

# Affiliate Classroom

The journal of affiliate marketing and management best practices

## Pay-Per-Click Success

PPC  
Essentials

Ad Writing  
Secrets

Marketing  
with PPC

Using AdWords Research Tools



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Affiliate Classroom Magazine is published monthly by Affiliate Classroom, Inc.™ Back issues are available at [AffiliateClassroom.com](http://AffiliateClassroom.com)

Article submissions should be 1250-2000 words, on one affiliate marketing subject. No general marketing articles. We reserve the right to edit all articles. Send articles or letters to [editor@affiliateclassroom.com](mailto:editor@affiliateclassroom.com) with the words AC MAGAZINE LETTER in the subject line.

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## Top 5 Affiliate Programs



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### Featured Program—Easy CGI

<http://easycgi.com/affiliates/overview.html>

Easy CGI's Affiliates program is great for those who want to earn money by referring customers to Easy CGI. Their program is one of the highest converting programs in the Online Services industry. All of their products are backed by a 30-day money-back guarantee and 24/7 support, and there are no setup fees. This makes their products one of the easiest to promote.

As an Easy CGI Affiliate, you receive access to our affiliates interface that provides code to insert our banners and text links on your Web Site and a dedicated affiliate support team to answer any questions you may have.

Easy CGI maintains two affiliate programs with identical payouts. One is run through Commission Junction, the other is maintained in-house using the My Affiliate Program Software.

### Top 5 Programs: July 2007

#### Only Converting Offers

<http://onlyconverting.com/index.html>

Onlyconvertingoffers.com – the name says it all. If you are looking for an ad network, look no further. Onlyconvertingoffers.com is where you need to be when looking for ads or offers that convert. What makes Only Converting Offers different? ALL offers at Onlyconvertingoffers.com are tested with their own traffic FIRST. If it doesn't make the cut – it is not added to the network. Exclusive offers, unique rotating creative, real-time tracking, and weekly payouts for high-volume affiliates.

#### Virtumundo

<http://virtumundo.com/>

Virtumundo delivers bottom-line results through a wide range of online marketing solutions. They focus on helping businesses grow by profitably connecting them with online consumers. By effectively utilizing email, search engine optimization, keywords, and other online media forms, Virtumundo engages consumers with messages that are relevant, personalized, and timely. Virtumundo uses its many years of experience to deliver your message safely and accurately.

### Home Based Business Course

[http://www.lazy-internet-marketing.com/bm/signup\\_iv.php](http://www.lazy-internet-marketing.com/bm/signup_iv.php)

Home Based Business Course has created a unique way of generating income from home. First you start shopping and then join their easy-to-sell Home Based Business & Internet Marketing study course. They provide generous commissions of up to 50% so you are able to easily earn money. On top of their commission they also have an excellent conversion rate of 2.3%.

### Drug Store Best Buys

<http://www.drugstorebestbuys.com/affiliates/default.htm>

If you are health affiliate looking for a way to choose from different health affiliate programs, you need to check out Drug Store Best Buys. Drug Store Best Buys and Pharmacy Shark Patrol provide independent testing, monitoring, and rating reviews that help you to avoid losses from bad programs. Join through Drug Store Best Buys links and benefit from years of experience, live help, fast approvals, top commissions, and a unique free dispute resolution service.

### ZipRealty

[http://www.ziprealty.com/affiliateprogram?referred\\_by=affiliateprog-dir-text---natl](http://www.ziprealty.com/affiliateprogram?referred_by=affiliateprog-dir-text---natl)

ZipRealty is a full-service real estate brokerage that serves 24 major cities, offering guaranteed customer service and cash back to buyers and sellers. By sending your visitors to Zip Realty, you receive cash for EVERY qualified lead. They offer service in all the major cities.

### Until next time...

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([http://www.affiliateprograms.com/industry\\_newsletter/10-17.htm](http://www.affiliateprograms.com/industry_newsletter/10-17.htm))

In our newsletter you can find all the latest industry news, tips, and tools. Communicate with our team of experts through in-depth articles and free online resources. These resources will help you to dramatically, increase your knowledge of affiliate marketing. Here is a place where you can receive the guidance and support you need to reach your full potential.

# PPC Essentials for Affiliate Marketers

by Matt Van Atta



As affiliate marketers know, an ongoing aspect of the business is getting your website to the first page of the search engine rankings and keeping it there. Many affiliate marketers rely on pay-per-click advertising (PPC) for this purpose. And at various times, and in various conditions of your business, you may have considered it yourself.

This is true if you are just starting out in your business and want to get your website noticed as soon as it goes live. This is true if your business has already reached a decent success level, you have a few extra dollars to spend, and you're seeking ways to increase your marketing reach and expand the revenue even further. And, this is true if you are merely treading water and need a kick-start to your marketing efforts.

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**PPC, as a tool in your marketing toolbox, can help you obtain what you need – whether it's revenue, or information about your target audience – that can serve you well over the long term.**

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Whatever your situation, it is worth your time to consider PPC. The strategy does carry risks, and it will cost you some money. But PPC, as a tool in your marketing toolbox, can help you obtain what you need – whether it's revenue, or information about your target audience – that can serve you well over the long term. So let's dig into the essentials of PPC.

## PPC, the Concept

I'm certain that when you've performed Google searches, you've seen what Google calls "sponsored links" along a right-hand column to go along with the organic search results on the main body of the webpage. Those links were paid for by the advertisers associated with the links. They constitute the end result of PPC advertising.

Pay per click has been around since 1998, when a small start-up that became known as Overture (now part of Yahoo! Search Marketing) began selling advertisers on the concept of bidding for space on its search engine based on keywords. Pay-per-click arrangements exist on other websites and advertising networks, and a few merchants will even pay affiliates a small amount for simply getting visitors to click on the merchant's link. However, the concept is best known, specifically geared, and perhaps perfectly suited for the search engines.

PPC is rather simple – an advertiser pays a search engine for every time a user clicks on the advertiser's link. An advertiser sets up an account with a search engine and makes a

monetary deposit from which to pay for the clicks. (The minimum deposit for Google AdWords is \$5.00.) The advertiser then bids a certain amount of money per click on a particular keyword or set of keywords; amounts usually range in the 1-to-25-cent range, but some can run a few dollars or more.

The advertiser who submits the highest bid for a keyword will have his/her ad appear at the top of the first page of search results for that keyword. Whenever a user clicks on the advertiser's link, the advertiser pays what he/she bid on the keyword. If no one clicks on the link, the advertiser pays nothing (although he/she has to address why no one clicked on the ad).

For example, say your website is devoted to video games. You place a bid of 10 cents per click on the keywords "video games." If that bid is the highest bid received for that keyword string, your ad goes to the top of the first page of search results. And if users click on the advertiser's link 100 times, the advertiser would pay \$10.00 to the search engine. Regardless of the ad's placement, any clicks on the advertiser's link would result in the advertiser owing money to the search engine.

## The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

At this point, you may be thinking, "No problem; I'll just set up an account with Google AdWords, bid on my keywords, and my site will be on the first page of the search engine rankings." It's not quite that simple.

« **First, bear in mind that you are not bidding on the very first listing in the main search results; those results are still reserved for organic search.** Instead, your link will be found in a side column nearby.

« **Second, you could easily find yourself in a bidding battle over a single keyword.** If you win such a battle, you could lose the war in that your advertising budget could wither away fast.

« **Third, it's not enough to get to the top of the PPC rankings.** If PPC is truly going to work for you, you need search engine users to click on your link, and you want at least some of those clicks to become conversions. Even an amazingly high 30% conversion rate via PPC means that 70% of the clicks you pay for go nowhere.

« **Fourth, click fraud remains an issue with PPC.** A competitor or other person who wants to cause trouble can do numerous clicks on your ad link with the sole intent of increasing your bill to the search engine. Last year, a click fraud scam was uncovered in which spyware "faked" ad clicks and led Yahoo! to charge advertisers for clicks that never occurred.

That being said, the advantages to PPC are worth considering:

« **First, PPC can generate traffic almost immediately.** Once you set up an account with AdWords, Yahoo! Search Marketing, or other search engine and submit bids, you can get almost immediate results in terms of ad placement and clicks.

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« **Second, PPC can actually be a bargain if you find the right niche within your keyword combinations that will drive traffic to your site.** A top bid of 10 cents or less per click could provide you with more PPC bang for your buck.

« **Third, PPC is an easy, cost-effective means to gauge your target audience in real time.** It can allow you to check response levels to a particular subject or offer, and if response levels are too low, you can rework or scale back your effort before investing a great deal of time and money in it.

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**PPC campaigns that focus on specific, targeted objectives usually generate more success than an all-in-one, break-the-bank effort to draw general attention to your website.**

Perhaps most important, PPC can work for you if you use it in a targeted manner as a part of your SEO efforts – not as the entirety of your SEO efforts. But here’s the “ugly” part I promised earlier: PPC is not simply a case of get the clicks, pay the money, and watch the sales come in. Just as with organic search, PPC takes a good deal of time and effort in order to make it work for you.

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## PPC Campaigns

PPC campaigns that focus on specific, targeted objectives usually generate more success than an all-in-one, break-the-bank effort to draw general attention to your website. Here are some necessary steps to take in developing and running a PPC campaign.

### Do your keyword research.

Just as with developing organic SEO for your website, keywords serve as the “key” to your success with PPC. Broad-based keywords such as “golf clubs,” “dresses,” or “cars” will be used much more often in searches. However, the bid rate for such terms will be through the roof.

Focus your research instead on more specific, niche-oriented keywords that are lesser used (though no less popular) and perhaps in two- and three-word combinations. These keyword combinations will likely take less money to obtain the top bid, and you are less likely to get into a bidding battle with a competitor for those keywords. Plus, such keywords will likely tie in better with the more specific needs of your target audience.

### Write your content.

Yes, once again, content is king – you need to give search engine users a reason to click on your ad link. Therefore, the copy appearing alongside the link needs to be compelling. Because you are given only a couple of short lines of space, writing compelling copy is not easy; yet it’s the first thing the search engine user will see from you.

Make certain that your copy adheres to the standards imposed by the search engine (Google will not post your ad if you pepper it with too many superlatives), and focus your copy on how

the user can benefit from what you have to offer. Follow this same process with regard to a landing page to which the link takes the user. Unless it focuses solely on your offer, do not use the home page of your website for this purpose; you don't want visitors to become distracted from your offer and leave.

And, of course, if what you have to offer is a white paper or other viral content, make certain the content fits with the keywords on which you base your PPC campaign.

### Set your bid.

Once the pieces of your PPC campaign puzzle are complete, place your bid with the search engine (whether it's Google AdWords, Yahoo! Search Marketing, MSN, or other search engine) and keep an eye on what happens next. Deciding which amount to bid is not easy, because there is no "right" amount to bid. The best circumstance would be to achieve the top bid by only one cent above the second-place bid.

Some experts will advise that you shoot for only a top-three ranking rather than number one. Being third on the list still places your ad "above the fold" of the search engine page. If your click-through rate is sufficient, Google AdWords can bump up the placement of your ad, possibly to number one. And, those who outbid you may drop out, leaving you on top.

Whatever you do, set a budget for your campaign (in terms of amounts to bid and total amount to spend) and, unless you see a logical reason to spend more, stick to that budget.

### Monitor your ad's standing.

At least once every 2-3 weeks check your PPC ads to see how they are doing. Google and Yahoo! in particular offer tracking tools in this regard. Ask yourself these questions:

- « Where is my ad currently in the PPC pecking order?
- « Is it being placed where I expect it to be? If your ad ranks lower than you expected, it could be because another bidder outbid you, and you may need to consider increasing your bid. If it ranks higher than you expected, look at where your bid is compared to others; you may want to decrease your bid just enough so that you can still maintain your ranking.
- « What is the click-through rate for the ad? An insufficient number of clicks could get your ad bumped by the search engine.

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**PPC is not about the clicks, but it's about what the clicks generate. Does the user who clicks on your ad accept your viral report in exchange for his/her email address? Does the user take advantage of your special offer and make a purchase?**

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### **Track the conversions more than the clicks.**

As I mentioned earlier, PPC is not about the clicks, but it's about what the clicks generate. Does the user who clicks on your ad accept your viral report in exchange for his/her email address? Does the user take advantage of your special offer and make a purchase?

You don't necessarily have to recoup your PPC investment in terms of revenue, but you should get what you paid for to the degree possible. So, while you should check the click-through rate, you should pay particular attention to the conversion rate. How many of those click-throughs actually accepted what you had to offer?

### **Maintain Your Focus**

PPC advertising will inevitably cost too much if you rely solely on that for your marketing efforts. If you are just starting out, your budget certainly won't be as high as the major corporations who engage in PPC daily, so avoid competing with those "big guys." Instead, use PPC for short- to medium-term, targeted campaigns that fulfill specific purposes for you, and you'll find that the return on your investment will be significant.

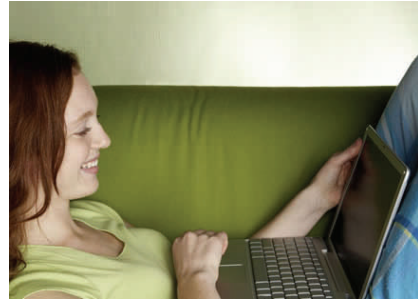
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### **About the Author**

**Matt Van Atta is a freelance writer and copyeditor for clients in both web-based and print publishing. He has spent many years crafting the written word in both marketing communications and academia, but decided only in the past few years that working at home was better than driving to work, and that a golf course is always better than a cubicle. His definition-oriented posts for affiliate marketing newbies and others can be found on the Affiliate Classroom blog.**

## The Many Uses of PPC Marketing

by Kathy Jackson



Around 1995, business on the Internet became a hope and interest for many. That was just 12 short years ago, and today, Internet businesses are booming. The playing field has been leveled to the point where even the little guy really can compete well with big corporations.

During those 12 years, many methods of marketing a business have come along. Some have stayed around and continue to be successful today, while others have gone, having had little or no success, or have been replaced by technological advances.

But during this 12-year period, those technological advances have given us an exceptional opportunity to market our businesses based on the words people type into search engine queries. We now have Pay-Per-Click marketing, or PPC as it is commonly known.

The concept behind pay-per-click marketing is pretty straightforward. You select keywords, write your ad, bid on the keywords, and pay for the number of clicks that you receive, with the amount owed based on what you bid and the number of clicks that were received. The more you bid, the higher your ad is placed on the webpage.

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**Because you will be paying for the clicks, it is important that you get the right people to click on your links.**

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The most commonly known source for PPC traffic is the search engines, such as Google's AdWords advertiser program. But many other search engines have followed suit and also offer PPC advertising, including Yahoo! Search Marketing (formerly called Overture), Look Smart, and Lycos, among others.

### Deceptively Simple

While the concept of PPC itself is simple enough, there really is a great deal more to successful PPC marketing. Not everybody succeeds at it, and some even fail in a very expensive way. That's because your PPC ads not only compete against other PPC ads, but you must also make sure that your ads will get clicked on by users — and not just any users.

There are many courses that teach one how to choose and bid on keywords. With the help of such a course, getting your ad into the first five positions on the search engine results page for your selected keywords really is not difficult.

However, getting people to click on that ad is another ballgame. You are not paying them to click your link. You are paying the search engine or company each time someone clicks the link. So you still have to convince the user to make the click. And convincing the user, for the most part, starts with how you write the ad.

Your ad copy depends on what you are trying to accomplish. You may be trying to promote a specific product, to build an opt-in list, to generate leads, to give something away as a viral generator, or to bring traffic to a landing page. The ad that you write must work with the purpose you have in mind. Furthermore, because you will be paying for the clicks, it is important that you get the right people to click on your link.

## Using PPC for Direct Sales of Products

Selling a product with PPC is really quite easy. As always, the first objective is to ensure that you bid high enough on your selected keywords to ensure that your ad is placed high enough to be seen – preferably on the first page of the search results for your keywords. You select keywords directly related to the product.

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**You still have to convince the user to make the click in the first place. And convincing the user starts with how you write the ad.**

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The ad should be written in such a way that it is obvious that you have something for sale. You do not want to pay for clicks from people who are just seeking a freebie. You want those who are in the market to buy your specific type of product. Therefore, you would avoid using words that indicate that they might find something for free, and you would not be “mysterious” about what it is that you are offering.

This may result in a lower number of clicks, but if the clickers are buying, your ROI (Return on Investment) is of course much better. It is also a good idea to send clickers to an opt-in page before they see your sales letter, so that you can capture their name and email address for future marketing in the event that they do not buy right away.

## Using PPC to Build an Opt-In List

Since you will be paying for the clicks, you definitely want to build an opt-in list, regardless of what the bigger purpose of running the ad is. Otherwise you will be wasting a great deal of money paying for one-time traffic. If you can persuade a certain portion of that traffic to give you their email address, in effect you get more mileage for your PPC dollar. In fact, some people run PPC ad campaigns for the sole purpose of building an opt-in list.

First, you would want to create something to give away. This could be an ebook, an email course, an audio, or a report. Whatever it is, your creation should have two qualities: It should have value to the people who are joining your list to receive it, and it should be strongly related to whatever it is that you plan to sell to this list in the future.

In this case, you would indicate that you have something to give away for free in your ad. While you will end up with freebie seekers on your list, you have the opportunity to convert them to buyers over and over again. It is important, however, to make your freebie as targeted as possible.

For example, instead of targeting those who want to lose weight (an overwhelmingly huge market with lots of competition), you might want to target people who have children who are

overweight, or diabetics who need to lose weight. This will allow you to create or select a product to market to them later that is more suited for that list.

## Using PPC as a Lead Generator

Many people confuse lead generation with building an opt-in list. They are not quite the same thing, although they are similar. As you've read, you will end up with some freebie seekers on your list, and these are not necessarily leads.

To generate true leads, you would most likely need to select different variations of your keywords and write your ad in a different way. You aren't just looking for people who are interested. You are looking for people who fall somewhere between "interested" and "ready to buy."

To generate leads, you might very well use some "mystery" in the ad, but you must still be clear enough to get the right people to click the ad. Here are some examples:

### Direct Sale Ad

**Headline: Half Priced Widgets**

**Text: We offer the highest quality widgets  
At prices that blow the competition away!  
<http://www.widgets.com>**

The link would go to an opt-in page, then to a sales page – or to a sales page first.

### Opt-In List Ad

**Headline: Free Widget Designs**

**Text: Get Your Free Widget Designs  
Over 100 Widget Designs Available  
<http://www.widgets.com>**

The link would go to an opt-in page.

### Lead Generation Ad

**Headline: Get Ahead of the Widget Game**

**Text: Get serious about widget income  
Learn how to make money with your widget designs  
<http://www.widgets.com>**

The link would go to an opt-in page that would ask for the first name, email address, and possibly even a phone number. The phone number should be optional, and you will know who is the most serious by the ones who do give you that information.

## Using PPC as a Viral Generator

Viral marketing is a big deal on the Internet. What you must remember is that the Internet has no borders – no limits. It reaches far and wide, and it is impossible to reach your entire market all by yourself. You need help, and this is where viral marketing comes in.

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**To generate true leads, you aren't just looking for people who are interested. You are looking for people who fall somewhere between "interested" and "ready to buy."**

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First, you need a viral marketing vehicle, such as an ebook, a report, or an article. This vehicle needs to be brandable, so that others can give it away for you. If it is in PDF format, you can include a brander in the package so that others can change certain aspects of the product.

Next, create an ad directed not towards potential buyers of what you are trying to sell, but instead to potential sellers. You need other marketers who play in your niche to give your freebie away to those whom they can reach. Within the freebie, be sure to encourage them to give it away to others as well so that it becomes truly viral.

A viral generator PPC ad may look something like this:

**Headline: Give Your Customers What They Want**  
**Text: Free Ebook on Widget Design**  
**Brand with Your Company Name**  
**<http://www.widgets.com>**

The link would lead to a page where they can opt in, so that you can build a list of potential JV partners, or to the download page itself.

## Using PPC with Landing Pages

Landing pages are great for really targeting your audience. You can have various landing pages for different products, but with the use of PPC, you can have different landing pages, with different sales copy, based on the ad that was clicked on.

For example, you might have a product that covers many different aspects of weight loss. Obviously, it is difficult to compete in the huge weight loss market with other PPC marketers.

You could select keywords that target specific groups within the weight loss group, write ads specifically for each individual group, and create landing pages, with different targeted sales copy for each of those individual groups.

Here are a couple of examples:

**Headline: Diabetic Weight Loss Information**  
**Text: Learn how to lose weight with**  
**Delicious diabetic recipes and information**  
**<http://www.website.com/landingpage1.html>**

**Headline: Help Your Overweight Child**  
**Text: Great information, recipes, and ideas**  
**That will help your child effortlessly lose weight**  
**<http://www.website.com/landingpage2.html>**

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**You can have various landing pages for different products, but with the use of PPC, you can have different landing pages, with different sales copy, based on the ad that was clicked on.**

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Again, make sure that you have a firm grasp on what the purpose of your PPC campaign is so that you can write more effective ads that target the people who will bring in the revenue. Most failure with PPC does not come from not choosing the right keywords, although that would be another cause.

The fastest way to fail with PPC is to not know and convey your purpose in the ad, regardless of whether or not you are in the number one position. It's not just in what you say and where you say it – it's in how you say it and in how it is understood that counts.

### **About the Author**

**Kathy Jackson is a Texas Rancher and freelance writer. She is also a contributing author for several farm and ranch publications. Internet marketing is one of Kathy's burning interests and she is just "tickled pink" to write for AC Magazine and Anik Singal, her marketing hero. On the Affiliate Classroom Blog (<http://blog.affiliateclassroom.com/>), you will find several articles by Kathy on various aspects of affiliate marketing.**

# How to Write Winning PPC Ads

by Katalin Torok, <http://mktg.idared.net>



No matter which corner of the marketing world you are active in, you sooner or later discover that copywriting is an art and science in itself. Yet, the realm of text-based pay-per-click ads brings the importance of ad copy to a whole new level. In this article we look at a couple of ideas on how to produce text ads that produce optimum results.

When working in the text ad field, your only weapons are your words. No fancy artwork, no colors, no flashing effects to help grab the prospect's attention. The standard looks of PPC ads strip your ad down to the basics: your message in its shortest text form. Your only chance for success, therefore, remains to find the winning combination of words that entice your prospects to click and buy.

Another key factor in your success is to entice the right prospects to click. It's the only way to ensure a good ROI (return on investment) instead of purely depleting your PPC budget.

## Step 1: Set Your Goals

Before you even start to think of which keywords to target in your PPC ads, set overall goals for the entire campaign. Are you trying to promote specific products? Are there amazing sale offers on your pages that will surely convert visitors? Do you need to build your newsletter subscriber base?

Having a goal for your project will ensure that you can correctly track ROI for your campaign. It also helps to keep your keyword lists focused and manageable.

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**A good keyword list can make or break your campaign. Your keywords and ad text should work together to prequalify your prospects.**

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## Step 2: Build a Good Keyword List

A good keyword list can make or break your campaign, so this topic could fill an entire article in itself. Your keywords and ad text should work together to pre-qualify your prospects. You can achieve this by tweaking your keyword list until you find an optimum between addressing the keywords and phrases that your prospects search for and maximizing the number of clickers who are likely to convert into buyers.

To do this, use the keyword matching tools that your chosen search engine offers: balance broad match and specific keyphrases, as well as negative keywords (that prevent your ad from showing for the given keywords if those appear in the user search string).

A search engine user who types “headphones” into the search box is most likely researching headphones before deciding on which type, model, and brand to purchase. More specific key phrases like “noise cancelling headphones” or the word “headphones” with brand names and model numbers show that the buyer is looking for a more specific type of product, or even one particular brand.

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**Don't forget to include a call to action in your ad to increase conversion. In a very competitive field, the call to action is often found in the title. But if your headline and body work together to present an enticing offer, including a subtle call to action at the end of your ad is your best approach.**

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In this example, if you have a page that promotes the bestselling noise-canceling headphones, or a specific product, it pays to target the more specific keyphrases, along with negative keywords for non-shopping related queries like "manual," "user guide," or "repair".

### Step 3: Choose Your Style

Some of your competitors will use the same text for all their search ads, with the only differences being the highlighted search phrases in each ad, so you can gain instant competitive advantage by having a unique style. Your ad, tailored to your specific audience will stand out from these generic ads

and therefore grab attention.

Match the style and wording of your ads to the audience. For example, if you are looking for bargain hunters, use to-the-point messages and an upbeat tone to grab attention. If you are promoting health products or services, a friendly and empathic tone can work better.

### Step 4: Putting Together Your Ad

The visible part of a PPC ad in the popular search engines consists of the following parts: the headline, the ad body, and the displayed URL. Let's look at these elements one by one.

**The headline.** Your headline – also known as the "title" of your ad – should work the hardest to grab attention, since this is the most visible part of the ad. However, don't compromise on targeting and specifics. Since PPC ads are shown in response to a user's queries for information, an intuitive headline works better than a funny, but puzzling headline.

Include specifics on what you are advertising, but make it friendly and interesting. Don't just echo the search terms, but "speak" to the user. Unless you are advertising a very specific offer to a very closely targeted audience, don't include pricing or coupon codes in the headline.

**The ad body.** The body of your ad is the two or three lines of text that follows the headline. It should work together with your headline to present your exciting offer. If your headline invites searchers to check out a general end-of-season sale, you can further increase the potential of your offer with highlighting a coupon offer (make sure it is compatible with the sale items), or a free shipping deal. If you are targeting a very specific product search and your headline contains the product name, include an irresistible offer in the ad body to stand out from the "we

sell this product"—type generic PPC ads.

Don't forget to include a call to action to increase conversion. In a very competitive field, the call to action is often found in the title of the PPC ads. But that may not be the best approach, as it can quickly seem too pushy, especially if five ads call out to the user to "Buy this today." If your headline and body work together to present an enticing offer, including a subtle call to action at the end of your ad is your best approach.

Include the targeted keyword in the body if possible, but make sure it naturally fits your ad text. Search engines will highlight the search phrase if it is included in your ad copy, further increasing the chance that your ad is seen as relevant to the query. However, as already mentioned above, many marketers take advantage of this by running generic search ads with no keyword-specific message, yet the search phrase being the highlight of the copy. Searchers will appreciate it if your ad actually has something to say about that search phrase and doesn't just repeat it for the sake of being highlighted.

**The displayed URL.** At the bottom of your ad, you can display a URL that doesn't need to be the same as the target URL where the click-throughs arrive (within certain limits to prevent abuse, of course). Try to make your displayed URL as descriptive as possible, so it can work together with the copy. If you can include keywords in the URL, they will get highlighted just like they do in the ad text. (And building keywords into your site URLs will help your SEO efforts too, so starting a PPC campaign is a great time to look into this tactic if you are not yet taking advantage of descriptive URLs.)

## Step 5: Run the Campaign, Measure, and Tweak

Once you have put together your ads and start to run a campaign, you can begin tweaking all of the above to maximize your results. Compare different versions of ads with your keywords to find the best converting text.

Pay-per-click campaigns can quickly become costly, so you might need to compromise on the statistical relevancy of your data. Instead of running the same ad in two similar versions, try drawing conclusions by comparing your overall approaches across your campaign. For instance, you can compare ads that contain pricing versus generic promotional ads, or ads that include the keywords in the headline as opposed to in the body of the ad.

Don't get discouraged if your pay-per-click campaigns start slowly, as it is a very flexible, and therefore complex, form of advertising. If you are new to this form of advertising, try this idea: run searches in Google or Yahoo and learn from fellow marketers. Which ads entice YOU to click on? Why? Which ads are annoying, and why are they annoying?

Once you have a feel for what works and what doesn't, follow the above approach to start building successful PPC campaigns that maximize your return on investment by prequalifying your prospects, and presenting an offer that results in conversion.

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### About the Author

Katalin Torok is an independent marketing consultant with a focus on Web 2.0. Her website and blog contains many helpful tips at: <http://mktg.idared.net> .

# Google AdWords: The Ultimate Niche Research Tool?

by Mark Thompson

<http://www.income-academy.com>



If you asked 10 people what AdWords was, you'd get a number of differing responses. The most popular response would obviously be related to the advertising aspects of AdWords. If you were extremely lucky, one person might respond with the suggestion that Google's AdWords program is a great research tool.

Using PPC and AdWords as a research tool is not so farfetched when you consider that the information returned is up to date and accurate. Additionally, if used properly, it can be a very cheap way of researching your niches.

## The Keyword Tool

The primary tool for research with AdWords is the Keyword Tool, which can be found in the tools section of your AdWords account. This tool allows you to enter a keyword or keyword phrase and get a list of suggested keywords returned.

The first part of this tool that you should use is called Keyword Variations. If we enter the keyword phrase "Dog Training," the keyword tool returns a list of 200 related keywords in a matter of seconds. Alongside these keywords you will find an indication of the search volume and the number of competing advertisers. That's pretty powerful stuff.

Best of all, the data is from the previous month, so we know that it is up to date and accurate. We can also quickly check the data for the broad, phrase, and exact variation of these keywords. If you add a keyword and Google's Keyword Tool can't find 200 results to return, it will list what it can find then make a suggestion for the remaining keywords. So if we add the keyword phrase "Health Food," we immediately have 162 related phrases returned and 38 phrases that Google thinks we should consider.

By using this tool, you will quickly build up a large selection of potentially profitable keywords and phrases along with alternative niches worth investigating. But the Keyword Tool doesn't stop there. The Site Related Keywords tab is potentially even more valuable. This tab allows you to enter a website URL, from which it extracts the keywords from the site grouped into themes.

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**Using PPC and AdWords as a research tool is not so farfetched when you consider that the information returned is up to date and accurate.**

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This time, if we select one of the top-ranked dog training sites, the Keyword Tool returns a selection of keywords with search and competition data. But this time the keywords are organized under various themes, including Dog Trainer, Dog Obedience, and Dog Behavior. Not only is this good for helping to choose keywords and niches, but it is also good when it comes to writing articles and organizing your website.

## Start a Keyword-Testing Campaign

I'm sure you'll agree that the data the keyword tool can provide you with is extremely useful. But we can go one step further and get even more accurate information. By selecting the keywords we are interested in and setting up an advertising campaign, we can get the most accurate information available.

The secret of using a campaign for research is to keep the cost under control. The best way to do this is to set a daily ad budget. I usually set a budget of \$10 per day and ensure that my ads are shown only on the search network. This is very important because if you display your ad on the content network, you can use up your budget in an hour.

By using an advertising campaign for research, we hope to find the daily search volume for our chosen keywords while at the same time not spending too much money and finding how much we'll need to bid to be on the first page of Google.

The first obstacle we need to overcome is Google's quality score algorithm. This can be done by creating a landing page that relates to the keywords we are targeting. Include as many of the keywords as possible, but remember the landing page doesn't need to be anything special, as we will run this campaign for only 24-48 hours.

Once we have our landing page to give us a good quality score, it's time to create the campaign. In doing so, set the bids to 5 cents or 10 cents, depending on the competition, and limit the maximum daily budget to \$10. Even with these settings, the campaigns I test with very rarely cost me more than \$2 per day. Quite often this low bid will be sufficient to get our ad into the first page of results on Google, which is where we want to be.

The ideal situation for us at this point is for our ad to appear on the first page of Google, but for no one to click on our ad. By writing a poor ad that people won't want to click on, you can save yourself some money while still getting the research data you need. You'll probably find it harder to write a bad ad than to write a good ad to start with!

## Keep an Eye on Your Progress

Now that our campaign is set up, we need to monitor it closely. If necessary, we should be prepared to increase the bid on the ads so that we get to the front page. Obviously for some

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campaigns, this won't work very well. I once targeted some webhosting-related keywords, a 20-cent bid managed to get me into 70th place. This was obviously going to be a very expensive campaign to enter into, so I stepped away from it.

On the other hand, I've used some test campaigns and found that seven cents is enough for first place on Google. This was for a product that paid \$43 per sale and converted quite well for me. This meant I could afford to pay for over 600 clicks before I would start to make a loss. Luckily those 600 clicks usually brought four or five sales.

Once your campaign has been running for 24 to 48 hours, it's time to look closely at the data you have collected. You should be able to see which keywords have lots of searches and what bids you will need to place to get into a good position on Google.

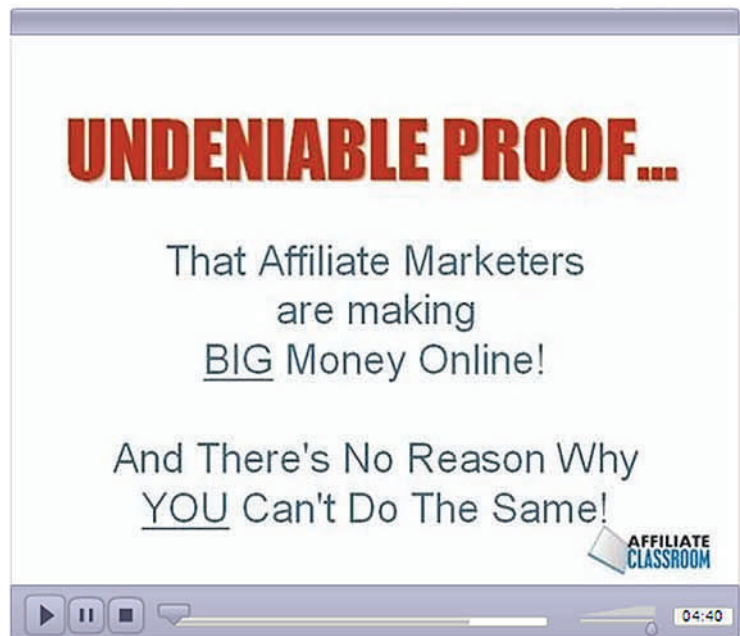
Ideally you should be able to find several keywords that will bring you lots of clicks, but at a low cost per click. All you need to do now is to modify your landing page and refine your ad, and you should be on your way to a healthy profit!

### Other Useful Tools

While you are in the Tools section of your AdWords account, it is worth noting that Google supplies a number of other useful tools that can be used to improve your campaigns. The first one you should look at is the Traffic Estimator.

By using the Traffic Estimator on a list of keywords, you will get an estimate of the daily costs and number of searches. It has to be noted that the costs estimate isn't very accurate and

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often overestimates your daily costs. However, it is a quick way of getting a feel for your chosen keywords.

Another tool that is worth using on a regular basis is the Campaign Optimizer Tool. This tool will look at your campaigns and suggest changes that will hopefully improve your campaigns. I used it recently on one of my campaigns, and one of the suggestions it made increased CTR by about 2% almost immediately. I would recommend running this on your active campaigns on a monthly basis.

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**The Campaign Optimizer Tool will look at your campaigns and suggest changes that will hopefully improve your campaigns. I used it recently, and one of the suggestions it made increased CTR by about 2% almost immediately.**

The final tool that we'll look at today is the new Website Optimizer. The tool allows you to set up different landing pages and analyze how the different pages perform and convert.

Using the website analyzer should allow you to create multiple pages and select the ones that perform the best. By constantly monitoring and tweaking your landing pages, you should soon start to increase your profit which after all is the most important reason for doing PPC advertising!

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By using the tools made available to you by Google wisely, it is possible to create profitable campaigns from the start. There was once a time when PPC advertisers routinely lost a lot of money just getting their campaigns set up and optimized. Google are now adding useful tools on a regular basis so by using the resources available to you along with a bit of inventiveness you should be able to create a profitable campaign from the start.

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### About the Author

Mark Thompson spent many years working in IT consultancy in London. Following a re-evaluation of his goals and lifestyle in 2004 he sold everything he couldn't fit into the family car and moved to rural Spain where he now pursues a variety of online ventures.

See: <http://www.income-academy.com>

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