CUSTOMER MANUFACTURING GROUP

MESOTHELIOMA
A SEARCH BEHAVIOR MODEL

HOW A SEARCH BEHAVIOR MODEL CAN HELP YOU TARGET YOUR CUSTOMER'S NEEDS

The Background:

Being found on the Internet is important for most businesses and critical for many. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is a methodology used to help specific websites be found. However, it is often non-trivial to truly understand what to optimize for in terms of how people search. Understanding the search behavior of people looking for your goods or services is mandatory for effective search engine optimization.

The Company:

The company was a law firm that wanted to represent more Mesothelioma patients for its practice. Its competitors used TV advertising, print advertising and Web-based strategies to attract potential clients.

Their Issue:

Mass market advertising was beyond the budget of this firm. They had been using pay-per-click as their method for

Category	Global	Local
Treatment	23,335,234	10,829,194
Informational	14,779,535	6,758,224
Type	3,334,255	1,895,595
Research	3,276,865	1,010,472
Organization	2,950,156	1,787,361
Causes	2,413,089	1,265,621
Diagnosis	1,137,054	619,871
Symptoms	990,662	424,173
Legal	400,666	271,880
Prognosis	314,420	201,663
Resources	156,179	85,571

generating Web-based leads and traffic for possible clients who suffered from Mesothelioma. However, the average cost per click exceeded $150, thus causing the firm to seriously consider alternative approaches such as SEO.

How a Solution Was Devised:

If you are not a physician, the word *Mesothelioma* (cancer caused by exposure to asbestos), will most likely register a blank unless you've seen the countless late night TV commercials on behalf of hungry lawyers trolling for victims. The search results on Mesothelioma also reveal that ten of eleven ads are from law firms, or lead generation outfits that sell leads to lawyers. So, one might be left with the impression that there are lots of angry victims using the Internet to look for the nearest lawyer to sue the pants off someone. But, when you actually look at the search behavior associated with Mesothelioma, it shows that legal-related searches amount to less than 10% of the total searches on a monthly basis (400.1K of 46.9M searches)

The data (table to the left) reflects that searchers in very large numbers have much more serious concerns than legal action in the beginning stages of their search. They or a family member has been diagnosed with Mesothelioma, and they are doing research to understand what they are dealing with and what their options are. The categories of behavior

reflect what they are interested in, and which categories are the most important to them.

These eleven categories of behavior can be used to develop website content to target consumers very early in their research cycle, even before they have had any idea that it would be a good idea to consult with a lawyer.

Let's take a look at each category to see what can be learned from this behavior, and how a law firm could use this data to provide useful information to this audience throughout the search process.

Treatment: 50% of all searches every month are questions about treatment. They want to know about treatment in general, clinical trials, their available options and is there a cure. This category cries out for a comprehensive content strategy around treatment of the disease.

Informational: One third of these searches are looking for specific types of content (photos, facts, articles, news) and asking *what is* and *why is* questions. Some of these searches are vague, but there are enough to construct custom content to answer these queries.

Type: 3.3M searches specify an aspect of the disease they are interested in. They are using medical terminology to focus their search (e.g., peritoneal, epithelial, calretinin, bihasic). This behavior probably reflects that these consumers are further along in their research.

Research: 3.2M searches are inquiries into new treatment options. This includes current and future clinical trials.

Organization: 2.9M consumers are looking for non-profit institutions, cancer clinics, interest groups and programs. These people are clearly in navigation mode, and know where they want to go. It would make sense to provide a list of resources on your website so that you can at least generate an impression that may bring them back in the future.

Causes: 2.4M consumers want some answers. They know that exposure to asbestos causes cancer, but that is all they know. They want details and a law firm's website that offered this information would impact the searcher's impression of a firm that appeared to be knowledgeable about the disease.

Diagnosis: 1.1M consumers want to understand how Mesothelioma is diagnosed. Though they sometimes ask about symptoms, this is really an opportunity to provide detail about the process of diagnosing the disease.

Symptoms: 990K consumers are asking about symptoms. This type of inquiry lends itself to providing this information in a bulleted list. Clearly *symptoms* are closely related to *diagnosis,* and these two categories could be combined to create one comprehensive set of content.

Legal: This is an interesting category. It contains 192 keyword phrases (almost 25%) but only accounts for fewer than 10% (440K searches) of the traffic. Consumers are also using a half-dozen terms to specify legal intent (i.e., Attorney vs. Lawyer vs. Litigation etc.). Here you can determine appropriate search keywords and phrases.

Prognosis: 314K searches are about death rates, survival, life span and progression of the disease.

Resources: 156K searchers are looking for help, support groups, resource centers, charities, doctors and experts. *Resources* are closely related to searches for *Organizations,* and these two could be combined to provide a single comprehensive resource.

Search Results for Mesothelioma

To validate my point, a Google search on Mesothelioma shows that the ten websites listed on page one search results have website content that reflects the above analysis. If you go to each website and review the content and menu structure for each home page you will find that their content almost perfectly mirrors what consumers are searching for. This is why the sites have done so well in search results. They have content rich pages that specifically answer the questions consumers most often ask about this terrible disease.

These are the top ten websites that Google presents on page one search results. Only one, number nine, is a legal website.

1. **Wikipedia**

2. **Mesothelioma.com** (Mesothelioma Cancer Alliance) (focus: Treatment, exposure and legal)

3. **Mayoclinic.com** (Focus: Information, Symptoms, Causes, Diagnosis, Treatment, Support)

4. **Asbestos.com** (Focus: Causes, Treatment, Legal, Types, Diagnosis, Prognosis, Support)

5. **NIH.gov** (Medline Plus) (Focus: High-level Informational into Diagnosis, Symptoms, Treatment)

6. **Mesotheliomasymptoms.com** (Focus: Symptoms, Support, Treatment, Prognosis, Veterans)

7. **MDAnderson.org** (Cancer center) Focus: Treatment, Research, Symptoms, Diagnosis)

8. **Cancer.Gov** (Informational, Treatment, Research, Causes, Clinical Trials)

9. **Simmonsfirm.com** (Law firm) (Focus: Legal, Diagnosis, Clinical Trials, Settlements)

10. **Surviving Mesothelioma** (A book) (Focus: Informational, Treatments, Resources)

Advertisements

The above search results also generated eleven ads, ten of which were associated with law firms.

- 8 ads by law firms

- 2 Lead generation firms

- 1 Info site

Day-by-day as consumers do their research and come to grips with the details of the disease, these ads are making an impression even though the consumer has not clicked on an ad. By the time they have finished their research they may well be primed to do so, but it costs these law firms an average of $158.86 per click. The law firm at position number nine does not pay a nickel for the traffic generated from that position. Why generate leads via PPC when you can make your site one of the first places your potential customers are actually visiting to get the information they need?

Final Thoughts

Categorizing consumer search behavior allows you to focus your website's marketing strategy in ways that are not apparent without looking at the data first. For example:

- You can target traffic statistically — 50% of all searches are questions about treatment. Would this be worth an experiment with a content-rich landing page for a law firm's website? You bet.

- You can build a model (using categories) that reflects behavior over time: Stage one (information); the consumers are in research mode — they need answers. Stage two (navigational); these reflect searches for resources such as support groups, institutions and experts. Stage three (transaction); these reflect consumers searching for clinical trials or legal help — they want to enter into a transaction. This lends itself nicely to a three-part website conversion process.

When you understand what consumers are looking for, you can service their needs on your website with content specifically targeted to the questions they need answers to. This provides greater impact and credibility than a PPC ad. That's why it pays to do your research on a search behavior model before you begin your web-based marketing strategy.

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If you would like more information about how to apply a process to improve your marketing/sales function, simply contact us and we'd be happy to help you get started. From sweeping marketing/sales management process strategies to specific branding or product launch services, Customer Manufacturing Group can help.

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