

## SEM Industry Training: What are the Options?

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### The State of SEM Training

Search Engine Marketing is the [hottest new career](#) to sweep the employment sector. There are literally more jobs available than there are marketers to fill them, hence the high salaries. Traditionally, SEO/SEM has had a long, steep learning curve, so there is currently a large supply/demand gap.

The growth of the industry has underscored the need for faster, more flexible training options. The demand for trained SEO/SEM staff has accelerated the launch of online training programs in the past three years. The spread of misinformation and the growth of dodgy SEO practices have also highlighted a need for best-practice industry certification.

### Advantages of a Career in SEM

Here are the major advantages of having a career in search engine marketing:

1. The search industry is hot, hot, HOT!
2. SEO considered one of four jobs on the cutting edge
3. The pay is (usually) fantastic
4. You can learn it all online
5. You can be your own boss
6. Search marketing has the WOW factor
7. The demand is strong and growing
8. The industry is hip and groovy
9. The skills are portable and global
10. Job satisfaction is high

### SEM Training Options

If you decide to start that career in search engine marketing, you have numerous training options open to you:

- Do It Yourself (DIY)
- E-books and online manuals
- Books and offline manuals
- Conferences and seminars
- In-person training
- Online courses

Let's go through these training options one by one.

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### Do It Yourself (DIY)

You could try to learn search engine marketing on your own, by conducting your own research, reading widely in webmaster forums and honing your skills on your own sites via trial and error.

The advantages of learning SEM on your own are:

- You can set your own timeframe
- It's generally inexpensive
- You have the satisfaction of acquiring skills on your own

The disadvantages of learning SEM on your own are:

- There is a very long lead time
- You will be faced with conflicting and unreliable information sources
- There is only a limited ability to network with peers
- Research is time-consuming
- You won't know what works and what doesn't until you trial it
- You'll have no record or proof of skills acquired

## E-books and Online Manuals

There are plenty of e-books and manuals about search engine marketing available online.

The advantages of learning SEM via e-books and manuals are:

- They are generally inexpensive
- They are readily available

The disadvantages of learning SEM via e-books and manuals are:

- They are generally considered lower quality than training
- There is no interaction with your peers
- You'll have no record or proof of skills acquired

Examples of SEM e-books and manuals include:

[The SEO Book](#) by Aaron Wall

[The Nitty Gritty of Writing for the Search Engines](#) by Jill Whalen

[SEM: The Essential Best Practice Guide](#) by Mike Grehan

## Books and Offline Manuals

As with online versions, there are just as many physical books, CDs and offline training manuals available to persons wanting to learn search engine marketing.

The advantages of learning SEM via books and offline manuals are:

- They are usually inexpensive
- They are readily available

The advantages of learning SEM via books and offline manuals are:

- The information dates quickly
- There is no interaction with your peers
- You'll have no proof of skills acquired

Examples of SEM books and offline manuals include:

[Search Engine Visibility](#) by Shari Thurow

[SitePoint's SEM Kit](#) by Dan Thies

[Building Your Business with Google For Dummies](#) by Brad Hill

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Conferences and Seminars

As search engine marketing has grown as an industry, so too have the number of conferences and events dedicated to it.

The advantages of learning SEM via conferences and seminars are:

- They offer cutting edge information
- They often provide access to search engine staff
- They give you the ability to network with peers

The disadvantages of learning SEM via conferences and seminars are:

- You must travel to the venue
- They generally provide no training material
- They can be more expensive than other options
- You'll have no record or proof of skills acquired

Examples of SEM conferences and seminars include:

Search Engine Watch's [Search Engine Strategies](#)

Webmaster World's [PubCon](#)

Search Engine Land's [Search Marketing Expo](#)

Australia's [Search Summit](#)

## In-person Training

Just as the number of conferences relating to search engine marketing has grown, so too has the demand for in-house training in SEO and SEM subjects.

The advantages of learning SEM via in-person training are:

- It generally includes step-by-step instructions
- Training material is usually provided
- Verification of subjects studied is provided
- You have the ability to network with your peers
- Some form of certification is generally given
- University credits are sometimes available
- Certification may be recognized by potential employers

The disadvantages of learning SEM via in-person training are:

- You must travel to the venue
- The information can date quickly
- It can be more expensive than other options

Examples of SEM in-person training include:

Bruce Clay's [SEOToolSet](#)

Jill Whalen's [SEM Seminars](#)

[Search Engine Bootcamp](#)

[Elite Retreat](#)

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## Online Training Courses

It's not always viable or affordable for webmasters to attend conferences or training sessions at a venue other than their home or workplace. For these reasons, the demand for online training in search engine marketing subjects has skyrocketed.

The advantages of learning SEM via online training courses are:

- Courses are available 24/7 from any location worldwide
- Training materials are provided
- They are usually cheaper than venue-based options
- They generally include step-by-step instructions
- Courses are self-paced and interactive
- Certification is provided
- A knowledge benchmark is required to qualify for certification
- Verification of subjects studied is provided
- The lesson materials are updated regularly

- University credits are sometimes available
- Certification is usually recognized by potential employers
- Training institutions can assist graduates with employment

The disadvantages of learning SEM via online training courses are:

- They can be more expensive than other options
- There is only a limited ability to network with peers

Providers of online training courses in search engine marketing include:

Search Engine College - [http://www.searchenginecollege.com/affiliates/jrox.php?id=285\\_1\\_aaid\\_2](http://www.searchenginecollege.com/affiliates/jrox.php?id=285_1_aaid_2)

## Benefits of Industry Certification

When it comes to industry certification, there are various schools of thought in the SEM industry. Some suggest certification is simply not necessary, others state that SEO/SEM has no official industry standards, so any certification is meaningless, still others insist that certification is becoming increasingly important to potential employers and persons seeking careers in SEO and SEM.

If you're skeptical about the value of industry certification, ask yourself these questions: Will you be looking to hire search marketing staff over the next 12 months? Would you prefer to hire search marketing staff that hold industry certification? Will you be seeking a job in the search industry over the next 12 months? Do you think holding industry certification would give you an edge over applicants applying for the same jobs?

Here are some advantages to having industry certification in search engine marketing:

For Staff:

- Proof of subjects studied and skills acquired
- Ability to promote certification on web site / CV
- An edge over other applicants when applying for SEO/SEM jobs.

For Employers:

- Ability to hire based on a proven skill set (e.g. ability to set up a Yahoo! SEM campaign quickly).
- Ability to impress clients with certified status of staff.
- Reassurance that search engine-approved methods are used.
- Less on-the-job training is required.

To Sum Up

Everyone has a different learning style, so don't assume one method will work for you. Don't rely on a single source of training for your search engine marketing needs. Attend conferences, purchase books, take a course, network in forums and DIY when you can to acquire a broader knowledge base.

Finally, remember that training should always be supported by hands-on SEO/SEM experience so get those hands

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dirty!

About the Author: Article by Kalena Jordan, one of the first search engine optimization experts in Australia, who is well known and respected in the industry, particularly in the U.S. As well as running her own SEO business, Kalena manages Search Engine College - [http://www.searchenginecollege.com/affiliates/jrox.php?id=285\\_1\\_aaid\\_2](http://www.searchenginecollege.com/affiliates/jrox.php?id=285_1_aaid_2) - an online training institution offering instructor-led short courses and downloadable self-study courses in Search Engine Optimization and other Search Engine Marketing subjects.