

# 8 Ways to Maximize Brand Awareness Through Paid and Organic Search

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In the **early days of marketing**, consumers were captive. Bombarded with TV, radio, and billboard ads, potential customers had little say in how they discovered brands.

Today, consumers are empowered to educate themselves. While they still receive ads on traditional mediums, they increasingly seek solutions online. A full **87% of shoppers** in the U.S. begin product searches online, with a majority turning to Google to find the answers they need. The path to purchase is non-linear, with multiple touches occurring across channels, devices, and locations. Consumers want to research, reflect, and compare their options before making a decision.

Providing potential customers with helpful content throughout this journey is the best way to build trust. **54% of consumers** say they trust websites more that appear at the top of the search engine results pages (SERPs). Ranking highly on Google is the best way to build brand awareness, generate leads, increase revenue, and provide genuine value to your customers.

Before we dive into concrete strategies on how to improve brand awareness through paid and organic search, let's get started with the key terms to know about brand awareness and search marketing.

## | What is organic search?

Online search engines and algorithms are designed to crawl the web and deliver efficient answers to relevant search terms. Organic results cannot be paid for—they are solely the result of which content or website page the algorithm deems most relevant and helpful for the given search term. Historically, organic results on Google appeared on SERPs as lists of blue links. More recently, Google has been **incorporating a variety of result types**, such as featured snippets, People Also Ask, and shopping, that pull website content directly onto SERPs so users can find their answers without leaving the page. Result types are still considered organic because they cannot be purchased.

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the way that marketers strategize to rank highly for relevant terms organically. SEO is valuable because of its **relatively low barrier to entry** and the **high return on investment** over time. Companies can rank well by providing genuine value to customers and ensuring that search engines can easily understand the content on your site. **Consumers overwhelmingly click on organic results over paid ones**, resulting from a higher level of trust and a feeling that they're in control of their search experience.

## | What is paid search?

Most search engines make money by displaying paid ads alongside organic results on SERPs. Pay-per-click (PPC, or paid search) is the type of marketing in which advertisers pay a search engine each time their ad is clicked. PPC results are identified as ads and typically appear above and below organic results on SERPs. Paid search can be complex, with a bidding process in which prices fluctuate based on the market. Some companies outsource their paid marketing entirely, while others boast in-house teams with dedicated headcount and technology. PPC is a useful channel because it is a predictable source of traffic and provides immediate, short-term wins, as long as the price you pay per click is less than the ultimate conversion value of that traffic.

# What is brand awareness?

**Brand awareness is the measure of how memorable and recognizable your brand is to its target audience.**

It is crucial to drive awareness of your brand at each stage of the marketing funnel, from education to consideration to conversion. While brand awareness is generally associated with **the top of the inbound marketing funnel**, its importance isn't limited to early-stage prospects. It also pays dividends down the line and helps fuel long-term growth, as customers are more likely to renew or re-purchase from a company that is top of mind.

Brand awareness is particularly important for B2B companies because of lengthy sales cycles and the presence of multiple decision-makers. It usually takes more than just one touch to close a sale. Memorable and valuable interactions with your brand will make a prospect more likely to purchase. Decision-makers also want control of the buying experience; B2B buyers are **147% more likely to buy** when they self-navigate the purchase process.

There are multiple types of brand awareness. **Unaided awareness** is the most difficult and most beneficial to brands. Awareness is considered unaided when customers can recall a brand without being prompted. This means that your brand will be top of mind when it comes time to consider options and make a purchase. **Aided awareness** is simply awareness that comes after prompting. Customers that fall into this bucket have likely been exposed to your brand somewhere but haven't yet solidified it in their minds. Finally, **brand familiarity** refers to the deepest level of knowledge and understanding about your brand. Such customers may even be brand advocates.

## What is an example of brand awareness?

**Glossier** is one example of B2C brand awareness done right, with the brand's initial viral success powered almost entirely by organic efforts. Prior to launching the brand, founder Emily Weiss generated a cult following by interviewing women about their skincare routine and makeup must-haves in her blog, *Into the Gloss*. Weiss used these insights to inform the content marketing strategy for the future cosmetics brand, eventually featuring detailed, visual content on how to use each product, along with more creative ways to use them.

Weiss also invested in building a comprehensive organic social strategy on platforms like Instagram before the brand even launched. **developing the millennial pink aesthetic** the brand eventually became synonymous with. Glossier also heavily relies on user-generated content as it regularly features this organic content across its social pages, incentivizing customers to become avid brand advocates online for a chance to be featured. These organic strategies helped catapult Glossier into competition with some of the biggest cosmetics brands by generating brand awareness (and brand loyalty) from the start.

Software company Asana provides an example of an effective B2B brand awareness strategy. The team at Asana identified that potential customers interested in developing a marketing strategy will likely also need project management software to run their program. As a result, Asana created a targeted piece of content called **19 Types of Marketing You Should Know** **About** to:

- A)** Provide genuine value to marketers and future customers
- B)** Raise awareness about Asana to these potential early-funnel customers

This piece generates over 2,000 organic clicks in the U.S. every month and ranks in the first position on Page 1 for important keywords like "types of marketing." Through this early-stage organic content creation, Asana increases brand awareness. The content helps the brand be front of mind when that searcher transitions to evaluating project management software solutions.

# Paid vs. Organic: How to balance search strategies to maximize brand awareness

When it comes to paid and organic marketing, it's not either/or but both. Achieving synergy between the two is about maximizing impact to grow and nurture your audience without wasting spend on places where you're already visible. Finding the right balance is the challenge.

As we'll discuss, sometimes it's best to bid on paid keywords to improve visibility, while other times it's more cost-effective to invest in organic content creation for keywords and phrases that are too expensive to bid on via PPC. A comprehensive strategy uses insights from paid search to inform organic search efforts and vice versa. In this section, we'll provide concrete strategies to help you maximize and even surpass your brand awareness goals using paid and organic.

# 1. Start with a strong SEO foundation

A crucial first step to improving brand awareness on search is to develop a strong SEO foundation. Without a strong SEO foundation, you will completely rely on paid spend.

There are several ways to measure the strength of your website's technical and on-page SEO. First, how do you rank for branded terms? If a significant portion of your organic traffic comes from branded search terms, many users are already familiar with your brand and see your site on Page 1 when searching brand-related terms. You should check the types of branded terms you are showing up for. Are you mostly ranking for searches comparing your brand to others (Asana vs. Jira, for example), or are you ranking for keywords signaling purchase intent (i.e., asana user license)? Your strategy and preferred assets may differ for each of those branded searchers. You'll want to ensure the right asset is ranking for each type of branded search.

Next up, you should analyze how you rank for non-branded keywords relevant to your category. This **requires extensive keyword research**, in which you bucket keywords into categories that are important to your brand. You'll also want to bucket them into intent stages. After setting up this foundation, you can assess your organic performance at a glance using

your preferred SEO solution. Non-branded keyword research will tell you the topics you are most and least visible for and inform your content strategy for organic and beyond.

Finally, technical SEO is an underestimated yet crucial part of your SEO performance. If SEO is like your house's foundation, then technical SEO is the ground you build on. Without it, everything else will crumble. Google and other search engines need to index and understand the content on your site quickly. This means you have to use **schema markup**, **hreflang tags**, and **site speed optimization** to improve your site's technical health and user experience. While technical SEO can feel daunting, there are real-time monitoring solutions that can **help automate which issues to prioritize first based on the expected impact** and ensure you make the necessary optimizations before rankings are impacted.

Once you have a strong SEO foundation, you can assess what's working and what's not. Notice competitive areas where you are underperforming? These could be good places to score a quick win by bidding with paid search. Similarly, you might be able to scale back on paid spend for areas with strong organic visibility.

# 2. Identify areas of opportunity for paid search where you aren't performing organically

As mentioned above, PPC is a great way to generate brand awareness for terms you are not (yet) ranking for organically. Paid search allows you to **target specific personas**, taking user history into account when deciding whether to bid on a given term. In other words, you can use PPC to specifically reach people in the market for your product/service or those who have never interacted with your brand. This can be incredibly powerful when paired with strategic budget allocation in other areas.

The trick is to use the above SEO foundation to help maximize your paid budget. If you find you need to improve on branded search terms organically, or if the wrong page shows up, then you should consider bidding on paid keywords with the best-

suited landing page. This ensures that you capture valuable branded traffic while you fix any issues that are preventing you from ranking via organic SEO.

You can also use PPC to bid on a competitor's branded search terms that you will never show up for organically. This helps your brand to appear to someone searching for a competitor. Known as a conquest page, this strategy can work well but according to insights from our paid search intelligence partners at **Adthema**, costs can quickly exceed the return on investment with this strategy. Although bidding on competitor-branded terms is worth considering, it will likely not be the best strategy to prioritize unless brand awareness is a critical need and you have the budget to do so.

### 3. Test brand-related keywords in paid and organic search

Brand-related keywords directly contain the name(s) of your product or services. Paid search offers a valuable testing ground for organic brand-related keywords and vice versa. For instance, you may find that nobody is bidding on your brand name, making organic a better (and free) way to target those searchers.

Additionally, you can save on paid budget for terms by taking your competition's strategy into account. Adthena's new **Brand Activator** tool can automatically pause spend on keywords when you are the only paid ad and the top organic listing. After all, why bid on your branded terms when you'll show up organically anyway? Just make sure you reactivate your spend if competitors step into the fray or if your organic ranking drops. \*Bonus: Adthena's tool does this automatically.

You can also use the same data to determine areas for additional content creation. If a brand-related term is expensive to acquire via PPC, you can work towards capturing that traffic organically by creating and optimizing value-driven content. While you'll probably want to continue bidding on those terms so that you don't lose any valuable traffic, organic traffic can be less expensive and higher converting than paid traffic for this use case.

### 4. Align your paid and organic marketing teams

Team alignment is key to maximizing your paid and organic search marketing budget. Siloed organic and PPC teams lead to duplicated efforts and inflated budgets. Here are a few ways to develop a synergistic relationship between your marketing teams:

Breaking down these siloes helps ensure that you're spending limited resources effectively.

**Establish regular check-ins between paid and organic teams.**

During these meetings, marketers can review past performance and align future initiatives.

**Designate a PPC liaison on the SEO team and an SEO liaison on the PPC team.**

These marketers can ensure alignment in the times between planned check-ins.

**Share insights gleaned from each team.**

Paid data is extremely valuable for organic optimization and vice versa. As we'll discuss below, paid search reporting can help identify new long-tail keywords to target via SEO.



## 5. Combine paid and organic data to inform strategies

As mentioned above, there are numerous ways that paid data can help inform organic efforts and vice versa. Here are just a few ways to leverage the data that your teams are already capturing. The goal is to combine the two data sources to improve your brand's visibility across your entire breadth of keywords.

- **When to use paid data:** PPC is a great place to test keywords you want to rank for organically. Develop content to target low-converting, high-cost paid keywords using SEO instead. You can also use paid data to learn what your competition is bidding on and then target those areas using PPC and/or SEO.
- **When to use organic data:** SEO data can inform you which paid keywords to target. If you are not ranking well organically for an important set of terms, it may take some time to build/optimize content that will rank better. Therefore, it can be a good idea to target those terms instead via PPC in the meantime. There also may be head terms that are just too competitive to rank for organically. PPC can be a great way to buy visibility and increase brand awareness for such searches.

- **When to use both:** Combine paid and organic data to unlock deeper insights about your performance and maximize your budget. You should use paid, along with the right SEO solution and talent, to get a full picture of your search performance. Are you bidding on paid keywords that you already rank well for organically? Consider pulling back on paid spend for those terms. Are you duplicating landing pages across both paid and organic? Take search intent into account and optimize for conversions.

**The takeaway:** both paid and organic search offer useful data that you should capture and synthesize to inform a holistic search strategy.

### How to use paid and organic data to support each other

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>When to use paid data</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Testing keywords you want to rank for organically</li><li>● Learn what your competition is bidding on</li></ul>  |
| <b>When to use organic data</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Discover what paid keywords to target</li><li>● Target competitive head terms that are difficult to rank for</li></ul>                                   |
| <b>When to use both</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Combine data for a full picture of your search performance</li><li>● Maximize budget by eliminating costs where you already appear organically</li></ul> |

## 6. Target Google, but evaluate opportunities on other search engines

For many brands, SEO is synonymous with Google. This makes sense, as Google accounts for over **90% of searches worldwide**. However, this varies significantly by country. **Baidu dominates the search market** in China, for example. Even within the U.S., engines like Bing account for **almost 1B daily searches**. There are slight differences in indexing, reporting, and paid bidding depending on the search engine.

Paid and organic opportunities on other search engines can be both easier and more cost-effective than those on Google. This is why it's important for all companies, not just those with an international presence, to consider investing in paid ads and organic ranking opportunities across multiple search engines.

## 7. Invest in PPC for mobile and SEO for desktop

Search results differ drastically between mobile and desktop. Google recently moved to **mobile-first indexing**, reflecting the importance and **predominance of mobile compared to desktop**. In general, you should consider targeting PPC for mobile searches and SEO for desktop ones (though, of course, this does not mean you should exclusively focus on one or another; finding the right balance is key).

Search intent can be very different for both desktop and mobile. Mobile searchers often have a localized intent, making mobile extremely important for retail brands with brick-and-mortar locations. Google functionality like **local inventory ads** and buy online/pick up in-store should be your focus for such transactional searches.

Mobile users are often less patient than desktop ones: they want to get the information they need and move on. They are less likely to make multiple searches. Not only that, but their

screen size is much smaller, making them less likely to scroll down to see lower results. PPC can be an effective method to help your brand get seen at the top of mobile results. Just make sure your landing page is optimized for mobile conversions.

On the other hand, desktop searchers see more results on a single page thanks to larger display resolutions. Desktop users do not have to scroll as much to see organic results. As a result, they often have more patience and are willing to do multiple searches to find the answer they're looking for. Helpful organic content will serve these researchers well and likely lead to increased brand awareness and conversions down the line. While it is not a hard-and-fast truth, targeting desktop searchers using organic and mobile searchers using paid is a good starting point.

## 8. Power your paid campaigns with organic content

SEOs are sitting on a treasure trove of data that can provide insights for your paid strategy. Content and SEO teams should have a good understanding of their top-performing content. Are there trends in the types of content getting the most clicks and highest rankings? Which content assets are converting well, and which could improve? Are there areas where you own the first organic result but receive only a few clicks? These can all be indicators letting you know which content to feature in paid campaigns.

The point here is that you should also leverage high-performing organic assets for paid campaigns. This can supplement organic visibility for your most competitive search terms and categories. Just keep in mind that the landing pages for paid results will likely need to be different than those for organic ones.

# How to measure brand awareness strategies

It's not enough to just implement the strategies described above. You'll also need to evaluate whether those strategies were effective. This includes choosing the right metrics and reporting on them in a consistent and scalable way. Here are some of the top metrics for measuring brand awareness across a number of channels.

## Channel-specific metrics to measure brand awareness: Where to start

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Branded search</b><br>Monthly change in # of users to pages from branded traffic | <b>Direct traffic</b><br>Monthly change in # of users |
| <b>Organic social</b><br>Impressions and # of followers                             | <b>Paid display ads</b><br>CTR                        |

Once you've selected the metrics you want to use to measure brand awareness, you'll want to develop actionable reporting mechanisms. This can range from simple—a monthly email to your CMO—to complex—automated reports sent from an **enterprise SEO platform**. Of course, your exact need will depend on the size of your operation and the available budget.

# Recap: The best path to brand awareness

Whether you're just getting started on your digital journey or have a seasoned brand presence, these helpful tips can help fuel your funnel and drive conversions. **Register for Conductor's on-demand Paid & Organic Synergy course** for even more strategic insights.

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