

The other day I was speaking with a potential client who was very concerned about her SEO; and, how her paid ranking on Google was just not paying off. Immediately a red flag went off in my head.

“Huh, SEO paid rankings on Google?” I thought.

After I learning more about her situation, I realized she may not have known the difference between search engine optimization (SEO) and search engine marketing (SEM) and was just using jargon.

“You’re not alone when it comes to not knowing the difference between SEO and SEM,” I told her. “Many people use them interchangeably. Though they are very different.”

So, we had a quick primer on the difference.

### **SEO = Website Optimization with No Dough**

See how the “o” is carried through here? SEO. Optimization. No dough. Alliteration works remarkably well for me. So, I’m sharing it with you.



Technically, SEO isn't free. You spend time, energy, and resources to ensure you're doing all you can on your web site, behind the scenes, to increase search rankings naturally, both on your site and on search engine crawlers. Here's how:

- **Keywords:** Determine your keywords list using site analytics. Web site analytics should tell you how people are finding your site, right down to the word that drives them to a page within your site.
  - No analytics? That's okay. You can start by:
    - Writing down all the keywords that you can think of about your company, your products, and the services you offer.
    - Search competitors' sites to see how they are using keywords.

- Leverage free tools like [Google AdWords](#) to identify industry terms or product categories to help with search results.
- Narrow the keywords down to about 10-20 words per page. Limiting the number of keywords and making them specific helps reduce the “bounce” rate within the site. Meaning, visitors are less likely to keep clicking to find content they are searching for.
- Meta tags: Work with your web site developers to post on your pages. This single line of code could greatly impact search results for your pages.
- Font Treatment: “Bold” a relevant keyword at least once per page.
- Tags: Header, title, and Alt tags should also include keywords.
- Copy: Write the page’s copy with keywords in mind. Choose one to three keywords for inclusion in the page’s copy. Each should appear at least twice to three times on that page. This could be in places within the code, in headlines, within the copy, on photo captions, and more. Be creative when thinking about the usage.

### **SEM = Website Marketing Making You Money**

Again I used alliteration to help you remember what SEM means. The use of the letter “m” for marketing, making, and money should help you remember what this means.



SEM is another form of optimization to help increase your overall listing on search engines. It includes paid online advertising with search engine providers, like [Yahoo!/Bing](#), and [Google](#). It is also advertising via social media, such as [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Groupon](#), and more.

There are a few basic ways to use SEM. First you must think about your goal(s) and what you want to accomplish with your media budget, such as:

- Building Brand Awareness: Leverage an SEM campaign when you want to increase brand awareness for a product, client, events, or just about anything. Make sure your SEM campaign manager knows it's a brand awareness campaign so he/she buys for

impression or CPM (cost per impression). This approach ensures the budget is spent on displaying your advertising versus focusing on clicks.

- Conversions/Sales: SEM campaigns can be very powerful for sales. When setting up a conversion campaign, be sure to focus on the CPC or cost per click. This assures the budget is spent on actual clicks for the product you’re advertising versus impressions.
- Lead Generation: Like brand awareness, a CPM campaign can help with lead generation by leveraging the power of the search engines to display your ad most prominently on a page. For example, if the goal is to have the ad show in the first position on a search result, ensure your budget is enough to make that happen. Also make sure you are monitoring the campaign strategically, making changes at least once per day to increase campaign effectiveness.

No matter if you’re doing SEO or SEM, generally your goal is the same—to appear at the top of the search results for your products, brand, services, events, or more. It’s the “process” and “strategy” that makes them different. Well, that and money.

What challenges are you faced with when it comes to SEO and SEM?

[Contact us](#), and we’ll help you reach your goals in either area.