

**Pay-per-Click Advertising (or PPC)** is a term used to describe online advertising schemes such as Google Adwords or Yahoo! Search Marketing. It can bring substantial numbers of visitors at an affordable cost if you know what to do and cost a fortune for no results if you don't. NetSecrets ensure you achieve the former.

All search engines these days offer a mixture of results. They offer what are often called "natural" listings which are the result of the search engine examining the pages within your site using an automated process called "spidering". Based on what it finds the search engine sees your site as more or less relevant to a range of search terms and your position in the results of searches for those phrases is determined accordingly. This is a slow process and it can take many months for a new site to achieve good visibility and only then if the site has been subjected to "search engine optimisation" (SEO), which is another service NetSecrets provide, covered in a separate document.

Alongside these "natural" results, search engines now offer a means of gaining almost instant visibility for a range of selected keywords and key phrases. At its simplest it can be seen as an auction system. You make a bid, representing what you will pay to receive a visit from someone searching for a given phrase. If your bid is the highest you will be number one in the "sponsored listings" for that phrase. If someone clicks on the link and visits your site you pay the search engine the sum you bid. If someone bids a penny more than you, you drop a position. If you up your bid, you can be back at the top.

There can be several reasons for using PPC as well as or instead of SEO. Firstly if your site has been built using "unfriendly" design techniques PPC can be the only alternative to scrapping your site and starting again. Secondly it can take many months to get well ranked in the natural listings and PPC can bridge the gap by bringing visitors within days of the site going live. Thirdly you can be found for a wider range of keywords than you can normally achieve with SEO. And fourthly you will get some visitors through PPC who, for whatever reason, would not have clicked on the natural listing.

### **1.0 Step One – Keyword Research**

You can't set up a PPC campaign without picking the target keywords carefully. These are the phrases searchers would use to find your site and must be relevant. These are organised into groups and sub-groups of like phrases which form the basis of the individual ads that make up your campaigns. We use a range of tools to build these lists and regularly review them in light of results.

### **2.0 Step Two – Traffic Measurement**

We cannot assess the success of our PPC campaigns without measuring the results. There are several packages around that claim to meet this need but most are inadequate. There is one package we know to be suitable for this purpose, HitsLink. We have in depth knowledge of HitsLink and use it for all the projects we undertake.

Hitslink tells you how many visitors you get, where they come from, what they searched for and which pages they viewed. It looks at specific actions on the site, such as entering an enquiry or placing an order, and tracks the visitors who bought or enquired right back to their origin. So you can accurately see, for example, that this week a specific Google Ad that cost you £50 in clicks brought in 10 enquiries or that an ad in Yahoo! that cost you £100 this month brought in £400 in orders.

As long as we work with you we continually update your HitsLink account to more accurately reflect the activities taking place on your site.

### **3.0 Step Three – Write the Ads**

Research shows that the way a PPC ad is written has a major influence on its success in drawing relevant visitors. Where possible the ad needs to incorporate the keyword searched for; it needs to accurately portray what is on offer to limit paid visits to interested parties only and it needs to be attractive and compelling to the visitors we want. All this with just 95 characters, including spaces, to play with! To work best these need to be miniature masterpieces and great skill and experience is involved in writing them successfully.

In Google it is possible to cycle between one or more ads for a given group of words. This allows us to run 2 ads alternately and to measure their success over a period of time. We can then delete the poorer performer and create a new second ad, repeating the process until we are satisfied with the results.

The greatest success in PPC comes from methodically working on the ads to improve both the click-through rate and the conversion rate. This is because your position in Google Adwords listings is only partly based on the amount you bid. It also takes into account the percentage CTR or Click through Rate which is the percentage of visitors who click on your ad related to the number of times the ad is displayed and the quality and relevance of the page the ad points at. This means that an advertiser paying £1 per click with a low CTR or poor landing page will be listed below an advertiser with a 50p bid and a higher CTR. So, contrary to expectation, you can end up paying less per visitor the higher you are ranked in the paid results.

### **4.0 Step Four – Landing Pages**

It is proven that more visitors convert to customers if the ad takes them to a page relevant to their search rather than to the site's home page. So if the site sells buckets and spades, the ad should take someone searching for "buckets" to the page detailing the buckets on offer rather than to the home page which is more general. Usually it is beneficial to produce a "landing page" specific to each ad offering the visitor options specific to the search they have made.

### **5.0 Which PPC Engines To Use**

The two most important are Google Adwords and Yahoo! Search Marketing and these are used not only in Google and Yahoo! but in large numbers of 3<sup>rd</sup> party sites too, such as AOL, Tiscali and the BBC. MSN has recently introduced its own system and there are smaller engines such as Miva, Mirago, WebFinder in the UK and many more overseas. We usually start with Google (and often look no further), then Yahoo! and add others if appropriate.

## 6.0 What Does It Cost?

There are three main elements to the cost of creating and managing a PPC campaign.

Firstly NetSecrets charge a one-off fee for creating your account, doing keyword research, setting up tracking of the results in HitsLink and writing and refining the ads. There is a small fee for creating and configuring your Google Adwords account plus a fee per campaign created. A campaign comprises a list of target keywords and at least two variants of an ad to permit "split testing" of results. Usually a landing page will be specifically created for each campaign although in some instances these may not be required or one landing page can serve several ads.

Generally the setup fee is £50 plus £100 per campaign and £100 per landing page. These costs will generally come down if more than 3 campaigns are required or if campaigns are very similar to each other. Equally prices can be higher if the campaign is operating in a highly competitive market where more intensive research is required.

Secondly there is a 3 month period of intense testing and development of the campaigns, including refining the keywords, ad content and landing pages. This is the key to a successful project as, however much preparation is undertaken, nothing works like measuring actual results and acting on the lessons learned. The cost of this is based on the number of campaigns and how competitive the target market is. Typical cost for 3 campaigns for the 3 month period is £750.

Thirdly there are 3<sup>rd</sup> party costs that you, the client, pay direct to the PPC engines (e.g. Google) for the clicks received. In most cases this is based upon a monthly budget you define but this can be varied (usually upwards) as HitsLink measures the success of the expenditure. Note that we set up your account such that these costs are billed directly to you, the client. Some PPC consultants will make the payment on your behalf, add a percentage to the cost and re-charge you. We reject this practice as we feel we should not receive more money through spending more of yours.

For sites which do not already have it, HitsLink costs £100 per annum for smaller sites and from £20 per month for high traffic sites with multiple web addresses. For sites not built by NetSecrets there is a one-off setup charge to add Hitslink scripts to the web pages.

## 7.0 Ongoing Support and Promotion

Once all is set up, as defined in steps 1 to 4, your site enters the support and promotion phase.

We agree objectives with you for the growth of the site. This might be expressed as numbers of visitors, numbers of enquiries, order value or a combination of these depending on the characteristics of your business. We then regularly monitor, change and test the ads so that we achieve constant progress towards the objectives. We also identify new opportunities for increased traffic and advise these to you as they emerge.

This is a lower key activity generally than that undertaken in the first three months of "bedding in". Consequently costs are generally around £100 per month to cover up to 3 campaigns rising to £250 per month for 10. This will always be individually calculated however for each client based on the anticipated level of activity required.

## 8.0 What Next?

If you would like to explore the opportunities presented by Pay-per-Click advertising you should contact NetSecrets on 01386 792972 or by emailing [ppc@netsecrets.co.uk](mailto:ppc@netsecrets.co.uk). It would help if you can indicate which specific products and/or services you wish to promote; what geographical area you want to target; what an enquiry and/or an order is worth to you and what budget you feel you could allocate to the project. An initial telephone consultation should establish if we are able to help you meet your objectives and if so we can present a proposal with costs immediately afterwards.

In most cases the campaigns can be set up and running within a couple of weeks from agreeing the details of the project.

## 9.0 Other Services

There are other important services NetSecrets offer to augment the PPC activities and further increase your site's visibility. These include:

**Search Engine Optimisation (or SEO):** This is the process of working on the structure and content of your web site so that it is more likely to be found in the "natural" listings of the leading search engines for keywords relevant to its content.

**Site Submission** is a service that works hand-in-glove with SEO and aims to get search engines to index more of your pages more quickly so that the improvements made with SEO get results sooner.

**Link Building:** Links from other web sites can boost your ranking in search engines by indicating that your site is an authority in its field. Links from complementary sites can also bring relevant visitors who will do business with you. NetSecrets can undertake projects to identify potential link partners and negotiate links to your web site that will bring greater visibility and new customers.

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Version Control:  
1.0 28/06/06 – Original version  
1.1 22/03/07 – Minor corrections  
1.2 06/02/09 – Update details of service.