

## **Paid search tips and traps**

So you've been telemarketed by yet another paid search provider and it sounds like an excellent marketing investment (and it is!).

But how do you decide which paid search services your business needs, and importantly how do you decide which service provider to use? Could you do it yourself? Not sure? Read on.

### **What is Paid search?**

Paid search displays an advert to someone who has just searched for your products and services on the internet. Paid search even allows you to display those ads in a targeted geographical area i.e. you can only show your ads in SA, or just SA and Vic or just Australia or even globally.

### **Paid search facts**

- **Google** owns internet search in Australia with over 95% of all searches conducted on Google.com.au. For maximum exposure it makes sense to use Google's AdWords paid search.
- **Paid search = Auction:**  
Paid search is literally a keyword auction. You bid to show your ad when someone searches on a keyword. If they click on your ad then you pay a click price. If they don't click you don't pay. What value! Imagine if you didn't have to pay for the brochures that clients didn't read!

The prospective client is automatically taken to your website where they can find out about what you can sell them that they were just searching for.

- **Bidding:**  
It's an auction, so if your bid is too low your ad won't be seen. If you bid too much you are wasting money.

If you bid for searches or 'keywords' that don't clearly represent a customer, then you're wasting your money.

Poor bidding can burn money and get zero results if you are not careful.

- **Keywords:**  
Cultivating a selection of successful keywords is the most important component of a successful paid search campaign. This is followed closely by creating compelling adverts that entice searchers to click and visit your site.

- **Tuning:**  
Most search term volumes fluctuate over time. Some are seasonal (i.e. *Christmas*), others follow fashion, fads even current affairs (i.e. *green house*).

If you don't proactively manage your bids and keywords over time your campaign will drift out of tune and will either waste your money or stall altogether.

## Setting up Paid search

Actually setting up paid search is really easy! Well at least setting up a basic campaign is. But if your market is already strongly represented online, suddenly it gets much more challenging.

There is an arsenal of AdWords tuning tools and 3<sup>rd</sup> party products to help you be more competitive.

### DIY

It is quite viable for self-motivated and marketing savvy individuals to create a paid search campaign. There's lots of online help and Google even has a 'Starter edition' to make it even easier for you. Go to [www.google.com/adwords](http://www.google.com/adwords) and register.

If there's not much competition in your online marketplace then this is probably all you need to do to dramatically increase the number of sales leads to your website. So do it!

If you find your campaign is not working or it seems to be ridiculously expensive for a click then you probably need assistance from a professional.

### Paid search specialist

There is a growing number of good providers offering paid search support, even your web developer maybe able to assist you in setting up an AdWords campaign and getting you going.

## Assessing Paid Search results

AdWords includes a very useful management console that shows the status of individual keywords and ads over time. The system can even email you regular reports to keep you informed.

**Google Analytics** is Google's free website traffic tool. It provides a unique holistic view allowing you to examine AdWords and organic search. You can even track paid search traffic through your site, but only if the Analytics and AdWords accounts are linked.

## Paid Search traps

- **Changing rules for paid search**

In an effort to improve its paid search 'relevance', Google is penalising paid search campaigns that have a poor *quality score* which mainly relates to the target website's *landing page*.

This signals the end of the simple paid search campaign era and heralds the need for a broader internet marketing strategy that balances paid and organic search to avoid the penalty of inflated click prices.

- **Bundled fees = poor information**

Paid search providers who bundle their service fee with click fees mask ROI information and so inhibit your ability to evaluate and tune individual keywords, or even the campaign.

- **Fixed fee packages**

Paid search providers with fixed fee prices somewhat naively assume a constant keywords click price. You will either pay too much per click or the keywords will be under budgeted and therefore ineffectual.

- **Analytics & AdWords linkage**

You need to link AdWords *to* Analytics to assess the quality of keywords and ads in your campaign. If your provider won't allow you access they are hiding something; most likely their profit margin for their bundled campaign.

## Where to from here?

**Research:** Your online marketplace.

Search for the generic terms that describe your offerings or the problem they solve in Google. See how many AdWords ads are displayed on the right hand side under 'sponsored links'. There are only eleven positions available so if they are already occupied then there's already competition for that keyword.

**Do it:** Set up a paid search campaign

If you don't have time or the interest use a Paid Search provider or internet marketer.

**Measure:** Your website's performance

Add Analytics to your website so you can critically examine its paid and organic performance

**Assign:** Your website a sales budget

Treat your website like a sales person. Set a budget and demand results.

Investigate why if it fails to meet the budget. You may have to invest to get results.

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I hope you find this helpful information to coax your website into becoming a viable sales tool. If you think the information in this newsletter is useful, I encourage you to forward it to peers, business associates etc.

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