

Seven deadly sins in PPC

Pay Per Click (PPC) advertising is a powerful way to attract new donors in short order. At the same time, it can prove to be slippery slope for the uninitiated and inexperienced user.

Here's help in the form of the seven most common PPC campaign mistakes that prevent organizations from realizing their full potential with PPC.

1. Ignoring Keyword Match Types

PPC newcomers often underestimate the prodigious power of keyword match types. To clarify, here are how each of the three match types handle the keyword "mass intention":

Exact Match: Triggers ads only when the exact phrase "mass intention" is queried.

Phrase Match: Triggers ads that include the exact phrase "mass intention" and any words or phrases that surround it such as "mass intentions Chicago" or "personal mass intentions."

Broad Match: Displays ads for an even wider range of keywords, including variations that only loosely match such as "offer intentions" (although more control can be used through broad match modifier).

Don't overlook the opportunity that exists within each of these three keyword types. For example, broad match keywords often have a lower bid price than their exact match counterparts, and can be controlled with an abundance of negative keywords.

2. Neglecting Negative Keywords

Negative keywords are safety nets for your accounts. Regardless of the match type, negative keywords prevent your ads from being displayed when unattractive or irrelevant modifiers accompany your broad and match phrase terms. For example, the keyword "Catholic mass cards" might be a great key phrase, but "free Catholic mass cards" is a drain on resources.

Adding negative keywords is simple to do. You can find great ones with Google's keyword tool or by going into the keywords tab and selecting "See search terms all."

3. Excluding Yahoo/Bing

Clearly, Google Adwords is the market leader, but many organizations miss the growing opportunity that lies in MSN search properties, Yahoo! and Bing. You can replicate a successful Google Adwords campaign in MSN in a matter of minutes. Better yet, we find it often offers lower CPC's and

cost per conversions than Google does.

4. Selecting 'overly broad' keywords

Many organizations make the mistake of targeting keywords that are way too broad. *Being specific* is the holy grail of Pay Per Click advertising.

A good example is when an organization which offers Sacred Heart of Jesus mass cards advertises for the keyword "Sacred Heart." While a broad term such as "Sacred Heart" will draw a lot of interest, who's to say the searcher isn't really looking for a high school, church or hospital with Sacred Heart in its name?

Look for keywords that communicate not only direct product/service, but also intent (in this case "Sacred Heart Jesus cards" while produce higher returns).

5. Avoiding Ad Testing

Ad tests are the only way to determine which words, phrases, and propositions appeal the highest to your target audience. Maybe it's a tempting offer (free shipping on mass cards) or brief testimony to your organization's mission (help us help disadvantaged youth).

Initially, try testing three different ads per ad group (set ad rotation to even). For starters, I recommend testing three vastly divergent ads. Once you have a sample of 300 clicks per ad, you should be able to begin to determine winners and losers by ROI. Be careful not to judge by Click Thru Rate alone, as high clicks rates can actually be detrimental to a campaign if they do *not* result in conversions.

For second round, experiment with language refinement to further boost returns. You will find that strong adjectives such as "powerful" can often further improve your ad. Always, keep your first winning ad as the control!

6. Sending traffic to the Homepage

Instead, use landing pages that specifically relate to the users search intent. This should include headlines, content, text, images, and call-to-actions. Find a more detailed explanation of conversion rate optimization here.

Sending a user to the homepage enables them to, by and large, determine their own experience. Imagine your hard-fought budget disintegrating as users click your "about us", "mission", and "sitemap" before bouncing.

Think of it as controlling the user experience as tightly as possible. Use research, testing, and analytics to discover

exactly what matters to your users and then deliver a tight, visually engaging experience to fit their needs.

7. Not Tracking Conversions

If you're not tracking conversions at any level means that a campaign, then you're essentially flying blind. Conversion data lets you quickly understand the financial returns from a campaign, ad group, and keyword level. This data affects every aspect of campaign optimization from ad testing to landing page performance to bid adjustments.

(See Whitepaper entitled "How to track conversions" for tips on tracking PPC results when you need to track results that come in through channels other than online ecommerce.)