

Search Engine Marketing / PPC Best Practices

1. **Use both Search Engine Optimization and Search Engine Marketing (or Pay Per Click) together to improve your referrals from search pages.** Search Engine Optimization (SEO) or “natural search” and Search Engine Marketing (SEM) or “paid search/paid per click” have advantages and disadvantages. Together, they make an effective strategy that should be built in tandem around each discipline. It is analogous to combining print, radio and television in traditional advertising. Your business strategy should use both.
2. **Continually re-allocate your budget across SEO and PPC for optimal results.** It is appropriate to split your budget between both SEO and PPC methods. But whether that split is 80/20, 50/50 or 20/80 depends on your particular business and the market for your keywords and key phrases. Continually analyze how well each is working and continually readjust your budget. Don't let the budget work itself out by default.
3. **Continually monitor PPC to evaluate your ROI.** Different PPC strategies using different engines and keywords will yield vastly different ROI. Monitor your ROI, reallocating your budget to areas that show the highest ROI.
4. **If you outsource your PPC, make sure they provide solid ROI.** Outsourcing your PPC can be an effective tactic as PPC firms have experience in this space. However, there are still costs and you'll need to see a solid ROI. Monitor them and raise issues when the ROI is not high enough.
5. **Experimenting with PPC is a must.** Different keywords, strategies and engines are all things to experiment with. Brainstorming your keywords will help find alternative keywords and phrases that your customers may use to find your products and may not be bid up as high as more commonly used ones and could still improve your traffic, ROI and other goals. Different engines have different bid rates; try all of them. It may turn out not to be right for your business but it's so easy, effective and controllable that you would be negligent if you didn't try it.
6. **With PPC, conversion is everything; don't let Google fool you.** They offer all kinds of tools to promote increased clicks. More clicks may not be best; it is having the right clicks that matters. Make sure you spend the time and invest in analytics to determine what drives your conversions from PPC. It will take a lot of analysis, attention and human evaluation.
7. **Divide your PPC campaigns into as many logical groups as you can feasibly manage.** Google rewards the relevance of your PPC ads (“quality scores”) by giving higher positions at a lower cost-per-click. The only way to achieve this, however, is to make sure the content in the ad/banner matches the search term as well as your landing page content. Having a number of ad groups is the best way to take advantage of this.
8. **Google gives you 35 characters per line; make them count.** Write the ads yourself. You know what's special about your product. And experiment. You can “a/b” test for the most effective verbiage. But remember, it is the number of conversions, not clicks, that counts.
9. **Create landing pages for specific PPC ad groups.** People who click on your ads are hot prospects with a want or need. They're looking for products in your vertical. Give them a way to convert immediately.
10. **Watch and have keyword contracts with your affiliates.** Affiliates sometimes buy your keywords, bid up the rates, and then send you the traffic to make the sale. It will make you pay more for their sale, higher PPC and the affiliate fee. This is an unscrupulous practice that some affiliates may use. Make sure you have contracts preventing this by having terms on placement of particular branded keywords that are off limits.
11. **Make sure your analytics work.** Without analytics, you cannot track any SEM effectiveness.