

## Using Pay-Per-Click to Play in the Big League

Ever wondered how to get one of those short ads on the top or side of your Google, Yahoo or Bing search page? Those short **pay-per-click (PPC) ads** are related to the keywords you entered in the search field, and they circulate on a rotating basis.

The great news for you is that any business of any size can post those ads...and can get noticed!

How can you take advantage of this targeted ad placement? There are few key steps...

- A good PPC ad campaign starts with **researching relevant keywords** for your business. What will lead a customer to your door? What words or phrases will help someone find your website? If you were a potential customer, what would you type in to find a business with your products or services?
- **Determine which search engine(s) you want** to use for placing your PPC ads. Google is by far the largest and most well-known...which also means it has the most competition. If your business is in a small niche market, it won't matter so much. But if, for instance, you're one of the thousand coffee shops in a city, recognize that there's likely to be many more businesses looking for the same real estate you are.
- Once you've established a list of keywords, the next step is to **create short, effective ad copy** using those keywords. Before writing your ads, check the rules for the search engine you're using to make sure your ads comply. The emphasis here is on brevity: these text ads are typically short, so your copy should quickly give a sense of what you do.
- Next you'll need to **determine your budget**. Each search engine has its own PPC service, and most offer fairly flexible pricing. The pricing structure often involves a not-to-exceed monthly budget that you establish at the outset. You can often break down that monthly amount in a number of configurations: weekly, daily or some combination.

How does that work? Basically, each time a search engine user clicks on your PPC ad, a small fee is deducted from your budget. When your budget is exhausted, your ad is taken out of rotation until your budget is reset. For instance, if your daily budget is \$10.00 and each click costs \$.25, after 40 people have clicked on your ad it will be "retired" until the next calendar day.

Keep in mind that these ads are called "pay-per-click" rather than "pay-per-view". (That's a whole other animal...) Your budget is affected each time a user actually clicks on your ad, not each time the ad appears.

How can you know what the right times are to run your ads? Or how much your budget should be? Or how well your ad is working?

The secret to answering these questions is **maintenance**.



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545 pawtucket ave  
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401 724 4523 p  
401 679 0037 f  
www.gladworks.com

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There is certainly a world of data that can help you determine the right budget for your particular keywords, but in this case there's really no substitute for experience. Each search engine offers analysis tools you can use to identify where and when users click on your ads. You may find that your \$10.00 budget is exhausted every day by 2pm, in which case you may want to increase it. Or you may discover that your ad is never clicked after 7pm, so you may choose to eliminate later times from your PPC profile.

As you become more comfortable managing your PPC campaign, you can...

- Create a few different PPC ads and see how they perform over time, eliminating under-performers as needed.
- Tweak your budget to ensure the highest return on your investment.
- Change the parameters of your ads so that you can better target more likely prospects.

PPC ad campaigns can be an efficient and useful tool for advertising budgets of all sizes, and can help you reach the people who use your products and services.

Next month, we'll discuss spam: tasty breakfast meat or the Bermuda Triangle of your work day?



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