

Perficient Digital (formerly Stone Temple) | Gold Winner

Small and Medium Businesses—Driving Business with Thought Leadership

Stone Temple Builds Top Agency Reputation with Original, Data-Driven Research Studies

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

The primary challenge in marketing a digital marketing agency is differentiating your agency from the competition in a highly competitive space. How do you stand out, attract attention, and build your reputation when all agencies make the same claims? How do you obtain clients and grow with no outbound sales force?

PROGRAM OBJECTIVE

We believed regularly publishing helpful, expert-level content on our site, in industry publications, and through conference presentations, was the best way to achieve that goal.

The further challenge, however, was what kind of content would best achieve the above goals? Surveying our competition, we could see that publishing content was not in itself that unusual for marketing agencies. We decided that publishing original, groundbreaking data-driven research studies was the way to rise above the pack.

PROGRAM EXECUTION

Our studies are managed by our marketing department, and our CEO is the head coordinator of the entire process. He actively drives the final analysis on all studies. The marketing department meets with the CEO at least weekly to review ideas for new studies, report on progress of in-process studies, plan next steps, and coordinate efforts across departments.

Because of our CEO's background and experience in advanced data analysis, he oversees all our studies and is their head analyst and author. One member of the marketing team handles project management for the studies, while others assist with execution (in some cases), publishing, and promotion. Over the past year, another member of the marketing team directly managed specific aspects of data acquisition and pre-analysis.

The CEO and marketing department also coordinate the recruitment, training, and management of other company assets, including our development and tools staff as well as our in-house designer.

BUSINESS RESULTS

Our first and most important success metric is the large number of our clients who have told us how our studies either first made them aware of us or helped impress them with our knowledge and expertise, or both. As an example of this, major brand new clients we closed during 2017 and early 2018 include: Comcast, Arrow Electronics, SeaWorld, Amazon, JC Penney, and many others.

We also measure our success by the number of citations and articles our studies have generated in major industry and technology publications, as well as mentions by online influencers and major conference speakers. Our studies have been cited in over 800 articles in numerous major publications, including *The Wall Street Journal*, *Inc.com*, *The Next Web*, *ReCode*, *Techcrunch*, *The Verge*, *Huffington Post*, *AdWeek*, *CNN*, *The Guardian*, *The Daily Mail*, and many more.

A third success metric is traffic to our site driven by these studies, since such traffic creates many other opportunities to market to these visitors. By far our studies are the most significant traffic-drawing asset on our site, accounting for six out of our top ten content pages by landing page sessions over the past year. Since most of the online publication articles mentioned above contain links to our studies, they have contributed significantly to the organic search traffic growth of our site. The influx of links to our first viral study alone, back in 2014, caused our search traffic to jump by 300% in a matter of days.

As a result, we now dominate the top of Google results for a number of terms important to our business and related to some of our top studies. For example, as of this submission we are #1 for “mobile vs desktop” and “digital personal assistants.”

We have also won a number of industry awards, including SEO Agency of the Year (US Search Awards), and both Search Personality of the Year (US Search Awards) and Search Marketer of the Year (Search Engine Land Awards) by our CEO, Eric Enge, based in part on the industry reputation built by our studies.

But our most important success metric is the growth of our business, from approximately 30 employees before we started doing regular studies to nearly 70 at present, and revenue growth in the same period from \$3M to a projected \$10 million this year. Because our growth is only achieved via reputation, and a large part of our reputation comes from our studies, we have no doubts about their value to our business. This success was a critical factor in our friendly acquisition by Perficient Digital in July 2018.