

**1.** Trade Secrets are those digital or tangible aspects of a company that are private and belong solely to one company. If a company loses a trade secret, the risk lies in the public or competitors gaining knowledge or information about formulas, market data, algorithms, programs, codes and models. These private parts of a company are what makes them successful are the keys to keeping them in business.

Online Advertising/ Search Engine Advertising are both used to promote a brand, website or company- online. There are many companies out there now that work to get a logo or link on a webpage for the company they are working for. In addition to this, most search engines (like Google) allow sponsors to buy space a top their search pages. Both of these forms of advertising are giving businesses more access to a multitude of people.

**2.** The two articles I selected are, *The Dirty Little Secrets of Search*, by David Segal and *Google to Microsoft: Search "Gotcha"* by Claire Cain Miller. In *The Dirty Little Secrets of Search*, Segal gives an in-depth look into how Google "ranks" items when a person searches for them. Although Google has now developed a new algorithm for its search results (see Google blog reference list), the way it used to "rank" sites was by how many other sites linked to it. The rational being, if you have a lot of people linking to the information on your site about books, that must be a very popular site, and thus, Google should provide that site as a top hit whenever a person searchers for books. Turns out, some very sneaky people figured out how Google was ranking items and they started placing links on a multitude of pages all leading to one website. In this story, it was the retailer, JC Penney. Penney claims it had no knowledge of this link frenzy so Google went easy on them. Other companies were not so lucky when Google caught on to their "search tricks." In 2006, BMW was caught trying to bolster its search results and Google dropped them from their search results. Seems pretty harsh right? Google is not a fan of people trying to cheat the system, however, and they take this offence very seriously. The punishment for Penney's was a drop off in some search results and full removal of their rogue links. Segal also goes into some detail about the business of planting these unaffiliated links. The people are called Black Hats and are in high demand. One person interviewed in the article told the reporter that if a company was not paying black hats to bolster their search ratings, that they were not playing the game. Interesting theory. Segal also notes that perhaps some of the big search engine sponsors get off the hook in rigging the system because they do contribute so much to Google's advertising. Just a theory though, and one that Google denies.

*Google to Microsoft: Search "Gotcha"* discusses the online search engine "Bing" and its recent similarities to Google's search results. Miller writes about a Google "sting" operation that went into effect to see if Microsoft Bing was indeed copying Google results. Turns out, when using Internet Explorer 8 and a Google Toolbar, Microsoft can get access to information provided in search results on Google. So, the test began. Google analysts used made up words in their searches and started to monitor Bing search results. After watching the Bing results, they noticed that Bing started pointing people to made up search results created by the Google testers. Miller concludes with some quotes from Microsoft and implies that Bing watches people when they visit other sites and use Google.

**3.** I'd first like to look at the "trade secrets" concept from our E-Marketing text and how that relates to *Google to Microsoft: Search "Gotcha"* by Miller. Clearly, there is an ethical and fair use issue here. The fact that Microsoft is monitoring Google so closely makes me think they are treading on dangerous waters. Google is trying to protect its search algorithm and the basis for its search and Bing (Microsoft) is trying to get whatever piece of their trade secret that it can get. The "trade secrets" can also be applied to the other article as well, but in a little bit of a different sense. I think the fact that these black hats even exist and are using such trickery to beat the system is, ultimately, a trade secret. Especially if you take into consideration that many companies will deny that they paid black hats or even know anything about it. This is one of those dirty secrets of the industry that will probably remain a secret for a while.

Next, I believe the "Online Advertising/Search Engine Advertising" relates directly to *The Dirty Little Secrets of Search* article. Because this industry is booming so much and we are seeing an influx of online revenue, search engines now become the star of the marketing stage. However, what we have now is a battle between legitimate and unethical advertising. Using links on dummy sites as "advertising" is an underhanded way to bolster search results and get good ratings, however, according to Segal, it is common practice. One also has to consider Segal's theory that Google "goes easy" on the sites that scam their rankings but also pay for advertising with Google. While this could be considered stretching the truth, I still think it is something to be considered and looked into.

**4.** Unfortunately, it seems like my findings suggest that to play the game, you have to do some underhanded and shady things to rise to the top. Just Kidding! It is tough out there though and I think that Chapter 5 in the e-Marketing textbook gives really great examples and talks about all the right ethical and legal issues surrounding copyright, privacy and internet use. I think the main thing to

remember as an eMarketer is that you have to stand up for your rights and the rights of others. If your boss asks you to market the company in a way that you know is unethical...you have a tough decision to make. You can say no and find better ways to do thing or you can quit and join a company that better matches your values. In any case, I think it is important to learn from the mistakes of past companies like JC Penney and BMW. Yes, the tricks may get you to the top, but eventually, you will fall!

5. The thing that jumps to mind first, is software infringement. We read about that at the beginning of Chapter 5 in our e-Marketing text and I still believe it is one of those things that consumers still don't understand. With music, software and movies, there are still a lot of people who are stealing works and don't know it. As a consumer, I think it is important to read and learn about the new rules and regulations, especially as it involves the internet. Reading about clickstreams and intelligent agents really made me think about the information that I have online. In addition, I learned new things about digital property that I was not previously aware of. Consumers have to be aware of what they are doing online and take the time to get the information they need to make sure they are not breaking the rules.

## References

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