

Optimizing Online Advertising

By Mary Lou Denny

Strategies for targeting customers with effective online ads

Anyone who has ever used Google knows the search engine enables companies to advertise products and services next to search results, as well as on websites, Google Maps and many other places on the Web. These ads can be a great way for businesses to build Web traffic and see positive results.

In order to ensure that these ads provide the most benefit, it is important to know how to use Google AdWords, a bidding system used by advertisers to help determine when and where their ads will display. Advertisers competitively bid to display their ads next to the keywords they specify.

The cost of each visitor click depends on factors such as how much you bid, how much the competition bids and your click-through rate (CTR).

While there are many advantages to using Google AdWords, there are also a number of pitfalls and landmines hidden in the pay-per-click landscape. Here are some of ways to avoid paying more than you should for results.

Use Targeted Keywords

Search engine users look for the keywords they have entered when scanning search results. Google highlights in bold searched keywords within its ads; therefore, if you want to catch customers' eyes, you should include targeted keywords in your ad's headline and text.

The highlighted words in your ad will help convince visitors that your ad is relevant, and will help your business stand out in the competitive advertising marketplace.

Be Specific

To get the most for your Google AdWords money, make sure the

keywords you use are specific to your product. If you market filtration equipment for drinking water, then "filtered drinking water," rather than "water," will provide better results.

Strategize Bidding

When you use Google AdWords, your ad placement is decided by two factors: the size of your bid and its CTR. Only by gaining clicks can you establish a high CTR. If you place a comparatively higher bid, your ad will be seen earlier in search results, helping generate crucial clicks. Once that is accomplished, your bids can be lowered.

Try Multiple Ads

Google AdWords allows advertisers to test several ads that are rotated within the same ad group. Some experts suggest creating three to five different ads featuring varying headlines and text, as well as prominent mentions of different benefits, to gauge which ones produce a higher CTR. More effective ads will result in a higher CTR and lower bids for the same ad position. Testing multiple ads will allow you to avoid the temptation to rush in and bid on high-value keywords. A few weeks of testing should help you determine which keywords work best for your business.

Provide Appropriate Links

Search engine users clicking on your ad will be sent to your website. The landing page should not be your homepage, however, unless it is also a targeted sales page. Send users who click on your ad to a landing page on your website that includes search keywords. If necessary, create a special landing page that provides information

that customers will be looking for.

The objective is to convert the visitor to a customer, and a well-focused landing page will accomplish that more readily.

Control Costs

You want your ad to display every time a visitor searches for your keywords, not just some of the time, but the latter will be the case if you do not set your daily budget high enough. One expert suggests setting the budget higher than Google recommends, and gaining greater economies in other areas, such as targeting by region or tweaking keyword bids.

Utilize Negative Keywords

One way to increase your CTR is to use negative keywords. If a visitor's search includes negative keywords, your ad will not be displayed. For instance, if you base your marketing on a low-price strategy, adding keywords like "premium" or "luxury" is a wise move. This is a way to screen out visitors who are not great prospects. By adding negative keywords on a regular basis, your ad group's CTR will grow, and you will gain more from your ad spend and capture better ad positions.

Employing these tips can help bring more traffic to your website with less cost, and enable you to get a critical advantage over your online competition. *wqp*

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