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**Methodology**

Ascend2 benchmarks the performance of marketing technology, strategies and tactics using a standardized online questionnaire and a proprietary 3-Minute Survey format. This survey was fielded to a panel of marketing influencers and research subscribers during the week of October 30, 2017.
SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION TACTICS

Search Engine Optimization, or SEO, is the practice of improving how specific web pages rank in a search engine’s unpaid results.

But what tactics are companies using to achieve their important SEO objectives?

To find out, Ascend2 and our Research Partners fielded the Search Engine Optimization Tactics Survey. We thank the marketing influencers responding to this survey for sharing their valuable insights with us, and you.

This Survey Summary Report, titled Search Engine Optimization Tactics, represents the average of all the market segments responding to the survey. Specific market segments from the survey are reported on separately and exclusively by our participating Research Partners.

This research has been produced for your use. Put it to work in your own marketing strategy. Clip the charts and write about them in your blog or post them on social media. Please share this research credited as published.

Enjoy!
A total of 61% of marketing influencers use SEO to increase search rankings and, subsequently, website traffic to draw leads to the top of the marketing funnel. 14% use SEO to increase conversions and 25% to increase revenue, driving leads to the middle and bottom of the marketing funnel respectively.

Which is the most important OBJECTIVE for a search engine optimization strategy to achieve?

- Increase website traffic: 33%
- Increase search rankings: 28%
- Increase sales revenue: 25%
- Increase conversion rate: 14%
STRATEGIC SUCCESS

An overwhelming total of 95% of marketing influencers consider a search engine optimization strategy successful to some extent at achieving important objectives, with 45% describing their success as best-in-class.

How SUCCESSFUL is a search engine optimization strategy at achieving important objectives?

- Very successful (best-in-class): 45%
- Somewhat successful (above average): 50%
- Somewhat unsuccessful (below average): 5%
- Very unsuccessful (worst-in-class): 0%
There are many tactics used to effectively achieve important SEO objectives. For a 57% majority of marketing influencers, on-page content development is effective. Keyword research, link building and website structure are also effective tactics for 50%, 46% and 43% of marketing influencers respectively.
The trend in SEO effectiveness is very promising for a total of 87% of marketing influencers, about half of whom (44%) describe the increase in effectiveness as significant. On the other hand, SEO effectiveness is decreasing to some extent for a total of 13% of marketing influencers.

To what extent is the effectiveness of SEO tactics CHANGING?

- 44% Effectiveness is increasing significantly
- 43% Effectiveness is increasing marginally
- 12% Effectiveness is decreasing marginally
- 1% Effectiveness is decreasing significantly
Link building is considered a most difficult tactic to implement by a 52% majority of marketing influencers. The tactical degree of difficulty is a primary factor in determining the implementation resources to use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEO Tactics</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Link building</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website structure</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-page content</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media sharing</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyword research</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meta data and tags</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-page content</td>
<td>29%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
SEO IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCES USED

The implementation of some SEO tactics, such as link building, may require skills and capabilities not always available in-house. That is why 84% of marketing influencers in total say they outsource all or part of the implementation of SEO tactics to specialists.

Which best describes the RESOURCES used to implement SEO tactics?

- In-house resources only: 16%
- Outsourced to a specialist: 28%
- Combination of outsourced and in-house resources: 56%

Search Engine Optimization Tactics Survey
Ascend2 and Research Partners, November 2017
Tactics that are much more effective than difficult to implement (on-page content and keyword research, for example), are more likely to be part of a successful SEO strategy and less likely to require outsourcing to a specialist.
THE SEO BUDGET IN THE YEAR AHEAD

The trend is to increase the search engine optimization budget in the year ahead for a total of 91% of marketing influencers, with 38% describing the increase as significant. A very promising outlook for this proven marketing initiative.

To what extent will the SEO BUDGET change in the year ahead?

- **Budget will increase significantly**: 38%
- **Budget will increase marginally**: 53%
- **Budget will decrease marginally**: 8%
- **Budget will decrease significantly**: 1%

Search Engine Optimization Tactics Survey
Ascend2 and Research Partners, November 2017
Ascend2

Research-Based Marketing for Marketing Solution Providers

Marketing technology companies and digital marketing agencies partner with Ascend2 to reliably generate demand and supplement marketing content for their own business development efforts. Below are just a few of the leading marketing solution providers that Partner with us on research-based marketing programs.

Learn more about us at Ascend2.com

As a marketing technology company or digital marketing agency, your prospective customers are marketing influencers with an interest in the facts about improving marketing performance.

Research-Based Marketing is a process we developed to generate leads using factual content of interest to your target customers, and nurture those leads to marketing-qualified status in the name of your brand.
Research Partner Programs

Research Partner Programs rapidly deliver factual content of interest to marketers and a guaranteed number of leads to marketing solution providers, in two simple steps:

1. Choose marketing topics of interest to your audience.
   - A new marketing topic is surveyed every month
2. Choose an exclusive data segment for each topic.
   - Successful Strategy Benchmarks
   - Leadership Benchmarks
   - B2B Benchmarks
   - B2C Benchmarks
   - Enterprise Benchmarks
   - SMB Benchmarks
   - Agency Benchmarks
   - And more!

Learn more about Ascend2 Research-Based Marketing by calling 800-762-1595 extension 703 or visit Ascend2.com.