

SEM / PPC Key Questions to Ask Providers

Company

1. How long have you been in this business?
2. How many clients have you sold? Lost, why?
3. What size or types of clients fall into your “sweet spot”?
4. Do they have clients in your vertical

Products/Services

1. Do you offer the entire suite of services around the search arena (search engine optimization, pay-per-click management, website design, consulting, social marketing, content delivery, etc.) or a subset of those services?
2. Is your service based on the expertise of one or two key individuals whose attention I’ll only have for a short period? Or is it based on scalable systems and techniques independent of your subject-matter experts?
3. Which segment does your product better serve, enterprise-level business or small to mid-sized business?
4. Is your Search Engine Marketing (SEO and PPC) your primary business or a subset offered to support some other services?
5. What happens when I discontinue service with your company? Will I be able to manage SEO and PPC myself or will it be impossible for me to take over? Will my SEO ranking plummet? How do I retain the SEO content and PPC data?
6. What does “Web 2.0 services” mean to my business? (Don’t be afraid to ask. It’s one of those buzz phrases that everyone uses and no one agrees upon the meaning!)

Solution Features

1. Where is your competitive advantage and or value proposition?
 2. What do you do to improve conversion rates? Do you use any third-party tools?
 3. How can you demonstrate ROI for your efforts?
 4. To what analytic packages have you integrated?
 5. Do your services tend more towards statistical analyses that rely on the laws of big numbers or more of an agency approach, requiring new content creation at many levels?
 6. Do you provide services to help integrate my SEM efforts into my existing systems, such as CRM, lead scoring/analytics, order entry, help-desk/trouble ticketing and customer management? If not, how do I integrate?
 7. With which search engines does yours integrate? Please provide a full list.
 8. Do you provide PPC services or a solution?
- If services:**
- a. Who writes the ads? Who manages my PPC?
 - b. How do you become expert enough to understand the nuances of my product positioning to get good clicks with high conversion rates?
 - c. If I’ve been managing my own PPC for a while, will I lose all the knowledge and trends you’ve been following so far?
- If solution:**
- a. What tools does your solution provide to manage PPC campaigns?
 - b. What reporting is available? Is it real-time, batch, ad hoc? Please provide a list of reports.
 - c. What guidance do you give to help me use your solution effectively?
 - d. What reporting is available? Is it real-time, batch, ad hoc? Please provide a list of reports.

Pricing

1. PPC management pricing usually involves an upfront payment, then a monthly percentage of total PPC spend. How do you justify fees after the start-up effort?
2. Are you incentivized to get me to maximize clicks, not conversions?
3. Do you offer any pay-for-performance approaches? Cost per qualified lead? Cost per sale?

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