

HOW TO
SQUEEZE MORE
FROM YOUR
PAY-PER-CLICK
CAMPAIGNS



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HOW TO SQUEEZE MORE FROM YOUR PAY-PER-CLICK CAMPAIGNS

Amongst veteran business owners and online marketers, there are two generally accepted realizations when it comes to pay-per-click advertising (PPC). The first is that it can be an extremely fast, targeted, and efficient way to find buyers. The second is that it's becoming increasingly-difficult to use online ads efficiently.

With competition getting more intense by the month, and costs increasing across the board, getting traffic isn't the problem - turning a profit from PPC ads is. That's true for online retailers, B2B service providers, and even local businesses.





That doesn't mean PPC advertising isn't still a great avenue for attracting customers online, though, or that you have to settle for decreased effectiveness with your campaigns on Google, Facebook, and other search or social sites. Instead, it means you have to start looking for ways to get more out of each dollar you spend and every click you generate.

Finding ways to magnify your budget has always been part of Internet advertising, but in 2017 it's more crucial than ever. If you want to take your PPC campaigns to the next level, then let us walk you through a handful of tips you can use to squeeze more from your budget...



Begin by Making Your PPC Campaigns Smaller

When reviewing a new client's PPC campaigns for the first time, it's often easy to tell that they were billed for volume rather than efficiency. Newer marketers like to use general, high-traffic keywords and bid for top search positions on Google AdWords. The ultimate effect is to bring them a maximum amount of web traffic, in the hopes that those visits will turn into purchases.

That's the online equivalent of cold calling names from a phonebook. It can yield results, but they aren't going to be nearly as good as they would have been with a little more planning and precision. There's just too much wasted effort. Given that each bit of effort involves a paid click in this instance, that's a very bad thing.



PPC campaigns

For that reason, one of the first steps towards tuning up your PPC campaigns is looking at your ideal customer and building small ad groups that appeal directly to them as an individual with unique motivations and hot buttons. You have to be able to translate your best leads into keywords and demographics that can be zeroed in upon. Otherwise, you're just targeting everyone, and that's never helpful.

Just as important as knowing whom you want to bring to your landing pages is figuring out which buyers are a poor match for your products or services. Filtering out as many of them as you can negative keywords, account variables like language and location, or demographic controls – is every bit as important as crafting your ads. After all, displaying your ads to someone who isn't going to respond to them depresses your click through rates and increases the cost you pay to reach actual buyers. At the same time, if someone who is a poor fit for your company does click on your ad, you've actually wasted money.



Your **pay-per-click campaigns** themselves could be very large, but the individual ad groups themselves should reflect a very tight focus on a small group. If your target market spans more than one demographic or buyer type, set up unique ads, budgets, and offers to reach them separately. It doesn't matter whether you have a single campaign or dozens – what's important is that no click, dollar, or opportunity is being wasted.



If it sounds like we're advocating an approach that involves tedious work at the outset of your campaigns and a lot of micromanaging to get them up-and-running profitably, then you're right. However, the upside to this approach (besides the fact that it will cut your costs and help you generate more conversions) is that after it's working, it can be maintained almost indefinitely. Unlike organic search engine optimization, which takes a constant influx of new content, a strong PPC campaign can keep generating sales day after day, week after week, and year after year.



Follow a Three-Step Optimization Process

Any PPC authority can tell you that there's no such thing as the perfect campaign. Instead, marketers should start with a strong base of knowledge and then test, refine, and improve their approach until they simply can't find a way to improve their results further.

However, it's at this point that many business owners find themselves getting tripped up. How do you squeeze more from your campaigns when you aren't exactly sure which elements are working? What if you change too many things at once, and actually hurt your bottom line as a result?



The answer, based on our experience, is to follow a three-step **PPC optimization** process. It looks like this:

- 1 Work to increase click through rates for each PPC ad or group
- 2 If you're using Google AdWords or another search-based platform, improve your quality score
- 3 Finally, test landing page elements and offers to generate more conversions from paid visits

Not only does this template give marketers a concrete plan they can follow, but it follows a logical order.

No PPC campaign is going to be effective if click through rates are too low. There simply won't be enough visits to generate traction. Although things are going to vary a great deal by market and customer type, as a rule of thumb any PPC ad that generates a lower than 3% response rate could probably be tweaked. New headlines, better uses of the searched keyword, or even a different placement on the page could make a big difference and double the amount of clicks that are received.

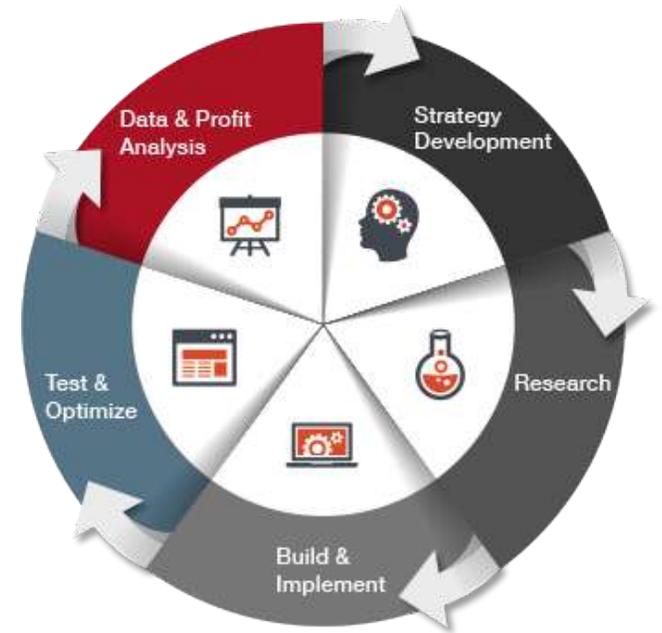


When click through rates are dealt with, quality score issues largely take care of themselves. Because Google AdWords and the other major PPC ad platforms pay a lot of attention to relevance, they pay a great deal of attention to what searchers and social users think about the ads they are seeing. In almost every case, a healthy click through rate (compared to industry averages) will translate into a high quality score.

Still, the difference between a 7/10 quality score and a 10/10 quality score (for example) can be enormous when it comes to ad placement, visibility, and per-click costs. Knowing that, you shouldn't count on improved click through rates as the only solution to the challenge of efficiency. Paying attention to on-page text, usability, privacy policies, and other details is important. Your goal should be to tweak every ad group until it looks to be perfected from Google's point of view.



The third step in the optimization process is to ensure that your website is doing its job and generating leads or sales at a very high rate. Ultimately, it's not really important whether you're getting lots of clicks, or how much you're paying for them, if the campaigns you have in place aren't doing anything to grow your bottom line.



You can split-test headlines and images, add links and money-back guarantees, or add secondary conversion options (like an ebook download) to entice prospects to take the next step. This is perhaps the most important step in making the most of your PPC campaigns, but you shouldn't start experimenting with these factors until you're sure you're getting as many visits as possible at the lowest rate you can because you have a great click through rate and a perfect quality score.



Explore Less Competitive Search Platforms

When it comes to search engine optimization, or even paid search advertising, marketers tend to turn their attention straight to Google. In fact, they have a habit of ignoring the other search engines altogether. That might make sense when you're first planning out campaigns and ad groups, but it's not a great strategy if you're trying to maximize your efficiency.



The reason comes down to simple math.

Google might have a strong grip on the search market in North America, but it doesn't have a monopoly. Some surveys suggest that Yahoo and Bing make up between 15-20% of the search market. Bing is of particular interest, being that it's backed by Microsoft – one of only a few companies that has the resources to cut into Google's lead in search. They have made small but steady gains in the past few years, winning over new fans and turning curious users into converts.



As an advertiser, there's no good reason to give up a measurable share of the market. Whether it's one out of every five searchers or one out of every twenty, there are opportunities to win over customers that can't be reached on Google. Even better, you might be able to win that business at a discounted rate.



Why would PPC advertising on Bing be less expensive?

Because the majority of small and medium-sized business owners think the way you do and overlook the platform altogether. They put all of their time and attention into Google, abandoning the other traffic to marketers willing to put in a bit of extra time. Think about it this way: if Google attracts 2 billion searches per day, and Microsoft's engine only gets 10% as many, that's still 200 million users. Who couldn't use some share of that market, especially if bid prices are less competitive.

To make advertising on Bing (and to a lesser degree, Yahoo) even more of a no-brainer, you should know that there are automated tools that can help you move ads and keywords from one system to another. So, you or your marketing team won't have to spend hours duplicating your past work. Instead, you can bring your winning campaigns with you, make a few adjustments, and be up-and-running very quickly.

Finally, it's worth noting that Google's dominance is overwhelming in North America, but not necessarily in other parts of the world... or even within certain communities. There are unique search engines for different countries and regions, languages, and even demographics. Some studies suggest senior citizens, for instance, may be using specialized search engines more often than younger searchers do. While it almost certainly makes sense for you to target buyers through ads on Bing and Yahoo, know that there may be other profitable channels for you to explore, as well.



Embrace New **PPC** Options

The general principles behind strong pay-per-click advertising have been in place for a number of years. Finding the right audience, reaching them cost-effectively, and converting them into leads or buyers is a proven model that can serve you well in any business or industry.

However, some of the tools for carrying out that process have changed in the last few years. In particular, there are a handful of strategies that can make PPC cheaper and more effective, but many marketers have been slow to embrace them.

A good example can be found in the practice of retargeting. This advertising style allows you to have your messages displayed for a fixed period of time to prospects who have previously responded to one of your messages. For example, someone who clicks on your Google search ad but doesn't complete their purchase could continue to see ads from your company for an additional period of days or weeks. During that time, they may decide to buy from you after being given a second or third chance.



In a lot of businesses, retargeting ads have shown a huge potential to increase sales. That's because today's buyers have more choices than ever, and crave information in the form of reviews and side-by-side comparisons. The bigger a decision is, and the more variables that are involved, the less likely they are to make a fast decision. With retargeting, you can win a customer who might have otherwise slipped away.

Another **pay-per-click** channel that doesn't get enough attention is Facebook's advertising platform. In terms of style and delivery, it really does represent a whole new ballgame for marketers.

There are a few things that make Facebook ads unique. The first is that the messages themselves need to be image-based. Facebook will reject your ad, or severely limit your viewership, if your message contains too much text. Another switch is that you pay for impressions rather than clicks. Although some Google AdWords campaigns are set up in a similar way, Facebook offers much less certainty in terms of outcomes than search engine ads do.



The biggest difference, however, is in the way campaigns have to be structured. On Google, you can set up your AdWords groups to target buyers who are thinking about a specific topic at the moment they're researching solutions. Conversely, Facebook's advertising platform lets you target users through their feeds based on criteria like location, demographic data, and known interests. If you know whom you want to see your marketing, then you can try to grab their attention in between games, memes, and other items that pop up on their social feed.



As you might expect, retargeting and social advertising are game-changers for some marketers, and barely register any notice for others. That shouldn't be surprising, given that all ads have to be tailored to both the marketers style and the audience they want to reach. However, if you are one of the millions of business owners who hasn't given either much attention yet, 2017 should be the year you branch out, experiment, and see what works for your company.



Know and Trust the Numbers

As I mentioned before, the ultimate goal of most marketers who take advantage of pay-per-click advertising is to set up their campaigns in a way that leads to predictable and profitable results month after month. However, the majority either won't do what's needed to optimize their ads in the first place, or will give up long before they've squeezed all that they can out of their search and social advertising accounts.

Before you can improve the numbers you are seeing from your ads, you have to know what they look like in the first place. Even more than that, you have to be willing to trace sales opportunities back to their sources, and to regularly explore your analytics to see how well your accounts are performing.

A quick overview of the data from your PPC campaigns might be enough to clue you in about the progress you're making on a day-to-day basis, but a cursory look is going to leave a lot of questions unanswered.



For example, knowing whether your click-through rates are increasing or decreasing is important, but it matters even more that you are able to see which keywords or demographics resulted in sales, rather than clicks. In doing so, you could find out that some of your most popular ads are also the least profitable. Perhaps they attract lots of views, clicks, and likes, but aren't generating revenue.

Likewise, you could learn that you're getting just as many sales from an ad that's halfway down the page of search results, as one at the top of the results. That's because serious buyers will look at several top options before making a decision. They might visit a well-placed ad first, but won't necessarily stop there. If you make a more compelling offer than your competitors, you might not notice much of a drop off by spending less for ads that don't necessarily maintain the first position. Assuming you've taken our advice and boosted your quality scores to the highest possible level, that could mean generating conversions for pennies on the dollar.

These are pieces of information you simply can't get from your account dashboard. As a marketer, if you want to squeeze every available drop of value out of your PPC accounts, you either have to take the time needed to learn about web analytics or work with a creative team will do it on your behalf.



Are You Going to Get More From **PPC in 2017?**

The world of Internet marketing is constantly changing. Depending on your point of view, that's either its best feature or its worst. The savvy businesses that adapt to changing conditions and use creative best practices tend to come out ahead again and again. The ones that look for the cheapest, fastest, or easiest answers become complacent and fall behind.



Pay-per-click advertising in 2017 and beyond isn't about overpowering your competitors with brute force in a financial sense. Unless you have a Fortune 500 budget and want to blow it – simply outspending the rest of your market isn't going to be a winning strategy. Instead, you should be thinking smaller, optimizing your campaigns one piece at a time, and embracing new marketing channels. And most importantly, you need to have a process in place that forces you to look at the results that are being generated and adjust going forward.



If you feel like you could use some help putting this information to good use, and want 2017 to be the most profitable year ever, then we encourage you to reach out to our creative team today. We'll guide you through the pay-per-click optimization process and help you ensure you're making the most of every click and opportunity. There are a lot of sales to be made out there on Google, Facebook, Bing, and other channels. Are they going to go to you or one of your competitors?





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