



CAREER RESOURCES



Search Marketing for Dummies

[By Chris Kenney]

There are over 200 million searches per day on the major search engines, according to COM Score, forcing advertisers and small businesses to jump into the paid search space. Doing so is simply something that every business should do on some level, given the explosion of the Internet.

The growing popularity of the Internet has led to a very competitive search landscape on hundreds of thousands of terms across a multitude of industries. Many companies outsource their paid search efforts, others neglect the issue completely, and some just can't afford to compete in their given area. The truth is, companies of all shapes and sizes should have a paid search strategy and long-term plan, be it something very small and simple, or a far-reaching campaign. While it may seem like a bit of a scary proposition to enter into this market and get your arms around the concept in general, it's not all that difficult for a small company to elevate its search engine rankings. The bottom line is that these efforts can truly drive business, conversion, and ultimately revenue.

If you're a small business looking to generate some additional revenue and expand your reach online, then advertising with paid search can be the right option for you. It's not as simple as bidding on a couple of keywords and putting together an ad or two, but with a few simple tricks and tips, you can be successful. The sheer volume on the Internet can lead to explosive growth and revenues, but you must be proactive when managing a search campaign. By taking a reactive approach, the chance of losing money can become a reality quickly.

Getting started is easy. You can sign up for Adwords at adwords.google.com. Once you set up your account, you can start creating campaigns using some easy to follow rules of the game.

Account Set-Up/Keyword Selection

First, select the keywords that are relevant to your products and then start to build them out with all plurals, misspellings, and other variations, so that any kind of search term will help bring your page to the top of the results. For example, the keyword "business cards" can become "business card," "businesscard," "businesscards," "buisness card," "buisness cards," etc. You have to keep in mind that many times people will mistype search terms, but there is still an opportunity during those searches for your business to snag business.

Once you come up with the keywords, start to arrange them into "campaigns," usually by product or service. Within those campaigns, create "ad groups." When creating ad groups, try to keep the keywords within each ad group as specific as possible. For instance, all terms relating to custom business cards will be one ad group. Terms such as "custom business card," "custom business cards," "business card custom," "business cards custom," "customized business cards," etc.

You should also consider using negative keywords. Using negative keywords will allow you not to show to the wrong users. For example, excluding the term "credit" to stop your ad from showing for all the business credit cards. This alone can cut your costs dramatically. Leverage all the reporting and tools that your company has to determine which keywords you are matching that are not performing.

Creating Ad Copies, Testing Results

Once you have gotten through the creation of keywords, campaigns, and ad groups, then it is time for writing the copy of the actual ads. There are some basic tips to writing quality paid search ads. First, use all available characters. Filling up the space won't be difficult when making sure your offer is clear and actionable. Be sure to call out any promotions or competitive advantages that your product has to offer. Also, use correct spelling, but do not hesitate to try unique characters that may set you apart, such as (! & \$ % ® TM).

Do not write a misleading ad; try to qualify the user before they click with a descriptive and informative offer. Finally, test multiple copies against each other to see which one performs the best and generates the most tangible results. A/B split testing allows you the control to test run multiple different paid ads against each other over time. Like the practices used in marketing, split testing software helps to choose which adaptation will render the greatest conversion rates. Running split testing in the search space allows you to figure out exactly what works and what doesn't. Both Google and Yahoo allow for A/B split testing, and you should always utilize it.

When setting up a test to split run, you must do so in the "campaign settings" so the ads rotate evenly and the results are not compromised. Use split run testing to optimize your campaigns for ad copy, landing pages, and the price or specific offer. This will allow



CAREER RESOURCES

you further insight into what can work best for you and what doesn't, and will also allow you to stay on the proactive path which will ultimately lead to success.

Tracking and Targeting

Whether it's in-house reporting or an analytics package offered by the search engine you choose to buy ad words from, you *must* track everything. Tracking results provides you all the insight required to accurately determine test winners, move bids up and down, and add negative keywords.

At the very least, you should get conversion tracking (a service that is offered by Google, Yahoo, and MSN). If you cannot track the performance of your search engine marketing efforts and assign a value to it, there is no reason to start in the first place. There is also a lot of value to geo-targeting, specifically for small regional businesses that might only be interested in reaching a specific geography.

If your product or service is only available in a specific region, geo-targeting is a great option. This will allow your ad to show only to users in

a select region. You can target by city, state, or even country. By geo-targeting, you will most likely have lower costs-per-click and will get an additional line of copy calling out your local roots. This can be a boon for locally based small businesses, and is an option offered by the search engines.

Budgeting

Budgeting is right behind testing and analyzing in terms of importance when it comes to paid search campaigns. Make sure you set daily budgets to prevent a certain campaign from spending too much. You will lose impressions by setting a low daily budget, but you will not run into any invoice surprises. These can often discourage or even outright kill a small business's desire to stay in the space. Start out slow, and work your way up as you get your feet wet. Depending on your industry, click costs can range anywhere from a few cents to as high as \$10 plus. A daily budget should range according to your average cost-per-click.

Another way to limit daily spending is day parting, or having your ads show only during

select times of the day. We also talked about geo-targeting, which can save you money by being targeted. Another option is to turn off content networks. Unless you are solely trying to brand your product or service, turn off the content networks! Most campaigns, when created, will have content turned on as a default. Make sure it is turned off. Content networks are expanded areas of reach in which the search engines are able to show your ads. They are shown on blogs, emails, web pages, etc. and are supposed to be shown when there is any content related to your keywords on the page. The main difference between search and content ads is that a user is looking for your product/service when clicking a search ad. These people are more qualified because they are looking for you. When using a content ad, it is like you are searching for them.

Chris Kenney is a Search Marketing Specialist at VistaPrint. Customized printed products and marketing services can be found at www.vistaprint.com.

EmploymentCrossing is the largest collection of active jobs in the world.

We continuously monitor the hiring needs of more than 250,000 employers, including virtually every corporation and organization in the United States. We do not charge employers to post their jobs and we aggressively contact and investigate thousands of employers each day to learn of new positions. No one works harder than EmploymentCrossing.

Let EmploymentCrossing go to work for you.