AMAZON SEO AND PPC OPTIMISATION

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INTRODUCTION

Amazon has been redefining how we shop online since 1996 – and the changes have not stopped coming, with Amazon's share of shopping searches now at 54%.

In addition to this, 90% of all product views on the Amazon platform came from searches – rather than from ads or product aggregators and 45% of all of those views went to products on the first three rows of the search result.

While these top rows increasingly feature ads, this isn't likely to diminish the percentage share of clicks for the top results by much – though the Google and Amazon SERP are not exactly interchangeable, the share of clicks is similar and, one can safely assume, consumer behaviour is unlikely to substantially differ between platforms.

This means that, if your brand operates on Amazon, it is as important – if not even more so – that you feature in the top positions. This eBook will look at both Amazon SEO and PPC and we'll show you what can be achieved through paid advertising and – the most cost effective method - improving your Amazon SEO.

WHAT IS AMAZON SEO?

To begin with, we should begin by defining the two terms.

Amazon

Beginning as an online marketplace for used books, Amazon has become the primary eTail site, making its founder Jeff Bezos the richest man in the world in the process. Amazon is now responsible for the majority of product searches and while its growth is below the overall growth of the verticals it is represented in (for example, IKEA's online sales have increased, as have online furniture sales in general, more than Amazon's sales, but all have grown), it has become such a major player in eCommerce that brands as large as Nike now sell through the site.

SEO

SEO, or 'search engine optimisation', is the process of adjusting content, presentation and more to cater better to search engine ranking factors to improve performance therein.

So, Amazon SEO… catering to Amazon's ranking algorithm – referred to as A9 (after the Amazon subsidiary that handles its SEO) – Amazon SEO is the process of optimising both your seller account and your product pages to appeal to the ranking method that underlies the Amazon search engine results pages. This shares some things in common with SEO for Google search, but is heavily weighted for relevance and performance of your products.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

As mentioned, Amazon starts 54% of all product searches and, as of 2018, Amazon was responsible for a third of the approximately £175 Bn generated by UK eCommerce (making it the fifth largest retailer overall).

This means that, like Google, if you're selling online, you pretty much have to be on Amazon (as mentioned previously – even the largest sportswear brand in the world sells directly through the platform).

So, with your competition consisting of everything from basement/garage bound start up retailers to multi-billion mega-corporations, you should be ensuring you're doing everything you can to ensure that your product is capable of standing out from the crowd – and that starts with optimisation.

Unlike Google, who prefer to keep their algorithmic black box sealed, locked and guarded by wolves, Amazon has been quite clear about the factors it expects sellers to optimise. There are four elements that we need to examine:

1.   **Visibility**

2.   **Relevance**

3.   **Conversions**

4.   **Reviews**

According to Amazon: "Customers must be able to find your products before they can buy them, and searching is the primary way they can do that. Customers search by entering keywords, which are matched against the information (title, description, and so on) that you provide for a product.

"Factors such as degree of text match, price, availability, selection, and sales history help determine where your product appears in a customer's search results. By providing relevant and complete information for your product, you can increase your product's visibility and sales."

Bearing in mind the four key points above, this is how we would consider SEO optimisation, and instruct brands and businesses that want to adhere to Amazon Ranking factors.

There are a lot of crossovers between these factors – there aren't too many things to optimise, so there are bound to be – our expert, John Warner deals with each point independently in the following summary.

1. Visibility

Visibility, as far as Amazon is concerned, represents the consumer's ability to find the product and, therefore, relates to the effort sellers put in to completing the information sections for your listings. While you can do this en-masse using a spreadsheet upload, all of the fields for a solo listing should be present in the sheet you use for the mass upload. These include (not an exhaustive list):

In tab one:

- **Product name** – this should feature the keyword you're looking to rank for at the beginning or as close to as possible as the title length displayed varies depending on where on the screen or device the listing appears.

- **Manufacturer** – if you're selling your own product, this should be your own brand name, if you're a reseller, use the information from the original manufacturer.

- **Brand name** – as above, dependent on your inventory, your own or the manufacturer's name goes here.

- **Package quantity** – simply the number of packages that will arrive with the consumer.

- **Material type** – the material from which your product is made (there's a list of options if you click into the cell).

- **Shape** – while it may not be a searched for term in your industry (car shaped toy cars?), if your product has a shape which may differentiate it or be searched for, mention it here.

- **Size** – whether selling clothes or containers, list the generic sizes here (small, XL etc).

- **Hand orientation** – while it may not apply to every product, the left or right handedness of a product can be a selling point, so make sure you fill this in if it's appropriate.

- **Tension supported** – again, this is unlikely to be a feature for most, but if you're selling hanging baskets or hanging chairs or anything in between, the tension of the item should be listed here.

In tab two:

- **Variations** – this is where you can define any variations of the same product, whether that's size, colour or shape.

In tab three:

- **Offers -** if you have any reductions in price or offers applicable to specific areas, they are entered here.

In tab four:

- **Images -** there's plenty of space for images, so you can use as many high-quality product snaps as you need to show off your product.

In tab five:

- **Key product features -** these will be the bullet points near the top of your listing, so make sure you help your product stand out. In addition, while it has not been stated explicitly, there is anecdotal evidence to support the idea that keywords placed in the product features can have a positive impact on rankings, so use them if they can be used organically.

In tab six:

- **Keywords -** you're looking for as many unique, applicable keywords as possible. In this regard, your general PPC keyword research will come in handy. Help your consumers to buy your product by ensuring you think about it from their perspective and how they may look to find you. Optimising this process is the key to achieving visibility for your products, so ensure that you're giving this as much thought as it deserves.

2. Relevance

While this is also determined by the data you enter in to your product listing, relevance is something you should consider separately – you want to make your products discoverable, but you also need to make sure that the keywords you're targeting are entirely focused on those your ideal consumer, or buyer personas would be using to find your product. While increasing the number of keywords, or using branded keywords from competitors may (probably temporarily) increase visibility, leaving a consumer disappointed with your product is a poor first impression.

3. Conversions

Sales and sales velocity seem to be the key factors for ranking on Amazon – while there may not be too much you can do to influence this at first, you can use paid search to boost your initial sales figures through both Amazon and search PPC. While boosting in this fashion will improve rankings, it should be noted that it is lasting sales volume that produces lasting ranking improvement.

4. Reviews

Whether it's a friendly note with the product, or an email following the purchase, you need to pick up reviews – not only is it beneficial for sales (as most consumers will prefer to purchase an item which has been rated), but it is also a ranking signal to get those reviews rolling in.

KEY SEO CONSIDERATIONS

In summary nearly every Amazon search is transactional. That's why its algorithm actually comes down to only a couple of things:

- Relevance

- Performance

This means that if you optimise your Amazon product page for these two, crucial ranking factors, you'll end up converting and selling more on the site. Probably the most important element of Amazon SEO, as far as relevance is concerned, is the product-title ranking factor. You'll want to put the most relevant keywords for your product in the title.

That being said, it is important to avoid keyword stuffing in your title, as that could harm your search rankings. A title that doesn't read naturally, can look spammy and have a negative impact on your CTR.

As well as this you should consider the impact of your seller name on your relevance as a ranking factor. If your brand is called 'Shoe World' and you include this in the title, eg, 'Shoe World - Men's Brogues', you may find that your products are picked up by more searches. This is especially helpful for certain types of sellers.

Performance factors are a bit harder to directly exert control over because additional considerations beyond keywords come into play. Things like how much you charge for your product significantly impacts your Amazon conversion rate. You need to make sure that you are offering items at a competitive price. Carefully compare what your competitors on the site and other sites are doing, and set your price accordingly.

Your product's conversion rate is another highly significant performance factor in your search ranking. Unfortunately, it is harder to get these analytics or at least compared to your own ecommerce performance. The best thing to do is look at the Seller Central's Detail Sales Page and Traffic under Business Reports and Reports. Here, you'll want to look at the Unit Session Percentage, which is essentially the number of units that are bought per visit. It's the closest you'll get to a pure conversion rate for your product page.

Another point to consider is that you should include high-quality images. Amazon states that: "Images should be 1,000 pixels or larger in either height or width. This minimum size requirement enables the zoom function on the website. Zoom has been proven to enhance sales. The smallest your file can be is 500 pixels on its longest side."

AMAZON ADVERTISING (PPC)

When it comes to advertising ROI – Amazon PPC sees a 10% conversion rate compared with 1-2% for Google Ads meaning that it is a no-brainer for today's marketer.

The rise of Amazon Advertising

Over the past few years, Amazon has begun to realise its huge potential as an advertising platform and developed a range of flexible, self-serve solutions for sellers to promote their products. It's power is in taking the tried and tested pay-per-click (PPC) model already well-established by Google Ads and combining it with its own USPs, namely:

High purchase intent
People usually come to Amazon with a specific product in mind - making it a valuable opportunity to expose your product to customers with high purchase intent (meanwhile, shoppers tend to use Google to search for products when they're in the research phase of their purchase journey).

Rich customer data
No other business does eCommerce on such a massive scale, which gives the platform another unique competitive advantage: the detailed customer purchase data that sellers can use to leverage their campaigns. Amazon knows the specific products that customers are purchasing, and how frequently they're buying. This means its algorithms have a wealth of data to draw on when it comes to accurately matching your ads to relevant customer searches.

Ease of purchase
A familiar platform for users, with the ability to drop products from a range of different sellers in their basket without leaving the website. If you already sell on the platform, advertising on Amazon is a versatile and powerful way for you to promote your listings, for example, to push your best-selling, seasonal or end-of-line stock up higher in search results, make them visible to a new audience and, perhaps most of all, making it easy for buyers to purchase them through a familiar checkout interface.

So it's easy to see why Amazon is so popular with advertisers: research by Third Door Media (publisher of Marketing Land, Search Engine Land and MarTech Today) found that 80% of advertisers plan to increase their ad budgets on the platform in 2019, with many shifting budget there from traditional search and paid social media advertising.

Amazon's ad offering

Amazon offers the following options:

Sponsored Products
These are bottom-of-the-funnel direct response ads that drive traffic to Amazon product pages, giving brands the opportunity to brands and sellers that want exposure to shoppers with strong purchase intent (as customers generally come to Amazon with the intention of making a purchase).

Like Google Ads, Sponsored Products are cost-per-click (CPC) and largely keyword-driven, matching the keywords that feature in your campaign to the search terms that shoppers use to search for products on Amazon.

When a shopper searches for the keywords in your campaign, your ad has a chance of displaying if it meets the required eligibility criteria. These image ads appear in several different places in Amazon (across all devices on desktop, tablet or mobile): your ads may be displayed on top of, alongside, or within search results - these look similar to organic Amazon search results or Google Shopping ads.

In April 2020 Amazon announced that it was releasing product targeting for Sponsored Display ads. This means that merchants can now target similar or complementary products and categories via Seller Central. With new options, for example, you could target running shoe ads to appear on category pages for running shorts, says Amazon.

Similarly, you can cross-promote your own products. "If you also sell socks, product targeting placements on your shoes' product detail page makes it easy for shoppers to add a pair of socks to their shoes with just a few clicks."

Until now, Sponsored Display ads have been a retargeting product. Advertisers can use audience views targeting to retarget users who have viewed their product detail pages in the past 30 days and didn't make a purchase with Sponsored Display ads on Amazon as well as on third-party websites and apps. The two targeting methods can now be used together.

Sponsored ⓘ
Warrior
Red Socks (Super Pack of 4 Pairs)
mens shoe size 6-10 uk
★★★★⯪ ⌄ 10
£9⁹⁵
✓prime
Only 4 left in stock.

Product Display Ads

These ads can appear across Amazon desktop and mobile, with placements on detail pages, above search results and top of the offer listing page. You target these ads by selecting specific products or shopper interests. There is speculation that Product Display ads will be absorbed into the Sponsored Products offering as Amazon is putting a lot more emphasis on the latter as the best choice for sellers.

Sponsored Brands

Similarly to Sponsored Products, these are self-serve solutions available to registered sellers, vendors, book vendors, Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) authors, app developers, and agencies. Targeting sellers at the top of the purchasing funnel, they allow sellers to boost brand awareness with your logo and a customised headline in ads that appear in search results.

This option generates recognition for your brand portfolio rather than specific products; as well as solutions via the Amazon DSP for advertisers who want to spend at scale via display, video and custom ads.

Product Display Ads

This is by far the biggest growing opportunity for advertisers, and which accounts for the majority of ad spend on the platform.

If you sell on Amazon, Product Display Ads offer a powerful and versatile way for you to promote your listings, for example, to push your best-selling, seasonal or end-of-line stock up higher in search results, making them visible to a new audience. Visibility, whether paid or organic, is key to success as 70% of Amazon shoppers only purchase from the first page of search results.

Ad ranking

In order to fully understand how to optimise for paid ads in Amazon you need to get to grips with their ad rank formula.

There's a significant difference in how Amazon ranks ads (ie, decides when and where to show them) compared with Google Ads because Amazon primarily makes money when items are sold as it makes commission on every sale; Google primarily makes money when ads are clicked on. In a nutshell, Amazon ranks profitable ads higher; it prioritises what the customer is most likely to buy from based on performance and relevance metrics.

The formula is as follows:

Ad Rank = CPC Bid x Ad Grade

Ad Grade is based on:

1. Performance metrics

•   CTR (click-through rate) history

•   Conversion rate

•   Overall sales

2. Relevance metrics

•   Product title

•   Description

•   Search terms

•   Seller name

The bottom line is that the quality of your product page is just as important as the quality of the ad (in the same way as your Google Ad Rank is partially determined by the quality and relevance of your landing page). It's therefore absolutely crucial that you optimise your product detail pages with great images, a clear description, and a competitive price, before you even start advertising.

FINAL THOUGHTS

While the Amazon algorithm may not be of the same level of complexity as that of Google or Bing, it's nevertheless important to ensure you're ticking all of the right boxes with your product listings. With Amazon continuing to grow its share of eCommerce and retail in general, there are few brands that can afford to ignore the world's favourite shopping search engine.

By implementing the right Amazon SEO practices, however, and ensuring that you take the platform seriously, you can help your brand compete against larger competitors and take steps to succeeding in an ever more digital world.

There's no doubt that Amazon can deliver customers at an unmatched scale, making it a competitive place for sellers. While offering good quality products and following eCommerce best practices are obviously critical to Amazon success, there's an increasingly compelling case for a hybrid optimisation approach of organic and paid campaigns as the best strategy for brands looking to maximise their visibility.

GET IN TOUCH WITH US TODAY

ABOUT US

Click Consult is a multi award-winning search and digital marketing agency with two decades of experience. Part of global consumer brand business Ceuta Group, we have a team of 70-plus specialists and a portfolio of more than 60 clients worldwide.

Click was named SEO Agency of the Year 2019, adding to our long list of other awards and accolades, and also ranks within Econsultancy's 'Top 100 Digital Agencies', and Prolific North's 'Top 50 Digital Agencies'. We're also a Google Premier Partner, a Bing Select Partner and feature in The Drum Recommends.

We're here to help - whether you're looking to hire an agency to undertake technical and creative work behind the scenes until the present situation is clear, or you just need some free advice. You can get in touch using hello@click.co.uk.
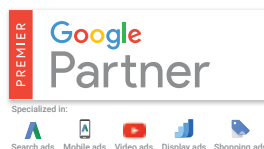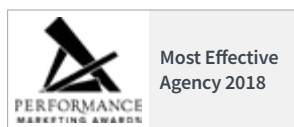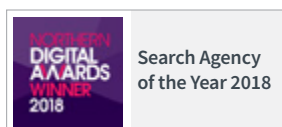
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OUR ACCREDITATIONS

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VWO CERTIFIED PARTNER

OUR AWARDS

SEO Agency of the Year 2019	Search Agency of the Year 2018	Most Effective Agency 2018	Digital Agency of the Year 2018

OUR TECHNOLOGIES

monitor TRAX   rank TRAX   feed TRAX   link TRAX   pro TRAX   page TRAX