

10 Worst AdWords Campaign Mistakes

On the highly competitive Google AdWords pay per click (PPC) search engine, it's now more important than ever to ensure that your PPC campaigns are optimized to their utmost potential. All of us want to achieve maximum return on investment (ROI) for the keywords or phrases that are most relevant to our businesses, and are most likely to provide our sites with targeted traffic.

With the cost-per-click (CPC) prices available through various PPC search engines always increasing, it's essential that you avoid certain mistakes that will undoubtedly result in poorly performing PPC campaigns. The mistakes that you should avoid include:

1. creating a long list of less than targeted keywords
2. failing to identify unique aspects of your product or service
3. a lack of keywords in your ad text
4. directing users solely to your home page
5. creating single ad groups
6. utilizing single campaigns
7. using broad match only
8. failing to optimize ad serving for your ads
9. failing to track results
10. entering the content network without modifying bids

This article will explain each of these mistakes in turn, so that you're aware of the problems they cause, and know how to avoid the pitfalls.

1. Creating a Long List of Poorly Targeted Keywords

When you first set out to create your AdWords campaign, it's important not to go "keyword crazy" -- resist the temptation to create long lists of irrelevant, generic keywords. For example, if you ran an automotive dealership then, it wouldn't be in your best interests to target the keyword "truck." The cost per click (CPC) for such a generic keyword would be incredibly high when compared to a more descriptive and relevant keyword, such as "T-Z783 Extended Cab."

Similarly, the keyphrase "tail light covers" would not produce conversions if you strictly conducted automotive sales only. The phrase may bring visitors to your site, but if they don't find what they're looking for when they get there, they'll leave just as quickly as they arrived.

It's important to identify your specific niche, and to market directly to users who want the products and services that you offer. Don't trick yourself into thinking that broader is better. With AdWords, that's just not true.

2. Failing to Identify Unique Aspects of your Product or Service

Before you implement your AdWords campaign, you must understand exactly what it is that makes your organization stand out from the competition. By identifying your unique products, services, or offerings, you'll see clearly how you can rise above your competitors and zone in on the keywords or phrases that are unique to your business.

I'd recommend that you perform an analysis of your competition. Have a look and see what they're doing, and which phrases they're using. After you've conducted a competition analysis, and you understand what makes your products or services unique, you'll be able to come up with a strategy that will topple your competitors.

3. A Lack of Keywords in your Ad Text

When you're creating descriptive ad copy, it's imperative that you manage to inject your keywords in to your title and description while maintaining a delicate balance between clarity and relevance. Your ad copy should be tailored in such a way that as visitors read it, they understand exactly what they can expect when they click on your ad.

4. Directing Users Solely to your Homepage

Few site owners take the time to decide which destination URL should be applied to each ad. Instead, they point all ads in a campaign to the site's homepage, then wonder why they're not getting decent conversions.

If you've spent time compiling a list of relevant keywords that describe the unique aspects of your offering, why on earth would you send everyone to your homepage in the hopes that they'll navigate through the site to find what they're looking for?

Why not send them straight to the page that contains exactly what was described to them in the ad copy? Referring back to our example, if, as the automotive dealership owner, you'd created an ad that contained the keyword "T-Z783 Extended Cab," which URL would you send prospects to? Instead of sending them to www.auto-motive-dealership.com, you'd send them straight to www.auto-motive-dealership.com/T-Z783_Extended_Cab.html, of course!

5. Creating Single Ad Groups

If you categorize ads that target related keywords into a common AdWords ad group, you'll establish a high level of control over your entire campaign.

Let's imagine that you own a sporting goods store. You might start by grouping all the ads you'd targeted towards hockey skates into a single ad group. You'd then create another ad-group which would contain ads that targeted hockey sticks, another that contained ads for hockey gloves, and so on.

Organizing your ad group structure in this manner gives you the ability to create in-depth reports on each ad-group, and to make real changes that have a significant impact on those ads' performance over time.

6. Utilizing Single Ad Campaigns

Once you have your AdWords ads sorted into easily identified ad groups, you can move on to the next step: creating campaigns.

In the example above, we created ad groups that contain ads relating to separate products: hockey skates, sticks, gloves, and so on. Now, it's time to create a container entitled "hockey equipment" to hold all of the ad groups in the campaign. Then, you can repeat the process of creating ad groups for tennis -- one group for shoes, one for

racquets, and so on -- and drop all the groups into a single campaign called "tennis equipment."

Having highly organized campaigns is the key to determining which ads are creating the optimal conversions. Don't simply put all your ads into the one campaign -- split them into separate campaigns to make tracking and amending the ad groups easy.

7. Using Broad Match Only

Unless you take advantage of the phrase matching options that AdWords makes available, chances are that you're missing out on potential customers and creating a higher CPC for yourself.

As the name suggests, broad matches are usually less targeted than exact and phrase matches. Broad matching is the default option under which your ads will appear for expanded matches such as plurals or relevant keyword variations.

When you utilize phrase matching, your ad will appear for your chosen search terms in the order that you specify, and sometimes for other terms, too. Exact matching is by far the most targeted option to use, so don't neglect it! Your ad will appear for the exact keyword you specified. The negative keyword option is also a great tool -- it allows you to specify the keywords for which you don't want the ads to appear. Here's a quick example of how these targeting options work:

Broad match: Default option: blue widget

Phrase match: Surround the keyword in quotes: "blue widget"

Exact match: Surround the keyword in square brackets: [blue widget]

Negative match: Place a negative character before the keyword: -blue widget

Take the time to test these different matching techniques, and to tweak your selections to improve your conversions. Broad matching is not necessarily the best -- or only -- option!

8. Failing to Optimize Ad Serving for your Ads

When you take advantage of the AdWords ad serving service, you'll ensure that your most popular ads are displayed more often.

The AdWords platform will give more weight to the ads with the highest click through rates (CTRs), and will display them more often than ads with lower (CTRs) in the same ad group.

9. Failing to Track Results

In order to have any idea about your AdWords campaign's performance, you must be able to identify which keywords work and which do not. Google AdWords supplies a vast array of very useful tracking tools. Google has also built into the AdWords interface Google Analytics -- a marvellous web analytics tool that provides in-depth reporting on all aspects of your campaign's performance.

I cannot stress enough the importance of creating goals for your AdWords campaign, then comparing your actual performance against these goals so that you can gauge your success.

10. Entering the Content Network without Modifying Bids

The AdWords platform has recently given advertisers the ability to set different bids for the content network than for the search network.

If you don't set different bids on the content network for your keywords, you'll be paying more than you should be for each click. Lower the prices on certain keywords, and you'll notice that the number of clickthroughs you'll receive will remain the same as at the higher bid.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to create awareness among AdWords advertisers about the common mistakes they can make with this network, and to eliminate frustrations that may emerge as you manage Google AdWords campaigns.

The points outlined above are compiled from the mistakes that I've stumbled upon time and time again. I hope that this advice helps you to create a marketing campaign that will generate dramatic increases to your business profits.