



iProspect Search Engine Marketer Job Function Study

May 2006



Background

In March 2006, iProspect partnered with JupiterResearch to develop a survey to discover if organizations that are utilizing search engine marketing as a channel are creating job functions within their organizations solely dedicated to its management. The results of that survey, and the analysis of its findings, are what comprise the *iProspect Search Engine Marketer Job Function Study*.

Methodology

In March 2006, JupiterResearch conducted a formal survey of search marketers. Respondents were targeted by familiarity with their company's search marketing efforts and screened for involvement with marketing their own company's products. A total of 276 respondents were qualified based on their involvement with search engine marketing. Respondents received an e-mail invitation to participate in the survey, with an attached URL linked to the Web-based survey form. As an incentive, respondents were entered into a sweepstakes for the chance to win a \$50 gift certificate from Amazon.com.

In this survey effort, JupiterResearch worked with its sister company, JupiterWeb, on the technical tasks of sample building and survey fielding. JupiterWeb properties include more than 150 websites and over 150 e-mail newsletters that are viewed by 20 million unique users and generate over 350 million page views monthly, thus enabling JupiterResearch to survey hard-to-reach audiences.

For purposes of this survey, the term "search engine marketing" applies to the macro category of marketing that includes both natural search engine optimization and paid search advertising.



Executive Summary

The *iProspect Search Engine Marketer Job Function Study* reveals some interesting findings about the relative maturity of the search engine marketing channel as reflected by how organizations who are utilizing search engine marketing are dedicating human resources to its management.

Findings, Implications, and Positions

- Key among the findings relating to the current search engine marketer community is that search engine marketers are responsible for an average of five other job functions within their organizations in addition to search engine marketing.

Despite the recent boom in the popularity and power of search engine marketing, it appears that many organizations are not yet assigning and dedicating specialized individuals to the full-time management of that channel. This may be a result of the shortage of experienced search engine marketing practitioners available in the marketplace, and organizations' needs to cultivate this skill set internally within existing staff. It may also be a result of the newness of the search engine marketing channel within some organizations, and the absence of enough early results within those organizations to warrant assigning a dedicated resource to its management as of yet. In either case, this finding is indicative of a less mature channel than many would have thought.

It is iProspect's position that to be fully effective at the management of search engine marketing, dedicated human resources need to be assigned to it, regardless of whether the marketer's organization is engaged with a search engine marketing firm, or is performing all of its search marketing functions in-house.

- Website design and email advertising are at the top of the list of additional functions performed by search engine marketers.

Since search engine marketers are performing other job functions, it is at least encouraging that search engine marketing and website design are often being managed by the same person. It demonstrates that organizations are recognizing the need for these two functions to be closely aligned. This may also be a symptom of organizations' choice to "home grow" their search engine marketers out of existing job functions – with website design being a natural function to expand to include this role.

It is also encouraging to see that email advertising – one of the online channels that can be used most effectively to drive traffic to a website – so often falls within the purview of the same individual who manages search engine marketing. Once again, this demonstrates that organizations are recognizing the need for these two channels to be closely aligned – as well as the potential to extend email marketers' responsibilities to include the newer search engine marketer function.

Given that at many organizations the same person who is managing search engine marketing is also managing other marketing/advertising channels, there appears to be plenty of opportunities for integration between search and other channels.



It is iProspect's position, however, that it is discouraging to see so little campaign integration taking place in the marketplace of search engine marketing with other marketing channels, especially in light of search marketers' first-hand involvement with many of these other channels. It's our view that this phenomenon has far more to do with other channels choosing not to integrate with the search channel, than the search channel's unwillingness to integrate. Integration with the search engine marketing channel should be taking place with as many other channels as possible, as frequently as possible, to maximize the effectiveness of search and other integrated initiatives. Again, this lack of campaign integration with other channels points to a channel that is still maturing.

- 26% of search engine marketers also perform information technology functions.

The implication of this finding is that one out of four of search engine "marketers" probably work for the information technology department. Consequently, the search engine marketing function at those organizations is a technology one and not a marketing one. There is probably some correlation between this finding and the previous detailed finding that website design is the other job function most frequently performed by search engine marketers. Perhaps at these organizations website design responsibilities reside within the IT department, and as a result, so do search engine marketing responsibilities.

It is surprising that this figure is as high as 26%, as it was thought that the ownership of search engine marketing by the webmaster and/or the IT department was a phenomenon of the past and that ownership of budget, management, and implementation of the search engine marketing process was now squarely in the hands of the marketing department.

It is iProspect's position that search engine marketing should be performed by marketers and not technologists. Marketers have knowledge of both traditional and online marketing fundamentals, techniques, and strategies; have greater exposure to other marketing initiatives undertaken by their organizations; and have goals which are more closely aligned with the company's monetary objectives than those of the IT department. This finding, once again, speaks to the further maturing of the search engine marketing channel that needs to take place.

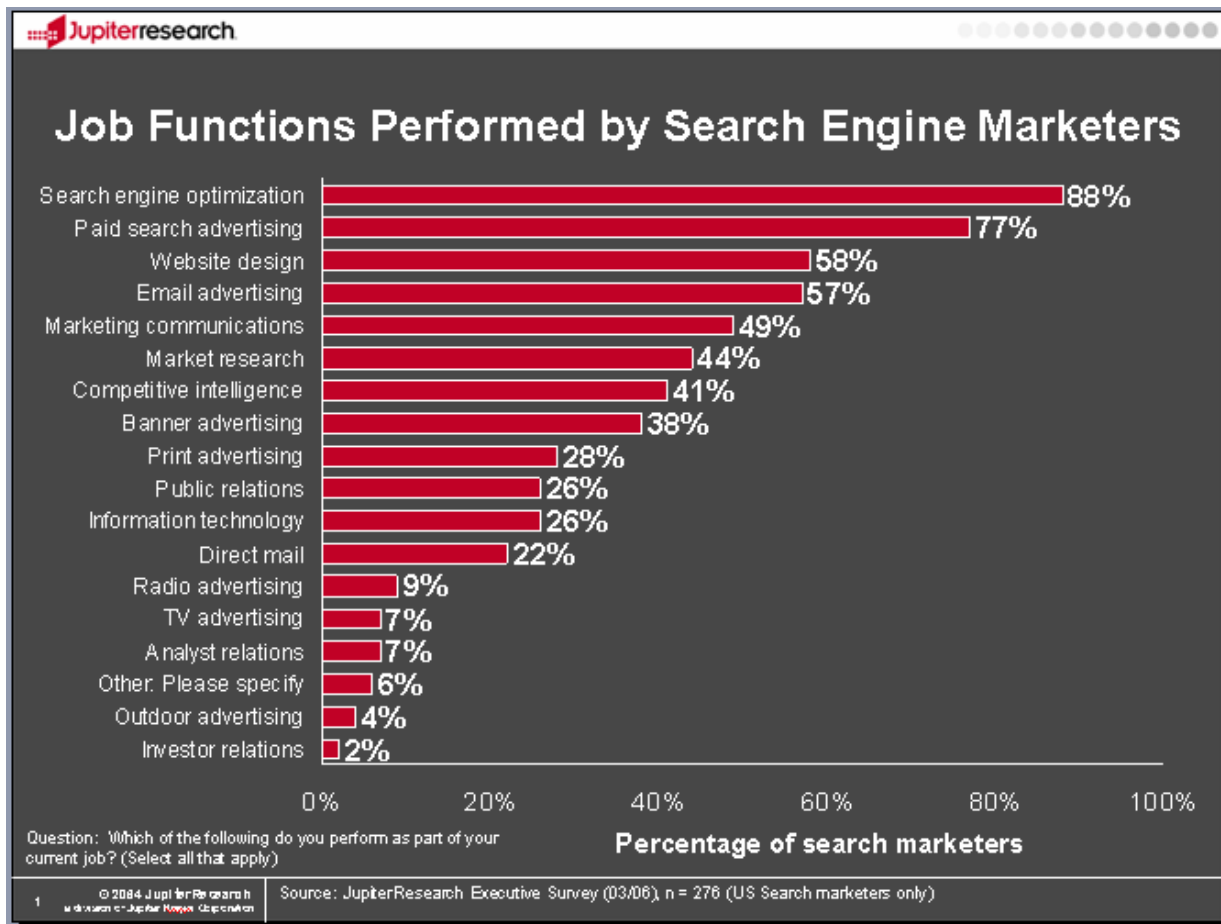


Question & Responses

This study focuses on the findings generated from the following question and responses:

When search engine marketers were asked...

“Which of the following do you perform as part of your current job? (Select all that apply)”



Despite the fact that neither search engine optimization (88%), nor paid search advertising (77%), was performed by 100% of the 276 respondees, note that one or the other was performed by the 276 qualified respondees to this question.



Key Findings

1. Search engine marketers perform an average of five other job functions in addition to search engine marketing.
2. Website design is the most frequently cited non-SEM function also performed by search marketers (58%), with email advertising being the second most reported additional function they perform (57%).
3. The percentage of search engine marketers who are involved in traditional offline media that can drive traffic to websites, as well as be effectively integrated with search, include: print advertising (28%), direct mail (22%), radio (9%), TV (7%) and outdoor advertising (4%).
4. 26% of search engine marketers also perform IT functions.



Detailed Findings

1. Search engine marketers perform an average of five other job functions in addition to search engine marketing.

iProspect believes this finding to be indicative of a less mature marketing channel than many search engine marketing industry observers would have thought. With all the attention given to search engine marketing in the press and online marketing industry circles, the astounding monetary success of Google and Yahoo!, and the superior marketing ROI that many practitioners are reaping from search engine marketing, this function still appears to be just part of an individual's job and not a totally dedicated job function within most organizations.

Possible reasons for this vary, but include the lack of experienced search engine marketers available in the marketplace. This talent shortage may be leading companies to make search engine marketing part of someone's existing job, and to "home grow" the individual's search engine marketing skill set. The possibility also exists that organizations that are new to search engine marketing are still weighing the results of their early efforts before making full-time human resource commitments to this channel, choosing the crawl-before-you-walk-before-you-run philosophy.

Regardless of the reason, it appears that the words "search engine marketing" within individuals' job titles is still a rarity due to the mix of other functions they perform across both interactive and traditional media. At this time, search marketers still appear to be Jacks of many trades.

2. Website design is the most frequently cited non-SEM function also performed by search marketers (58%), with email advertising being the second most reported additional function they perform (57%).

iProspect believes this encouraging finding indicates that many search engine marketers have been afforded a place at the website design table – an advantage that cannot be understated when it comes to gaining cooperation in the implementation of search engine optimization (SEO) best practices in particular. The more that SEO best practices can be incorporated into the day-to-day management of ongoing website design, as well as website re-design, the better chance a website has of achieving high visibility within the natural search results of the major search engines.

Conversely, and related to finding #1 above, it may be that when organizations decide to perform search engine marketing, they naturally look to the website design area to obtain individuals to manage their search engine marketing initiatives.

The email advertising function's relationship to search engine marketing is slightly different than the website design function, in that email advertising has historically been a very productive channel for driving traffic to websites, where website design is not really a channel at all. Yet like those who are involved in website design, those who perform search engine marketing are typically involved in the content of the website, at least as it pertains to their given email campaigns. The ability to create appropriate landing pages and forms, and to build a persuasive architecture for driving respondees to a



conversion are very much part of an email advertiser's skill set. Again, this may be a contributing factor behind why such a high percentage of organizations look to this particular area to also perform search engine marketing.

3. The percentage of search engine marketers who are involved in traditional offline media that can drive traffic to websites, as well as be effectively integrated with search, include: print advertising (28%), direct mail (22%), radio (9%), TV (7%) and outdoor advertising (4%).

iProspect believes this finding is reassuring, yet simultaneously disheartening. It was encouraging to see the number of search engine marketers who were involved in other channels (both online and offline) that had the ability to drive significant traffic to websites and take advantage of a lot of the best practices that are prescribed by search engine marketing once a visitor reaches a website. In addition to the offline channels listed above, email advertising (57%) and banner advertising (38%) were online channels which function hand-in-glove with search engine marketing, something a good search engine marketer could capitalize upon.

The discouraging aspect of this finding is that for all these channels that function so well in concert with search engine marketing – and could be so much more powerful at achieving their marketing goals if they were effectively integrated with search engine marketing – there is very little integration happening within the marketplace despite some percentage of search engine marketers being involved with these other channels. This is a missed opportunity for marketers of all channels, and once again speaks to a maturity level of the search engine marketing channel that has yet to be reached.

4. 26% of search engine marketers perform IT functions.

This finding was very surprising, though two to three years ago it would not have been surprising at all. To think that today one out of four search engine marketers probably work in the IT department instead of the marketing department demonstrates that the search channel still has a way to go. The fact that search engine marketing at some organizations is being managed as a technology tactic and not a marketing strategy is disconcerting, and seems to make as much sense as having the person managing your wide area network also write your press releases.

This finding may correspond to finding #2, where perhaps the website design function is owned by the IT department at a high percentage of companies, and where there is a job function correlation between search engine marketing and website design. This was certainly the norm three to five years ago, but it is surprising to see it's still the case today.

It is iProspect's view that there are far too many traditional marketing best practices known and understood by most marketers and that are also utilized within search engine marketing, to entrust an organization's search engine marketing initiatives to technologists who know little about traditional marketing. It is also our view that IT departments have other priorities which often conflict with the implementation of an aggressive search engine marketing strategy. By placing ownership, budget, and authority for search engine marketing initiatives in the hands of marketers, whose goals and priorities are aligned with their success, this conflict is avoided.