



Intro: Enterprise Ireland is the Irish government agency responsible for the development and promotion of the indigenous business sector.

Ralph: During the course of 2007 we'll be covering a range of eBusiness topics which affect SMEs in Ireland. This episode we're focusing on eMarketing which particularly targeted to companies who want to sell overseas.

We're going to look at a range of issues, some of which can often create more confusion than clarity. So, we hope with the help of our guest to dispel some of that as we look at how you can effectively market your business in the digital age.

In no particular order we have Cathy McGovern from Inspiration. Cathy brings many years of learning in the field. In 1999 Cathy founded online marketing agency Inspiration to marry her conventional direct marketing background with the opportunities arising from the internet. The agency client list include: Sony, Dell, Cook, Allianz, and many other household names. In 2005, Cathy founded giftvouchersnow.com, so she's at the core phase in terms of building and online growth. Welcome Cathy.

Cathy: Thank you.

Ralph: Next to Cathy is Fergal O'Byrne. Fergal is the CEO of Irish Internet Association. It was established in 97 as a non-profit professional body for those conducting business by the internet from Ireland. Fergal joined the IIA in 2005.

He's an internet industry entrepreneur himself have founded Interactive Return back in 1998. In 2004 he was awarded the IIA net visionary internet marketer of the year reward and Fergal is also an author, his latest book "10 Online Market and Search Engine Essentials" was published by Aspatore books. Welcome Fergal.

Fergal: Delighted to be here.

Ralph: Lastly, but by no means least, we have Richard Hearne, now Richard founded his company Red Cardinal in 2006, focusing on search engine optimization, search

marketing in general - internet marketing strategies. Working as an independent business consultant since 2002, it was at that time that he got his first taste of the search engine optimization market and has been hooked on it every since.

Richard provides a regular and detailed blog on all SEO matters which you can read at redcardinal.ie. He's also a regular contributor to the eBusiness units discussion forum which you can join at www.enterprise-ireland.com/ebusiness
Thanks for joining us today Richard.

Richard: Good Morning Ralph.

Ralph: So without further redo, when you first think about the term eMarketing Fergal what are the things that come to mind for you?

Fergal: Well, I think especially for an SME, I think. I think, is promoting the companies products and services online that can encompass their website channel and it can encompass their communications with the customers where it's email marketing or it can go even far as, what we'll talk about I hope today, is pushing out content about their products and services via feeds, blogs, podcast, whatever ever method whatever, and hope to solve them.

Ralph: Okay, Cathy for you, is that kind of synonymous with the kind of things that you would see as key to eMarketing?

Cathy: Yes, you know, at agency inspiration, I guess the two areas that we see clients are most interested in at the moment assuming they have a basic website and are now looking at search engine optimization and email marketing and you would see these as the two main tools that online companies are interested in.

Ralph: So, you can sort of talk about those as in terms of being the kind of pillars upon which you build your online presence.



Cathy: Yes and in terms of being proactive... proactively promoting your business online and you can have a lot of control over what you're doing both with the search engine optimization to maximize your budget. I think that the budget is an issue and is why now a lot of companies are now turning to online media, because it's more cost effective.

Ralph: Okay, Richard, what about from your perspective, you know, sitting slap bang in the middle of an SEO space.

Richard: Well, obviously I'm bias towards the search engines. The first thing I think about when it comes to eMarketing is actually just having a presence there in the first place. I think that's one of the biggest hurdles people have and it's just to understand what the internet can do and really... that they really do need to have a presence there. And understand that people are using the internet everyday and they're looking for your goods and your services and information about your companies. So, it's just really important to be there and to be in that space.

Ralph: Yeah, I think there's a danger, particular for those of us that are in this table, that we assume that, because you're already talking about eMarketing here, we're making certain assumptions about the level at which the level at which people are coming into this conversation.

It's quite possible that there's a lot of SME's out there who are interested in, you know, whether in a domestic or international market. And they haven't even got to the stage of having a web presence. And to a certain extend, that's going to be key to your eMarketing strategy, because without your base level of entry, then nothing else really matters does it?

Fergal: Well, I think you're going to the word strategies there, certainly yeah. What I'd love to see happen, which hasn't happened up till now, is that companies who are thinking about developing an online presence, will actually sit down and say look, before we pay money and get a website, let's see what is the website actually for?

You don't go out and get 5,000 glossy brochures printed and have a vague idea of what the content is and then leave them sitting under a table and not post them

actually. What is the point of having a website if you're a SME? What are you going to do with it? How are you going to promote it? We've all probably and heard... I'm sure Richard and Cathy heard the old, you know, built it and they will come. It's from a Kevin Costner movie "Field of Dreams" if I'm not mistaking.

But the idea was, you know, if you build a website, and that perception is still there I believe that if you build a website, people are just going to magically turn up at the door step at your site, that's not going to happen. It just doesn't happen. We need to dispel that myth.

Cathy: I think what's interesting as well actually, is that, when people do build a website and I would say 90% of business if you talk to them, although they may have some web presence, very few of them are actually happy with their website. I mean, I would rarely talk to somebody in business and, you know, say are you happy with your website and they say, absolutely love it, it works for us, and 90% of people will say, no, I'm not happy with it.

And to that extent that's because, this point Fergal was just making, they haven't briefed their requirements at the outset, so I think if you're looking at your web presence whether you have an existing site or starting from scratch, you need to develop a very clear brief on what it is you require and what your objectives are.

Ralph: I think it's often the case that you see a number of companies who've set up a website presence where, they very quickly find it far more constricting to their, you know, new business plan for how they're going to reach out to that new market and they over anticipate it and so, oh we haven't thought of this, oh we haven't thought of that. And it might be something as simple as the flexibility to build on... the website was built for you perhaps isn't there, because the tools that were used make it very, very restricted. And that can be quite a big issue for a lot of people.

Fergal: Could I just add to that, you know, take one sector, the accommodation sector, the tourism sector, I think are classic examples, a lot of people with very restricted budgets, they get a small website, maybe if they were B&B, have pictures of their property.



You know, they never really sort of thought it through, okay the next thing I want to do is take bookings online and that's a whole, you know, they don't understand the technology behind it and they have to on and start thinking about that.

Then they have to promote it, then they're trying to say, well do need to do Google Adwords, do we need to invest in an eMarketing solution, and I think there probably isn't the level of advice at the start when they're actually doing it to help them make those strategic decisions instead of just jumping in.

And even the SEO, you mention SEO to some of these people and they really don't know what it is? I mean, it's fundamental that you get the SEO right and you do it at the start, not retro fit.

Ralph: You see, what I think comes to my mind when I think about it, is for your average, if there's such a thing as an average SME. But, for your typical business man who's wanting to use the internet as a channel to market. They can look at traditional media and it's relatively self explanatory, you know, full page spread in a broadsheet or a tabloid, an audio ad during a radio show, a TV ad between program slots, these things are all fairly self evident. They don't need a great deal of learning. And you're talking about SEO, Richard do you think there's a challenge here in terms of the complexity of what we're dealing with here.

Richard: It can be very complex, but it doesn't always have to be complex. I think that if people don't really understand how the internet works, ask your kids. I think that's pretty simple, because most kids are online and they'll figure out how things work.

Even consider how you use the internet and then you'll start to realize what you need to do to get people to read your message and to see your message online. SEO is complex and it can be complex and then again it can be very simple, but you can start simple and then you can build it up.

So, again it comes back to having a strategy in place and thinking about where you want to be in the future and then coming up with how to get there.

Fergal: Can I follow up about that about the SEO, I mean, what about, you know, SEO ways, it's the way its written is a, you know, an intimidating phrase "Search

Engine Optimization”, you know. That’s intimidating... really it’s just good house keeping for your website, I mean, basic things that people aren’t going to write is the content of their site, I mean, Google will tell you.

You go to Google website and say, what’s the best thing you can do when people are trying back engineer Google and figure out the secret of the algorithm, it likes content, it doesn’t know if you have pictures on your website of your property. You don’t actually tell Google what your sites about, you know, that’s content is your basic compound, put content on the website.

Cathy: I think a valid point here is as an industry we have a responsibility to make it not complex and so why there may be technical complex programming issues involved in search engine optimization, explaining those clearly is up to us as an industry and for clients out there. Companies out there, if you don’t understand what your agency is doing or they haven’t explained it to you, or if you got somebody out there building you a website that hasn’t mentioned search engine optimization which is quite common, then these are the questions that you need to ask. You need to understand what your web developer or what your suppliers actually doing and if it’s too complex for them to explain it to you, then you probably need to use a different supplier.

Ralph: Richard, what are the top mistakes I guess you see in your rules as a guru of the search engine optimization field. What are they not doing that they should be doing with their websites?

Richard: Well content is king. So, if you have good content, you are going to do well, you know, because good content will attract links and most of the search engines are based on linkage algorithms, so if you have good content, people will link to it and I think a lot of people put up small brochure sites and it’s really like eh, look at us, welcome to our site, we’re great, we do this, we do that, people really don’t want to hear that.

People want to get information about either the product or service that they’re looking for or on your industry - it’s all about having good content on your site and having fresh content. People don’t want to see the same content every time, they’re not going to come back. You need to have fresh content, and it needs to be text content. If you want to do well in the search engine it has to be text.



Pictures, they don't really see pictures, it's not going to get you anywhere, so text is the main thing and good quality content.

Ralph: It reminds me of a phrase that's been used in a whole different set of circumstances, but the acronym KISS "Keep It Simple Stupid" you know, probably has a role to play in this area as well doesn't it? Cathy.

Cathy: I think there's a very simple thing that every website should have, which is a site map linked to the home page. Because, purely by doing that simple step, you can... if Google is only seeing your home page, if you link the site map, you can immediately open up all the other pages.

And we've seen radical changes where sites which are only being, you know, Google is only seeing the homepage, just by adding that link suddenly it opens every other page on the site, so and that's a simple step that every company should do.

Fergal: Just to reemphasize the points that Richard made on the content. There are many sites that we've all been to when you get to the home page after finding the site, maybe in Google or via another link. And you know, it's like the first paragraph is normally, welcome to my website, I'm really glad that you turned up at my website, my website has been 3 months in the making and I'm really happy with my website.

Now, that's the first paragraph. They don't talk about their business, they don't about the keywords as they're called around, you know, what is actually their website about? Google is a stupid piece of software, it doesn't know and in fair from the English language that's on your site, it has to know what the words and what the content of the site is actually about, so tell us about...

Richard: I think as well you have to remember that time compressed online, people don't have the same amount of time and they really... they don't read pages, they just glance through them. They scan pages, so you got to get your message across very, very quickly. People don't want to read all the welcome lines and the rest

and how great your company is. They want to know the information they are looking for and they want it now.

Ralph: Cathy.

Cathy: I think in fact if you're writing content a good way to think of it and to try and have well optimized content, is to write like a newspaper writes, which is you don't burn the interesting detail and your key points at the end of a long article or paragraph. You put it right up there as a headline and that's how you need to write to have a well optimized sight.

Ralph: So, that's a little bit like the [unclear 13:26] of W's here, who, what, where, why, when, you know, follow those golden rules in terms of what you're saying on the very first page that people hit.

Cathy: Yeah, and get to the key point straight away, don't hide behind an introductory paragraph.

Ralph: So, I guess the first top tip is, go for your punter who's visiting the site and for the dumb search engine that doesn't understand is, make sure the content is contextual relevant. Don't dally in getting to the point of what your sites about and update it frequently, now that's something that I wanted to pick up on. Because, of course a lot of these sites, particularly ones that are more oriented towards being a brochure of services or products that you're offering.

The challenge there of course is how do you frequently update the message on your main site so that it is more likely to encourage increased links and therefore make it more interesting to search engines generally? Fergal, any thoughts on that?

Fergal: Again one thing we always advise to someone who is sitting down and doing a tender or a brief to the designers is they ask for a content management system our CMS. And that can be quite complex or can be very, very straightforward.



It's literally an interface online where you can go online... it's like looking at a Word document and essentially you can update content, put in new pages, or you can update the content that's there. And there is lots of them. Most web design companies will currently offer as a default. It's very, I think a very important that you have the facility to update your own content rather than going back to the web designer company.

Ralph: Cathy.

Cathy: And there is a very simple tool that we recommend a lot of our clients called Macromedia Contribute and it cost about \$150. You can go online, by the tool, and it will allow you to update. And the vast majority of cases technically fine to update content pages on your site and so for a minimum cost companies can do this so. And if they do they will have better rankings on Google. So, it's well worth using some kind of tool like that.

Ralph: The other than that occurs to me that might be a workaround, particular companies that don't have a lot of for frequently updated information. Is there a value in having something like a blog to create, you know, a fresh face to some part of the site. Does that sort of have value to it?

Fergal: It can, but before even looking at blogs, in terms of what content can you add to it that would be fresh. News about your industry or you can publish white papers or you can publish articles that would be helpful.

It might sound like you're given away the crown jewels sometimes when you're publishing content which is telling people how you operate. But, that's the type of content that people will link to and again links are going to bring visitors. People follow links they come to your site.

In terms of a blog, well blogs are just exceptional. It's so easy to set up, you're talking about four minutes to set up Word press, its four click them and set up. You have a blog, you can publish content, you can update content, suddenly you're into to Web 2.0 which is... and now most people can now interact with you, and interaction is what really, really creates a buzz on a website.

People will come back because they can interact. It's not just them reading, they're actually contributing to the website. They are commenting on your post and then you're into a different region. And that's where you will see a real success, so yeah, I'd say to most people set up a blog if you can, will you consider it, it will pay off, I guarantee you will get all the way on a blog for sure.

Ralph: Or a, return on the list

Fergal: Yeah.

Ralph: Cathy you got something to add?

Cathy: Yeah, I think it's important as well to have a look at what resources will you have to maintain your website internally, because there can be a danger when you recognize that you should have lots of news and be updating your site and that it is better from an optimization point of view and that you set yourself too hard a task and then suddenly nobody in the organization wants to take on the website because in fact it's a whole job and its own right.

So, I think you need to be realistic rather than try and say yeah, we have news, you know, every day we write a blog or whatever and work out what is realistic for you to do in terms of maintaining your news and then appoint somebody to do it internally or keep it realistic in terms of the resources that you're going to have available to do that.

Ralph: I guess, Fergal, one of the challenges is, you know, if writing your forte and you understand the principle that you need to have a website that is constantly got something fresh on it to make it visible both in search engines and to encourage other humans out there to link you.

What do you say, how do you go about, I mean, that must surely be a big challenge for a lot of people who are in business but you know they don't for a moment imagine themselves as journalists are writers perhaps.



Fergal: Yeah, I think to go back to the point that Richard made about developing content, I mean for a company certainly, you know, if you have something to talk about or develop a white paper, this is something I'd certainly actively encourage, you know. Tell about your product, especially if it is say a technical product or piece of software you're selling and are trying to promote online.

Write yourself a non-techie white paper about what the product is. That the trends in the landscape in market around it, not just a naked sales pitch just for your product and not only will users be able to interact with that or even put up as a PDF, Google can index the content... it's more content and it's putting up an archive if you like of content. And the same with blogs, I'd probably dare go a [Unclear 18:55] slightly on this is that, I think if you're going to set up a blog, you have to commit to posting regularly. The blog is... because of the nature of media it's not like your in brochure website, if you put up a blog, you can't say that's I have a blog, you have to commit. I advise people to set it up you, do it certain times in the week every week and you post something of value upon the blog. Otherwise, don't bother.

Ralph: Cathy

Cathy: Just in terms of content that the idea of white papers, I think that's a fantastic idea. One of the things that we found and many companies can do this. If you can come up with something rather than spam to your industry and write up a white paper and put a description of it and then ask people to request it rather than put it up for free on their website.

Because by doing that, you can actually create an interaction, you know now who got it, you've opened a line of communication. And so, as long as you've written that paragraph to describe what the content is and the content is relevant to people in your industry and your target market. It's an excellent way to encourage someone to interact with you.

Fergal: Actually, just on a solid point there... I'm there telling people to post on their blogs, I'm guilty of it myself, you know, get in regular time to post. So, what we actually do here at the Internet Association, we get guest bloggers and it's a fantastic away to generate very glorified content that we wouldn't of had from

within our own resources and people are put up posts and they are cross linking to their own post and to the bloggers sphere or the blog community.

So, you know, even within a small visit, you can get someone who is related to your business, maybe not even and it or at industry expert in your build and get them to post content or to post on your blog as a guest can create a good buzz around your content space.

Ralph: One of the things people often hear when, for instance, like Web 2.0 or RSS. What, if anything does that mean to your average SME... I mean, is Web 2.0 or RSS does that matter to an SME and not being able to be visible to the Internet?

Richard: I think that those words don't matter. That's my view. I don't think it matters, because at the end of the day it's all about how you use the Internet, there is many, many ways to use the Internet so, I would never worry too much about buzzwords I try not to use them to be honest.

Cathy: Buzzwords are really about people in the industry talking to each other and what we want is clients to understand what they're getting for their money and for the website and for their online marketing to deliver for them, so, you know, we should try to avoid that I think. If, you know, you're working with a company developing a site on their online marketing and in they're using words that you don't understand, it's vital that you clarify because it's your money.

Fergal: I think if you look at say the BBC or RTE and you see this little orange icon, that's all that I care about. I don't care that it's a XML feed or what the actual XML looks like... it doesn't mean anything to me.

But, I do know that if I click on that icon I can get a feed or can subscribe to a feed and it's very easy. You can dispel the myth about RSS podcast, blogs, XML, all those words that are only, as Cathy says, are really of interest to the people from the industry. So, the idea is that you have this orange icon on your website, on your blog.



Ralph: But should SMEs who got a website and a blog should they care about whether, you know, whether it means anything to them. Should they care about ensuring that they have something like RSS. Does it matter in terms of the visible to search engines and in terms of links? Cathy.

Cathy: Well, I guess does it matter to your target audience is the question, so if you think it will make sense to them and it will be of interest to them and then yes it does matter and if it isn't it doesn't. So, it's really about who you're targeting.

Fergal: Do you remember the earlier days and we all started using the Web you had to put in H-T-T-P colon forward slash? Nobody even cares about that anymore, why? Because it's not necessary anymore because of the technology and the interfaces that you use don't care about either, so they can just type in the www, and most cases you can leave that out.

So, you now, that's going to evolve, people are not in a care if you understood what XML means, they're into care about the tools and the Web 2.0 engagement tools that they're using, that's all they're going to care about.

Ralph: So, content can in terms of making sure that you, in the first place, have a website that's got to be picked up by search engines and then a question that often comes up, and we've seen come up in some of the discussions that we've seen on the eBusiness discussion forum has been, how important is it for me, particularly if I'm trying to sell it to in overseas market, how important is it for me to have, let's say a .com as opposed to a .ie or a .co.uk if I'm going to try to sell it to the UK market or does it matter if my content is sitting in an a server in Ireland or if I'm trying to hit US market should be sent somewhere in the US? You know, does it matter? I... I mean Richard from your perspective, are these issues that SMEs need to be thinking about?

Richard: I'm going to come back with the most horrible answer and say it depends, because it does. You really have to think about who you are targeting, and in some cases, yes it really does matter because you can not target your site via the search engines if you don't have the right domain name or TLD. If your server is

in the wrong country it will affect who find your site, but we're now getting into the more technical realm of SEL and difficult really to answer.

But yeah, you do need to consider these things, but really if you don't understand these things find someone who does. And a lot of this information is available freely online. If you want to implement a strategy yourself, if you don't necessarily have the resources funding wise to go on pay a third party, go online and look for the information.

The great thing about SEO and web master material is that most of it is available freely online, it's there you just need to find it, most of it is easy enough to find it as well. So, It does matter, but as I say, you're getting into a very technical realm there.

Ralph: But I think what I'm almost looking at is do we have an issue here where it's something that people need to be focusing on, they need to be aware of the fact that if they're trying to hit US market, they need to investigate a .com, they need to investigate having all their material for their website on a US server. Is it sufficiently important that they should be looking at it, Fergal.

Fergal: Well again, it is a technical issue. What I always advise people if they are starting off. If, the .com and the .ie are available before they even get their website published, because you can buy your name and leave it parked there until you have your website assigned. So it's available buy it... you can buy a .com for like 8 or 9 euro and you can buy a .ie form anywhere, shop around, 25 to 45 euro. At the price of which is quite radical.

I think it's important to have the .ie, because it's a managed domain and that means that it's relatively secure for you and you might have seen the recent report that .ie that worlds second most secure domain I think behind Finland whereas a .com I don't see anyone, I mean I could go in and buy your name as a .com if I wanted too, but I probably couldn't do that on the .ie space.

So I think it's important that at that stage in the company can sit down and do the research as Richard suggest about where they want to host, what site they're going to have, what technology they're going to use. That's the techie stuff. At the start, at the outset, cover both opportunities of both markets, get the .ie and if its available the .com. That would be a simple first step at that.



Richard: For a very small investment upfront you can secure your domain and across multiple TLDs. And yeah, for sure, I would always say to people even if you never think you'll use it, you just never know and it's always handy .co.uk, .eu, any country where you think you might go in the future yeah, you can grab your domain name because the last thing you want is to get a successful site on .ie, to want to go to the UK, to look for the domain name, someone has taken it, whether they are either squatted or they're selling something or it's an affiliate site and if you want to buy that it may cost you an awful lot of money later on, so up you can secure your domain names now, yeah I would do it.

Cathy: I guess as will the search engine optimization issue, there's obviously the marketing issue, so if you're targeting the UK and try to get the .co.uk it's a conquered factor for your target market, so you need to look at where you're marketing and try to secure those domains.

As a matter of and interest, it's quite often that we find it quite difficult to get it and good .com names because awful lot of them are gone now. We use .net as an alternative and I think that's quite an effective alternate as well.

Ralph: What about the content though, I mean we're talking about content at the top end if you're, let's say you're pitching to the US market... I'll give you an example I'm familiar with and I had gone to advertising near holiday rents and of course the phrases they were using on the UK site where pretty much for the UK market, because that represents a majority of the bookings.

But, they found as soon as they used vacation rental as a word in their website at... the number of bookings they got from the US went right up because of course the kind of phrases used in the US market for holiday rents, is a vacation rental.

It was actually suggested by somebody from the US market who said that that would make a massive difference. So, that simple turn of phrase suddenly opened up a new revenue stream. So, as content for localized markets...

Richard: You could localize contents are you or you could actually build out multiple many sites within your site for different locales and you could get far more technical and actually serve up localized content based on where your viewers are coming from, that's again getting more technical.

But certainly you do need to be aware of the different call cultural differences that are there. Because, people won't react to the same phrases used on the page in the states as you mentioned, as would, in Ireland or the UK. So you do have to be conscious of that fact, that different markets will have different phrases they will use.

Fergal: I think it's quite natural to look at the constituency of the English speaking, you know, if your hoping to go into the eu markets as well, and if you do localize content, one thing I would advise SMEs, don't go the free route and use things like Babel Fish which are free translation services, you'll get what you don't pay for.

And that if you put on the page of content and translated to French or German you could be easily insults and your audience because of the translation are just not... just get a student to translate if your restrictive on budget or to a professional translator, you'll be pleasantly surprised how cost-effective they are, but put good content in their language if you're going to go down that route.

Cathy: We just had... we used localization companies and what we've actually found is if you get a native speaker, you get a better result and that's what I would recommend.

Ralph: What does that mean in terms of search engines? Because, let's say for instance I go to Yahoo.fr or I go to google.de, I'm guessing that the way that they search for an information for those localized markets is based on a number of different criteria's, so it's not all the same whatever search engine you're using our whatever whether it be Google or Yahoo or whatever, what do you say about that?



Richard: The search engines will tend to try and search up results that are relevant to their constituent audience, so if you do go to google.co.uk, they will serve up slightly biased results which are biased towards English sites as they find English sites by looking at either the IP or the server, so where the server is physically located or by the TLD of the domain so, .co.uk would be UK sites.

So, you do have to realize that. There is also an option, most people will see it, but you can search for pages from a particular country and in those cases they will only serve up results that are found... UK-based IP's for example, like Google.co.uk searches there.

Ralph: As far as location, when you talk about IP is that like a physical address?

Richard: It's an identifier which is unique for every machine which acts as the Internet.

Ralph: And so certain IP's are geographically...

Richard: Yes, they're prominent to geo locations. So, certain blocks will be regarded as Irish answer and blocks will be regarded as from other countries, so it's important to know, where is your server located.

And do take care if you're an SME, some smaller host and how host here in Ireland even though the iris hosts the servers may well be in the US and in that case it will have an impact on where your results will come up, what country, what search engine results are going to be return based on a country location, okay, so it's something worth looking a for sure.

Fergal: I think there's another option as well if all of that SEO tactical stuff fails you can always market your way out of this by using a system like Google Adwords for instance where you can quite literally target your market very accurately at geo target your audience and so, that is another way around it.

Ralph: One thing, we've obviously been talking quite a bit about search engines, I guess that implicit is the fact that for most commercial websites they go to live or die by how well they perform in terms of being visible in search engines. Cathy.

Cathy: Well that is true if you're dependent on your target audience finding you through a search engine, but I guess in a lot of cases you'd be doing your own marketing activity as well. But, one of the things I was going to say, there is a lot of free tools out there which would allow SMEs improve their keywords.

And the websites that in particular are Overture and Google sandbox and is it, NicheBOT, N-I-C-H-E-B-O-T and if companies look at those sites, they can actually test their suggested keywords and see how many sectors are delivered on those and those sites will give you suggestions. And tons of keywords which may help more searches and so, I think you can do a lot of work yourself in terms of developing the right keywords for your own business.

Ralph: One thing that obviously comes up quite a bit is that... we also talk about is their value in advertising on various search engines and I guess there's two issues there. One is, if you feel what you need to advertise, is it because you've done everything you can to optimize your website already and you're still not getting the exposure.

Fergal: As I was researching for fun today I just went to look at, you know, large sites that host traditional visual advertisements like RTE, [I show on the home page 33:32] so then I went to Google and typed in car insurance Ireland and in the free organic listings, Google's normal listings if you like, Quinn-Direct were listed at number five I think it was, but they were also advertising on the right hand of the screen and the text boxes within the Google Adwords system. So, they're trying to cover all their bases there by advertising in the traditional way on a banner ad and also via the Google Adwords system.

I would caution that's not for everyone, I think the SME route is to go towards the pay per click model which is Google Adwords, not the paid to be seen model like RTU, which they're probably paying for a certain amount of impressions or views of the ad. So, I think the model for SME search should be going to get value by only paying for clicks, and there's a good value I think to be having the system with Yahoo and Google.



Cathy: I think it's very worthwhile for small companies go to go on to go on to Google. This isn't complex in the early stages anyway; it's easy to get to grips with. Go on to Google, look at Google Adwords, there's a very simple tool that anybody can use to set up their own Adword. Be careful, because you need to put a limit on your span or else you could be paying for clicks that are deliver nothing.

But go through the tool and set up your own Adword and manage the account and do that for a little while and get experience because, no agency outside is going to have a clear idea as you have about your own business the better briefed you are of what you want to get out of Google Adwords and how it will work for you, the better he can brief somebody also. And so, I would get to grips with that myself if I were an SME.

Ralph: And, you raise a good point by getting to grips with it. Just playing the devils advocate for a moment, how would you describe Adwords, I mean obviously a banner ad is fairly self-evident, but what are ad words to the uninitiated?

Richard: Well, if you do a search on a search engine you generally get two types of results back on the page, so on the left-hand side normally you will find the organic results which are the results of the search engine has actually gone out and found on its own accord and they're trying to give you back the most relevant results, no one has paid for those results.

On the right-hand side you generally have a very thin column and they're called paid results and they are the results that people are paying to do it clicked, so I basically will go to a search engine and say, I would like to advertise my products or service here and for every click a user makes on my ad I will play x amount.

So you got a situation where pay per click is really a great, great resource there for smaller companies, because he can just pay and get traffic and instantly. The only problem is that in the long run they can turn out to be very, very expensive and it can turn into a very chronic addiction. It needs to be just one small part of your overall online strategy for getting traffic to your site if you rely on it, you're in a pay for it.

Ralph: Fergal.

Fergal: We'll just to read ample that, I do think that you have a few things that you can do with Google Adwords that you can't with other ad channels and that's you can... you know, your ads are actually contextualized, and by that I mean, if someone types in certain ways you can choose when your ad is shown for those phrases, you can choose the words that you like a shown for, you can choose the locations that add showing for, and you can choose the amount, the maximum amount you want to spend for each click.

So, you have a lot of control over it, I do agree with Richard and I've seen this out where people start to use Adwords, you know, there is run away scenario where that think they're getting great value to keep spending more, more, more, they're getting traffic.

But, what you need to do is you need to analyze is that traffic that's turning up at your site actually converting into business. And you can do that as well Google, you can go to conversion tracking code that will let you analyze if someone clicks on an ad, you know, do they actually complete a task on your website, whatever that may be, downloading something, putting an email address, you know, buying something.

Ralph: Richard what's the...

Richard: I think it's important really, if you're talking about search engines optimization or pay per click, it's like getting traffic but that's not the end goal, traffic is absolutely useless and pointless unless it converts, so you have to make sure that your site will convert that traffic, by what ever way you measure conversions, as far as I know it may be an email I just, it may be contacting you are looking at a particular page to get your contact details, it may be making a purchase. But, you need to make sure that you all are actually converting and need to basically analyze what's going on, because if you don't measure you can't control...

Cathy: To understand the conversion end is similar, I guess, to conventional marketing and how do you make people convert, and you need to have a [Unclear 38:10],



you need to have an incentive, you need to keep it simple. If you're doing a Google Adword there's no point in sending people to your homepage and letting them move around, you need them to come to a specific page where this is a very clear call to action and so it's really back to the basics of marketing.

Ralph: Now, Richard you mentioned whether it be getting them to do something, like for instance supply their email address, because once they give that permission you suddenly have a channel of communication that they've given you permission to communicate with them, haven't they? Then that leads to then, how can he go from your website to reach out to that customer base where you managed to establish that line of communication.

And that takes us into a whole other area which is really an extension of her website arguably, which is, are you then taking the email to reach out to those people that you may have established that relationship with. How key do you see email as part as a whole strategy for SMEs to be able to communicate with the customer base? Is it, a critical part of the overall process?

Cathy: Well we would certainly see it as being critical and a lot of our clients are leaning strategically to email as a key method of communications, but the customer relationship and tools for the customer relationship marketing programs and also obviously for sales, and I think there is a critical point here, which is, that permission is vital.

And obviously from the data protection perspective in Ireland here and you must have permission to email consumers and for both consumers and business customers, you must allow them to opt out.

And I think that level of permission is important to be effective. But, the actual reason email is becoming more and more popular, and one of the reasons is the cost effectiveness of email. I mean, if you look in Ireland for example your standard postage stamp is \$.55, if you just add an envelope and a piece of stationary you're talking about a euro a pop, where you can send out thousands of emails, you know, for very small cost.

Ralph: So Cathy you're saying that you see email as really a key part to the overall eMarketing strategy. But then, in the Congress of Ireland wasn't there some new legislation particular Irish SMEs should be aware of?

Cathy: That's right and I see this as a positive thing. But, from the first of April 2007 all email communications coming from your company or organization should have effectively the same information as is on your corporate letterhead. Now, I think this is a positive because actually distinguishes Irish businesses from spam.

Ralph: Yeah, yeah. Fergal, do you got anything?

Fergal: Yeah I also think that there's a provisionary of your company that has to be in there, which is also useful for readers of your email, but the Irish Internet Association on their website IIA.ie have a free home page document that is literally a tick box of what you need to do, so I'd say educate yourself and get up to speed on this and it's very easy to implement what her company, so do it.

Ralph: So just to summarize here, we've talked about content being key, we've raised the issue of a blog being a value, but only if it's used correctly. Having a blog isn't an end in itself, you have to actually use it frequently in order to use it as a tool to help make your site more visible, and we also touched on the issue of advertising, you know, through search engines.

Come in to stop full circle, we started with content and I like to end with content and really ask you what your top tips would be or top things to avoid doing, you know, when you do your first website. What things should you actively try to avoid doing that could be pitfalls for your website? You want to sum up Fergal?

Fergal: I love to say George Bernard Shaw left money in his will to reduce the English alphabet if anyone could come up with a more succinct I think I'll leave money in my will to anyone that doesn't put on entry pages on their homepage and their website when you turn up and there is either an image or a flash animation are something on the site this is welcome to our website click here to enter, just don't do that.



Don't make someone turn up at your website and then click another button to get into your website, no point. When you get into the home page, reduce clutter, have content on your homepage keyword rich about your site don't have flashing graphics and all sorts of fancy bangs, keep it simple. You may have to remember the KISS principle, get your content across, use graphics appropriately, and have proper navigation on the set. That's it.

Ralph: Cathy

Cathy: Well I agree wholly with the entry page point, but also I would say, black text on white background is the easiest thing to read research has shown, and so don't put this whole load of small white text on a black background for example, it's very difficult for the eyes read. People read three times slower online as they do on paper, and so bear that in mind.

Although text is very good from an optimization point of view, nobody's going to read reams and reams of text on a screen, so just keep that in mind, clear navigation, having a content timely - a simple thing like putting a date on your site so that it turns over every day automatically and makes your website look current even if you haven't updated it on a daily basis.

And I guess minimize graphics also, and when people arrive and again research has shown that one of the first that place eyes are drawn to is the top right hand side of the screen. And so whatever called action as, if it's a contact our a sale button by now or your address or your telephone number and put that on the top right hand side of the screen.

Ralph: Okay, Richard anything to add to that?

Richard: Well I would say that navigation is one of main things, so that people can actually get around your site, everyone has agreed on a. The other thing that I would say is to break up the content and again it comes back to look at how newspapers will do that, and the have headings and subheadings and a list, but break up your content, making easier for people to read and they will read. People will scan the

page and they'll look for the information they want and if they can't find quickly they go somewhere else.

Ralph: Okay, well like to think you very much for giving your time today to take part in this discussion and so again, thanks to return up. For further information on this topic visit enterprise Ireland's eBusiness website that www.openup.ie where he comes to subscribe to eBusiness live or the fortnightly newsletter from the eBusiness unit and you can receive radio updates for the team and watch out for future podcast.