

## **Five Facts about SEO and PPC that Every Businessperson Should Know** **By Heather Lutze**

Mention the words SEO (Search Engine Optimization) and PPC (Pay Per Click) to most businesspeople and you're sure to hear stories of frustration. Either they've handed their company's web site SEO and PPC activities over to an agency and have little idea what's going on with either, or they've "done it themselves" and have had lackluster results at best.

This is unfortunate, because SEO and PPC are the foundation of any good web site. Think of it like building a house. If you build the roof before you build the foundation, you really don't have a house. Likewise, if you launch a web site or engage in fad web marketing techniques (such as Facebook, Twitter, etc.) without solid SEO and PPC in place, you're wasting both your time and money—two things that are precious in the business world.

Complicating the whole SEO and PPC experience is that many businesspeople are so determined to please Google and appear under certain ego-focused keywords that they neglect their customers and how they search for products and services. For example, suppose you have a web site that sells high-end gas grills. As such, you're fixated on seeing your company come up under a general search with the keyword phrase "gas grills." But that's an informational, ego-driven keyword phrase, not a selling keyword phrase. When people are ready to buy a gas grill, they don't search with vague keywords. Rather, they type in something like "Viking stainless steel outdoor propane grill model 5529." Now that's a buying keyword phrase. And face it...at the end of the day marketing is about getting customers in the door and paying your bills. It's not about seeing your company under a general keyword and pleasing your ego.

When you stop trying to please Google and start pleasing and connecting with your customers, you will end the frustration and will start getting the results you want from your SEO and PPC campaigns. Use the following tips to make connecting with your customers and maximizing your SEO and PPC a profitable endeavor.

### **1. Use PPC first to fish for keywords.**

Fishing for keywords is a like throwing out a big net into the ocean. The more narrow or refined the holes are in your net, the better the quality of fish you're going to pull back. When you're new to PPC and SEO, you don't know which keywords will work for your web site. At this stage you need to balance the general, obvious, and informational keywords with the longer keyword phrases that will attract customers who are ready to take action. Therefore, start slowly with long keyword phrases and then shorten your phrases over time (open up the holes in your net) to let more general traffic in. Over a testing period of at least 30 to 90 days you can see a pattern of which keywords give you business and which are a waste.

The general rule of thumb is to start with approximately 500 keywords. As you see what works, you can narrow your keyword list. Also, your number of keywords depends on your industry, your company, and the length of time you've been testing keywords. Some companies who have years of testing and research under their belt have a finely narrowed list of only ten keywords, while others have a keyword list in the hundreds of thousands. The bottom line is that you don't know what your company's

findability is until you start throwing out that net and tracking your PPC results. So don't rush into a web site redesign or other web marketing activities until you have tested in PPC.

**2. Apply your top performing PPC keywords to your SEO campaigns.**

Take the knowledge from your test period, which again is a minimum of 30 to 90 days, and apply what you learn about top performing keywords to your SEO campaigns. The goal is that you don't waste time and money on SEO terms that will never help you. Therefore, as you analyze your PPC information, look at which keywords are getting clicks and which ones lead to a conversion or a purchase. A conversion could be someone downloading a white paper, filling out a contact form, taking a survey, etc. It's some activity that gets people involved in your site. A purchase, as the term implies, is when someone buys something from you. Find out how many clicks it takes for someone to say "yes" to your offer and make a buying decision. You may find that it takes three to four clicks before someone takes action.

**3. Carefully group or theme your SEO keywords by page content.**

The prime objective of SEO is to prove to Google (or any other search engine) that the content on your site is worthy to be placed on the front page under a particular keyword. "Worthy" means you have the content on the page in such a fashion that Google sees repetition of the keyword, either in your text or in your code. This proves to the search engine that you belong under a certain keyword.

The challenge is that many business people have a fruit salad mentality. In other words, even though each page of their site deals with a particular topic or theme (and should therefore have page specific keywords), the keywords for every page are identical. So even though one page is dedicated to bananas, one page to apples, and one page to oranges, every page has keywords that relate to all fruits. This confuses search engines because they don't know what you really are. As a result, your site never gets found.

Rather than think "the more keywords the better," think in terms of compartmentalizing your keywords. So if one page covers who you are as a company, that page should only have keywords about your company. Likewise, each product page should have keywords that apply to that specific product only. Those companies that clearly define who they are by keyword on a page by page basis win.

**4. Submit only once to search engines.**

While Google and other search engines will find some of your pages naturally, if you want to be sure they find every page of your site then you have to manually submit it to them. However, you don't want to submit to them every day. Once they have spidered your site, you don't need to submit it again unless you add a lot of new pages or make significant revisions. Many online submission tools sell the idea that you should submit your site every day. Such an approach only ends up frustrating Google rather than helping your company. So let the search engines know you're there, but don't harass them.

## **5. Get great inbound links to your site.**

Google looks for two types of links. The first is a non-reciprocating inbound link from a reputable source, such as an industry association, the Better Business Bureau, etc. Since a link from another site is essentially an endorsement, getting a link from a reputable source—one where you don't link back to them—is the gold standard of links. It's not an "I'll scratch your back if you scratch my back" sort of arrangement, and Google likes that.

The second type of link is a reciprocated link, meaning you link back and forth with the company or person. Such links are good, although the search engines don't place as much value on them. Realize that if you're an authority you are going to link to others, and Google expects this. However, when you have 800 reciprocating in every category under the sun, you send a red flag that your site isn't of value. Any link you have needs to be appropriate and industry related; therefore, only link to people and partners you know and that make sense for your site.

## **Make Your Web Site Work Smarter**

Only after you take the needed steps to maximize your SEO and PPC, which typically takes a year or more to fine-tune, should you redesign or relaunch your site, or engage in trendy marketing endeavors. While SEO and PPC are in-depth and intense activities for a business to undertake, they are the foundation of any good web site that effectively reaches the company's target market and converts prospects into paying customers. So whether you decide to tackle the project yourself or hire an agency to help you, always be aware of and stay on top of the basic tenets of SEO and PPC so you can get the results you want.