

PPC Bid Management Software Showdown

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If you've been keeping up with the search engine industry lately, you'll know that Pay-Per-Click (PPC) is a fast growing trend. Nearly all of the major search engines and directories have now integrated one type of PPC or another into their search results. At the moment Overture.com (formerly GoTo) is the clear leader in the PPC field, with an estimated 90% of the total PPC search market. But others such as FindWhat, Kanoodle and eSpotting are slowly catching on.

Overture currently has partnerships in place with Yahoo, AOL, AV, Lycos, Netscape, InfoSpace, MSN and Excite. People bid to purchase keywords from Overture and the top 2 or 3 bids (called Premium Listings) appear on their partner sites when searches are conducted for those keywords. Most of the time, Overture results appear above regular search results as "sponsored matches", so you can see how effective this type of campaign can be when used to draw targeted traffic to a web site. Whenever a viewer clicks on a sponsored listing, they are taken to the advertiser's site and the advertiser is charged for the click at the rate determined by their bid on Overture.

The main drawbacks to advertising on PPC engines to date have been:

- a) The quick exhaustion of funds due to large traffic volume
- b) The time consuming nature of bid rank analysis for multiple keywords
- c) The impact of bid gaps on cost-effectiveness (when your bid is more than it needs to be to maintain your target rank).

When you are managing PPC campaigns for hundreds of keyword sets for multiple client sites, these problems are compounded. Fortunately, software has sprung up to help people manage their PPC campaigns and automate the bidding process.

We have reviewed eight of these Bid Management Software programs in our effort to find the one right for our client campaigns and thought we'd share the results with you:

(Please note a more detailed version of this article, including a Software Features Chart can be viewed at our site here:

http://www.high-search-engine-ranking.com/PPC_Bid_Management_Software_Showdown.htm)

1. Tangare's Pay Per Click Maximiser www.tangare.com

The Pay Per Click Maximiser is a great product. A downloadable desktop program, no monthly fees, plenty of keywords and a good price for the Standard edition (USD \$199 for 500 keywords). It supports FindWhat, Kanoodle and eSpotting in conjunction with Overture US & UK and allows the user to determine the bid update frequency. Other notable features include the ability to export reports to Excel, HTML and email.

My only real problem with this program is the Interface, which tends to be confusing, (all that gray on gray) and not very intuitive. There is a help menu, but on first launch, it is not clear where to start or how to launch a new project. The “manage search terms” tab is also a little user unfriendly, but once you study the help menu to determine how to set your rank targets and bid limits, you’re off and running. Their free trial download simulates the bid optimization process, but is otherwise fully functional. Score 8/10

2. Click Patrol www.clickpatrol.com

Click Patrol claim to be the largest provider of automated Pay-Per-Click bid management services, but I can’t see any redeeming features that differentiate the service from other providers. For starters, it is Internet based, so if you are security conscious, you may not like the idea of handing over your Overture account login details to a third party provider. Then there are the monthly fees, which are the most expensive of all programs reviewed, ranging from \$100 to \$500, with an extra fee per keyword if you want your bids checked more often than every 24 hours. See the Features Chart for details. They do support seven of the major PPC engines and I hear their “Auto Position” feature works well to close price gaps, but there is no free trial of their system that I could find, only case studies and a screen capture. Score 5/10

3. Gapster www.did-it.com/gapster

With the release of their freeware bid optimization tool Gapster, Did-it had an opportunity to win hearts and capitalize on a thankful market. It sure sounded promising: free automatic bid monitoring & updating for 200 keywords on Overture US & UK, FindWhat and Kanoodle.

Unfortunately, they chose to abuse the privacy of their customers and win enemies for their trouble. As reported by Danny Sullivan in his latest Search Engine Update newsletter, beta users of Gapster allegedly had their Overture account login details published on the Internet last month, care of one of Did-it’s own servers. The security breach was quickly corrected, but the damage to Did-It’s reputation was already done. Mindful of this first impression clouding my judgment, I tried to download the beta version to verify the product itself and give them the benefit of the doubt. But at time of writing the download was unavailable due to the software undergoing an update. Let’s hope their updating their security protocols. Score 0/10

4. Save Per Click www.saveperclick.com

Another Internet based program, Save Per Click supports more PPC engines than any of the other products we reviewed, Nine in total, including some I’ve never heard of. They offer a free 7day trial, but you need to have an account already in place at one of the supported PPC engines. This is a fairly straightforward program, but my major gripe is price and the inability to pre-determine bid update frequency, although you CAN choose time of day. The monthly fee ranges from \$19.95 to \$89.95 for the Standard edition (updates once a day) and \$59.95 to \$199.95 for the Pro edition (updates once an hour). Price range is determined by number of keywords. See the Features Chart for details. Score 6/10

5. Auto Pilot www.managebid.com

Probably the pick of the Internet based programs, Manage Bid's Auto Pilot software was the only one reviewed that provided unlimited keywords. The hitch is that each keyword will cost you 0.25 USD a month to monitor, with a minimum spend of \$25 per domain, per month. Bid updates are done every 24 hours and the program provides support for eight PPC engines (some obscure). There is also an Economy Mode for the penny pinchers, at 0.10 USD per keyword, with a minimum spend of \$10 per domain, per month. But economizers must update their bids manually – see the Features Chart for details. Score 7/10

6. PPC Professional www.ppcmanagement.com

Now this one has real potential. You have the choice of purchasing a lifetime version or a monthly subscription and you also have the flexibility of determining how often your bids are checked and updated. Keywords supported range from 50 to 5,000+ with costs staggered from \$89 or \$12 per month for 50 keywords to \$999 or \$100 per month for 5000+ keywords (see the Features Chart for detailed pricing). With a "Smart Bid" feature to ensure your bids are cost-effective and the ability to import keywords straight from Overture, this new product has many features the bigger names don't. You can print reports or email them directly to customers and the developers claim to keep your login and account info secure. It also supports unlimited Overture accounts for those of you with multiple clients. Currently the software only supports Overture.com, but a new release planned shortly will support other engines and include new features. The 10 day, 10 keyword trial version has a few bugs to be ironed out and the interface isn't as intuitive as others, but definitely one to watch. Score 7/10

7. Position Guardian www.positionguardian.com

Not the most feature-packed product, Position Guardian (Premium) is an Internet based bid monitoring and gap analysis tool that automates the process of checking your bids on Overture and sends you daily notification of bid gaps. Unlike the other products reviewed, Position Guardian does not include automated bid updating, you have to manually change the bids yourself by logging in to your Overture account. Sure it's cheaper than some, with prices ranging from \$7.95 to \$57.95 per month depending on keyword numbers, but it still seems like a lot to pay for less than half the work (see the Features Chart for detailed pricing). In their defense, they do provide a free online version that allows you to manually check for bid gaps one keyword at a time – handy if you're worried about that all important keyword. Score 4/10

8. BidRight www.bidright.net

We have a winner! BidRight was very hard to fault. A downloadable desktop program, no monthly fees, generous keyword limits and a very competitive price for their new release Pro edition (USD \$199 for 500 keywords). See the Features Chart for more pricing options. Version 2 supports FindWhat, Kanoodle and eSpotting in conjunction with Overture US & UK and allows the user to determine the bid update frequency from every 60 seconds to every 24 hours. Their interface follows the WYSISYG principle and it was the easiest of all the software to install and start using.

Particularly impressive is the "Gap Surfing" tool that finds the most cost-effective position from a range of ranks that you predetermine. So if you wanted to remain in the top 5 positions, you choose position 1 as your target rank and enable gap surfing with a range of 4. BidRight will find the largest price gap in the top 5 and slot your bid in there automatically whenever it is scheduled to update,

preventing you from overbidding and saving you lots of money in the process. Other new features include the ability to export reports in CSV format, a drop back rank feature when maximum bid has been reached. Combine all this with the ability to customize the update frequency for your most important keywords and you have a very powerful tool that becomes a must for managing any PPC campaign. You can download a fully functioning 15 day demo, with the only disadvantage a five keyword limit. Score 9/10

Well BidRight was the ultimate winner of our Showdown and I was so impressed with the product that I immediately signed up to become an affiliate! If you would like to buy BidRight, you may like to use our affiliate link: <http://store.yahoo.com/cgi-bin/clink?bidright+NARxJp+index.html> . Be sure to mention Coupon Code WR 007 to obtain a 5% discount (we do get a commission if you use our link, so if that bothers you, feel free to use the general link above). Remember you can view the Features Chart for all the software reviewed from the longer version of this article located at our site: [http://www.high-search-engine-ranking.com/PPC Bid Management Software Showdown.htm](http://www.high-search-engine-ranking.com/PPC_Bid_Management_Software_Showdown.htm) .

If you are in the market for any kind of Bid Management Software, you may want to keep an eye on current talk about the implications of such software on server load at Overture. Apparently Overture are considering restricting access to their servers from persons using bid management software because the server load is becoming too great. They may block access from certain IP addresses that abuse the system or they may restrict access by software. To reduce the impact on search engine servers, you should use your bid management software responsibly, restricting bid checking to every few hours or daily rather than every few minutes.

More: <http://www.ihelpyouservices.com/forums/t1479/s.html>
<http://searchengineforums.com/Forum16/HTML/000836.html>
<http://www.pay-per-click-bid-managers.com/>

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