

The Ultimate Guide to Internet Marketing

In this day and age, opening an online business is only half the battle in achieving true success. Even if you have an incredibly well-designed ecommerce site with a fantastic product line, people have to come to your store before they can buy. And with millions of sites out there, it's even more important to stand out from the crowd. This is where marketing comes in.



While there are tons of ways to inform others about your business and bring them to your site, some of the most important and unique marketing tactics are done digitally. So if you're new to internet marketing or are looking for a new strategy, this toolkit will help you understand the basics so you can start on the right foot.

Here's what you'll learn:

- ▶ **What's search engine optimization and why is it important?**
- ▶ **How does pay per click advertising work and how does it bring traffic to my site?**
- ▶ **Why should I use social media and how do I get started?**

Some online businesses use all three of these strategies as part of their internet marketing plan while others pick and choose. It's ultimately up to you to decide which pieces of the marketing mix you want to deploy.

Let's get started!

Chapter 1

What's search engine optimization and why is it important?

Remember the last time you tried buying something online? If you're like over 80% of the internet population, you started your journey by entering a term into a search engine like Google. Then, you glimpsed through the search results and visited a few websites to compare prices and features. Finally, you made your decision and entered your credit card information.

But think a little deeper – when you conducted your search, how far into the results did you go? More than likely you didn't go past page 4 or 5. Thus, if your online business' website is buried past these pages, it's unlikely that you'll be considered in an online purchasing decision.

This is where Search Engine Optimization (SEO) steps in. SEO is the practice of implementing tactics to help search engines find your website and move it up the rankings. The closer you get to the top of the rankings for certain search terms, the more likely you are to increase site traffic and sales.

So how do you go about increasing your site's search engine visibility? The first step is to understand how search engines retrieve their results for various search terms.

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How search engines work

There seems to be a lot of mystery, behind search engines and how they work. But never fear, it's really quite simple. All you really need to know is that search engines follow the same three steps every time:

1. Crawling

Search engines deploy software (spiders) to scan through the content and links of your website.

2. Indexing

The spiders then transfer the content of your website to a giant database.

3. Relevancy ranking

When a search is performed, search engines tap this database to determine which website delivers the most relevant information.

Try thinking of search engines as an actual spider. First, the spider crawls around looking for a place to cast a web. Once it finds a location of interest, it begins to spin that web. And when the web is built, it has a big net it can catch food and live in. Same idea for your website –if your location hasn't been found (crawled) and included in the net (indexed), you're not going to be brain feed for anyone (ranked). For the first time, you want to be caught in a spider web and eaten.

Each of these steps are of equal importance to your SEO strategy. In regards to crawling, here are some tips to make sure that search engine spiders have a better chance of effectively going through your site:

- **Have good link structure.** Place your most important pages very close to the home page in terms of navigation. In other words, don't bury your key content deep into your website – spiders may not go that far.
- **Add new content (a lot).** You can do this through a blog or updating your pages, but the more you update your site with new (and quality) content, the more spiders will come back.
- **Clean up your URLs.** Spiders don't like URLs (web addresses) with a bunch of weird symbols in them. Make sure you utilize URLs that are easy to read.
- **Check for broken links.** Make sure all of your links are working, especially links from one page of your site to another. If a crawler is going through your site and hits a dead end, consider Spidey squashed and unable to crawl any further.

Second up, think of indexing like you would a big research journal. Most of these books have a topical index at the very end. So instead of looking through every single page, you can find a topic of interest, and then find what pages are most pertinent to your needs.

The same is true with indexing, which is the process in which search engines store the content downloaded by spiders/crawlers. And just like the index of a book, the point of search engine indexing is to make your searches faster. So instead of scanning a billion webpages each time you search, the system only has to run through an already-created database.

Here's some other interesting factoids about indexing:

- Each time a crawler finds new information on your site, it will update the index with the new findings.
- Simple words like "the, is, of" are ignored. This explains why they're not too helpful when you're conducting a search of your own.
- Just because your website has been crawled doesn't necessarily mean it's been indexed. The indexing will come, but there may be a delay. The problem with this delay is that until content is indexed, it can't be accessed by users of search engines.

Finally, the third task completed by search engines is relevancy ranking. This is a little more complex, so pay special attention – this is where SEO tactics really come into play.

How search engines rank pages

This is the part of the search engine puzzle that has caused headaches for internet marketers around the world – what magic formula do search engines use to rank websites for various search terms? And more importantly, how do I use this formula to my website's advantage?

This magic formula is actually called an algorithm, and is proprietary to each search engine. These algorithms are also very closely guarded and consist of elaborately complex mathematical equations based on a certain number of variables that are kept secret from the public.

Fortunately there are lots of smart people out there who have been able to come up with the most important parts of search engine algorithms. While there are several other factors involved, knowing these will better prepare you to craft an SEO plan that gets the most bang for your efforts.

These factors include:

- **Domain trust and domain authority** - how credible your entire website is, along with how many quality links are pointing to your site.
- **Link popularity** - a hybrid measure of the number/importance of various sites linking to a particular webpage.
- **Anchor text from external links** - the hyperlink text from a link to your webpage.
- **Keyword usage** - how words used in search queries are utilized on your webpage.

Domain trust and authority

Domain trust is how credible your website is to search engines, and largely depends on links coming to and from your site. If you're linking to sites that are known for spam, your trust level is significantly damaged. Likewise, if spammy sites link to your site, search engines will deem you unreliable. Domain trust is also calculated by looking into your domain's registration info – if the domain is traced to a history of spam, domain trust will be negatively impacted.

Domain authority is a rating of how many high quality links are coming to various pages of your site. This factor measures the type and number of links coming to your entire domain, as opposed to just one page. So if your homepage gets a ton of links, that's great – but what you're really looking for is links from other quality sites to your pages. Thus, to help your domain authority, make sure you offer high quality content on several pages.

Link popularity

Link popularity tells search engines how many quality sites are linking to a specific page, as opposed to the entire website/domain. Remember, search engines want to promote sites that are useful to searchers. Thus, if someone links to your page, it's considered a vote of confidence.

To optimize link popularity, the goal is to boost the number of quality backlinks to a specific page, particularly if they come from another site discussing a similar topic with similar keywords.

Anchor text from external links

Anchor text is the text you find within a hyperlink on a page. For example, if you saw a sentence on a webpage that says, “Sign up for a free trial of our award-winning shopping cart software,” the phrase “shopping cart software” is the anchor text. This text is extremely important to page ranking because it gives a brief summary of the page being linked. Thus, you should avoid using general text like “click here” or “learn more” when using anchor text on your site or blog.

Keyword usage

Keywords are words or phrases potential customers enter into a search engine to find information on a particular topic. Thus, search engines also consider the words used within your content when ranking pages. So if you’re writing an article about panda bears, you’ll want to explicitly use the phrase “panda bears” and other related terms throughout the copy. Using these words across the page helps search engines understand the topic of discussion.

An introduction to keywords

Keywords are the words and phrases **on your website** that match or relate to users’ search terms. Searchers are trying to find information when visiting your website, so you need to clearly identify that your site provides the information they’re looking for. This is achieved by incorporating keywords into your site content.

Keep in mind that search engines aren’t people – instead, automated crawlers scan through text to identify patterns. This is why it’s vital to your SEO health to insert keywords consistently throughout your content. Once a crawler is able to identify a pattern, it takes this pattern and adds it to the index. Then, when someone enters search terms related to this indexed pattern, the search engine can quickly pull the results from the index and use the keywords to determine relevancy.

Okay, but where is the best place to put your keywords? In regards to your content, it’s a good idea for keyword placement to be within your headline and at the beginning of the page. This allows crawlers to identify these patterns faster and indicates a heightened level of importance for these terms. This makes sense – if your headline and intro copy define the overall article, the phrases in this content are clearly significant.

Another thing to understand is that crawlers don’t scan through your webpage like a human. Instead, crawlers only look at your HTML code, which is why it’s important to optimize your meta tags.

Meta tags are callouts in the HTML that give information (meta data) about a certain webpage. While there are several different meta tags, here are the three main ones:

1. Title tag

This isn’t technically a meta tag, but it’s an important one to mention. The title tag appears as text in the very top left corner of an internet browser. This tag is much like your headline and is extremely important because 1) search engines find this quickly and 2) it’s the text that appears on the search engine results page (SERP). This means that when users are browsing through search results, the clickable link is the text of your title tag. Incorporate keywords here – this is by far the most important tag for rankings.

2. Meta description tag

The meta description is text that helps summarize the entirety of your content. Additionally, this description appears on the SERP, directly under the title tag text. This is important for users to better understand the page content and encourage them to click through. Most experts agree that the meta description isn't weighed very heavily by major search engines, but it's definitely helpful to readers.

3. Meta keywords tag

Meta keywords are nothing more than a direct listing of your intended keywords within the meta data. Most search engines don't consider meta keywords in relevancy ranking, so don't fret over this one. Some smaller engines, however, will take a glance and it's always a good practice to reinforce the keywords you're gunning for.

Of course, it's vital that you pick the right keywords to use for your site. Here's how to get started with your keyword research.

Keyword research

The first step of keyword research is to internally brainstorm potential search terms and keywords. A good method is to scan through your site content to identify key terms, themes and patterns that appear. It's also useful to think about the key phrase that describes your product offering – something like "organic hot sauce."

Then, come up with a quick list of around a dozen search terms you think customers would use when searching for your product. Some of these terms for a hot sauce business could include:

- **Organic hot sauce**
- **Homemade hot sauce**
- **Hot sauce**
- **Buy hot sauce**

Again, this is only a start. To take things to the next level, look outside your business and ask friends/family what terms they would enter into Google to find your products. Since these individuals aren't working with your product or industry, they can provide great insight into what terms the average person would use when conducting searches.

Finally, take advantage of some free tools to think of more keywords. One of the most popular is Google's Keyword Tool. You can use these tools to generate more keyword ideas based on particular phrases you enter into the tool.

Once you have all your keyword research complete, organize and prioritize them based on importance and relevancy. Then, begin incorporating them into your site content.

Of course, as we discussed, keywords are only one piece of the pie. To take your online business to the next level with search engines, you'll need to get started with link building.

Link building basics

Link building is the process of increasing the number of quality links from other webpages to yours. There's no question of the chicken or the egg – your SEO success begins and ends with link building. As is the case with all things SEO, link building takes some time. However there are several tactics you can deploy to give your site a jumpstart.

1. Promote the heck out of your content.

In order for anyone to link back to your webpages, they first must know your pages exist. Fortunately there are multiple avenues where you can establish awareness of your content. Take a look at a few ideas:

- **Social networking and bookmarking sites** - Start off by sharing your content with your closest network: your friends, family and coworkers. The best place for this is social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Then, share your content with complete strangers on social bookmarking sites like Digg, Reddit, Squidoo, etc. It's worth the time to research various social bookmarking sites to see which are most appropriate for your products or industry.
- **Industry-related forums** - To help find people who are interested in your message, look no further than industry-related forums. Here you can begin your own threads and leave responses that contain links to your webpages.
- **Article directories** - You can also spread your message by adding your informative content to article directories like Ezine Articles or Article City. These are hubs that many bloggers use to find information for their posts.
- **Press releases** - Launching a new website is press worthy, so tell the press about it! Press releases quickly spread across the web so be sure to include links to your site.

2. Launch and maintain a blog.

Search engines love blogs because they provide all of the aspects related to high rankings. Think about it – blogs provide fresh, unique content that is relevant to users and is easily shared. Talk about a gold mine for your SEO and link building strategy!

When writing your blog, it's imperative to remember SEO lessons like keywords and meta data optimization. In regards to content, write about topics that inform others and relate to your industry. By providing useful content, readers will want to share it, resulting in more and more inbound links.

It's also a good idea to tactfully include links to your product pages within your blog posts to help bump the relevancy of those individual pages.

3. Engage in reverse link building.

Reverse link building ultimately means that you need to link to other webpages from your own content. Bloggers and webmasters consistently check their backlinks from various tools, and if they see that you continuously provide quality links, they're much more likely to return the favor.

4. Provide anchor text for specific links.

On top of domain trust and link popularity, anchor text is a big component of how relevant your pages are to search engines. Thus, it helps to provide specific anchor text to others when they link to your site. For example, if you're making a guest blog post or exchanging links with another related site, provide the specific anchor text for that link. This anchor text should be a high quality keyword for the particular page you're optimizing.

5. Build a community.

This tactic is nothing more than the umbrella of the previous four. While you're sharing quality content across the social sphere and engaging with others, you'll naturally begin to build your own network of fans and influencers. The key here is to continuously churn out work that others want to read. One word of caution: watch the amount of content that is too sales-oriented and all about you. Just like with any relationship, if you take too much without giving anything back, the bridge is burned.

The final step to a successful SEO plan is to make sure you're tracking your results. You can do this through various analytics tools by taking a look at some of the most important metrics for success, including views, bounce rates and conversions.

The most important takeaway for SEO is to write quality, informative content that others will want to share. If you create something that is engaging and of value to readers, they'll spread your message for you and provide links to pertinent keywords, thus increasing your visibility on all search engines, regardless of what you're selling.

Never underestimate the power of search engines to the success of your new online business – while it's often easy to overlook, you're fooling yourself if you don't take the powers of Google and other major players seriously.

Another way to make yourself known in search engines is to pay for it via advertising. The most popular and effective model is called pay per click advertising, or PPC.

Chapter 2

How does pay per click advertising work and how does it bring traffic to my site?

Pay per click advertising (PPC) is growing in importance to online businesses around the world. In fact, PPC has reached a \$29.8 billion industry in 2010, an increase of 17% growth from 2009. And out of all aspects of internet marketing, PPC takes a whopping 50% share.*

But why is PPC so popular? Quite simply, it's a quick, effective way to drive targeted traffic to your website. But before diving into a new PPC campaign, you should know how this advertising model works. Despite its potential, the costs of PPC advertising can quickly spiral out of control if you don't manage your efforts correctly.

Thus, you'll now learn a general overview of PPC, how search engines pull PPC ads, how to conduct keyword research, best practices for bidding and cost savings, the most effective ways to write your ads, and how to use landing pages to boost your campaign success.

**MAGNA Advertising Forecast: Expedited Recovery for Media and the Broader Economy*

What is PPC anyway?

Pay per click, also known as paid search, is a model of search engine marketing where you pay a certain amount of money each time someone clicks one of your ads. These ads are displayed based on keywords entered into search engines by people looking for specific information. PPC ads appear as "sponsored links" on search engine results pages, and can usually be found at the very top of the page or on the sides.

While PPC is similar to SEO, it's much different in a number of ways. With PPC advertising, your website itself doesn't have to rank at the top of search engine results for your ad to appear on the first page. This provides your online business an opportunity to compete with larger companies, whereas with SEO it's a much tougher battle to land on the same page.

Additionally, PPC ads allow you to appear in search engines for keywords that you might otherwise not rank well for via SEO. Furthermore, PPC brings qualified traffic to your site that's more likely to convert. "Qualified traffic" means that visitors coming to your site are actually looking for specific details about your products instead of general information. "Convert" means that the visitor coming to your website actually takes the action you want them to perform.

Another advantage of PPC is that you have a lot more control over where your message appears. Unlike SEO, PPC allows you to target specific messages based on specific searches. You also have full control over which geographies (countries, states/provinces, even cities) you want your ads to display. Online business owners who use PPC effectively tend to have higher sales and brand awareness.

How does PPC work with search engines?

Fortunately, PPC is pretty easy to set up. All you need to do is create an account with various search engines, like Google AdWords, Yahoo Sponsored Search, and Microsoft Ad Center. Each of these programs are relatively similar in functionality and allow you to manage your campaigns and keywords.

After you create an account with your ad programs of choice, you'll then load pertinent keywords related to your products. Then, you'll create the ads associated with those keywords. Next up, you'll set the maximum price that you are willing to pay for each click. This is based on the competitiveness of the keywords and your budget. (More on these topics later.)

Once your account and campaign details are set, search engines are in charge of the rest. When a person enters a search query, search engines like Google scan through all of the ads in its massive database. Based on the user's search query, the search engine then selects and displays what it deems as the most relevant ads. Relevancy is based on two ideas: 1) the quality of ads in relation to the keyword and 2) the bid price a business is willing to pay for a click. Naturally, the higher the quality and the higher the price, the higher placement an ad will receive on the search results page.

But what does "ad quality" and "bid price" even mean?

- **Ad quality** details the relevance of your ad to the search query made by the user. In other words, if your paid search ad provides quality information that answers the question of a searcher, it's deemed as higher ad quality.
- **Bid price** is the amount of money you're willing to pay for someone to click on your ad based on certain keywords. This amount is set when you set up your campaign. The higher your bid price, the better placement your ad receives for that keyword.

There's even more to the puzzle than what's listed above. Both ad quality and bid price are components that lead to an extremely important factor in where your ad is placed in search engines, something that Google calls your ad's Quality Score.

Quality Score is based on several factors related to the historical performance of your ads, all in the name of serving the most relevant information to searchers. Several of these attributes are kept secret to protect the algorithm, but Google has offered the following for us to work with:

- **Historical click through rate (CTR) of your ad in relation to a certain keyword.** Click through rate is a metric that is calculated by dividing the number of times an ad is clicked by the number of overall ad impressions, or the number of times a PPC ad is delivered in search results.
- **How well your overall ad account has performed.** Google takes the performance of all of your ads in your account history and gives you a ranking. Think of this almost like a credit score for your entire PPC account history – the better your overall performance, the more credit you earn.

- **The level of connection between your ad and the search term.** This is the same thing as ad quality and largely depends on keyword utilization within your ad.
- **The quality of your landing pages.** A landing page is the webpage that searchers are taken to after clicking on your PPC ad. Again, since search engines want users to find quality information, the helpfulness of your landing page content is considered.

Of course, before search engines can begin pulling your PPC ads into their search results, you have to have an ad in their database. And before you can even make an ad, you have to decide which keywords to pursue.

Which keywords should I use in my PPC campaigns?

That's the \$29.8 billion dollar question. The answer? Whichever keywords bring the highest levels of customers to your online store. But how do you know which keywords will give you the most bang for your buck? You'll have to perform thorough keyword research to make sure you're hitting the mark once you start any PPC advertising campaign.

Fortunately, many of the same principles from SEO keyword research (Chapter 1) apply to PPC. It's best to start with an internal brainstorm, ask others, and utilize keyword generator tools to give you ideas about which keywords are relevant to your business and product line. However, there are major differences between SEO and PPC that are vital to the success of your PPC keyword research.

PPC requires a much bigger focus on the long tail

Long tail keywords are keywords that are less popular and competitive than other important keywords, but are still utilized by searchers. These keywords are much longer (3-6+ words) than more general keywords (1-2 words) and are much more targeted.

For example, if you're selling apparel, a general keyword could be "women's pants" while a long tail keyword would be "affordable khaki women's pants." With SEO, it would be difficult to optimize your content for this long tail keyword. With PPC, however, it's easy to create an ad for this. Additionally, the cost per click (CPC) for long tail keywords is much cheaper than more competitive keywords – this is especially important for brand new online businesses with smaller budgets.

Similarly, PPC requires a longer list of keywords

Since there's an added emphasis on the long tail with PPC, you'll naturally have a lot more keywords to work with. When conducting keyword research, take more basic keywords and add adjectives and modifiers to them to help build your long tail, much like the previously used "women's pants" examples. Some potential keywords include:

- **"best khaki women's pants Austin"**
- **"size 9 women's khaki pants"**
- **"fashionable women's khaki pants"**

And the list goes on and on. Fortunately, you can place these keywords into similar categories and groups that utilize the same PPC ad copy. And as a special hint, make sure you're keeping track of all of your keywords in a spreadsheet.

PPC allows you to optimize for keyword "mistakes"

Based on what you know about SEO, it's clear that you would never want to optimize your site for misspelled words. But with PPC, you can take advantage of searchers' typos and misunderstandings. After all, no one's perfect and search engines don't provide a spell checker. These keywords are also much less competitive, thus have a much lower cost per click than many other keywords.

So with our example, some potential mistake keywords are "kackee pants" or "khakee pants" are both potential PPC keywords. Granted, you wouldn't want to base your entire PPC strategy on misspellings, but it definitely presents an opportunity that others might not consider.

PPC lets you optimize for competitors

You'd never include your competitors as a primary focus of your internal SEO strategy. PPC, however, allows you to place ads on branded searches for your competitors. Having your ads appear on competitors' search results brings additional exposure to your brand and helps bring customers over from other online stores. Perform a competitive analysis to see which competitors you'd like to go against and add them as a keyword to your research list.

A note on negative keywords

One often overlooked key to a successful keyword list and PPC campaign is the use of negative keywords. A negative keyword is essentially a term that you don't want your ad to appear for when entered into a search engine. If our pant-selling merchant sold every kind of pant except for jeans, she would want to include "women's jeans" and "women's denim" as negative keywords in her campaign.

Incorporating negative keywords into your PPC strategy is one of the easiest and most efficient ways to cut costs and increase conversions. And with these cost savings, you can readily invest that money into going after more competitive keywords.

Of course, once you have your list of keywords, the next step is to decide how much you're willing to pay for each respective click. This aspect is often the thorn of many PPC efforts – bidding.

How do I make effective bids?

Quite frankly, this is where things can get a little tricky. Some online business owners create very well-written ads with fully-optimized landing pages, only to lose their shirts in the PPC game. Why? Most likely they didn't set objectives and base their budget on actual business operations. Instead, they probably made best guesses or simply copied what their competitors paid to secure the top ad spot.

Don't fall into that trap. Before beginning your first PPC campaign, perform a little bit of analysis to set expectations and give your efforts a better chance of financial success. To do so, you'll want to first set your budget and execute a few calculations.

But what does bidding even mean? A PPC bid is defined as the maximum cost per click you're willing to pay for your ad for a specific keyword. Thus, your bid won't be the same for each keyword. Typically the more competitive the keyword or the more importance it has to your business, the more you'd pay for it. For example, one might bid \$0.25 a click for a keyword like "women's khakis" while only bidding \$0.12 for the keyword "women's size 9 dark khaki pants."

Before getting into the bidding ring, you must set your PPC advertising budget. You can do this by taking a certain percentage of your revenue and attributing it directly to PPC campaigns. Thus, if you're pulling in \$9,000 a month in sales and wanted to attribute 10% of that to paid search, then your monthly PPC budget would be \$900. Obviously, this number will vary dependent on your revenue and desired PPC investment.

Once you have your monthly budget, determine your daily PPC budget. Search engine ad managers allow you to enter your daily max spend to help you prevent costs from spinning out of control. So if you wanted to divide your monthly budget by 30 days, your daily PPC budget would be \$30. After becoming more comfortable with your campaigns, you can see which days typically perform the best and adjust your daily budget accordingly.

Now that your budget is set, the next step is to actually start your bidding. To help determine what your bid should be, there are three models you can use:

1. In the bidding tool, find the average of the top 5-7 bids and bid near the average.

This is a quick, non-analytical way to get some general context on how competitive bids are for this keywords and what you'll need to pay in order to compete. Keep in mind that bid price isn't the only variable in your ad placement –ad relevancy and Quality Score are also considered.

2. In the bidding tool, look for large bid gaps.

For each keyword, you'll likely see close bid competition for the top spots, perhaps within a few cents. But between placement #3 and placement #4, there might be a ten cent bid difference. Based on the importance of your keyword, you can make a slightly higher bid to sit at the top of that bid gap.

3. Base bids on your business by using a standard formula.

While the first two models are helpful for context, making bid decisions based on mathematics is much safer and effective. Here's the formula you need to know:

$$\text{Target CPA} \times \text{Expected Conversion Rate} = \text{Max PPC Bid}$$

Target CPA stands for "target cost per acquisition," or the amount of money it costs for a potential customer to take the action you want them to, whether it's purchasing a product or providing their contact information.

The **expected conversion rate** is a variable that represents the amount of people who click on your ad and then perform the desired action. The average conversion rate is typically 1.5%-3% for most industries.

Max PPC bid, also known as your cost per click (CPC) is the number you'll use for your bid.

Now, calculate your bid. First, figure out how much profit an actual purchase brings you. You can calculate this by multiplying your average order value and how much profit you make on that order. For example:

$$\text{\$80 average order value} \times \text{50\% profit margin} = \text{\$40 profit}$$

Next, take your profit value and figure out what your target CPA is. You'll do this by determining how much of your profit you're willing to spend on advertising.

$$\text{\$40 profit} \times \text{40\% of profit spent on PPC} = \text{\$16 Target CPA}$$

Now, take these numbers and plug them into the formula above (target CPA multiplied by expected conversion rate, again a safe bet of 1.5% to 3%).

$$\text{\$16 target CPA} \times \text{2\% expected conversion rate} = \text{\$0.32 max bid}$$

Remember, your bid will vary for certain keywords, so performing analysis for various groups of keywords will help stretch your buck across multiple ads.

So with your budget and bid levels in mind, it's time to get to the fun part – writing your PPC ads.

How do I write effective PPC ads?

The words within your paid search ads are essential to drawing clicks and getting users to your website. And since you're paying for each of those clicks, you want to make sure that each one is of value to your business. Thus, effective ad copy is vital to your PPC health – well-written ads bring more profitable clicks, increase awareness of your business, and most importantly, boost your conversion rate. The only sticking point is that you have to convince searchers to click on your ad in 130 characters or less.

Before pulling out your pen, you'll first need to separate your keywords into various ad groups, which are groups of keywords that can be labeled under the same ad. Pay close attention to which keywords are in each group – having keywords in the wrong ad group leads to wasted clicks and money.

Next, determine where your business lies within your competition. Are you a cost leader or a service leader? What is your major point of difference? These answers will help you include benefits within your ad copy. Also be sure to set your objectives – what do you want someone to take away from your ad? Finally, identify your target market. While it's important to classify those you want to click, it's equally important to point out what people you don't want clicking on your ad. This helps save money from wasted clicks.

There are special considerations to make when actually writing your ad, particularly regarding the character limits. 130 characters isn't much, so you'll want to use each wisely. PPC ads in Google are broken out as follows:

- **Headline: 25 characters**
- **Description: 70 characters (35 characters per line)**
- **Display URL: 35 characters**

Headline

Your headline is by far the most important part of your ad. Its purpose is to draw users' attention and entice them to read the rest of your ad. Thus, using keywords helps searchers identify your headline as helpful to your search.

Description

Your description takes up two lines of your ad and should be filled with "marketing meat." This copy identifies why customers should click on your ad by listing product features and benefits. Your second line should also include a distinct call to action. A call to action is a statement that tells customers exactly what to do, such as "View our products" or "Call us today."

Display URL

Your display URL is the web address that users can click on if they don't click your headline. Note that your display URL doesn't have to be an actual web address on your site. As long as it reflects your domain name, you can add descriptive text that relates to specific keywords.

When writing your ads, the following tips are best practices in boosting click-throughs:

- **Capitalize the first letter of each word**
- **Use numbers within your copy**
- **Be clear in describing your site/product**
- **Explicitly state your call to action with specific verbs**
- **Pay attention to punctuation**
- **Always test variations in ad copy**

Preparing yourself for PPC copywriting will help you make the most of what you're paying for. The biggest takeaway of your ad is this: **the objective of your ad is to make people click it.** But to have people actually convert, you'll need to rely on your landing pages.

What are landing pages and why do I need them?

There's more to PPC advertising than keywords, bidding and writing. While these are all important steps to entice users to click your ads, you also need to consider what you want them to do afterwards. This is where landing pages come in. Think of a landing page as the place you're sending a user from your PPC ad. This page is vital to your success as it shows people whether or not they're in the right place and have found the information they're looking for.

In other words, landing pages increase conversion rates. Additionally, the relevancy of your landing pages to certain keywords directly affects your Quality Score, which impacts your cost per click and ad placement. With this level of importance, it becomes clear that you don't want to send each visitor to your homepage.

If you don't have the time, budget, or energy to create custom landing pages for various ad groups, consider sending potential customers to specific product or category pages within your online store. When someone searches for "stylish khaki pants," it's a natural step to place a visitor on your category page for khaki pants.

When deciding on landing pages, consider where searchers are in the buying cycle. This is accomplished by analyzing which keywords are being used. When someone searches for "what are khaki pants," you know that they're not ready to buy, so sending them to a content page would be appropriate. Yet if someone searches for "buy khaki pants," sending them to a specific product page makes sense since the customer likely has their credit card in hand.

Take a look at some additional tips to optimize your landing pages for higher conversions:

- **Have a clear, direct call to action**
- **Include keywords within the copy of your landing page**
- **Incorporate branding elements from your website**
- **Offer special promotions on the landing page**

And like your ad copy, testing your landing pages provides you with insights as to which tactics work and which don't. You'll be surprised by how searchers react to your landing pages. Sometimes what your team feels is the right decision doesn't perform as you hoped. Thus, make various versions of your landing pages and test them against each other – it's well worth the effort.

Using the techniques detailed in this chapter will help you launch a better organized, lower cost, and higher converting PPC campaign. Pairing PPC with your SEO efforts makes your ecommerce site a much more powerful player in search engines.

But there's still another piece of the marketing mix you can get started on – the booming channels of social media.

Chapter 3

Why should I use social media and how do I get started?

The ecommerce industry is aflutter with social media buzz. This is understandable – social media usage has grown faster than the adoption of television. With this in mind, many small online businesses are flocking to social media – in fact, one report states that utilization of social media by small businesses has doubled since 2009. Here's a few reasons why:

- **Social media is a cost-effective way to establish relationships with customers.**
- **Social media serves as a great source of open feedback and competitor intelligence.**
- **Fans/Followers of branded social media pages are more likely to buy from that company and recommend it to friends and family.**
- **Everyone else is doing it.**

Wait, "everyone else is doing it?" That doesn't seem like a very good reason to start a social media campaign! Unfortunately this is the rationale many small online business owners use when entering the social space. But the problem with an "everyone else is doing it" approach is it typically leads to a haphazard social presence.

Sound familiar? If so, it's quite possible that your social media strategy isn't a strategy at all. Instead, it's more of a mix of tactics thrown together under the guise of a strategy. But what's the difference?

A **strategy** is a comprehensive plan meant to achieve a long-term objective. A **tactic**, on the other hand, is a specific action *within* a strategy intended to help reach the designated goal.

Now that you know the distinction, here's a step by step guide to ensure your social media efforts form an actual strategy:

1. Set your social media objectives.

What do you ultimately want your business to achieve from social media? Some ideas include: brand awareness, thought leadership, networking opportunities and SEO benefits. While it's tempting to set your strategic objective to "all of the above," you need to pick one and stick with it – other positive results will coincide with your growing social presence.

2. Choose the right channels to meet your objectives.

Next, take a holistic approach of integrating various social media channels to achieve your set objective. This means that you need to carefully select which tactics to use within your campaign – you can't be everywhere at once, so choose the channels that will best help reach your goal.

Here's some aspects of various social tactics to help guide your pairings:

Blog

- **Serves as premier outlet for offering fresh content that's pertinent to your defined audience**
- **Lays foundation for spreading unique content across the web**

Facebook

- **Establishes a "face" for your brand via addition of photos and personal information**
- **Facilitates an interactive community with wall posts, discussion boards, fan photos and likes**

Twitter

- **Presents chance to expand social network and find influencers in specific industries**
- **Lets users share your content, including blog posts, articles, etc.**

LinkedIn

- **Provides location to establish business credibility and share business information**
- **Offers place to join relevant groups and make connections with other thought leaders**

YouTube

- **Allows for repurposing of customer videos, product tutorials, testimonials, etc.**
- **Supplies vehicle to comment on others' videos and reach out to those with similar interests**

As an example, if the objective of your social media strategy is to establish thought leadership within your industry, start with a blog to create unique, relevant content and use Facebook and Twitter to spread that content. Also use YouTube to create educational videos related to your blog. By purposefully mixing various tactics, you've put together a comprehensive strategy to achieve your thought leadership objective.

3. Establish a timeline for completion.

Another integral part of any strategy is creating a timeline to reach your goal. By setting monthly or quarterly benchmarks, you can objectively gauge your progress. The key to this step is establishing smaller goals within each tactic for measurement against your deadline.

Going back to our thought leadership example, you could set benchmarks of establishing 5 blog relationships and posting 8 articles on your blog by the end of July. And by the end of August you could set a benchmark of making 3 guest blog appearances and posting 2 educational videos on YouTube. Of course the numbers will vary on a case by case basis, but you get the idea.

While creating your benchmarks, it's advised to dedicate a certain amount of time to executing your strategy. Far too many small online business owners strongly launch a social campaign, only to drop off the face of the earth 6 weeks later. Just like any strategy, social media takes time, so make sure you're ready to make the long-term investment before diving in the pool.

4. Put together your metrics.

To provide a legitimate strategy, you must establish metrics to gauge your progress. The easiest way to do so is creating key performance indicators, or KPIs, for each of your tactics. Some KPIs include: number of Twitter followers, number of YouTube views, number of blog subscribers and growth patterns for each metric.

It's easy to fall into a trap of setting arbitrary numbers for your KPIs. Hitting 500 Twitter followers sounds nice, but what does that really mean? Instead, it's best to base your KPIs on your objectives, so perhaps setting a KPI of adding 50 influential Twitter followers is better aligned with a thought leadership goal.

Whatever the case, be sure to track results against your metrics to see how you're performing in each of your channels – this will allow you to make proper adjustments.

5. Deploy, measure, adjust.

The entire point of setting objectives and benchmarking them is to make sure that your strategy stays on course. If you're exceeding your KPIs in one channel and are way behind in another, you have an opportunity to evaluate your execution and make alterations as necessary.

It's okay to shift course if things aren't working as planned – the beauty of a true strategy is that you can make changes along the way to better achieve social media success.

If you haven't gone through this process or you identified with the "everybody else is doing it" mentality, it's a good bet that your social media strategy isn't really a strategy after all. Fortunately, in this ever-evolving medium, your online business can quickly adjust to better maximize the bountiful benefits social media has to offer.

Ready to get started?

Now that you're a master of online marketing, why not get started with your very own online store? Keep in mind that you don't have to perform all of the actions listed in this document out of the gate. As your business and knowledge grows, you can easily deploy these new tactics in a timeline that's comfortable for you. Better yet, there are tons of resources and professionals to provide assistance along the way.

Selling online is a fun, exciting process that allows anyone to fulfill their dream of becoming a business owner or satisfy a desire to extend their hobby to the masses, especially in this period of booming ecommerce growth.

If this opportunity sounds interesting to you, it's time to turn your idea into reality with Volusion. You'll receive a fully hosted, award-winning shopping cart solution full of features needed to build, manage and grow a successful online business. Thousands of merchants have trusted their success to us, and this number is growing each day. Our customers enjoy peace of mind by experiencing 24x7x365, live Out of this World Support™ from our team of friendly ecommerce experts.

Ready to give it a try? Sign up for a **free 14-day trial** of our software – no credit card or obligation required.