

## FAST-TRACK WEB SHOPPERS

> How do people shop nowadays? You already know the first process because you probably do it yourself: A staggering 81 percent of consumers begin researching potential buys by conducting an on-line search, according to Retailing Today.

From the results page, a shopper's next option is to scroll to click on the organic listings. If you've focused on search engine optimization (SEO) and expanding your presence through social media, you should be the top listing. If you've invested in Google AdWords or Bing Ads, customers may also click on your pay-per-click (PPC) ad above these listings or to the right side of them.

Feeling good about dominating the search screen and increasing the likelihood of making a sale? Not so fast. This month, we explore another compelling way marketers are reaching their customers right on the search page: product listing ads, an offering in the merchant centers of both Google and Bing.

### How It Works

While both Google and Bing have merchant centers, Google has a much larger search market share (64 percent), so we'll stick with them for our example.

First, search Google for "get-well flower arrangements." If you're on a desktop, look to the right side of results, or the top if you're on a mobile device (see graphic).

As you'll see, you'll find product photos, brief descriptions and prices within sponsored boxes. Hover the mouse over any listing and you get a pop-up box with full descriptions. Click on any one and

you'll be taken straight to the product page on the relevant company's website.

What's the true value of this service? It stops customers from scrolling to the organic links and saves them a few clicks by taking them straight to the product page. That can translate into better conversion rates. Yes, this method bypasses your site's home page, but it creates a direct beeline for your customers to where you ultimately want them to be: your shopping cart.

Speaking of clicks, this is how Google makes its money. Product listing ads managed through the Google Merchant Center are essentially another variant of ads within a Google AdWords campaign. You're only charged for the ad if a customer clicks on it.

### Opportunity for the Local Florist

You may notice some familiar — and big — names selling their wares through this method. But before you raise your hands in virtual defeat and conclude you can't compete with those companies, let's talk about an opportunity available to you, a small retail florist.

Try a new search using the same keywords ("get-well flower arrangements") — but this time, add your local delivery area such as "Fairfax, VA." You'll probably get no result at all — no sponsored box. Think of it: Because this is a relatively new offering, it's likely that no one — including you, your local competition or even the big companies — is participating in this type of advertising at the local level. As AdWords veterans



will tell you, if you bid on these keywords tied with local information, you will likely be the only advertiser. The result is a low-cost, high-exposure advertising opportunity.

### Get Started

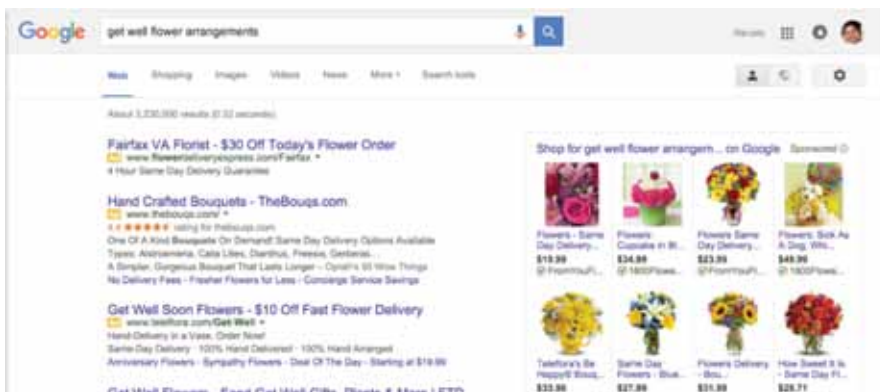
Launching this campaign can be technical, so recruit the help of your website developer and be sure you have claimed your website through Google's Webmaster Tools.

You may also need technical help in claiming your website in the merchant center, which requires you to have administrative access through your website's site admin tool or FTP or shell access to your website. As previously mentioned, an AdWords account is also required. Get one started at [google.com/adwords](http://google.com/adwords).

Fortunately, Google provides clear, short video tutorials on setting up your Merchant Account, getting your products uploaded, managing products and managing the campaign:

- Guide to Google Shopping: Set up your Merchant Center account [youtu.be/apXuW7Qex7k](http://youtu.be/apXuW7Qex7k)
- Guide to Google Shopping: Upload your products with a data feed (small inventory) [youtu.be/dq2VIBbqTL4](http://youtu.be/dq2VIBbqTL4)
- Guide to Google Shopping: Upload your products with a data feed (large inventory) [youtube.com/AkXPArO3fgo](http://youtube.com/AkXPArO3fgo)
- Create Shopping Campaign [youtu.be/FLZdoeCv5o4](http://youtu.be/FLZdoeCv5o4)

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**BEE-LINE TO BUY** Search "get well flower arrangements" on Google or Bing, and you'll see how product listing ads are taking consumers directly to the product page of websites.