

## 13.1: Search Engine Optimization

### Learning Objectives

Understand SEO and keywords and why they matter for your firm, for consumers, and for competitor analysis.

### Search Engine Optimization

**Search engine optimization**, or SEO, is “the process of affecting the online visibility of a website or a web page in a web search engine’s unpaid results” (Wikipedia, 2024a). This differentiates SEO from the use of paid ads to appear at the top of search engine result pages (SERPs). Take the following two screenshots, for example. On the left-hand side, we have results that appear at the top of the SERP because the company has bid on certain keywords used in a search query (“car rental Montreal”). On the right-hand side, organic search results appear because the company has practiced SEO on similar keywords. In other words, they have optimized certain pages of their websites to maximize the chances that these pages would rank high when people search for specific keywords (e.g., “car rental Montreal”).

### SEO vs Organic

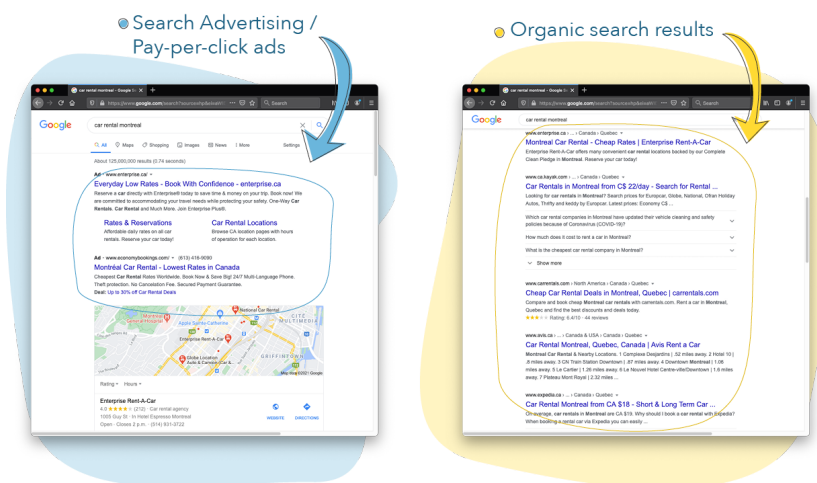


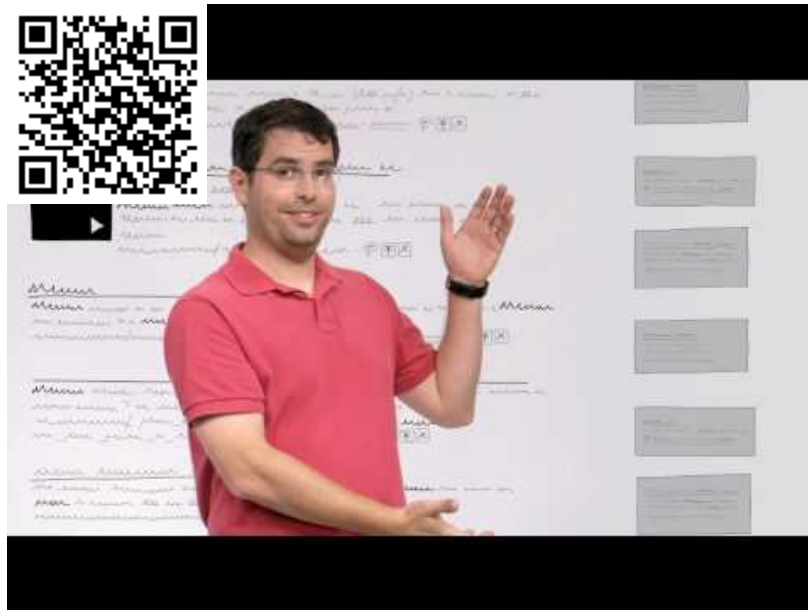
Figure 13.1 SEO vs Organic Search

### Why is SEO Important?

People use keywords to interact with content online, and most online experiences start with a search (Agrawal, 2017). As we will soon see, people turn to search engines for a wide variety of reasons, and these give opportunities for your firm to show up when people are searching for something.

Ranking high on search engines also gives a competitive advantage. In 2015, the first spot on Google received 35% of the traffic for a specific search. More than 50% of the traffic went to results located on the first result page (Advanced Web Ranking, 2015). Search matters for physical stores, too, and local searches lead 76% of mobile visitors to visit stores within the day. 28% of these resulted in a purchase (Think with Google, 2016). SEO also matters because most people ignore paid ads (McGee, 2011). Clearly, ranking high can benefit a firm: Being well-ranked provides a clear advantage over competitors.

To understand how to rank high, it is important to understand how Google works. Let’s watch the following video from Google:



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