Google® AdWords

Strategies & Tips

Powerful ideas to help minimize costs and maximize website traffic

280Group

The Product Marketing & Product Management Experts™

www.280group.com

About the 280 Group…

The 280 Group is a Product Marketing and Product Management firm in Silicon Valley that provides Consultants, Contractors, Training & Templates to help companies define, launch and market breakthrough new products. If you need assistance running an AdWords campaign or with any other Marketing or Product Management projects, contact us for a free quote and proposal.

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Introduction

One of the hottest topics in marketing right now is Google AdWords, the pay for performance advertising attached to Google's search engine results. The purpose of this book is to describe what AdWords is, and then to give you some powerful tips to ensure that when you launch an AdWords campaign you do it right. This will include suggestions for minimizing costs while maximizing results, selecting effective and compelling keywords, optimal placement of ads and testing strategies. Before reading this book you should have a basic understanding of AdWords - the tips and strategies that we discuss will then help you make your campaigns much more effective.

The way Adwords works is simple. Type in a search term on Google and a set of unbiased results show up on the left hand side of the screen ranked in priority order. For some terms you'll also notice ads on the right hand side of the screen (and 2 ads on the top above the unbiased results as well) - these are AdWords ads. Companies have paid anywhere from a nickel on up to have their ads appear based on the keywords that you typed in when you searched.
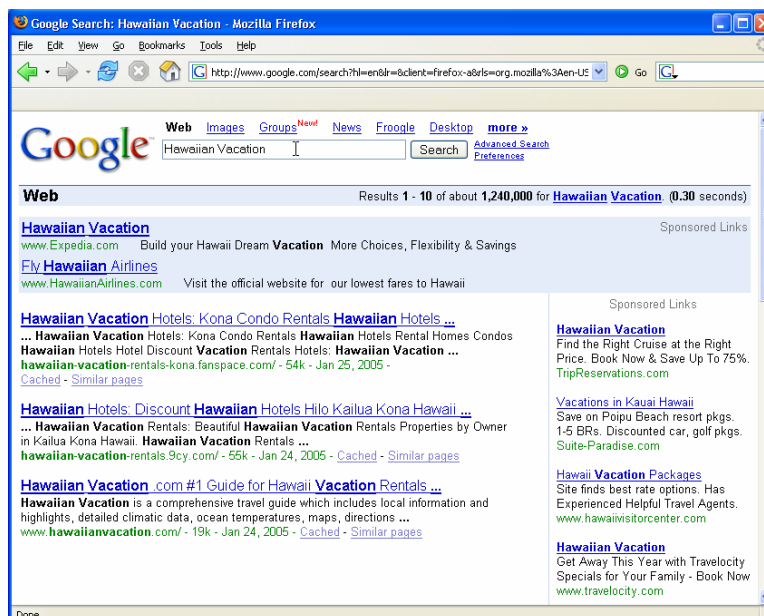
Paid advertisements appear at the top and on the right hand side

AdWords is the primary reason why Google will make a billion dollars in revenue this year. AdWords ads appear not only on Google's search results but on AOL, AskJeeves, Earthlink and other sites that have chosen to display them (and get a cut of the profits). And they also are now appearing alongside email in Google's gmail service (based on the content of what is in your emails).

Setting up an AdWords campaign can be done very quickly - decide how much you want to spend per day, create an ad, select some keywords that you want it to appear with, tell Google how much you are willing to pay for each clickthrough (you only pay when someone clicks through, and you automatically pay the least possible amount for the highest spot), and then run the campaign.

AdWords can be a very effective marketing tool for reaching your target audience in a cost-effective manner. However, you have to be VERY careful when you set up your campaign. Do the wrong thing and you may SEVERELY limit your ability to get good placement for your ads in the future. And of course, you want to find a way to pay the least amount possible per click to get the highest return.

Over the past two years our company, the 280 Group, has run several AdWords campaigns for clients. We were able to work early on with the internal Google AdWords team to get some ideas about what works and what doesn't, and have also been learned quite a bit through launching campaigns and reading the various resources available. This book is designed to let you leverage our learning, and make the most out of every penny you spend on AdWords.

With that in mind we've created the top ten most important Google Adwords tips. Follow these and your campaigns will be more effective and you will be far more successful.

Tip # 1: Do your homework before you launch the campaign

At first glance it appears simple to run an AdWords campaign, and Google even encourages you to dive right in with the promise of being able to bring you new customers within the 15 minutes. While this is true you will want to really think through your campaign beforehand, or you may be penalized and be unable to recover if you do the wrong thing.

The reason for this is the way that Google determines what the order is for ads to be placed on the page. *To decide who should be at the top of the list they use a combination of the price you are willing to pay per click PLUS the results of your clickthrough rates.* Why do they do this? They want the ads that appear to be as relevant as possible - thus they want ads that aren't relevant and don't get clickthroughs to show up at the bottom of the list (or not at all).

What this means is that if you run a campaign that isn't well thought out you run the risk of having a poorly performing ad. *And if your ad doesn't get many clickthroughs initially you may NEVER be able to get listed at the top of the results, no matter how much you are willing to pay per click.* In fact, if your ads perform poorly Google will disable them altogether.

The moral of the story: *write your ads and design your campaign carefully before you go live with it.* Even though Google encourages you to dive right in and activate your campaign immediately proceed with caution and put some thought into it.

Tip # 2: Try hard to be number 2, 3 or 4

One of the first tendencies with AdWords is to become obsessed with being at the top of the list. While there is some merit to being listed at the top, for search terms that are very popular you may end up paying a high premium that just isn't worth it. One campaign that we ran had a price of $5 per click to be in the number one spot.

A smarter strategy might be to write a much more compelling and targeted ad and decide that you are willing to be number 3 or 4. It turns out that instead of paying $5 per clickthrough for the campaign we mentioned we were able to get the number 3 spot for less than 50 cents. And our clickthrough results were quite strong because our ad copy was better than the ad in the number one spot.

Tip # 3: Use somewhat obscure words and acronyms.

Are there obscure words and acronyms that only your potential customers and people in your market might use? These can be hidden gems from an AdWords perspective because you can often get them for the minimum possible clickthrough price ($.05) and they can drive well-qualified traffic to your site.

Look through your product literature, website, selling tools and any other marketing materials that you have at your company. This will help you find the acronyms and words that can be hidden gems for a cost-effective campaign.

Tip #4: Target your competition

This is perhaps the easiest thing to do. Make sure you use your competition's company and product names as keywords to run ads against (though you have to be careful about trademarks). One way to find your competitor's keywords is to check their web pages to see what Metatags they use. (Metatags are special information that is put in a website to help search engines identify what is important when they are indexing the site and trying to determine when it should be displayed in search results.)

To find your competitor's Metatags go to their website using Internet Explorer. When you
are on their home page or their product pages, go the View menu and choose Source.
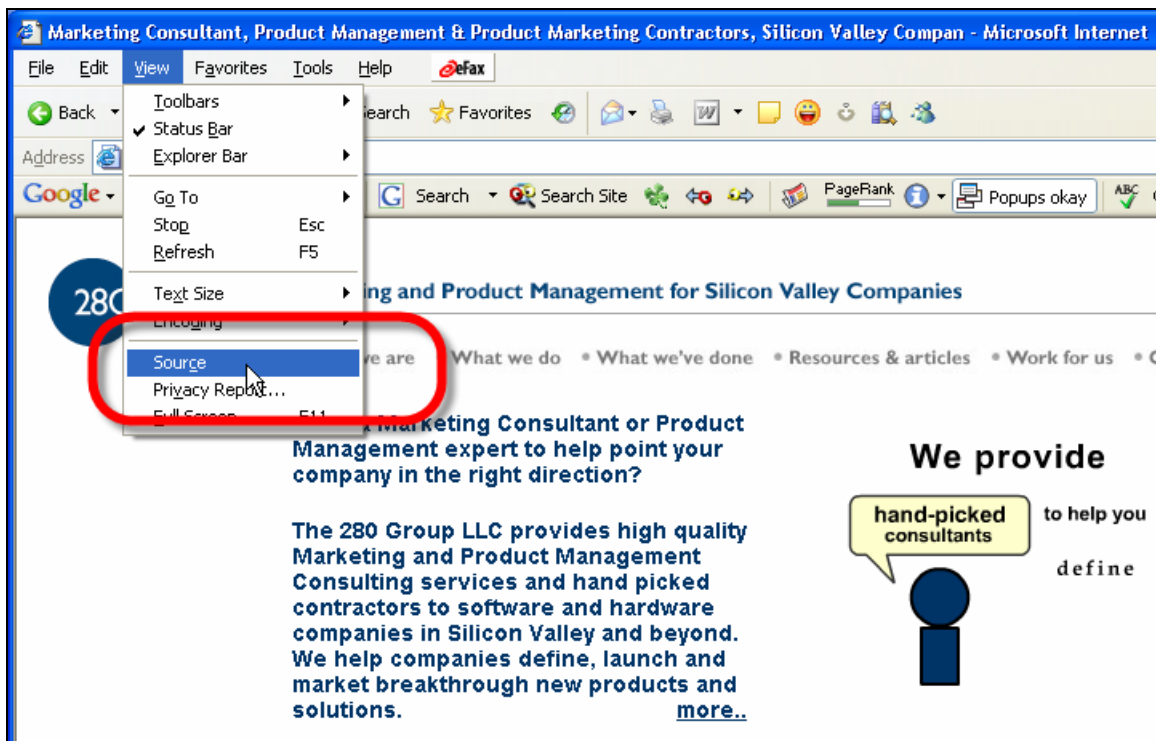
In Internet Explorer choose Source from the View menu.

This will bring up the HTML (web page language) that displays the page in the browser.
Look for the phrase <meta name="keywords" at the top of the HTML page - this will
give you an idea of some of the terms that your competitors believe are important, and
you can use these as keywords for your AdWords campaign.
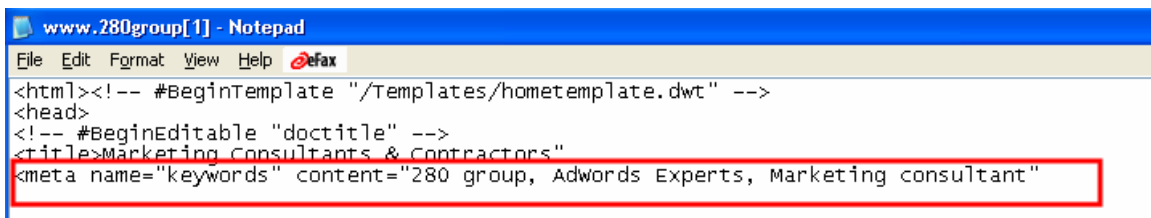
Sample of HTML from www.280group.com showing the keywords in the HTML page.

Tip #5: Don't forget misspelled words

People are lazy and make typing mistakes all the time. As with obscure keywords, common misspellings can be an inexpensive way to pick up targeted traffic. Want to find some of the most common errors? Go to Google and type in some of the keywords you think you want to use as rapidly as you can. Do this one word at a time and you'll quickly find the typing errors that are common. For example, the word management oftentimes will be typed as managment.

Tip #6: Check your website logs for popular keywords

If you use WebTrends or any other decent website statistics package you can get a list of the keywords that people use on Google (and other search sites) to find your website. This is a great starting point for brainstorming your list, and may lead to some unexpected finds. By mining this information you'll end up with some terms that might have seemed obscure but can pay off in terms of traffic at a low cost.

Tip #7: Choose where to display your ads carefully

Where should you display your ads? Should you choose to display them only on Google.com search results, or should you also choose the other websites and places that Google offers?

By default your ads will appear on Google search results pages for Google Web searches, Google Groups, and the Google Directory. But you also can decide whether to place them on Google's search network (sites like AskJeeves, Dealtime, Virgin and others) as well as their content network (consumer and industry-specific websites and products, including newsletters from companies like About.com, the New York Times, Business.com, Howstuffworks.com and others.)

There are two schools of thought here. One is to only place your ads on Google pages. For example, if you are selling C++ development tools why would you want your ads to show up on the Virgin or AskJeeves sites, which are unlikely to have serious programmers visiting them to search for tools? On the flip side, if someone is on these sites and searches for a highly targeted keyword term that you are using (for example, "C++ compilers"), you would certainly want to display your ad. Our recommendation is that you display on all of the sites you can and choose your keywords carefully and in a very targeted manner. This ensures that anyone doing specific searches relevant to your business will see your ads, no matter where they are searching from.

Tip #8: Test multiple ads per ad group.

The initial tendency with AdWords is to want to write one perfect ad and then display it with all of your keywords. But think of AdWords much like you think of a direct mail campaign. Ideally, with AdWords as you do with direct mail, you want to test multiple messages and offers to see which one gives you the best response. The ad that you thought was perfect may have a click-through rate that is only half of what an ad with a different message has. The great thing about AdWords is that you can experiment with this real time and adjust your results accordingly.

Tip #9: Manage your campaigns carefully

Once you create an AdWords campaign it can quickly get out of hand. Many new keywords and testing possibilities will come to mind, and without some organization it will be difficult to manage and make sense of it all. One of the most useful techniques to use is to group related keywords together in their own ad groups. For example, you might want to have an ad group named "Competitors", where you use your competitor's product names as keywords and your ad copy targets really calling out your differentiation or offers a free trial of your product to lure in potential customers. By using this approach, when a new competitor enters the market or you discover a new keyword that your

competitors are using, you can add new keywords into your existing campaign in this ad group and make interpreting the results easier.

Tip #10: Make AdWords part of a bigger marketing plan

The final tip is to not simply consider your AdWords campaign as something separate from your other marketing activities. For example, you might want to consider implementing a SEO (search engine optimization) program like the one offered by the 280 Group (http://www.280group.com/googleoptimization.htm). That way not only will your ads show up on the right hand side when people search Google and affiliate sites, but your website will also be listed at the top of the search results for the same keyword terms. As a result customers will see you twice on the same page, immediately establishing your credibility and increasing the likelihood they will come to visit your site. Another way to leverage AdWords is with free trials, contests and giveaways. Anytime you are offering something like this as part of one of your other marketing programs you should consider using it as an incentive to get people to click through your AdWords ad to come to your website.

Tip #11: Write ads that get clicked on far more often

We know we promised to give you the top ten tips, but this tip is probably as important as all of the others combined. It has to do with human perception, search usage patterns and psychological expectations on the user's part. When users search on Google and receive a page of results they are looking to quickly get to results - they scan the resulting listing for visual and word cues that match what they think they are looking for. In other words, they look for something indicating similarity to what they have just typed into the search box.

Keeping this in mind make sure that the first line of your ads contain the actual keywords that the user is searching on. For example, if your keyword phrase is "C++ Compilers" make sure that C++ Compilers displays prominently in your ad! This may seems obvious, but from our experience it will DRAMATICALLY increase your click through rate.

Final Thoughts

One last thing that we can't stress highly enough is that you should remember to monitor yours ad results VERY carefully in the first few weeks and quickly take corrective action if you see any of them underperforming. As we mentioned earlier, the ranking and placement of your ad on the search results page (whether you are in first place or much further down on the page) is dependent on 1.) how much you are willing to pay per click and 2.) how well your ad performs. If your initial ads and keywords underperform in the first few weeks you may have to pay much more money to get higher placement later, and it could take months to correct this. Correspondingly, if your ads perform well in the first few weeks you are cemented with a good starting position and will pay less.

We've covered a lot of territory, but don't be intimidated - AdWords can seem complicated but it will become easier as you go. I encourage you try AdWords out - it takes some learning and testing of the waters, but it can be a very cost-effective marketing tool.

If you are interested in learning more about AdWords, Search Engine Optimization, or would like someone to launch and run an AdWords or other Marketing campaign for you, contact the 280 Group and we'll be happy to help you out. And make sure you visit our website to sign up for our free 280 Insider newsletter for additional Marketing and Product Management tips and tricks.

Good luck with your AdWords and other marketing efforts!

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