INTRODUCTION

Transcript
# Introduction

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LESSON 1:
SEARCH MARKETING CONCEPTS
The 3i principles are the foundation tenets of the Digital Marketing Institute framework for successful search marketing. This stands for Initiate, Iterate, Integrate. And by keeping these 3is in mind as you progress with this course when the time comes to develop your own search marketing strategy you will find it much easier, more accurate, and well-informed. The core value of the DMI 3i methodology is the centrality of the consumer who we optimize towards and seek out wherever they are. Let’s take a look at what exactly each of this 3i’s mean. Initiate. Rather than starting with yourself, start with the customer, with what they are actually doing, and work backwards towards your search strategy. Iterate. This involves continually learning from your online search engagement with your customers and acting on that. Integrate. This involves integrating all of the search channels coherently.

This diagram displays a Digital Marketing Institute framework for successful search marketing, which outlines the key competency areas within the specialism. Each competency area is a module on this course, so let’s take a quick look at each module. Introduction to search marketing, SEO setup, SEO workshop, SEO content, page search, display advertising, video advertising, analytic setup, applied analytics, strategy and planning. This course shouldn’t be seen as a standalone course. During each module think about how everything you learn can be integrated together to create an all-encompassing search marketing strategy that works for your company.

Introduction to search marketing is the first of 10 modules in search marketing. We’ll start out with some concepts about search engines, how search has evolved over the years, some common misconceptions about search, how people use search engines day-to-day. How language relates to how search engines work, and how you can identify the right keywords to optimize for, and search engines as answer engines which is the next evolution in search engine.

A search engine is a program that searches for and identifies items in a database that correspond to keywords or characters specified by the user, used especially for finding particular sites on the web. Search engines are an applied form of information retrieval, which is a computer science discipline. Computer science is the fundamental part of all search engines, especially information with retrieval as, for example, Google started as an information retrieval project at Stanford University by Larry Page and Sergey Brin.

This is a typical search engine results page. This is displayed by search engines and responds to a query from its users. Paid advertising makes up the bulk of a search results page, especially above the fold because this is what search engines like Google make most of their money from. When people click on ads, Google gets paid, and that’s the bulk of their profits. These paid ads are the result of Google Ads advertising. These sections are the organic search results which other results of Google’s algorithmic evaluations of websites and webpages. Google feels these are the most relevant and trustworthy results to show for any given query. The order in which they appear represents the relevance and trusted Google acquired to these results. A high ranking on Google means that the webpage is showing near the top of the organic search results. Users tend to click more on the organic search results than on the paid ads, because they tend to trust the organic results more than they trust the paid ads. Usually when users recognize an ad as a paid ad, they’re less likely to click on it and will instead prefer to click on an organic result that they feel has more relevance and more trust associated with it.

Generally speaking, all search engines have three main processes. The crawler, the indexer, and the query engine. The crawler, which in Google is known as Googlebot, is the piece of software that continuously crawls the web trying to find new links and updated pages. When the crawler finds
something new, it sends them on to the indexer, which is Google’s internal process that tries to make sense of what the crawler has found, and tries to see what kind of keywords that page could be ranked for. The indexer then builds an index of all the pages that have been found and that is what you perform to search on when you do a search in Google. The query engine is the front end of Google, where the user enters search terms and where Google tries to make sense of what the user has typed in, and selects the best possible results from which index to show in its search result. Again, relevant and trust are the key factors the Google users to determine which of the new results deserves to be ranked near the top.

The process for paid advertising is very different from the one from organic search. Advertisers choose keywords that they want to advertise on, and whenever their keyword is searched for it triggers a live option. Google determines which ad is shown first and second and third depending on the bids that the advertiser has put in for that particular keyword, as well as the quality score of their ad and their landing page. Those combined result in an ad rank, and the ad with the highest ad rank is shown as the first ad.

**Trends in Search**

The last couple of years, Google has seen a lot of changes in how it presents its search results and the type of results that are showing. For example, we see a lot of direct answers in Google search results that provide an answer to the query directly on the search result’s page without you having to click through to the actual website. We also see more contextual search. For example, pro-active notifications on your Android phone about traffic conditions or delayed flights without you having to go and actually query those in Google yourself. Because Google connects to your calendar, connects to your email, it knows all those things about you. We also see more voice search becoming the norm now, where people will ask a query directly to the Siri, or Cortana, or other mobile voice device, for specific queries. When you do a voice search you only get a single answer from Google, which is of course very different in a list of 10 blue links. So that’s important to keep in mind when you do your search marketing strategy, and how that relates to the behavior of the users you’re trying to target. When user behavior changes dramatically, you will need to change your SEO strategy as well, to make sure you catch up with what your users are doing, and that you can make sure you’re in front of them in the right context on the right device.

**Common Misconceptions**

Let’s talk about some common misconceptions about SEO, because there’s a lot of disinformation out there and a lot of old habits that people haven’t yet unlearned when it comes to search optimization. First, search engine submissions. A lot of people still believe that they need to submit their website to a search engine where it will be crawled, indexed, and ranked. That is no longer true. Google and other search engines will discover your website on their own using two links to your website, from other websites or to domain name registrations which Google keeps an eye on to make sure that it can easily find any new website that is being registered. Another common misconception is the meta keywords tag. Previously you could identify the topics that your website should be ranked for by putting those in the meta keywords tag on your website. Google and other search engines have stopped using the meta keywords tag, because they were abused a lot by spammers who put a lot of irrelevant keywords in there to try and get more traffic to the website. Generally speaking, the meta keywords tag is no longer useful for SEO. The only exception is for news websites where a specific news keywords meta tag is still being used to identify the topics of news articles.
Another common misconception is keyword density or keyword stuffing, where you feel you have to put a keyword that you’re trying to rank for into your body content a certain amount of times. That used to be the case but not anymore because Google and other search engines have become very smart in interpreting human language and understanding exactly what a piece of content is about. So you don’t need to cram the keyword into your copy anymore at certain amount of time. In fact, if you do that, it might actually lead to your website being interpreted as spam rather than as a legitimate search result. Instead it’s more important that you write good, long, in-depth copy about your specific topic, so that Google has enough words and material to work with and understand that you’re writing high quality content that deserves to be ranked in the search results.

Another common misconception is that, if you spend a lot of money on paid advertising you will also be rewarded with high rankings and organic search results. That is not true. Google in fact keeps its Google Ads division very much separate from its organic search division to prevent people suing Google when they feel they’re being unfairly treated in organic search results. No matter how much you spend on paid advertising, you will never get an advantage in organic search as a result of that. Instead what you see happening a lot, is that when a company spends a lot on paid advertising, they also tend to have quite a large budget allocated to search engine optimization for the organic results, so that they can claim both high slots in advertising results and high rankings in organic search. This leads to this particular misconception that there’s a correlation between the two.

The last common misconception is about web spam and guaranteed rankings. You will have a lot of SEO companies who will claim they can guarantee you a number one spot on Google. This tends to be a hallmark of web spam, because no SEO can actually guarantee a first, top ranking on Google. Instead, we focus on high-quality content and doing all the right things, hoping to be rewarded in Google’s organic search results over time. Whenever someone promises you top rankings on Google, you tend to have to rely on web spam tactics to get you there, and those sorts of tactics also tend to result in penalties on your website, or your website will actually be deindexed after an amount of time when Google detects that you’re using web spam to get to the top of its search results. So don’t believe it when anybody claims to guarantee you a number one spot on Google.

**How People Use Search Engines**

Generally speaking, all searches that people do on search engines can be classified as one of three types of searches. We have transactional queries, where people actively want to do something, like buy a plane ticket or download a song. We have informational queries, where people want to know something, for example, the name of a new band or a good restaurant in New York. And lastly, we have navigational queries, where some people want to go to a specific website or webpage that they know exists on the web. Like, for example, they type in “Facebook” into a search engine, or “the homepage of the NFL.” Search engines will identify the type of query that someone is using and will show the best possible results, either transactional, informational, or navigational results to satisfy that particular user’s query.

This is an outline of a common process people go through when using search engines. First, someone experiences the need for an answer or solution, or piece of information. Then, they formulate that need in a string of words and phrases, which is the query, the search term, or the keyword. They enter that query into a search engine, and then browse through the paid and organic results to find the best match. When they click on the most appealing result, they will quickly evaluate it, whether or not it satisfies their need, and if it does, that’s the last that the search engine sees of them. If the result doesn’t satisfy the query, users can go back to the search engine, try a different result, or try to change the query a little bit to find a more suitable set of results.
Generally speaking, users will go through this process several times before this query is satisfied and they're happy they've gotten the right answer.

**Language and Search**

Search engines have become very good at understanding human language and can interpret it quite accurately. This makes things a lot easier for us because now we can honestly say we can build an optimized website for humans more than for search engines. We don't need to focus on specific tricks and tactics any more like keyword density. We can just focus on writing great copy aimed at end users. Some of the technologies that search engines use to analyze human language and copy and make sure that they can serve the best possible result are things like LSI, which is Latent Semantic Indexing, LDA, TF-IDF, Topic Modeling, etc., etc.

These are all kinds of different approaches to semantic analysis of human language and search engines will use a variety of these to analyze content and make sure they can serve you the best possible result. Search engines, as a result, have become very good at understanding human language, but are not quite perfect yet.

Sometimes they still need a little bit of help from us when we write copy and optimize web pages to make sure that Google understands what kind of queries your content will be relevant for, and where it should be ranked for. Another important aspect of modern search engines is entities. An entity is basically any concept, or idea, or item, that exists in the real world.

Search engines can understand entities and understand the relationships between entities to help serve the best possible search results. For example, you could ask a search engine where does Donald Trump live? This question has several entities and relationships embedded within. For example, Donald Trump, as the main entity of the search, is the president of the United States. This again, has several other entities associated with it, like the office of president, the country of the United States. The word live in your query relates to the entity of a residence, and a search engine can interpret all of these to arrive at a correct answer, in this case, the White House. You can then ask a follow-up question like, who is his wife?

And the search engine will understand that his part of that query relates to the previous entity, Donald Trump. Wife, of course, is a new entity. It will understand the relationship between those and will serve you the right answer. Search engines like Google will also heavily personalize results, based on what it knows about the person doing the search.

It knows, for example, where the user is based, and will try to localize the search results based on the geographic location of the searcher. It also knows a lot about the search history, what the user has typed into Google before, and will use that information to refine the search results. Google also has a good eye on your browsing history, especially if you use an Android browser or a Chrome browser, and will use that data to determine which websites you like to see the most to filter that into the search results.

Lastly, Google knows a lot about your social networks and connections and where appropriate, will feed that into the search results pages, as well. So when you do a search, versus when someone else does a search, you might see entirely different search results based on the personalization that search engines apply to that.
The key purpose of a search engine is to provide its users with the correct answers. Google will now often show direct answers in its search results so that users don't have to click through to the website providing the answer. With the growth of voice search, Google will provide these answers in a format that is entirely separate from the web as direct voice commands given to users.

So this could dramatically change how users engage with search engines and it's something you will need to keep an eye on to make sure that your website continuously generates traffic and sales.
LESSON 2: USING ORGANIC SEARCH IN MARKETING CAMPAIGNS
Search Engine Optimization

Search engine optimization is a process, so it is not something you do once and forget about. SEO needs constant attention and focus. Your website is not a static finished thing. It’s something that requires constant effort to improve and optimize. What can you accomplish with SEO? It’s important to set objectives before you start doing any SEO work. We should start with establishing a baseline of performance. How is your website currently performing? How much traffic is it getting from organic search? And how much sales or lead is it generating? We can then look at several key metrics to determine SEO success. First off, we look at improving traffic from organic search. Imagine this in web analytics where we look at the visits for traffic source. We also want to of course improve sales or conversions on our website. Again, web analytics will tell us what kind of sales and conversions we’re getting on the website and what traffic source those sales and conversions are coming from.

Lastly we want to measure our impact in search visibility and we can do that by tracking how we rank in Google’s organic search results. We can either use a rank tracking tool or use a platform like Google Search Console in the search analytics report to see exactly how well our website is performing.

Technical SEO

Technical SEO is about making your website easily crawlable and indexable. There’s a lot of different factors that go into technical SEO and some of the most important ones are, how fast your site loads. The kind of HTTP status code that you’re serving and a Geo-targeting that your website might have, how your website is structured and how pages link to one another. Any duplicate content issues where pages might have content that is very similar, any structured data that you might have on your website, XML sitemaps that help search engine crawl and index your content and much, much more.

To assess a website’s technical SEO, we usually emulate a Google crawl of your website. We can use a variety of different tools for that. These tools will generate reports on what went well in that crawl, and what went wrong. We can then use that data to determine how well optimized the website’s technical SEO is, and what needs to be done to improve it further. Google Search Console is a great tool to start with. This is a free tool that Google would give you access to once you’ve proven that you own a website. Usually if you’re an administrator on a website’s Google Analytics account that is sufficient for Google and will give you access to Search Console as well. In Search Console which is formally known as Webmaster Tools, you can find a variety of different reports that give an indication over website’s technical health. The crawl errors report is one of the most valuable reports as it tells you what Google finds wrong with your website whenever it tries to crawl it.

Another great tool is Screaming Frog SEO Spider. This tool will emulate a Google crawl on your website and generates a report of everything that it finds. It’s a very flexible tool that can be used for all kinds of technical analysis. The free version can crawl up to 500 pages and then there is a paid version that unlocks unlimited crawl capabilities. The downside of Screaming Frog is that you will still need to interpret the data yourself. So it does require a certain amount of basic SEO knowledge and technical understanding. DeepCrawl is another technical SEO tool that like Screaming Frog will crawl your website and generate reports. Contrary to Screaming Frog, which you need to download and install in your PC, DeepCrawl is a cloud platform that you can use on a subscription basis. But not as flexible as Screaming Frog, DeepCrawl does generate useful reports that give you clear indication of what might be going wrong on your website. This makes it a bit more useful for beginner SEOs who...
might not necessarily have the technical understanding to interpret the data that Screaming Frog generates.

**SEO Content**

When your website is technically sound, the next thing to look at is the content on your site. It’s important to understand that search engines rank webpages rather than websites and that every page on your site should be optimized for its own topic which can be a keyword or a set of keywords. Content marketing is the tactic that we use to grow a website’s relevance and authority in search engines by publishing and promoting great content.

A perfectly-optimized page for SEO has all of the following elements. First, a strong title tag that describes your topic and contains the main keyword that you want to rank for. Then a meta description, which is a short summary of the contents of the page. You need to have a strong headline which aligns with the title tag and also contains the main keyword. You need well-written body content, where more content is better and that content needs to explain the topic in detail. Make sure you structure the content properly using sub-headers, to make it easily scannable for when people just have a quick look through it. Any images on the page need to have an alt attribute, which is a little code that tells search engines what the image contains. You can use the alt attribute to make the page more relevant for the keyword you try to rank for. The page should also contain links to other pages on your website as well as external sources that you can trust. This will help Google evaluate where your page fits in to your site structure and understand that you link to other reputable sources, making you a little bit more trustworthy yourself.

Lastly, ensure that your page has strong calls-to-action that tell your readers what you want them to do next, like buy now, click here to read more, add to cart, contact us, etc., etc. Content comes in all kinds of different formats, and each has its own strengths and weaknesses. This content marketing matrix shows where different content types fit into your overall content marketing strategy. For example, how-to guides are great to educate readers on a topic and quizzes and competitions can entertain your visitors.

It’s important to pick the right format that suits what you want to accomplish with your content. Search engines will show all kinds of different content in its search results. It’s important you understand what a search engine shows for a specific search so that you can make sure you create the right content to align with that search results page. For example, in this search result, we see a knowledge graph answer at the top as well as images showing different kinds of diagrams. There are also text results that are nearly all blog articles about the topic, and Google also shows related queries that could be interesting to optimize for as well. So if you want to get traffic on this keyword, you’ll know you need to create a great article with good imagery to go along with it.

Other types of search results are news, videos, apps, books and more. Google has various types of search verticals and will integrate this in their search results. You’ll also see so-called ‘rich snippets’ in Google results, which are enriched search results that show additional information from the website. For example, when you search for event tickets, Google is likely to show you rich snippets showing event date and locations for available tickets.

**Trust and Links**

Great content alone is not enough to rank in Google.
Your website also needs to be seen as a trustworthy and reliable source. Google calculates the trustworthiness of your website through its PageRank algorithm. This is what made Google unique when it was first launched and remains an important part of their algorithm to this day. Basically, PageRank means that your websites needs to be linked to from other trusted websites to show Google that your site is important and authoritative, and that your content can be trusted. Without links, it's very hard if not impossible to achieve high rankings in Google. Most often, other websites will link to your website’s homepage. However, that’s not always the best page to rank for a keyword. For specific queries about product and services you want those pages to show up in Google search results.

The way the value of external links is distributed to your website is important so that Google knows it can also trust your deeper pages. Ideally, you want some links from external websites pointing to these deeper pages. This not only helps those webpages rank better in search results, it also helps Google’s crawlers to find those deeper pages, and then the other pages link to from there. Google search console would give you some data about the links from external website that Google has found. It doesn’t present a complete list, but gives you an overall idea of how your content is linked to and which websites link to yours. This can be useful to find possible broken pages on your site that have links from external websites, which you will want to fix or redirect them to relevant active pages.

A great third-party tool to help with link analysis is Majestic. This tool has its own database of links with its own crawler to create a searchable database of all the links that it’s found on the web. You can use this to analyze your own site’s links as well of those of your competitors. Majestic has some proprietary metrics that can be useful indicators of a website’s link profile. These metrics are trust flow and citation flow. The higher these metrics, the stronger your website’s link profile and the more trusted your website is. Majestic is free to use for websites that you have a verified owner of and has a paid subscription option if you want to look at your competitors’ websites. Another third-party link analysis tool is Moz’s Open Site Explorer. It has its own link database and link metrics such as domain authority, which is used by many SEO’s to evaluate the strength of a website link profile. Open Site Explorer has some features that you can use for free, but it requires a paid subscription for most of the data.

It’s important to know that links are the most relevant and valuable if they come from websites that are topically relevant to yours. If you sell shoes online you’ll want links from websites that talk about shoes and fashion, not necessarily from a used car website. So look at the site’s content, the title and headline and the on-page optimization to evaluate if a link from that website would be topically relevant for yours. So how do you go about getting more links to your website? There are roughly four main tactics to get other websites to link to yours. First, trusted online business directories still have some value. While most directories are pure spam, some like Yell and Scoot still have value. If you do a search for business directory on Google the top ranked websites tend to be the ones that are worthwhile, because Google obviously trusts this website. Blogger outreach is the process of engaging your bloggers and writers to get them to publish articles about you, about your content, about your website and your products. Sometimes you can offer to write a guest post for another website which includes a link to your website, but Google doesn’t like it when you do this in exchange for free products or money. So you have to tread a little bit carefully. Linkbait is content that is so awesome that people will want to link to it voluntarily. They can be something really useful, something funny, something controversial or insightful, or anything that really grabs people’s attention. If it’s good enough people will love it and link to it from their own websites. And digital PR is about getting coverage on news websites and online publications, hopefully with a link back to your website. Good digital PR focuses on newsworthy things you’ve done or interesting research that publishers can write a story about.
With digital PR you can get high-value links from news websites pointing to your website. While you need links to rank in Google, Google really doesn't like it when you go out there and get links. Google wants you to earn links the hard way. In their guidelines, Google state that any link intended to manipulate PageRank can be seen as a violation of their guidelines and could lead to a penalty. That would rule out most of the link-building tactics I just mentioned, so we need to be careful and make sure that any link we get to your website looks like it's a perfectly valid earned link. If we're not careful, Google can penalize your website. This is an example of a manual penalty applied to a website that has violated Google’s guidelines. This penalty will have an effect on how the website ranks in Google search results. In this case, it's a partial penalty. It means the website is penalized for a specific topic or site section, and will no longer ranked for keywords that apply to that topic or section.

Another type of penalty is a site-wide penalty, which applies to the entire website. This could result in your whole website disappearing from Google search reloads. That's the worst kind of penalty you can get. Generally speaking, Google will penalize your website for blatant paid links using link networks or other spam tactics to get links to your website. Links need to look natural, earned and proper endorsement from one website to another.
LESSON 3: USING PAID SEARCH IN MARKETING CAMPAIGNS
PPC stands for pay-per-click, which is the most common way of advertising on the web. It's called PPC because you, as the advertiser, only pay when someone clicks on your ad. So you're only paying for actual visitors to your website. PPC has a lot of specific terminology, so let's explain some of the most important acronyms and phrases.

Keywords are the search terms that users might type into search engines that you want to advertise on. Impressions are how often your ad is being shown on a search results page. Clicks is how often your ad is being clicked. The click-through rate is the percentage of impressions that lead to a click. Cost-per-impression is the cost to show your ad a thousand times. Cost-per-acquisition is how much it costs in PPC advertising to generate a single sale or conversion on your website. Placement is where your ad is shown on a search results page. The landing page is the page on your website that your ad links to. Conversion is a sale or other desirable action on your website. The conversion rate is the percentage of visits that lead to a conversion on your website. A product listing ad is a special type of pay-per-click ad for e-commerce products. And a dynamic search ad is an automatically generated search ad based on the content of your landing page.

Google Ads is the advertising service that Google has for businesses wanting to display ads on Google search results. When you first start with Google Ads advertising, you're going to have to decide how to manage your advertising budget. Google Ads offers many different ways to spend your budget, such as a maximum cost-per-click, targeted search page location bidding, or budgets related to cost-per-acquisition. You can also control exactly how much you want to spend on a daily basis, so you'll never spend more than you've budgeted for. Additionally, Google Ads allows you to control when your ad is shown. For example, the times of the day and the days of the week. So you can make sure your budget is spent when it has the biggest impact.

Campaigns and Ad Groups

A Google Ads campaign is a collection of one or more ad groups, and each ad group can contain one or more keywords you want to advertise on. Any ad group can also have one or more ads that are shown whenever your keyword is searched for in Google. As a rule, it's wise to keep your ad groups quite tight, with not too many keywords per ad group. This allows you to craft targeted ads and send traffic to the best possible page on your website.

If your ad group is too broad, your ads might not be optimally relevant for all keywords, and the landing page your ad links to might not be the most relevant page on your website. Google Ads campaigns come in all kinds of different flavors. You can use the search network, which is Google's own search engine and the search partners that they have. The search network will display ads, video advertising, and a few other options.

For the purpose of this search engine marketing module, we're only going to look at search network campaigns. Google Ads also allows you to target a campaign to specific devices, like desktop computers, tablets, or smartphones. Google Ads allows you to adjust your bids and ads for different devices. One of the most powerful features of Google Ads is its geographic targeting.

You can target your campaign for specific areas, such as entire continents or as small as individual postcodes. This allows you to target your ads very accurately to the best possible audience.
also target specific languages in Google Ads, for example, a French-speaking audience in Switzerland, and make sure your ads are not shown for German-speaking users in the same country.

So what happens when your ad is shown on Google? Whenever someone searches for a keyword that you advertise on, and it matches your campaigns and ad groups targeting, the live option will take place. Here Google looks at what every advertiser is bidding to advertise on that keyword through their matched CPC, cost per click, and what the advertiser’s quality score is.

The quality score is basically a measure of how relevant the ads are and the landing page that the ad is associated with. Google does this to ensure it only shows relevant ads, and its users aren’t bombarded with ads that have nothing to do with what they’re searching for. Each advertiser’s quality score is applied to their bid, and each ad gets a resulting ad rank.

Google will then show these ads in proper order, according to the ad rank with the best ad shown at the top.

**PPC Metrics**

You will need to measure the success of your PPC campaigns. The amount of impressions shows how many times your ad has been shown in a Google search result. The clicks indicate how often people have clicked on one of your ads, and the click-through rate is the percentage of clicks from the total number of impressions. In the end, it all comes down to conversions on your website. Sales or leads. You can determine if a PPC campaign is successful by evaluating the money you spent versus the profit you make from the sales or leads that it’s generated. Sometimes advertisers willingly overspend on PPC to achieve top ad rankings and get that initial sale even if they lose money on it. They know they’ll earn it back during the course of the whole customer life-cycle value with up-selling and cross-selling.

There’s more to PPC than just advertising or search results. Google Ads also allow you to do display advertising on websites, video advertising on YouTube and sponsored promotions in Gmail. This makes Google Ads a very powerful advertising platform and allows you to create multichannel ads to a targeted audience. For example, you could create brand awareness with display and video ads, encourage interest with Gmail sponsored promotions and then get interested visitors to your website with search ads.
LESSON 4: MEASURING SEARCH CAMPAIGNS
Web Analytics Basics

Web analytics is a term that applies to all forms of online measurement. Generally, we use it to refer to an analytics tool like Google Analytics or Adobe Omniture. But there are many more forms of web analytics that allow you to understand exactly how people engage with your website. In this module, we'll focus purely on Google Analytics, because it's free to use and the most-used web analytics platform on the web. Web analytics allows you to understand three things. First, how people find your website. Second, how people engage with your website. And third, what your website's strengths and weaknesses are. This is incredibly valuable information which allows you to improve your website, as well as improve your digital marketing efforts. Without web analytics, we're just guessing what works and what doesn't.

Web analytics allows us to make informed decisions based on actual data. That's what sets digital marketing apart from other classical marketing activities. The key benefits of analytics are that it enables you to get closer to the customer, to accurately engage user experience and to gain insights from real customer experience.

This is the Google Analytics interface showing you the top metrics of your website's performance in the last 30 days. Here, we see the total amount of sessions, the amount of users that have visited your site, how many pages they viewed, the amount of pages a visitor looks at on average, how much time they spend on the site and the average bounce rate. Module 8 will go through all of this in more detail.

Applied Analytics

Google Analytics has four main reporting areas. The audience section provides information about your website's visitors, the acquisition section shows how your visitors found your website, behavior is where Google reports on what your visitors do on your website, and conversion is a section that reports on any conversions that may happen, such as e-commerce sales or submitted contact forms.

So let's look at the audience section. Here, we can find out what languages our visitors speak, where in the world they come from, what kind of device they've used, who their internet service provider is, and so on. You can distill all kinds of insights from these data sources. For example, if your audience primarily uses Internet Explorer on Windows 7, you're probably looking at an elderly demographic.

Whereas if your audience uses the latest Chrome browser on an Android device, you have a much younger and technically savvy audience to work with. The next section is acquisition which shows how your visitors found your website. There are four main primary sources of traffic. Search is organic and pay-per-click. These visitors come from search engines, either from the paid advertising results or the organic results.

Social media visitors come from social media websites like Facebook and Twitter. Referral sites are visitors from other websites that may link to yours, such as business directories or news articles. And direct traffic is traffic that comes directly through your website via a bookmark or typing in your website's address or any other traffic where Google Analytics doesn't know where they come from.

Additionally, there's also a section for campaigns which shows visits from specific online campaigns, such as pay-per-click advertising or email marketing. Google Ads will usually connect to your Google Analytics to show you the campaign data but other campaigns, you might need to use special
tracking URLs to make sure Google Analytics can report accurately. Creating those special tracking URLs can be done with a URL-builder program.

You can tag your marketing URLs in email marketing or other channels with specific tracking codes to enable reporting in Google Analytics. So this is how you create a tracking URL. You start with the actual address of the page that you want to send users to, and then you add certain extra elements to it.

The three main elements you need to add are utm_source, which is the traffic source of your campaign, such as your email newsletter or display ads, utm_medium is the type of traffic, for example email or advertising, and utm_campaign is the name of your campaign, for example, Christmas offer or seasonal specialty. When you use URLs that are configured like this, Google Analytics will report on them in the campaigns report of the acquisition section.

Next, we look at the behavior section which tells us what visitors do when they arrive on your website. Here, you can see which pages they visit the most, how long they spend on each page, how users click through your website from page to page and so on. This section also has reports on how your visitors use your internal search feature and how fast your site loads.

In this section, you can also look at specific events on your website that you may have configured. The conversion section is where Google Analytics shows you whether your visitors turn into actual customers. Here, you see data about goal conversions or online transactions depending on what kind of website you have. You can determine exactly which traffic source is driving the most conversions as well as how many visits a person needs to become a paying customer.

Goal conversions are important because they allow us to determine if your website is delivering value to your business. Traffic numbers are fine but without conversion data, we still won't know if your website is generating business. If your site is not an e-commerce site, you will need to set up goals to measure. Example of goals are when someone fills in a form, downloads a brochure, or looks up your office contact details.

Basically, any desirable action on your website can be configured as a goal, allowing us to track it and report on it. We can configure goals based on a URL that people visit or based on an event that we've configured. If your website is an e-commerce website, you can enable e-commerce tracking which allows you to track exactly what has been sold on your website, the value of those products, the amount of transactions, etc.

When configured properly, Google Analytics will show you precisely how many e-commerce sales are happening on your website, how much money you're making from those sales, the average order value of those sales, and where those sales come from in terms of traffic sources. This allows you to see exactly how your e-commerce website is performing and what its strengths and weaknesses are.

**Digital Marketing Mix**

As we've seen earlier, search is the biggest driver of traffic and sales on most websites. That's not to say you should only focus on search. Other channels have their own strengths and weaknesses as we'll see further on and you need to utilize the best possible channels for your specific scenario.

Suffice to say without search marketing, your digital marketing efforts will leave a lot to be desired. Each digital marketing channel is not an isolated silo. People use all kinds of different channels in conjunction.
For example, they might read an email newsletter, then Google the company, maybe look them up on social media, then Google them again before visiting the website and converting. We have so-called multi-channel conversion reports and Google Analytics to help us visualize these multi-channel customer journeys. Here we see that for this particular website, page search and organic search work together with direct traffic to generate the most conversions, with email marketing and referral sites playing a role as well. It’s important to invest in multiple channels when doing digital marketing, because you minimize risk and maximize your return. You could lose traffic from one channel entirely, for example, if your website is hit by a Google penalty or your emails end up on a spam list. But with multi-channel marketing, you will have other channels to fall back on. Additionally, each channel amplifies the other and helps spread your brand and your message further.

Let’s look at social media first. Social media marketing is a form of internet marketing that utilizes social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter as a marketing tool for direct and indirect sales. Social platforms like Twitter and Facebook have enormous reach and can help you establish your brand, but they’re conspicuously absent from those traffic and sales graphs we saw earlier. That’s because social media has a very different purpose in people’s daily lives. Social platforms like Facebook are poor sales platforms but excellent customer engagement platforms. With social media marketing, you can grow your brand awareness, promote your website’s content, provide customer support, and create an audience of loyal followers.

Email marketing is a structured, systematic process to deliver marketing messages to targeted subscribers. It’s the grandfather of all digital marketing channels. Email has been around the longest and often people forget about it as a viable channel. That would be a mistake, because email marketing is still incredibly powerful. Email is an opt-in channel, which means you have an audience at your disposal that wants to receive information from you. It doesn’t get more targeted than that. Email is great to enhance customer loyalty, encourage repeat sales and promote your content to an audience that you know is interested. You can identify email marketing visits to your website in web analytics by looking at direct traffic and segment according to device and host or network data. If you’ve tagged your URLs with the right tool analytics tracking code, you will also see your email marketing visitors show up in your campaigns section in your Google analytics dashboard.

Affiliate marketing is another one of those neglected channels that are still immensely powerful. With affiliate marketing, you pay affiliates a commission when they generate a sale for you. So you’re only paying when you’re actually getting new customers. Affiliate sites can also help you claim more sales from search. If the top-ranked websites on Google are all affiliate sites offering your products, you can make sure you get all the sales, even if your own site doesn’t get all the traffic.

Looking at the digital marketing mix, this is another report showing how search dominates. This is a different data set from the Wolfgang Digital Research we showed earlier, but has similar trends with search as the leading sales channel. This is followed by email marketing and affiliate marketing. As said before, using multiple channels will amplify your digital marketing and drive sales across the board. It also contributes to a brand’s presence and online establishes a sense of trust and authority.

Search often comes into play towards the latter stages of the sales funnel, when people already know your brand and the product they want to buy and then will use Google to search for it. Thus, search gets most of the credit while other channels may have played a strong part in creating that awareness and creating that interest in the first place.