

How To Make Pay-Per-Click Advertising Payoff

By Jeff Smith

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Profitability with Pay-Per-Click (PPC) advertising comes down to how well you have chosen your keywords.

Choose too generic a term and you will lose your shirt - and fast. Choose too specific a term and you'll miss out on traffic your competitors will get.

For example, let's say you offer a travel guides for sale online - here are some possible keywords with associated monthly traffic counts and top bid as of the time this article was written:

travel: #hits (1198817) top bid: \$2.11/click

travel guide: #hits (30859) top bid: .75/click

Italy travel guide (516) top bid: .22/click

If you zip on over to the Overture Keyword Suggestion Tool,

<http://www.inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/>

you'll find well over 100 associated combinations of keyword phrases that incorporate travel - but would not be interested in your product.

Similarly, a search under travel guide returns many search phrases including travel guide that may not properly target your customers.

You are still better to go one step deeper and find keywords

more specific to your market - and as you will notice, the cost per click becomes much more reasonable which means your return on investment for PPC advertising becomes much greater.

So, that's all great information, but how do you find those "magic" keywords and phrases that will pull well for your business.

This is where your detective skills will come in handy. A little work will pay off in spades.

TIP 1. Examine Your Web Logs

Access your web logs - either from your dedicated server or from your shared server with your virtual web host. Most web statistics packages allow you to examine search terms that brought customers to your site from large search engines.

You want to look over a few months and find patterns of search terms that pop up again and again - those are the one's you'll want to start with.

TIP 2 Use Keyword Suggestion Tools

There are various keyword suggestion tools that you can access on the internet to assist you in finding commonly searched terms -- some even list combinations that you may not have even thought of. Here are a few of them to try out...

Overture Search Term Suggestion Tool:

<http://inventory.overture.com/d/searchinventory/suggestion/>

Google Adwords Suggestion Tool:

<http://adwords.google.com/select/main?cmd=KeywordSandbox>

Wordtracker

<http://www.wordtracker.com>

TIP 3. Scan the Message/Discussion Boards

Look for patterns of words, phrases or questions that people use on discussion forums related to your product or service. These boards are tremendously valuable sources of intelligence given that most posts start off with a question followed by several responses - find questions your product deals with and you'll find clues to keywords.

TIP 4. Search your competitors keywords

Spend some time searching down your competitors using Google, Yahoo or other search engines. You can use the toolbar extension at <http://www.alexa.com> to help find out which sites are more popular.

For Internet Explorer users, choose the "View" and then "Source" menu options to look at the code for a particular website. Look for the Meta Tag Keywords section as well as keyword patterns in titles and sub-heads as well as through the text for clues on top performing keywords.

You can then go back to the Keyword Suggestion tools outlined in TIP#2 to test the keyword combinations you've come up with.

TIP 5. Look at leading Direct Mail, Magazine Articles and Books on your market to get hints on common "trigger" keywords that pop up again and again. Try mixing and matching some of these keywords, then throw them into the tools used in Tip#2. Before long, you will have found a few gems to try out.

TIP 6. Test IT

Keyword targeting is not an exact science. As with every other marketing technique, you need to test it. Depending on your budget and how fast you want to get results, you'll need to decide on a PPC to go with. Note: You will get far faster results with the big guys - Google Adwords and Overture, so my advice is to test using these PPC's. You should have narrowed your keywords down to a point where you are risking .05-.80 per click rather than \$2.00/click, so your exposure should be minimal.

Finally, you need to assess both the short-term and longer term impact of PPC. Shorter term, you'll notice traffic coming from PPC right away in your web logs - so you'll get a sense of click-through rates, and eventually sales in 1-2 weeks.

Longer term though, being listed in the top 3 spots on the PPC's often provides you additional exposure through special marketing arrangements each PPC has made with specific search engines.

Weeks after your initial campaign you will often start to see a significant bump in search engine activity as the result of being in the top 3 of PPC's.

Be smart in your PPC marketing. For the vast majority of

businesses who don't have unlimited funds for marketing, stay away from following the flocks - try and focus on niche keywords.

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