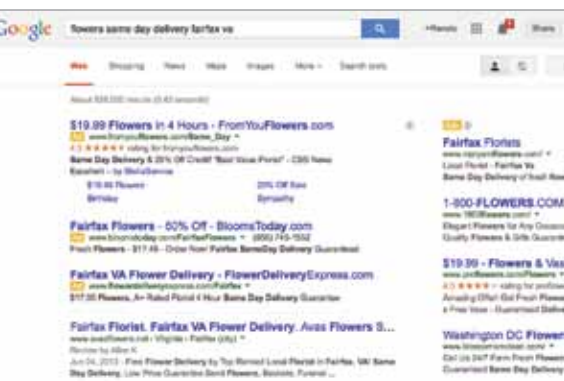


## THE PERKS OF PAY PER CLICK

> Across the board, retail florists serving as SAF volunteer leaders consistently report that website revenue represents about 20 to 30 percent of business — and it's growing every year. What explains this phenomenon? An optimistic reaction may be "wow, new customers!" But when you dig into web analytics, you'll probably find that much of the traffic comes from existing customers who no longer walk in but now order online, in addition to a steady flow of new customers who find you through search.

Either way, search continues to be the most critical way to retain and build business in today's marketplace. No doubt you already knew this, thanks to your ongoing efforts to build quality inbound references to your website using social media, blogs and accurate directory listings in addition to using search engine optimization (SEO) best practices.



**PPC PRIMER** If you participate in PPC, your ads appear high in search result screens; you're not charged until someone clicks on the ad.

So this month and next, we'll talk more about another critical piece of online promotion: pay-per-click (PPC) advertising. In this installment, we discuss how PPC is a value-packed, must-have tool for florists who want to dominate search results; maintain — and defend — their brand; capture sales from existing customers; and grow unique parts of their business, such as weddings and events.

### What Is Pay Per Click?

To answer this question, ask another: How do customers look for your business online? By searching keywords such as "flowers same day delivery

Fairfax, Va." (see graphic). If you participate in PPC, your ads appear high in search result screens; however, you're not charged until someone actually clicks on the ad link — hence the term pay per click.

Remember, you and several competitors may be trying to pay for the same search terms. All PPC programs require that you bid the amount you'll pay per click for search terms. You can assume the highly clicked search terms will cost more, so this is why researching keywords is the most important phase when developing PPC campaigns.

### Location, Location, Location

The first thing you'll notice in our graphic is that PPC ads appear above and to the right of organic search results. Folks may argue that searchers rely on and trust organic searches more, which may be true, but top-of-the-screen placement is still prime real estate. Also, it's become harder to discern what's organic and what's paid. In the past, Google clearly defined paid results using a colored box. Now, they're only identified as ads by a tiny orange "Ad" box included in the description; otherwise, they flow right into the organic listings. (Bing and Yahoo still maintain the colored box.)

So, consider for a moment how to improve an already high ranking in organic results. With an investment each month in PPC, your listing would appear in both the organic and paid portions of the results page, giving you a dominant presence.

### Protect the Brand

Another factor to consider when investing in PPC is that other businesses may already be bidding on your exact shop name. This unseemly practice happens, and it's completely legal if you haven't trademarked your business name. What's the best way to combat this? First, trademark your business name. Next, bid on your own business name as a keyword phrase so any existing customers who search for it will see your paid listing. (We'll return to this step next month; for a fast tutorial, click on "how it works" at [google.com/adwords](http://google.com/adwords).)

### Promote Specialties

Another strong web trend in recent years involves florists establishing a stand-alone website — separate from their main shop website — to promote their wedding or event business. As you do with your main website, you may participate in social media and build other references to drive traffic to this website. Or not — who has time to drive visits to yet another website?

PPC could provide the classic solution of spending money to get quick results when you can't spend time. You'll discover high bids when using more generic terms, but those rates come down for specialty terms related to wedding and events (e.g., wedding flowers florist Fairfax, VA, or flowers for events, graduation or funeral flowers florist).

### The PPC Players

Let's get ready for next month's how-to segment by introducing you to the two services that matter in the PPC space: Google's AdWords ([google.com/adwords](http://google.com/adwords)) and Microsoft's BingAds (<http://advertise.bing.com>). It's tempting to use only AdWords because Google holds a commanding 67 percent of search market share, according to Comscore. But Bing is growing steadily, with 18 percent currently, so our advice is to do both so you get maximum search coverage. (Plus, third-place Yahoo collaborates with Microsoft to display BingAds in Yahoo results, so you really do have 100 percent coverage.)

Running campaigns with both is not much extra work if you start with AdWords. Once you develop, test and complete campaigns using AdWords, BingAds makes it easy to import these campaigns into its service. To keep your professional and personal life separate, be sure to create a new Google account for your business if your current Google account is personal. .

Next month, we'll cover researching keywords, setting up a PPC campaign and measuring results. 🌸

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