

## REAPING THE PAYOFF OF PPC

> In last month's column we discussed the tremendous value of pay-per-click (PPC) marketing, which helps you dominate a search page, increase and protect brand presence, and promote specific categories such as weddings and events. This month, let's discuss two essential strategies that will help you pull off a successful PPC campaign: keyword research and campaign evaluation.

### Clinching the Best Keywords

The foundation for a great PPC campaign starts with keywords. Each time your ad is clicked, that click costs you money, so you don't want unnecessary clicks triggered by non-relevant keywords and phrases. With PPC ads, you want high click-through rates with targeted consumers.

We'll base all our work in Google AdWords — later, you can import AdWords campaigns into Bing Ads (through Microsoft). Once you log in, AdWords will prompt you to start a campaign right away. Instead, begin researching keywords (AdWords suggests research as step No. 3). We stray from the recommended course because keyword research requires the most thought on your part. After this process, you'll be armed with the keyword phrases you want, and you'll be able to set up the most effective campaign.

Go to Tools > Keyword Planner. Of the four selections under Keyword Planner, explore the first: "Search for new keyword and ad group ideas." Enter generic search terms, such as "flowers florist Fairfax, Va." Click "Get Ideas." This powerful tool lets you see search

phrases real people punch in, along with frequency and bid price. If you're doing business in a densely populated area, expect to pay more than a florist serving a more rural area.

We recommend sorting the list by clicking "Avg. monthly searches." Scroll down the list and jot down phrases with competitive keywords, preferably with low bids, as a frugal way to try out the service. Next, go to Tools > Keywords Planner and click "Get traffic estimates for a list of keywords" and start dropping in the keyword phrases you discovered. You now will get details on the clicks, impressions and cost per day for each set of keywords. (These concepts will be important to the second essential strategy: evaluating campaigns.)

We've only scratched the surface of this tool, but these tips will get you started. Become familiar with Keyword Planner, and you'll save time and money and ultimately run better campaigns.

### Start a Campaign

Once you're done with your research, click the Google AdWords icon in the top left and then click "Create your first campaign." For your first effort, keep it simple: Name your campaign, leave everything at the default selection and scroll down until you see "Budget." Enter a comfortable figure; remember that you can adjust this later, depending on the bid prices. You want to spend enough to evaluate how the system works. Click "Save and continue."

You now need to create the ad that will appear in search results. Search Google with the proposed set of keywords you've selected, review the other ads in place and then think of a headline and description that set you apart from those ads. Need an idea to help you kick-start your campaign? Consider a seasonal special.

Then, drop in the keyword phrases you so carefully vetted in the previous process. Click "Save and continue to billing." Once you input your payment info, your campaign is active. And if you decide you don't like it, you can edit or delete and tweak as you please. Remember, it's an editable learning process.



### Evaluating PPC Campaigns

With PPC, you'll know exactly how many people viewed or clicked the ad, and, if you have Google Analytics tied into your AdWords, you'll know if those visits were converted into sales. (That's a standard practice we highly recommend.) As you review the information, you'll quickly realize something: There is a ton of data and it doesn't lie, so act on it and adjust. (See box for a vocab primer.)

Let's briefly discuss conversion. The only stat that truly matters is: Did the ad result in a sale? If not, deconstruct from there. Ask yourself if any of the following weighed down your campaign: bad or duplicate keywords, too many keywords, lack of unique keywords that separate you from the competition, lack of negative keywords (see last month's column, [safnow.org/floralmanagement](http://safnow.org/floralmanagement)), words that do not return wanted results, and/or a poorly written ad with no call to action, such as "click to save 15 percent."

PPC advertising is an organic, contextual process that allows you to achieve success through exploring and finding the correct keywords and phrases that describe your business. Rely on the Keyword Planner as your primary tool, and consider asking customers directly how they would describe your business. What they say could be the AdWords word nugget that will deliver success. 🌱

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## TALK THE TALK

Here are some PPC terms you'll want to know:

- **Impressions:** the number of times an ad is seen, whether it is clicked on or not.
- **Click-through Rate (CTR):** the click rate divided by the number of times the ad was shown.
- **Average Cost-per-Click (CPC):** the average position; how your ad placed among similar ads and conversions.