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Using Pay Per Click Search Engines to Increase Your Bottom Line *by Carol Arnold*

At last, after months of working on your website, it is finally complete. Now comes the hard part, getting your potential clients to your web site. It is a common misconception that online marketing is purely about throwing up a website and calling it a day. Any effective online marketing strategy will include a search engine component as a means of getting the best kind of prospects to your site, people who want or need your product or service the most. This is targeted marketing at its best.

A relatively new concept that has proven its effectiveness is a modality called pay-per-click search engine marketing. Before you decide that with a name like "pay-per-click," this is only for techno geeks or web aficionados, read on. This concept is one that most certainly is for those who still think that HTML is a foreign language dialect spoken only in parts of Europe. Originally appearing on the scene back in 1999 as pioneered by search engines GoTo.com and AltaVista, pay-per-click has just recently proven its effectiveness and thus has gained attention. So what is it?

Similar to traditional search engines, businesses register keywords or keyword combinations along with a title and description of the site. Then the difference comes in; placement in pay-per-click search engines is purchased by the advertiser through a bidding system where the more you pay, the higher your site appears in the ranking and you only pay for those who click through to your website. Although usually pennies per click, the specific price you'll pay for clicks for your selected keyword or keywords varies based upon what others, perhaps your competition, is willing to pay for the same keyword or keywords.

Since its debut in 1999, certainly the face of pay-per-click has changed especially given many mergers, acquisitions, and dotbombs going belly-up. The current major players and programs in this area are FindWhat.com, Google AdWords, and Overture. Google is the reigning king of web site traffic and other major search engines use their results such as AOL, HotBot, and Netscape.

Although pay-per-click can be effective targeted marketing there are a number of things one must consider before embarking upon and during such a campaign.

- Don't feel that you have to bid the highest to rank #1 for your keywords. Start small; monitor your bottom line results and fine tune as necessary. There is also a prevalent theory that the more serious someone is about finding something, the harder they will look. Of course, you do not want to make it too hard.

- Pick the most appropriate and targeted keywords for your

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business. Do not be too broad or too specific; otherwise you will not get optimal results. For example, say you run a Mexican restaurant in Portsmouth. Do not bid on the broad keyword "New Hampshire." Instead, bid on perhaps "Portsmouth and New Hampshire" or "Mexican Restaurant and New Hampshire".

- Know your customers. This applies to any form of marketing. However, is all the more critical here. The more intelligence you have about your customers such as where they live, what their hobbies are, how they initially heard about you, whether they are male or female, etc. the more effective you can be. For example, if you know that a good majority of your customers live in the Concord, New Hampshire area and play golf, it may make sense to experiment with "golf and Concord, NH" as some of your keywords.

- Adjust your pricing during busy times or seasons. Every business has times or seasons throughout the year where people are more likely to want your product or service. For example, a grower of evergreen Christmas wreaths will obviously have greater business during the winter months. To capitalize on that time, increase your bid to make your site appear higher in the ranking. Your competition may be doing the same, but, typically, depending upon the price, the increased cost can be worth it.

- Choose the right pay-per-click search engines or engines for your audience. Some search engines tend to attract more business users than consumers. If you only sell to businesses, for example, look for a site that attracts more business users. Also, closely evaluate each site's overall traffic and the presence of your competition. It may make sense to use those engines that do not have your competition present.

For optimal results, you will want to continually monitor your traffic, ranking, bid amount, etc. and test. If done correctly, pay-per-click search engine marketing can be an incredibly cost-effective way to increase your business. For more on this subject visit www.payperclickanalyst.com or www.payperclicksearchenginewatch.com. Happy clicking!

Have something you would like to see featured or comments about an article? I would love to hear from you so contact me at carol@arnoldcomm.com.

Carol Arnold is the President, CEO & Founder of Arnold Communications in Hampton, NH one of the foremost experts on cost-effective business generation and is a sought after speaker and author. For more information, visit www.arnoldcomm.com.

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