



Marketing your Website

By Scott Hendison of Portland Technology Consultants · Published September 2004

As you begin to research ways to market your website, there are two terms you'll be hearing a lot about. Those are SEM (Search Engine Marketing) and SEO (Search Engine Optimization)..

SEM is simply paid advertising on search engines, and SEO is a method of properly designing your website in a way that can be "seen" by the search engines. This month I'll talk exclusively about SEM:

Search Engine Marketing

Placing paid advertisements on the internet in the form of search results is known as Search Engine Marketing, or PPC (Pay Per Click). For a fee, your ad will appear in front of users, and you won't pay anything for the ad until the user actually clicks on the ad and goes to your website. Most users have become immune to clicking on the popup and banner ads, but the PPC (Pay Per Click) market continues to grow with no end in site.

The reason for this is that the PPC ads appear listed at the top of the search results on all of the major search engines. Many end users do not even notice the small words "sponsored link" that indicate a paid placement in the search results.

Google AdWords

Google places the ads on the top two rows in a shaded area, and also down along the right side inside small boxes. These are obviously ads, but still can be highly effective for driving traffic to your website. Their program is called Google AdWords and you can read more about it at <http://adwords.google.com>.

The Google AdWords results are also displayed (as of this writing) on Lycos, HotBot, AOL, AskJeeves, Teoma, Netscape and Iwon.. The ads are also distributed on thousands of small affiliate websites that get a small piece of the revenue they generate for Google

Overture

Overture is another PPC service. They have their own website at <http://www.overture.com> and they also distribute their results to a wide variety of websites. As of this writing, Overture results are currently displayed by Yahoo, MSN, AltaVista, and AllTheWeb among others. Unlike Google, most Overture ads are virtually indistinguishable from the true or "generic" results.

There are about a dozen other minor players in the PPC search engine business, but between Google and Overture, you're covering nearly 90% of the market. In my experience the others are a waste of time and not worth the extra effort to manage, but I'm sure the landscape will change.

The way Google and Overtures PPC services work is very similar. By "bidding" on the keywords and phrases you want, your ad appears in the results. As long as you're willing to pay more than the next guy, then your ad will appear above his. If you get outbid, then his ad moves above yours. It's really that simple.

That doesn't mean you can have your auto body shop come up number one for the search term "yellow banana", but as long as your business is relevant to the search term, then it's fairly easy to be number one. Both Overture and Google enforce certain relevancy standards that demand a certain "CTR" or (Click Through Rate) to keep the paid search results relevant to the searched for phrase, otherwise people would stop using their search engines.

Time is running out

Over the past two years the use of PPC advertising on the internet has risen dramatically. For example, two years ago, you could have the number one ad for the phrase "San Diego DUI Attorney" for under 25 cents per click. Today, that same phrase will cost the advertiser over \$40 per click.

Obviously, as more people catch on to the PPC advertising methods, prices will go up and it will no longer be cost effective for certain businesses. Until then however, there's a huge window of opportunity to get your business in the top of the search results for very little money, and if I were you, I'd get in before the window slams shut.

For more articles from Scott Hendison visit www.pdxtc.com or email Scott Hendison directly at scott@pdxtc.com.