

How to Maximize Paid Search Results

Because of increasing competition that has led to higher advertising costs with pay-per-click marketing, many battle-scarred - "do-it-yourself" - businesses have not realized their desired objectives. Although publicized as a straightforward, self-service marketing tool, pay-per-marketing involves far more knowledge than most businesses are able to invest in developing in-house. Faced with a moderately or less performing pay-per-click marketing program and the pressure to allocate resources elsewhere, many businesses choose to drop their pay-per-click marketing entirely - leaving a vast potential of sales for their competitors to harvest.

If you face pay-per-click marketing challenges, before you decide to drop the program, try these proven strategies to get it producing your desired results.

Discover These Proven Strategies to Produce Quick Results.

A. Keyword-Level Tracking

Track your pay-per-click marketing at the keyword-level - referred to as the "root". For pay-per-click marketing, it is essential that you know your "per click" results from the money you have spent.

For example, if you have 1,000 keywords active in your pay-per-click marketing program and you spend a total of \$3,000 a month - do you know which of the 1,000 keywords produce the best results?

What if 80% of your sales stem from 20% of your keywords? Moreover, what if this 20% accounted for just a small percentage of your \$3,000 monthly cost? If you do not have keyword-level tracking you will not be able to make these financially beneficial assessments. Time-tested experience shows that the 80/20 rule applies to pay-per-click marketing.

Does the 80/20 rule apply to your pay-per-click marketing? Get keyword-level tracking.

But Beware of Matching Options!

Although matching options (i.e. broad, advanced, exact, phrase and so on) offered by Google Adwords, Overture and other pay-per-click search engines provide "convenience" they unfortunately skew your keyword performance results.

If you setup a "broad-match" for the keyword "real estate", you will attract visitors who have entered any possible variation of the term "real estate" including geographically specific "real estate" keywords that may have absolutely no relevance to your product or service.

Here is a scenario where matching options skew your results...

You generate \$1,000 in revenue from the broad-match keyword, "real estate" yet the total click cost for it exceeds revenue and because of the keyword's negative return, you label it as a poor performing keyword.

What if the majority of the click cost originated from irrelevant, broad-match keyword variations like "Louisiana real estate" - while one variation, "real estate strategy" generated all of the revenue? By identifying this keyword (hard to do in a broad-match environment so rely on your web stats program), taking this one keyword and isolating it as an exact term you will reduce your total click cost while continuing to generate the same revenues.

How are your broad-match keywords performing? Isolate keywords to save click costs and to regulate individual keyword performance.

B. Landing Page Development

Pay-per-click marketing is unique compared to other mainstream forms of online marketing. In part because marketers have the opportunity to select specific keywords, write specific ads and direct the click-through to a specific web page. This "connect-the-dots" structure creates the need to develop consistency among the visitor's expectation from the keyword they enter to the ad that draws their attention and down to the web page, they "land-on". Relevancy and consistency are essential for an effective pay-per-click marketing program.

One of the reportedly major reasons why pay-per-click marketing programs fall short of their intended goal is because businesses direct all of their click-throughs to their home page. Since most businesses' home pages are designed to serve multiple audiences (i.e. media relations, investors, current clients, potential prospects, customer services, etc.) they do not provide the level of relevancy and consistency expected from the visitor to get them to act confidently.

What in the Virtual World are Landing Pages?

Landing pages are simply web pages designed specifically for a keyword or related group of keywords. They are highly relevant to the keyword searched and consistent with the ad's claim. They immediately focus a visitor's attention to a primary call-to-action (most wanted response). In essence - landing pages ask your visitors to take an action.

If your pay-per-click marketing is not living up to your expectations, consider which web pages you are sending visitors to. Are they relevant and consistent with your pay-per-click ads and keywords? Do they offer too many calls-to-action? Do they "fit" the expectations of the visitor searching on the particular keyword?

For example, are you sending a visitor searching on the keyword "Sony LCD TV" to a web page with twenty varieties of electronic products? An effectively designed landing page would present the visitor a "Sony LCD TV" with customer benefit oriented copy, an immediate "buy now" call to action and all applicable guarantee, shipping, customer service and return policies.

Make it Easy for Your Visitors and they will Reward You with Sales.

C. Keyword Selection

Keyword selection is important. The keywords you select provide access to "pools" of visitors at different stages in their buying cycle. By selecting the right keywords for your products or services, you can open a completely new market of ready-to-buy visitors.

Make sure that you thoroughly canvass your marketplace using strategies such as:

- Your competitors' websites
- Your website's copy
- Third-party tools - Overture's Suggestion Tool, WordTracker, and others
- Your website metrics program (look for "natural search engine" keyword phrases)
- Search engines like Ask Jeeves or Alta Vista (who suggest keyword variations)

Most importantly, "THINK" about your potential customers and what direct or indirect keywords they may use to find your products or services. Never give up searching for new keywords to setup and test. Both seasonal and even weekday keyword performance

fluctuations should be analyzed and studied in addition to potential associations people make to find your products and services.

What about you - have you selected the right keywords?

D. Bidding Strategies

All pay-per-click search engines possess unique bidding nuances. However, for the two largest, Google Adwords and Overture do not become fixated on the top bid position. Test how each keyword performs against your website's sales or lead conversion metrics up to the seventh bid position.

Depending on your product or service, you may be amazed how bid position six attracts less click-throughs but produces greater sales or lead conversion on your website. Or maybe position four generates better conversion. Regardless - test, test and test - the outcome may mean lower costs and higher sales conversions for you.

Consider this New Update in Your Bid Strategy.

Are you aware that recently Overture's top partners, MSN and Yahoo, opened their results to up to eight "sponsor results" or paid ads on the first page? In some cases, the fourth and fifth or fifth and sixth positions will show at the bottom of the first results page and again at the top, right margin of the first results page - in essence two ads for the price of one.

Do not be lured into competing for the first place position instead keep an eye on your keyword performance (via your keyword-level tracking) and occupy whichever position provides the best sales or lead conversion.

E. Writing Effective Ads

Finally, always test different ads by interchanging words in the title and description. For Google Adwords, try split-testing two different titles and descriptions and add a unique tracking code to each one so you can identify which one causes the best sales conversion increase. Notice that I did not state, "the best "click-through rate increase". Why? Because "a lot of nothing" (i.e. a lot of traffic without sales or lead conversion) is not a financially effective strategy. Consider that even a single word change on your ad can create a significant jump to your sales or lead conversion rate.

Follow these strategies to boost your pay-per-click marketing results today. Good Producing!

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