

Setting the scene for search-based marketing



By [Peter Stewart](#)

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Search-based marketing may be broken down into conversion, search engine optimisation (SEO), paid search and performance email information. In setting the scene for the rest of 2012, here are various trends per category.



Conversion trends in 2012

1. Source-to-sale reporting

This is all about measurability, campaign ROIs, setting web KPIs, contributors and properly following through.

It is important to highlight how web KPIs contribute to the entire marketing mix. Furthermore, we need to analyse performance and compare various marketing channels (impact of ROI per channel). This approach is a continuous improvement, though, as well as a very serious attribution modelling topic.

2. Development of mobile within the mix and growth of tablet apps

What is the role of mobile and various devices? Which influences have multiple digital setups on conversion rate? Which audience can be reached best by which device and how do the various conversion rates and user experiences differ from each other?

3. More in-depth user experience testing

Something which cannot be ignored in 2012 is testing, testing, testing! Don't assume what could be possible, but audit, analyse and use data to build powerful hypothesis. Test your variables and learn from your users. What will work? What doesn't work?

4. With the death of IE6, better adoption of HTML5

With the death of IE6 we can move forward to [HTML5](#). How will the user experience change? And how easy will it be to deliver solid experiences across sites?

SEO trends in 2012

1. Personalisation

A trend in SEO 2012 is that there is already more focus on personalisation of search results, using a variety of social signals from Google+, Facebook, Twitter and blogs.

User approval and acceptance of content (votes) on the web has got to start playing an important part in rankings, which in turn will mean that websites consisting of "thin" content will be marked down in the rankings and quality content will remain as important as ever, but even more so now.

2. Google launches Your World social search integration - "Search plus Your World"

Members, and to a lesser extent others who are signed into Google, will be able to search the broader web and their own Google+ social profile, with Google+ circles, photos, posts and more integrated into search.

Instead of all the public information that is already available to everyone searching via Google, searchers can also see information that they posted into Google's new social network and on some of Google's other services, such as Picasa Web. Google+ profiles will now also be a part of the search query box, provided that the member is signed into Google+.

3. Private content in your web results

Personalised results include listings from the web that are enhanced by personal behaviour, personal connections and public posts and photos - both consumer-owned and shared with them.

Paid search trends for 2012

1. Performance display advertising

With a strong growth in 2011, there is no doubt that in 2012 there will be a strong emphasis on budgets moving more towards performance display media.

With traditional media buys on the digital front costing more each year and the return on those rands spent becoming less, one can expect clients to adopt a different approach when looking to secure their ROI in 2012.

Clients are more aware that the presence of their digital creative does no longer suffice; in order for them to communicate more about their brand, their target market has to 'click'. Stepping into a performance-based pricing model opens up that opportunity for advertisers who want to achieve multiple brand objectives.

2. Facebook

In 2012, we will be seeing a big impact on budget percentage shifting to Facebook PPC ads. With clients growing more aware of where their brand is being talked about and how social media can play a role in communicating their brand and product messages, it's no surprise that we are starting to see more pay-per-click activity on Facebook.

3. YouTube

YouTube being owned by Google allows advertisers to get high premium ad placements at the same cost-effective performance-based pricing model.

In 2012, we can expect to see more advertisers run their above-the-line 30-second TV ad spots onto the YouTube network as part of their media-plan rollouts.

Performance email information trends in 2012

1. Mobile messaging is on the rise

According to recent statistics, there are more than double the amount of mobile internet users (62%) than desktop internet users in South Africa. Additionally, the increasing availability of smartphones such as BlackBerry (which hold 67% of the smartphone platform market share in SA) means that more users will be retrieving emails via their mobile/smartphones.

So, while mobile messaging continues to be an important part of communicating with South Africans, ensuring your email messaging is also optimised for mobile viewing is going to be vital in 2012.

2. Qualified data needs to be a focus

With the inception of the [Consumer Protection Act](#) in 2011 and the future implementation of the national [opt-out](#) registry, unsolicited messaging will carry real-world penalties for those sending direct marketing communications.

Make a point in 2012 to confirm that the recipients you're targeting have indeed opted in to hear from you and that your list acquisition practices are above board, carrying the necessary checks and balances.

3. Relevance is essential

We've seen numerous studies out of 2011 showing that one of the top three reasons for users unsubscribing from email communication is irrelevance.

Using your subscriber's name to personalise your communications to them is no longer enough - you need to bring them targeted, relevant content that speaks to their individual needs and preferences. If you don't do this, you'll almost certainly lose that relationship in 2012.

4. It's no longer just marketing - it's an on-going, integrated digital conversation

With so many marketing channels available to both business/brands and consumers, gone are the days of the "silo" approach.

Integration of profile and behavioural data across different marketing channels such as search, mobile, social, eCommerce etc will prove to be the key to understanding your customer and accompanying them through their individual journey with you.

Without a doubt, 2012 will see the rise of true one-to-one digital conversations.

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ABOUT PETER STEWART

Peter Stewart is the MD of award-winning digital conversion agency Clickthinking/iProspect (www.clickthinking.com), which he founded in 1999. In 2011, the company was acquired by Aegis Media (www.aegismedia.co.za) and is now part of the iProspect network. Pete has judged both local and international direct marketing association awards. He serves on a select group advising Microsoft engineers on ways of improving its search products. Tel +27 (0)21 404 1801 or email pete@clickthinking.com.
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