



Directive,

# Search Marketing Breakdown

## SEO vs. PPC vs. Full-Service

Investing in search marketing is essential for your B2B organization to increase website traffic and flourish your growth digitally.

Unfortunately, deciding which strategy saves you time and spend can be a cumbersome task.

The marketing team at Directive has designed this guide to lead your department toward exceeding your search marketing goals and expanding your company's growth overall.

When it comes to search engine optimization (SEO) and pay-per-click advertising (PPC), do you truly know the difference and the best practices to utilize?

Do you know which service will address your pain points and why?

When it comes down to it, the right service depends on your business's goals. It's essential to break down the pros and cons of both and discuss various misconceptions that float around search marketing.

Why? It's imperative that you are confident in which search marketing service (or maybe both) works best for you and how using it correctly can change your growth exponentially.

### SEO vs. PPC Misconceptions

One of the largest search marketing falsehoods we see on a consistent basis is "PPC gets you quick results and SEO takes a long time". This statement is almost true, but it gives you the wrong foundational starting point or wrong perspective going into either.

Let's unpack this phrase a little.

## Pay-Per-Click Advertising

PPC is a go-to for demand generation, and with a **proper approach and infrastructure for lead management** a marketing department can reap rapid rewards.

### PPC Fast Facts

When it comes to [pay-per-click advertising](#), it's not that it won't get you results quickly. Most people don't get certain results because they don't determine beforehand if their targeted keywords and their brand are cohesive.

You need a decent amount of click volume, which depending on your budget, might take three to six months to gather enough data to properly make a decision on whether certain keywords are profitable.

If you layer in your sales cycle, or the time it takes someone from a form fill to closing a deal, this idea that PPC will work lightning fast will create unrealistic expectations.

- ▶ **For example and from experience**, we know if someone searches "agency," that it is a better keyword modifier than "services." We know that the person or company who is looking for an agency has a higher propensity to pay for services than someone searching with the query "services". "Services" queries are usually from someone looking for a freelancer, such as Upwork, Fiverr, or something cheaper.

## What Does This Mean For You?

- ▶ It's imperative that you go into PPC knowing that you will get "clicks" very fast. "Clicks" often times can be seen as a vanity metric. ([Wait, tell me more about this.](#))
- ▶ You can turn a PPC campaign on and get clicks right away — but to think that those clicks are going to turn into opportunities, deals, and revenue in a way that makes sense for your departmental KPIs will take time. You'll also need a marketing infrastructure in place after the initial conversion to continue to nurture there.
- ▶ Understand that it takes a full strategy to make PPC a profitable channel for your business and that's okay.

## Who Should Prioritize PPC Services?

B2B or enterprise companies looking for a PPC agency are looking for a business partner and understand that it might cost more. Also, these companies typically have a large budget to spend on search marketing, strive for immediate results, and may not have content-rich websites.

## How Do You Succeed with PPC?

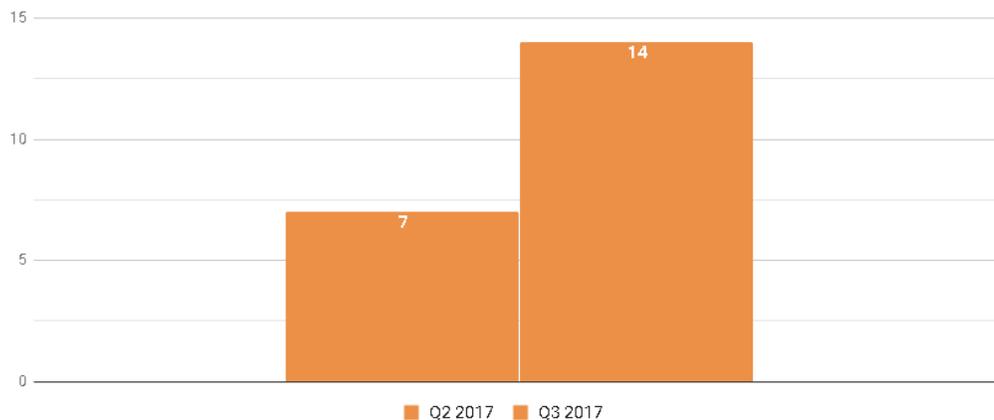
- ▶ Find relevant third-party directories where your audience is visiting and be present there. Being on the right directory can build credibility and ramp up visibility for your B2B brand.
- ▶ It's essential to understand how Google Ads work and who your target audience is. Without these aspects, you will end up paying too much and not get the ROI you should.
- ▶ Ensure that your landing pages are designed to lead the user on a journey to the step you want them to take (the conversion).
- ▶ Understand the cost for keywords that you want to show up in relevant searches for. However, make sure you're focusing on keywords that are associated with buyer intent.
- ▶ Optimize your marketing and sales funnel to reach your targeted audience at the right place, at the right time.

## PPC Success Story

In order to generate qualified leads for our client Xactly, we executed a laser-focused campaign on third-party directory optimization, specifically Capterra.

For Xactly, there were various opportunities to increase visibility in search for their target audience. To meet their objectives of increasing qualified lead volume, we identified different positions within the SERP that showed indicators of buyer intent.

Based on thorough research of their target persona, we found specific opportunities that involved paid advertising in Google and Capterra.



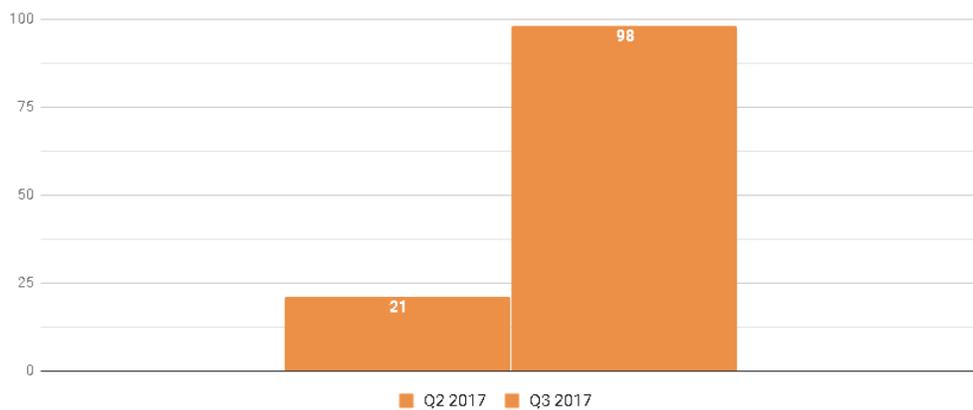
*100% increase in growth in sales accepted lead volume from paid advertising over one quarter.*

By leveraging Google and Capterra's paid advertising platforms, we increased Xactly's search engine presence to potential buyers searching for sales performance management software solutions.

Next, we optimized this fresh search engine visibility by improving the user experience when engaging with Xactly's website.

By strategically building new custom landing pages to these new promotions on Google and Capterra, we were able to communicate a supported message to potential buyers, which lead to increased contact form submissions.

A combination of increasing our search engine visibility to users looking to compare solutions, and optimizing our landing page experience, we were able to improve paid advertising performance for Xactly.



*336% increase in Capterra conversion volume in one quarter.*

**100%**

Increase in growth in sales accepted lead volume from paid advertising over one quarter

**336%**

Increase in Capterra conversion volume in one quarter

**39%**

Boost in pre-qualified clicks from Capterra in one month

[View the complete case study here.](#)

## Search Engine Optimization

[SEO](#) also takes time. However, the misconception here, is “This is going to take too long, it’s all about keywords and X, Y, or Z.” The reality of SEO is it can happen quick!

It depends on where you’re starting from and what your goals are.

### SEO Fast Facts

If you’re a brand-new website in a brand-new business, it could take two to four years for SEO to start delivering results. Find patience in the process, it’s worth it.

You need exceptional design and easy-to-use core pages. This helps your visitors want to stay on your site. ([Learn how to make your audience stay.](#))

You must have fresh content that meets your ideal customer persona - right where they are. Gone are the days of blasting aimless content onto the web. Your content should resonate with your ideal client persona (ICP) and focus on keyword research. What do they care about? Create content about that. ([Learn which content meets your audience’s needs.](#))

**Misconception:** You don’t have to beat Google to be successful in the search engine. This is the falsehood people get burned into their brains. In reality you must beat all the other brands. Get more people talking about your brand than competitors striving to rank for the same keywords.

## What Does This Mean For You?

- ▶ If your company is not implementing tactics to rank higher on Google's SERP - your audience will find your competitors first - and they will steal your business.
- ▶ In the world of search, it's essential to have little to no technical SEO errors on your website for search visibility, a content marketing strategy built to meet your target audience's needs, strong landing pages designed to simplify your users' experience, and a link building strategy that creates buzz and increases credibility back to your site.
- ▶ What do we mean by "buzz"? This buzz can be translated to linking to your website. In other words, you need to build your brand using link building tactics.

Bottom line, without quality backlinks leading to your site, it's difficult to rank. Keep in mind, this isn't magic; you need a strategy.

Link building buzz includes:

- ▶ Having mentions leading back to your site from relevant digital watering holes your prospects go to consume information.
- ▶ Having people [talking about you in the news](#).
- ▶ Having leaders in your industry talk about you.
- ▶ Having partnerships are talking about you.

Whether you invest in a quality SEO agency to free up your schedule or you take on the task in-house, link building (digital PR) is needed to increase your ROI, outperform your competition and get moving up in the SERP.

*"Within months, Directive's efforts generated double-digit increases traffic and keyword rankings. The team demonstrates a vested interest in sustainable success. Their deliberate and methodical approach goes beyond surface-level improvements to create and capitalize on competitive opportunities."*

**Gary Arnold**  
MARKETING MANAGER



## Who Should Prioritize SEO Services?

If you're a publicly-traded company, a large/mid-market/established small business, have people talking about you, and have strategic content; hire the right SEO agency to make the right changes for you.

A quality agency will take the time and effort off of your team and increase your ROI organically; so you can focus on growing your business in other areas.

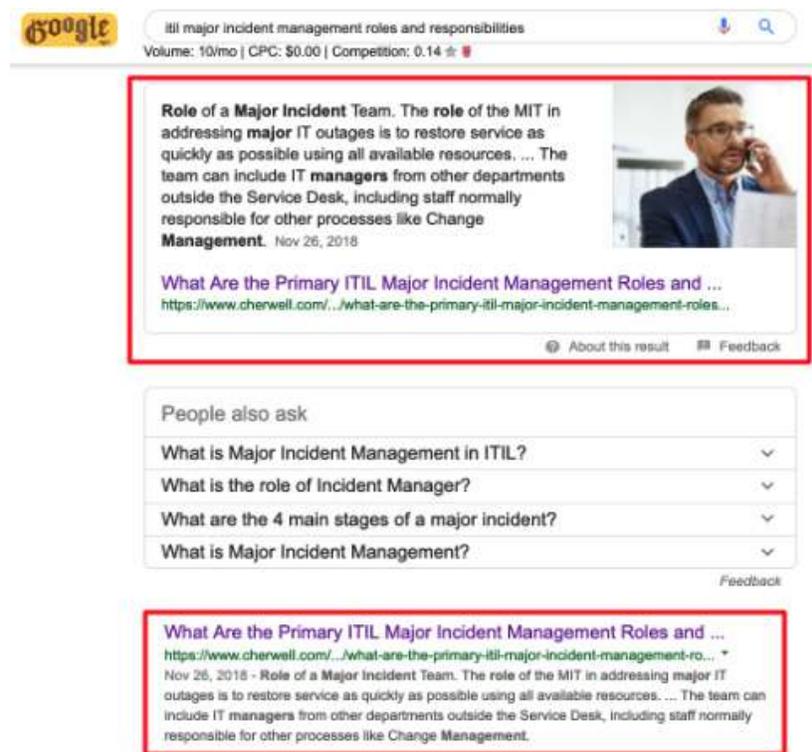
- ▶ You'll often get results faster with SEO. This is in the sense that they can take you from the fifth rank to third or from the third rank to number one.
- ▶ The massive amount of clickthrough rates you get from going to the third position to the first (on a search engine results page) can do exponentially more from a cost-per-opportunity standpoint than PPC could in the first three months.

## How Do You Succeed with SEO?

- ▶ It took our team four years to rank number one for "SEO agency." But was it worth it? Absolutely. [Read about how we did it.](#)
- ▶ Every time you rank, each one of those clicks that turns into an opportunity is hitting against the initial sunk cost you invest in SEO.
- ▶ That sunk cost is your time. It's paying writers. It's earning links. It's doing outreach.
- ▶ Each one of these actions is still a cost. It's not as if SEO is free while paid search costs money.
- ▶ The difference is, in paid search, you're paying an agency fee or just Google, directly. In SEO, you're still paying an agency fee, and also paying writers for content, designers for CRO enhancements, and developers who ensure you fix all technical issues.

## SEO Success Story

For our client, Cherwell, we positioned their articles ranking for 66 keywords total, with the target keyword “itil major incident management roles and responsibilities” ranking #1 on the SERP and obtaining a featured snippets, which you can see below:



This was accomplished through our intensive keyword research added with deep SERP analysis to provide the best target keyword for this piece.

From there, we added focus keyword to our blog’s metadata and overall content.

Additionally, we saw an increase in traffic to their blog pages. When we look at organic landing pages, we see our blog section increased in organic sessions by 59.50% and organic new users by 56.77%.

Landing Page	Acquisition		
	Sessions	% New Sessions	New Users
<b>Organic Traffic</b>	<b>59.50%</b> <span style="color: green;">▲</span> 18,780 vs 11,774	<b>1.67%</b> <span style="color: red;">▼</span> 74.73% vs 75.99%	<b>56.77%</b> <span style="color: green;">▲</span> 14,036 vs 8,953
1. <a href="/library/blog/7-steps-to-continual-service-improvement-csi-success/">/library/blog/7-steps-to-continual-service-improvement-csi-success/</a>			
Jan 1, 2019 - Mar 31, 2019	2,015 (10.73%)	86.05%	1,734 (12.35%)
Oct 1, 2018 - Dec 31, 2018	2,825 (23.99%)	86.87%	2,454 (27.41%)
<b>% Change</b>	<b>-28.67%</b>	<b>-0.94%</b>	<b>-29.34%</b>
2. <a href="/library/blog/what-are-the-primary-itil-major-in-cident-management-roles-and-responsibilities/">/library/blog/what-are-the-primary-itil-major-in-cident-management-roles-and-responsibilities/</a>			
Jan 1, 2019 - Mar 31, 2019	1,445 (7.69%)	77.51%	1,120 (7.98%)
Oct 1, 2018 - Dec 31, 2018	59 (0.50%)	59.32%	35 (0.39%)
<b>% Change</b>	<b>2,349.15%</b>	<b>30.66%</b>	<b>3,100.00%</b>
3. <a href="/library/blog/itil-service-desk-responsibilities/">/library/blog/itil-service-desk-responsibilities/</a>			
Jan 1, 2019 - Mar 31, 2019	1,272 (6.77%)	79.25%	1,008 (7.18%)

In Q1, our blog pieces accounted for 18,780 organic sessions and 14,036 organic new users. This is compared to 11,774 organic sessions and 8,953 organic new users from the previous quarter.

Through high-quality keyword research and SERP analyzed blog topics, we were able to achieve this organic increase.

# #1

In the search engines results page (SERP).

# 1,445

Organic sessions over one quarter.

# 1,120

Organic new users over one quarter.

## SEO with PPC > SEO vs. PPC

When you put these two search marketing channels together, now, that's when you get something powerful.

The thought process shouldn't be SEO versus PPC.

**It should be SEO and PPC.**

If you can take your paid search, go into your search terms report, and find all keywords that generate the most opportunity, deals, and revenue for your business, then you can take that exact data from the search term report, give that to your SEO team, and say, *"We notice that people searching X convert far more than people searching Y. Let's change our title tags under each one."*

If you're trying to decide which to do first, keep it straightforward. See below:

### Your Next Steps

#### **1. Ask yourself, "Does my budget fit better for SEO or PPC?"**

Whether you're in-house or partnered with an agency, you need to learn which terms are driving revenue profitably. An agency giving you four to ten hours a month can't do that.

You need experts who keep you up-to-date on all aspects of your account and are constantly deep-diving in your data to avoid wasted spend. This way, you're never in the dark and you know where your spend is being utilized.

At the end of the day, you truly get what you pay for.

**If you're looking to only do SEO**, and have a budget of \$6,000, you can get a lot of bang for your buck from a firm at this price point.

Avoid dropping below \$5,000 when paying an agency for SEO. It's challenging for you to receive quality time and attention to details from experienced specialists when you drop below this price.

If you do not have over \$5,000 a month for an agency that's totally fine; however, we would recommend seeking out a freelancer instead.

Why?

If you drop below that agency price point, you're dealing with a junior-level person spending only ten hours a month on your account. Additionally, he or she will give boilerplate recommendations from a systematized process that is not unique to your goals.

**If you're looking to only do PPC**, you'll run into two scenarios. You'll come across an agency that goes off of an ad spend model, where they take between 10% to 30% of your ad spend, or, you'll see a "retainer" model. This means you are billed monthly for management of PPC efforts.

When working with an agency with an ad spend model, many companies feel burned due to a lack of transparency into budget allocations for campaigns.

For B2B and enterprise companies, we suggest the retainer model so you feel secure in the spend you're putting behind these efforts. Also, your agency is held accountable to do what they say and constantly think of new strategies to increase ROI.

Percentage of spend billing does not put the clients' best interests in mind because the agency is demotivated to continually find new ways to ensure your account is performing efficiently. If they lower your spend, then they lower their earnings.

Keep in mind, quality agency efforts aren't cheap. Why? You don't know if Google Ads doesn't work or if you hired an inadequate vendor.

That is not a position of power.

*"Directive has generated notable increases in search rankings, web traffic, and conversion rates. With a customer-first attitude, the team communicates efficiently, responsively, and promptly. Having a range of industry expertise, they've established themselves as a valuable partner."*

**John Palmer**

DIGITAL MARKETING SPECIALIST



## ***2. Look at your internal resources - what do you already have?***

Next, look at your internal resources for your team. Ask yourself, “Is my team where I need them to be successful? Do we have what it takes to run a strategic, goal-focused SEO campaign, or are we battling 50 other daily tasks?”

Your timeline is based on your team and what you can execute internally.

In other words, if you have:

- ▶ Strategic writers
- ▶ Powerful brand presence
- ▶ An authoritative website
- ▶ Poor on-page targeting
- ▶ No experience with a reputable SEO firm

**You will most likely get results faster from SEO than starting PPC for the first time.**

[Learn how we lead one piece of SEO-optimized content to turn into 27 demo requests in 5 months.](#)

If you have:

- ▶ Previous PPC results
- ▶ Never done custom landing pages
- ▶ Great historical data
- ▶ No AB tests run yet or active currently
- ▶ No writer or web developer and your link profile is pretty poor

**The timeline for PPC is going to be quicker for you instead.**

[Learn how we increased bottom-of-funnel conversion rates by 336% in one quarter using PPC.](#)

You see, it’s not that SEO takes longer than PPC or vice versa. It’s that each is relevant to your business, your team, and what goals you’re trying to accomplish.

Assess and think, “Are we set on our content, our development, and our brand, or do we have a lot of historical data already, but we don’t like our performance?”

Now, adjust your timeline for each and focus on the best way to exceed your goals.

### **3. Decide how involved you want to be in your search marketing efforts.**

Lastly, you must decide how much time you're able to dedicate to search marketing to truly cultivate your growth. If you're partnered with an SEO agency, there will be more communication needed on your end than if you're working solely on PPC.

For example, for PPC, your agency can have complete control of your landing pages if they are partnered with a third-party software. They will have complete control of Google Ads and of your budget.

**In other words, for PPC, it will become a matter of just receiving your approval.**

The scope of SEO can be more encompassing.

For large organizations, an agency typically won't have access to your CMS. Maybe you have your own content team and you want them to produce all blog content and deliverables. Maybe you need your developers to make all site changes, but they're kind of busy working on your product.

You see, there are different bottlenecks involved with both services, so you have to ask yourself: *"Are we going to have more roadblocks on paid than we are on organic?"*

## **Make Your Decision**

In closing, these different factors matter. You shouldn't think of search marketing as SEO vs PPC, **it should be SEO with PPC.**

Where do you want to start? What will best work with your team to outrank competitors, reduce spend overall and impress your C-suite?

Make your decision based on your budget, your team, and the bottlenecks you may be facing and get started.

Looking to relaunch your search marketing efforts? Stay right on track with our [19-point checklist!](#)

Search can be one of the most lucrative and cost-effective channels when executed correctly.

Lack the human resources to execute search, or simply want to discuss your current efforts with a search marketing expert?

## Contact Us

sales@directiveconsulting.com  
(949) 214-4024

## Interested in a Partnership?

hmans@directiveconsulting.com  
(949) 214-4024 ext. 708

**At Directive, we focus our efforts on comprehensive search marketing for ROI-driven B2B and enterprise firms.**

### Los Angeles

555 West 5th Street, Floor 35  
#306, Los Angeles, CA 90013

### Austin

9225 Bee Caves Road,  
Building A, Suite 100,  
TX 78733

### Orange County

5201 California Ave #150  
Irvine, CA 92617

### London

15 Bishopsgate, Floor 6,  
London, UK EC2N 3AR

### New York City

750 Lexington Avenue, Floor 9,  
New York, NY 100223