid on a price they are willing to pay for each click on their ad.

Text-only ads are easy to produce. Marketers enter a headline, text for the body of the ad, a call-to-action and a URL for the hyperlink.

The Benefits of SEM

- While with SEO, it can often take months to see real results, with SEM, you can be driving clicks and conversions in a very short period of time.
- You can take full control over when ads show and who they show to, making the channel perfect for testing out new strategies, sending traffic to a sale, or for accelerating traffic during quieter periods.
- The reality is that SEO and SEM shouldn't be seen as channels in isolation and, ideally, should be seen as two parts of a larger digital strategy that drives visibility, traffic, and conversions from the search engines.

Google Ads

- Google AdWords is actually two networks: Google Search Network and Google Display Network. The first network consists exclusively of search-related websites owned by Google, while the second includes properties such as YouTube, Blogger and Gmail. Bing Ads allows customers to buy ads on both Yahoo's network of websites and Bing's network.
- While Google Ads is a much larger network (around 2x the size), the pricing is often lower on Bing Ads. Marketers may be able to get a better rank for a competitive keyword phrase for less than they get on Google. And some report that the clickthrough rates are higher as well.
- With Google Ads, brands conduct keyword research and create campaigns that target the best keywords for their industry, products, or services. When users search for those keywords, they see the custom ads at the top or bottom of SERPs. The brand is charged each time a user clicks on the ad.

A/B Testing

- Since you are already making an investment in search engine marketing to bring traffic to your website, it is a worthwhile effort to optimize that traffic for conversions and increase the efficiency of your spending.
- A/B testing your landing pages is an easy way to maximise your spend, either by optimising for average order value or revenue per page. A/B testing (also known as split testing or bucket testing) is a method of comparing two versions of an audience or webpage against each other to determine which one performs better. A/B testing is essentially an experiment where two or more variants of a



page are shown to users at random, and statistical analysis is used to determine which variation performs better for a given conversion goal.

- Optimising your landing page can increase your Quality Score with search engine marketing networks, thus reducing your average CPC.

SEO or SEM - Which Should You Use?

The answer to this question is plain and simple; *it depends* on:

- **What your specific goal is** - If you want to drive quick traffic to a sale, test a new offer, or kickstart a slow month, SEM should be your choice. If you want to drive long-term growth, SEO may be preferable.
- **Your existing performance** - If you already have strong organic visibility, SEM could be a great way to supplement this with additional visibility.
- **Your margins** - In some cases, once you take into account high click costs and low product margins, it doesn't make sense to run SEM. In cases like this, SEO is likely the channel to drive much stronger returns. It is worth estimating the CPC (cost-per-click) that you need to pay with the PPC keyword tool and to understand what your conversion rate would need to be to make a profit.
- **Consider the lifetime value of your customer** - When using SEM, you can find that higher LTV (Customer Lifetime Value) accounts for higher click costs. But a lower LTV may mean that SEO comes up as a stronger strategy.

SEM VS. SEO: WHAT'S RIGHT FOR MY BRAND?		
	SEM	SEO
WHAT'S THE COMPETITION IN YOUR INDUSTRY LIKE?	There is a lot of competition for your target keywords	There are a lot of organic content gaps to fill
HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR MARKET SEGMENT?	You don't know it well and want to test your idea, product, or service	You already know it has long-term value and demand
HOW LONG ARE YOUR CUSTOMERS' AVERAGE BUYING CYCLES?	Your customers typically know what they want, search for it, and immediately buy it	Your customers research for days, weeks, or months before buying
WHAT'S THE AVERAGE COST-PER-CLICK IN YOUR INDUSTRY?	Your cost-per-click is low and within your budget	The cost-per-click in your industry is very high
HOW OLD ARE YOUR BUSINESS AND WEBSITE?	Your business is new and you have little to no online presence	Your business and website are established and already have some online authority
WHAT'S THE CURRENT STATE OF YOUR WEBSITE'S SEO?	Your website needs a lot of work to improve its current organic SEO factors	Your website is already fairly optimized and currently performing well in organic search

Source - <https://blog.alexa.com/sem-vs-seo/>

These two powerful marketing channels together open up a wealth of opportunities to drive growth from potential customers who are searching for businesses just like yours. When you combine SEO and SEM, you have the ability to integrate the channels and:

- **Use data insights from your SEM strategy to supercharge your SEO approach**, including gaining valuable insights into expected conversion rates, performance at a keyword level, estimates around traffic opportunities, and more. In this respect, think of SEM as a testing-bed for SEO.
- **You can make your SEO efforts work harder by creating remarketing campaigns** as part of your SEM strategy to reach those that previously didn't convert into customers. You can target them with search ads, display ads, and more.
- **You can take over the SERPs by combining these two tactics**, and make sure you are visible both in the ads space and organic listings.

The reality is that, for most businesses, a successful search strategy should see you integrating both SEO and SEM.