



## Search Engines, Silos, SES Solutions

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Some of the biggest companies in the world took the stage at SES Chicago to discuss SEO ([define](#)) and SEM ([define](#)). Not, though, in a silo.

Several weeks ago in my column, "[Breaking Down Silos: Specialization with Integration](#)," I reviewed the lack of search marketing with traditional marketing. It's the one issue that relegates search engine marketing to the sidelines. This theme generated enough interest that [Kevin Ryan](#) created a new panel for [SES Chicago](#).

Our panel included two marketers (Hyatt and Chicago Tribune), one agency (Critical Mass), and two engines (Google and Yahoo). We centered the discussion on the key causes of silo thinking, as well as what each organization is doing (or needs to do) to foster marketing integration. Here are some of the most interesting (and useful) nuggets:

### **It All Starts With the Consumer**

Anyone heard this phrase before? This phrase holds a lot of weight when discussing the importance of breaking down silos; after all, what do consumers think about corporate or marketing silos?

Not long ago, it was easier to justify the existence of disparate marketing functions, each working within its own domain. Today, consumers move between touch points with ease and expect consistent and meaningful messages to be delivered on their terms.

It was rightly brought up during the panel discussion that if we begin by asking questions about the needs of the consumer, then the goals of the business silos are naturally harder to justify. If only that were enough...

### **Lack of Resources**

Every organization can use more resources. Too often for us search marketers, the resources we need in IT, eCommerce, or content development are all booked for the next 12 months. (I find it amazing how often I hear that comment.)

The Yahoo, Google, and Critical Mass panelists discussed their ability to add resources for key initiatives. The key point: all too often good ideas are not executed when stakeholders can't leverage a few hours from an overworked department, and the more departments work together (within and across companies), the more likely it is to lift the priority of your project within those resource-constrained departments.

### **Follow the Money**

Budget ownership was raised as a driving factor, especially for marketers, in building up silos. It isn't surprising that in many ways ownership of an activity is tied to budget ownership.

When a large organization with multiple departments is separately funding related activities, naturally each group finds it easier to work in a vacuum on their piece of the pie. Add in that product or service owners want to influence how their dollars are used by shared service groups like IT, eCommerce, or marketing, and you can see why rational people make ultimately irrational decisions (at least from a long-term company performance standpoint).

While not discussed directly, the implied set of solutions is not to address the budget issue head on, but instead to approach the topic with some of these key ideas.

### **Expand the Mental Image of 'Creative'**

Search has a definite image problem. For many people in advertising and marketing, their creative juices flow from an image that makes them stop in awe.

Unfortunately, search text doesn't have the same type of appeal. Rather than suggesting that search needs to employ images to be more appealing for integration, the panel argued that it's more important to change the meaning of "creative."

We need the idea of creativity to not only be about a stunning image, or an emotional commercial, but also about the idea of purchasing keywords connected to your Super Bowl ads, or capitalizing on a competitor's missed opportunity, or in using search to generate buzz months before your product is launched. In each case, by thinking more broadly about what is creative, we can garner attention and interest from our siloed brethren.

### **Demonstrating Real Business Value**

At one level, this is a no-brainer, but think about your experience -- all too often marketing efforts stop short of measuring true business impact. Understanding what data constitutes real business value is a topic unto itself.

As the panel aptly pointed out, this doesn't mean focusing on brand values *or* on direct response values, but in finding the *and* solution. The right combination of metrics can demonstrate to those who wouldn't typically notice your search investment that integrating search strategies generates better results.

### **Summary**