

LOCAL BUSINESS MARKETING

The Marketing Guide for Local Businesses

December 2014

Time To Set Your Business New Year's Resolutions



5 Tips
For Writing
Engaging
Posts On
Facebook

**Why Your Business Should
Consider Using Pay-Per-Click
Advertising**

Infographic:
Ideal Character
Counts

FREE!

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As we prepare to flip the calendar to 2015, we'd like to take a moment to reflect on what has passed, and what is ahead in our future.

We've been through ups and downs in the economy, and continue to witness an ever-evolving marketing landscape. Consumer habits also continue to change.

Remember Y2K? It has been 15 years since we held our breath wondering if the software we counted on would work as we moved to the year 2000.

The iPhone was introduced in 2007 and the iPad followed in 2010. The first Android smartphone was introduced in 2008.

Looking ahead, we're not quite sure where advances in technology will take us. Virtual reality marketing is on potentially new platform for businesses.

We're heading back out to the stars with the Orion space program, which could spawn a number of new technological breakthroughs.

We look forward to the New Year, and those beyond, and hope that the future is full of prosperity for all that read this magazine.

If you have any comments about this issue or would like us to help you with your marketing please do not hesitate to contact us.

Regards,
David Akers
President / CEO
LMS Solutions, Inc.

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A Little About Us

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LMS Solutions was developed to give businesses of all sizes the ability to leverage the same cutting-edge marketing platforms that the Fortune 500 organizations use, at extremely affordable rates.

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Marketing Calendar

Plan your marketing messages around these upcoming holidays and proclamations.

DECEMBER

World AIDS Month
National Write A Business Plan Month
National Tie Month
Tomato and Winter Squash Month
Universal Human Rights Month
Worldwide Food Service Safety Month

December 17th-24th - Chanukah
December 26th-January 1st - Kwanzaa

1st - Cyber Monday
2nd - National Mutt Day
2nd- Special Education Day
3rd - International Day of Persons With Disabilities
4th - National Cookie Day
4th - World Wildlife Conservation Day
5th - National Salesperson Day
6th - Bartender Appreciation Day
7th - National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
7th - National Cotton Candy Day

10th - Human Rights Day
12th - National Ugly Christmas Sweater Day
13th - Day of the Horse
15th - Bill of Rights Day
16th - National Chocolate Covered Anything Day
17th - Wright Brothers Day
18th - Answer The Telephone Like Buddy The Elf Day
18th - Free Shipping Day
18th - National Re-gifting Day
21st - Crossword Puzzle Day
21st - Humbug Day
21st - World Peace Day/Winter Solstice
23rd - Festivus
24th - Christmas Eve
25th - Christmas
26th - National Whiner's Day
28th - Endangered Species Act Day
28th & 29th - National Chocolate Day
30th - Bacon Day
31st - Make Up Your Mind Day
31st - New Years Eve



JANUARY

Cervical Health Awareness Month
Eye Care Month
Family Fit Lifestyle Month
Financial Wellness Month
Get Organized Month
International Brain Teaser Month
March of Dimes Birth Defects Prevention Month
National Glaucoma Awareness Month
National Staying Healthy Month
National Volunteer Blood Donor Month
Thyroid Disease Awareness Month
Walk Your Pet Month

January 1 - New Year's Day
January 19 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day

1st - Polar Bear Plunge Day

2nd - National Science Fiction Day
4th - National Spaghetti Day
9th - National Take the Stairs Day
12th - National Clean Off Your Desk Day
15th - Humanitarian Day
16th - International Hot & Spicy Food Day
17th - Ben Franklin's Birthday
18th - Winnie the Pooh Day
19th - National Popcorn Day
20th - Inauguration Day
21st - National Hugging Day
23rd - National Pie Day
24th - National Compliment Day
24th - National Peanut Butter Day
26th - Spouse's Day
27th - Chocolate Cake Day
28th - National Fun at Work Day
29th - National Puzzle Day
31st - Backward Day



5 Tips for Writing Engaging Status Updates on Facebook



As a local business, writing engaging status updates on Facebook is important because the more interest and interaction you spark, the more successful your business or website will be. This also helps with branding efforts and customer loyalty. The more someone likes your business, the greater his feeling of loyalty and reluctance to branch out. Apply the following tips to craft engaging status updates on Facebook:

Provide Exclusive Content

Provide some sort of exclusive content for your Facebook followers to present them with an incentive to keep following you. Some ideas include giveaways, coupon codes, contests, and online-only sales.

Only Post Relevant Updates

Make sure that your status updates are relevant to your business or else you will lose followers and annoy others. Keep in mind the reasons why they are following you and fulfill those needs. If a current event interests you, only discuss it if you can relate it to your business.

Ask Good Questions

When people are asked a question, it's only natural for their minds to immediately scurry to find the answer. Ask good questions in relation to your business, and even if a person doesn't take the time to share their response on your page, he/she most likely mentally answered it.

Don't Over-Promote

While many people are following you for updates on sales, promotions, and upcoming products, you don't want to be just another advertisement on their screen. Share quality links related to your niche. Post cute pictures and educational videos that are relevant. It's also acceptable to include some more personal posts, such as the picture of a new restaurant you like. This makes you more personable to your followers.

Make a Humorous Post

Occasionally make a humorous post and share links to amusing content or videos. When you show a good sense of humor, people naturally like you more. Just be wary of crude or potentially offensive material as that will only turn off some followers.

Awesome!! ☒

EXCELLENT ☐

GOOD ☐

AVERAGE ☐

POOR ☐



10 Ways Your Business Can Deliver Exceptional Customer Service

Are you selling products online? There are many other businesses that do as well. How can you set your online business apart from your competition?

Deliver excellent customer service.

Here's how to convert website visitors into customers, and then turn those customers into return customers who refer your business to family and friends.

Provide a Detailed Product Description and Picture

Your customer wants an online shopping experience that comes as close as possible to replicating an in-store shopping experience. Because the customer cannot hold or try on your merchandise, provide a detailed product description and present it in an organized and interesting way. Provide each item's brand, color, material, country of origin, care instructions, and sizing chart. If there are any important usage details, include them. For example, tell potential customers that a silk comforter is warm in the winter and cool in the summer, or that a kayak is intended for use on lakes, ponds, and protected

bays. The picture shown should allow the customer to view your product from several different angles, as well as zoom in on it. Better yet, include a video showcasing your product.

Allow Customers to Post Reviews

Invite customers to submit both a star rating, as well as more detailed comments. Of course, not everyone will post positive reviews, but some of the feedback may actually result in better-informed sales. Let's say that customer reviews note that a shoe runs small, and it's best to order the next 1/2 size up. Future customers will likely follow their advice, thus cutting down on your exchange and return rates.

List Shipping Options and Clearly State Related Costs and Timing

Online retailers should provide their customers with at least two shipping options - ground delivery and express. Clearly state what your shipping costs are and when your customer should expect their package to be delivered. Customers should be given a tracking number to monitor their order's progress,

from warehouse assembly to in-transit location. If your customer is required to sign for their package, make sure they know so they can be at the delivery location at the appropriate time.

Adopt a Fair and Reasonable Exchange and Return Policy

When a customer decides to exchange or return an item, make the process as hassle-free as possible. Clearly state your policy on your website and on their packing slip.

What condition will you accept? Apparel companies typically allow exchanges and returns as long as the item is unworn, unwashed, and still has the original tags attached.

How long will you accept returns? Customers can be given 30 days to return an item, but you may choose to honor returns well after a month's time.

Who pays for return postage? Smaller businesses usually require their customers to pay for the return postage, while larger companies will provide prepaid mailing labels for returns. If some sales are final - such as personalized items or deeply-discounted merchandise - include this disclaimer on the product's page, during checkout, and on the enclosed packing slip.

Include Your Business Contact Info on Every Page

Don't make customers hunt for your email and phone number. Include it on every page of your website, on order confirmation emails, and on packing slips.

Send Your Customer Two Emails - to Confirm Their Order and Again After It Ships

Once a customer places an order, you should send an email to the customer confirming their order. Once their order has shipped, email the customer again, detailing the shipper and tracking number. Not only will this cut down on the "Where is my order?" emails, but customers will appreciate knowing exactly where their order is in the fulfillment process.

Answer Customer Emails in 24 Hours or Less

Promptly reply to customers, whether it's a question, suggestion, or complaint. Always thank them for their email. Answer honestly - if you no longer stock backpacks or can't fulfill an order in time for Mother's Day delivery, say so - and then make a suggestion that will meet their needs, without the hard sell. While no one looks forward to addressing a complaint, be gracious in all correspondence and look at it as an opportunity to improve your business. A responsive company makes for very happy customers.

Do All That You Can to Find a Lost Package

Make sure all your shipments include tracking and delivery confirmation. But sometimes, even after your shipper has confirmed delivery, a customer will contact you saying that their package is lost. Believe her. And make every effort to find it, including calling the customer's post office and speaking with their mail carrier. The mail carrier may confirm the package was placed in a garage, or behind a bench on a side porch. It is a rare business that will go to such lengths to find a lost package. Be that rare business.

Anticipate and Fulfill Special Requests

Occasionally a customer will contact you with a special request. Are you an outdoor furniture retailer that requires customers to assemble delivered furniture? When a customer calls to have a picnic table assembled at his home, have a network of handymen at the ready and do it. Are you an embroiderer that monograms merchandise? When a new grandmother contacts you to embroider a bib with a nursery rhyme on it, do it. Customers, grateful for the personal service, will become your best advertising.

Thank Customers with Special Offers

Give your customers advance word on sales. If customers refer friends, email them coupon codes to be used toward future purchases. Choose a valued customer and mail them a free gift as a thank you for their business. Invite customers to submit testimonials and post them on your site, then ask a few to join you at an upcoming company event.



Defining Your Business' Voice

Does your business have a voice?

It should, and your entire sales and marketing team should know it, understand it, and use it. Just as you use the same company colors and business logo on all of your marketing materials and business assets, the same is true of the words you use and the way you interact with customers in person, on the phone, on the web, and on social media sites.

Let's look at Southwest Airlines for a moment. If you've ever flown this barebones airline, you know that it has a sense of humor. Its blog is aptly titled, "Nuts About Southwest." This company has a clear voice, nutty as it may be.

Defining Your Business's Voice

Think about Southwest Airlines once again. If you could come up with one adjective that describes the company's voice, what would it be? Nutty? Quirky? Funny? Okay, that's three, but you get the point.

Now, do the same for your company. Write down as many adjectives that you can think of that describe your company's desired voice. These adjectives should reflect who you are as a brand. Examples include:

- Professional
- Informative
- Helpful
- Trendy
- Edgy
- Snarky
- Worldly
- Empowering
- Nurturing
- Smart
- Technical

Try to narrow your list down to two or three adjectives. These adjectives will be helpful to your team. If they know that the business voice is defined as helpful and empowering, then they'll be better able to tailor their conversations around the defined voice.

You may even want to create a list of words that should be used or avoided. For example, a medical office might use words such as "injection" instead of "shot" or "discomfort" instead of "pain."

Create a Voice Model and Voice Chart

Helping your team identify with the brand voice is essential if you want them to mimic it. Thus, you may find it helpful to create a voice model or persona.

Is there a celebrity or fictional character that fits the mold?

That could be a good starting point. For example, you could tell your team to imagine that they're Martha Stewart, Jerry Seinfeld, or Steve Jobs when demonstrating a product or approaching a prospect for the first time.

A voice chart is also helpful as it describes the various characteristics of the voice and can serve as an at-a-glance reference.

In addition to listing the voice attributes, adjectives, and word list, you could also include a photo of the voice model or persona associated with that voice.

A blue rectangular advertisement for RingCentral. On the left, a hand holds a black smartphone displaying a video conference with four participants. To the right of the phone, the text "RingCentral" is written in white. Below it, in a smaller white font, is "Your all-inclusive cloud phone system." Further down, also in white, is "Voice, fax, text, conferencing and HD Video Meetings". At the bottom right, there is a white rectangular button with the text "FREE TRIAL" in blue.

RingCentral

Your all-inclusive cloud phone system.

Voice, fax, text, conferencing and HD Video Meetings

FREE TRIAL

Use Role Play to Reinforce Your Brand Voice

Role playing is a powerful training exercise that can be used to reinforce your brand voice. For example, you could ask team members to give a short product pitch using different voices such as trendy, conservative, or empowering. Make sure to have plenty of examples of how you can apply your defined voice to various scenarios.

Creating a business voice can help ensure the consistent delivery of your brand messaging. Define your business voice and use it across all of your business communications.

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3 Reasons You Should Be Outsourcing

You probably don't need to be told this, but running a successful business is a ton of work. Wouldn't it be great to just have someone else perform the heavy lifting? Having full time employees is perfect for that, however occasionally that's just not enough. If none of those employees are graphic artists, how can they be expected to produce a high quality flyer?

Perhaps that's not the right example for your business. The point remains the same, though. Your staff won't always be the best or the smartest choice for the job. No matter how incredible they may be at what they do, they can't do everything. This is where outsourcing comes into the equation, and here are three of the best reasons to consider it.

1. Quality

Paying a professional in the required field of work makes more sense than assigning Ted, the accountant, a job he knows nothing about. In almost every case, finding somebody who can do the job right the first time is just a phone call or an email away. Remember the old adage, "If it's worth doing, it's worth doing right."

2. Time

When your desk begins to resemble the Leaning Tower of Pisa, you ask Ted if he can handle a little

extra. Poor Ted, his work is really starting to pile up, too. Paying a professional with years of experience will not only free up Ted to focus on his normal duties, it will also get the job done quicker. Freeing up staff and outsourcing saves time, and what could be more important than saving time?

3. Money

There's a plethora of things a company needs. Many of them can be expensive. If the business needs advertising done, giving Ted a script and a \$50 microphone from Best Buy isn't going to cut it. With outsourcing, it's possible to hire people who already have the equipment as well as the experience necessary to operate it.

To bring it all together: If Ted makes \$15 an hour and it would take him 12 hours to complete it, but a professional can do a far superior job in five hours for \$100, that would be a no-brainer.

Knowing the limits and capabilities of your staff is crucial. Assigning a job to the wrong person can wind up being a nightmare when it finally does fall apart. Always remember that every decision made affects the business. While outsourcing may not be for everyone, the only thing that's left here is a question. Can outsourcing help you?

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The Impact of Public Email Addresses on your Professional Reputation

In the early days of email, Internet service providers charged premium prices for the use of personal email addresses, which led to a mass exodus toward free options such as Yahoo!, Hotmail, and eventually Google. While current technology makes personal email addresses safer than previous incarnations, the availability of these free and very public addresses encourages criminal activity.

A simple search for “public email address hack” pulls up pages of stories on the latest security breaches. Just recently, Yahoo! Mail users were victims of a sweeping account hack, and thousands of users lost personal data in the process.

Still, people continue to put their faith in public email addresses, and it’s not hard to see why. With so much storage and so many free options, public email addresses make communication easier and affordable during an economically uncertain time. But in an age of heightened security awareness and adept Internet hackers, one question needs to be asked: What are the real costs of using a free public email address, especially for business professionals?

The fact is that there’s no such thing as a free lunch,

and professionals who use public email addresses invite more than spam into their inboxes. From security threats to professional image, here’s a look at how public email addresses can negatively impact a professional reputation.

Dealing with Spam

Spam is an irritating side effect of using public email addresses. Some websites even allow spam ads and emails to populate a person’s inbox without permission. But it’s not a big problem for the average user. Using convenient built-in spam filters, public email users can simply filter out unwanted emails from their inbox. But what happens to spam? Most people simply let their spam folders accumulate emails, and after a while these emails resemble the family junk drawer.

Coupons, special offers, and junk mail may seem like harmless pieces of Internet refuse, but in reality hackers can use spam as an access point. In fact, many hackers create spam for the specific intention of checking how well people monitor their inboxes. In the real world, thieves can use credit card offers to

steal a person's identity. In cyberspace, spam becomes an open invitation to steal valuable information.

What a Security Breach Means for Business

If a person gets his email hacked, chances are that the following will happen: one of his friends will point out the issue, the person will change his password, and life will move on. This might work as a short-term solution for a college kid or someone without a professional reputation, but a business professional stands a much higher risk of further damage.

Security breaches aren't specific to public email addresses, but they are more likely to happen when using sites like Yahoo! and Hotmail. For professionals, a security breach can not only destroy an afternoon of emails, but it can also destroy a person's credibility. If the same person mentioned above happens to own his own business or work for a major corporation, he stands the risk of offending and losing important clients.

Creating the Professional Image

Perhaps equally important to security issues for a professional is the image she maintains. Security breaches can be devastating, but they're not permanent. In the business world, reputation is forever. Sending a professional email from a public email address indicates a lack of respect and confidence in a person's own business. Public email addresses may be fine for high school students or college students with limited job experience, but professionals need to present a confident and polished image to coworkers and clients.

How can professionals combat the negative impact of public email addresses while still growing their businesses? The answer lies in purchasing a website domain or finding a paid email service that offers valuable features. Paid, private email hosts indicate success and confidence, two major factors in the sustainability of a career. Professionals may be hesitant to pursue this route, but there are several benefits to paying for good service.

Finding a Positive, Cost-Effective Solution

If public email addresses should be abandoned, then what can professionals do to find a cost-effective email solution? Email addresses provided by cable companies and other service providers may seem like expensive alternatives when there are free options available. Rather than looking at an email address as an unnecessary expense, professionals need to weigh the pros against the cons. Private email addresses open more doors than they close, and these doors come with increased security, dependability, and professional branding.

With a much smaller network and closer monitoring, private email addresses give users better peace of mind. Internet service providers work on a local basis regardless of their national span. This means that users who utilize paid email addresses actually pay for better security features and a one-on-one approach to security breaches. Limited access and personal identification allow for private email users to enjoy a more comfortable communication experience.

In terms of dependability and professional branding, private email addresses denote prestige and authority. As discussed above, people are more likely to trust someone who cares enough to spend a few dollars each month on honing her professional image. Business professionals work hard to let people know of their accomplishments, and few things spell accomplishment better than owning a domain name and utilizing a private email address.

It can be difficult for professionals, particularly those just starting out in their careers, to invest in a private email address. With free options available, many may choose to take a gamble by using public domains while spending money in other areas. However, the old adage rings true: sometimes people have to spend money to make money. Private email addresses offer a safer and more professionally polished alternative to public domains. Over time, those who use private addresses stand a better chance of impressing future clients and employers. And in an era where security breaches can ruin lives in the time it takes to log in, investing in better alternatives is an easy choice for the modern professional.



Why Your Business Should Consider Using Pay-Per-Click Advertising

PPC is a very cost-effective means to get your site noticed by your target audience very quickly.

What is Pay Per Click Advertising?

Pay Per Click (PPC) is a type of sponsored online advertising that is used on a wide range of websites, including the search engines, where the advertiser only pays when a web user clicks on their ad. So you as a business would only 'pay per click' each time a web user is interested enough on your ad to "click" on it to learn more.

PPC is a very cost-effective means to get your site noticed by your target audience very quickly. If your website is new, and hasn't yet shown up organically, PPC is a great way to get first page exposure and drive traffic to your site.

How PPC works

Each search engine has its own PPC program, the most popular being on Google. You simply choose which program that you would like to advertise with and sign up to it. You can run ads on multiple platforms at the same time if you like.

Once your account is set up you can then design ads using specific text and even images, depending on the type of ad. You will also include a list of keywords that are associated with your company.

To illustrate, think of PPC advertising being like a silent auction. As an advertiser you would place bids on specific keywords or phrases that you think your target audience would type into a search engine when looking for specific goods or services like yours.

When a web user types a search query into the field of a search engine that matches your keyword list or visits your web page with content that matches the keywords or phrase chosen by you, the PPC ad may be displayed on the search page.

In search engines, a PPC ad is generally seen just above or to the right of the search results where they can be easily noticed. On other kinds of websites, the ad will be placed in the location the site designer has decided will be the most advantageous to his site and to you, the advertiser.

Once the ad is designed and the keywords are entered, an auction will be held. What this means is that other companies in the same industry as yours will all bid for the keywords and locations on the search engine that they want to use.

The bid is the price that each company is prepared to pay each time a visitor clicks on its advertisement. The higher bids will receive better ad placement giving their ads more prominence and visibility on the results page.

Is PPC right for your business?

If you want to attract new customers to your business and website then you have a few options to choose from.

A lot of businesses still try to reach out to a local audience using flyers and brochures. If you have done this before then you will know how expensive it is, as well as the time involved to get flyers designed, printed and then distributed. Not only that, but you are limited to the number of people who will actually see the flyer.

Times have changed. Very few people actually read newspapers now and traditional business advertising like the Yellow Pages is almost dead.

When you use PPC marketing, your advertisement can literally reach thousands, if not millions of people all around the world. The added beauty is that the people who see your ad will be people who are actively searching for what you offer. They are a highly targeted audience. Nothing in the offline

world can compete with the power of PPC marketing.

Saying that, we have seen local businesses who have realized how powerful PPC is and thrown a huge marketing budget at it only to see their campaign fail miserably.

Just like any other traditional marketing campaign your strategy needs to be well thought out and planned properly.

A lot of businesses throw together poor quality advertisements in the hope that enough people will click on their ads. They forget these ads are their 'shop window' and creating an effective PPC campaign advert can be the difference between their company thriving online and simply wasting their marketing budget.

Why Poor Ads Damage Your Click Through Rate (CTR)

As Pay Per Click professionals, we realize the damage a poor ad can do to a marketing campaign. For example, Google uses an algorithm called 'Ad Rank' to determine the positions of ads on their pages.

A good Ad Rank means that your advert will appear much higher up on the page. This is important, as you will be more likely to attract traffic to your site if you are positioned here. Ads that appear lower down the page will get less traffic. So if you are competing with other businesses, all competing for the same keywords it is vital that your ads are well ranked by the search engine.

Another reason why the Ad Rank is important is because it is used to calculate how much you are charged for each click that your advert receives. A good Ad Rank means that you will pay less for your campaigns.

As a quick guide here is how Ad Rank is calculated:
$$\text{Ad Rank} = \text{CPC bid} \times \text{Quality score}$$

So as you can see there are two factors that determine your Ad Rank:

- Your cost per click (CPC)
- Your campaign's Quality Score

A number of different elements contribute towards

this Quality Score. Google explains this on their Adwords website: "Quality Score is an estimate of how relevant your ads, keywords, and landing page are to a person seeing your ad. Having a high Quality Score means that our systems think your ad, keyword, and landing page are all relevant and useful to someone looking at your ad. You can find out your Quality Score for any of your keywords, and there are several things you can do to help improve your Quality Score."

To further understand Google's Quality Score, read our story in this month's issue "Understanding Your AdWords Quality Score".

According to Google, "The AdWords system works best for everybody – advertisers, customers, publishers, and Google – when the ads we show are relevant, closely matching what customers are looking for. Relevant ads tend to earn more clicks, appear in a higher position, and bring you the most success."

Google really wants you, as a business owner, to profit from PPC. This is essential for everybody concerned. When a potential customer wants to find a particular service or product, they expect to find it on Google.

Google in turn, wants to send the customer to the most relevant results very quickly. If your PPC is the right match, they will send that customer to you, you will get more customers and make more money. Everybody is happy.

Despite that, there are still many businesses that are

dipping their toe into PPC and getting it wrong.

What Are Advertisers Doing Wrong?

A quick online search shows a huge variety of mistakes businesses make when it comes to PPC ads. These range from poorly converting landing pages (the page that visitors are taken to when they click on your ad), to things as fundamental as spelling mistakes.

Here are some of the most common mistakes that businesses make:

1. They have Ads that aren't relevant

As a business owner your main aim is to make sure that your ads are relevant to the information on your landing page as well as the keywords that you are bidding on to help people to find you.

Making your ad relevant will help improve both your Quality Score, which we have already established is very important, and the CTR your ads get. The higher your Quality Score the less you will pay for each click that you receive. That means you get a better return on any investment. More profits for you.

The mistake a lot of business owners make is this: For whatever reason, they group together a number of very different keywords and place them into a Single Ad group. This makes it impossible for your ads to be relevant.

This has an adverse effect on your Quality Score; it



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View deals

lowers it so you end up paying more for each click you receive.

It is vitally important that all of the keywords relating to your business or product are tightly grouped together and relate to just one theme.

2. They don't have a Call to Action

Including a call to action to your ads is crucial, as it will help increase your Click Through Rate.

You need to tell the person seeing your ad exactly what you want them to do. If you want them to 'buy it now' or 'click for more information' then tell them.

Don't underestimate the power of your call to action, but make it appropriate for what you want them to do as it could be the difference between a person simply browsing your products and buying something.

3. They don't test their Ads

It is a good idea to run at least 3 different variations of your advert. Test new ads every month so you are continually trying to improve your Click Through Rate.

We see many advertisers who fail to update their ads regularly. Why is this such a big deal? Because it means their promotions, prices and the message they trying to convey are out of date. Not only will the Click Through Rate be lower, but it will also spoil the user experience for the potential customer as well.

So what should you test? These would be elements like your descriptions, display URL's and Calls to Action. Test new messages too by making tweaks to the benefits, promotions and prices. This will help you to see which promotions resonate the most with the search engine users.

4. They don't optimize their Website

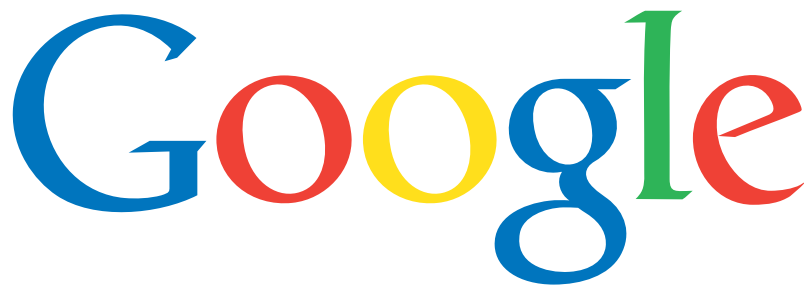
Ensure the website page you are driving consumers to has relevant content, and make sure it is easy to navigate.

Basically, if you want a successful PPC marketing campaign here is a small checklist that will help you:

- Ensure that the relationships between your ads, keywords and landing page are relevant.
- Carefully analyze your competitor's ads. See what they are doing then make yours even better. YOUR ad should stand out and be better than theirs.
- Another way to make your ad stand out and look professional is by 'Capitalizing The First Letter Of Each Word'.
- Always mention your unique selling points together with the main benefits of your product or service. You want the user to choose your ad over your competitor's.
- If you have an enticing promotion or special offer don't forget to mention it in the ad.
- Make sure your Call to Action is relevant to the purpose and goal of your advertisement. For example if you want them to download a brochure, tell them. If you want them to buy your product, tell them. If you want them to look at your special offers, tell them.
- Integrate your Google Analytics account with your Google AdWords account.
- Decide in advance what you want the adverts to do. Once you have established your goals, use the appropriate ad extensions.
- Ensure your website is optimized, and you are sending consumers to a page that is relevant to the ad content.
- Utilize ad extensions, which allow you to show your phone number, address, main page links and other information to potential customers.
- Don't forget to test and then test again.

PPC Marketing can be extremely profitable for your business but it can also be an expensive learning curve if you are not sure what you are doing. We can help you with all of these elements to ensure that you are not throwing your money away on a campaign that is doomed to fail.

Even if you are having moderate success we can significantly improve your promotions so that your profits go through the roof. We get great results and we deliver them fast. Why not contact us for a free consultation.



UNDERSTANDING YOUR ADWORDS QUALITY SCORE

Each keyword in your Google AdWords campaign gets a Quality Score between one and ten, with one being the lowest score and ten being the highest.

Quality score is meant to be a general guide of the quality of your ads, but there are several factors during an actual auction-time bid that also effect where your ad appears, if at all.

How Google calculates Quality Score:

Every time someone performs a search using the Google Search platform, which triggers your ad based on entered keywords and other settings you've set in your campaigns, Google calculate a Quality Score. To calculate this Quality Score, Google looks at a number of different things related to your account.

According to Google, by improving the following factors you can help improve your Quality Score:

- Your keyword's past Click Through Rate (CTR): How often that keyword led to clicks on your ad
- Your display URL's past CTR: How often you received clicks with your display URL
- Your account history: The overall CTR of all the ads and keywords in your account
- The quality of your landing page: How relevant, transparent, and easy-to-navigate your page is
- Your keyword/ad relevance: How relevant your keyword is to your ads
- Your keyword/search relevance: How relevant your keyword is to what a customer searches for
- Geographic performance: How successful your account has been in the regions you're targeting
- Your ad's performance on a site: How well your ad's been doing on this and similar sites (if you're targeting the Display Network)
- Your targeted devices: How well your ads have been performing on different types of devices, like desktops/laptops, mobile devices, and tablets – you get different Quality Scores for different types of devices

How Quality Score affects you:

- Ad auction eligibility: Higher Quality Scores make it easier and cheaper for a keyword to enter the ad auction.
- Your keyword's actual cost-per-click (CPC): Higher Quality Scores lead to lower CPCs. Which means you pay less per click when your keyword has a higher Quality Score.
- Your keyword's first page bid estimate: Higher Quality Scores lead to lower first page bid estimates. That means it's easier for your ad to show up on the first page of search results when your keyword has a higher Quality Score.
- Your keyword's top of page bid estimate: Higher Quality Scores lead to lower top of page bid estimates. That means it's easier for your ad to show up towards the top of the page when your keyword has a higher Quality Score.
- Ad position: Higher Quality Scores lead to higher ad positions. That means your ad can show up higher on the page when your keyword has a higher Quality Score.

Time To Set Your Business New Year's Resolutions



It's almost the New Year - a time to reflect on the past year and set new goals and aspirations. However, keeping those resolutions can be tricky, especially if they're far-fetched. Instead of setting unattainable goals this year, take a moment to reflect on the lessons learned from the past year and move forward with a new focus on success for your business!

No business is perfect and there is always room for improvement.

If you're looking for a resolution or resolutions that you can keep, we have a compilation of New Year's resolutions and how to make sure you succeed in keeping them for 2015!

Resolution 1: Promote your business regularly and consistently.

When it comes to running a small business, we can easily let the task of promoting it slip to the bottom of the to-do list in favor of other urgent tasks. But, if

you want to attract new customer, you **MUST** make promoting your business a priority. While you're promoting your business, be sure to keep track of what works and what doesn't. It could save you from spending money unnecessarily.

Resolution 2: Learn Something New

You can learn something directly related to your business or learn something completely unrelated. Regardless of what you choose, learning something new adds to your skills and can add a new dimension of interest to your life. Depending on how you choose to learn (online or in-person), you can meet new people who may become customers.

Resolution 3: Join A New Networking Group

Networking for small businesses can be key to their growth. Being able to talk to other business people and bouncing ideas off of them, while generating new ideas is integral to your success.

Resolution 4: Set Aside YOU Time

It's incredibly important to take time to recharge and refresh yourself. Working to mental and physical exhaustion is a recipe for disaster. If you have trouble finding some free time, write some time into your schedule (regularly). Don't let your business push you into all work and no play! If you don't invest time in yourself, why would anyone else?

Resolution 5: Set Realistic Goals!

Set attainable goals for your business rather than unrealistic pipe dreams. Goals that are achievable will lead to less frustration!

Resolution 6: Give Back

As a small business you rely on your community for income and referrals. Make this the year you give back. There are many worthy organizations within your community; find one that matters to you and give what you can. Whether you serve on a committee, be a volunteer, mentor, or donate, anything works!

These resolutions seem like they would be pretty easy to keep right? According to a study done by author and psychologist Richard Wiseman, only 12% of people who make resolutions succeed in keeping them. So what's the secret? People who take meaningful steps in order to attain their resolutions are far more likely to achieve than those who make no specific commitments.

Get specific. Instead of setting obscure goals such as "I want to gain more customers or clients," make your resolution specific. Determine how many more customers or clients you want to gain each month and for the year. Make sure it's a tangible number otherwise you're liable to get extremely frustrated. When you reach your goal, set a new one!

Writing down your goals in small steps can also help make sure you achieve success. Planning and accomplishing things one step at a time will help you stay focused and positive!

Work with your team to make sure your goals are reached. Clearly communicate the resolution you'd like to make and achieve, and get them onboard. Having each team member on the same page will help your company to stay on track with the resolution or resolutions.

New Year's resolutions may have been hard to keep in the past, but you can change that this upcoming year! Set realistic goals, and work towards them in small steps. You'll be surprised at how easy it will be to keep your resolutions and reach your goals!



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Microsoft



News You Should Know

Black Friday Results

IBM reported that online and mobile shopping during Thanksgiving and Black Friday hit an all time record, based on consumer transaction data analyzed in real-time by the IBM Digital Analytics Benchmark.

For the first time, online traffic from mobile devices outpaced traditional PCs on Thanksgiving Day. Thanksgiving Day reached a new mobile tipping point with browsing on smartphones and tablets accounting for 52.1 percent of all online traffic. Overall Thanksgiving online sales were up 14.3 percent compared to 2013.

Overall Black Friday online sales were up 9.5 percent year-over-year with mobile devices accounting for 25% of all online purchases.

Facebook Announces Changes

Beginning in January 2015, Facebook will give significantly lower News Feed visibility to organic (non-paid) posts that are overly promotional. Understandably, many businesses balked at this news. However, the purpose is to a) strip out the overly hypey, salesy, pitchy, bait-and-switch type of posts, b) to keep the promotional posts in the 'Sponsored/Suggested' (paid) sections of the News Feed, and c) to force business users to stick with paid posts for direct promotions.

News leaked recently that Facebook has been secretly working on a whole new platform aimed at enterprise customers that will allow them to chat with colleagues, connect with professional contacts, and collaborate over documents. This new platform could be future competition for Google, Microsoft and LinkedIn!

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IDEAL CHARACTER COUNTS

40

Facebook

Posts with 40 characters receive 86% more engagement than posts with a higher character count.



28 - 39

E-Mail Subjects

Subject lines containing 28 - 39 characters get an open rate of 12.2% and click rate of 4% on average



8

Domains

The best domain names are short, have a .com extension, and do not contain hyphens or numbers



1600 Words

Blog Posts

74% of posts that are read are under 3 minutes long and 94% are under 6 minutes long.

3 Minutes

YouTube

The average length of the top 50 YouTube videos is 2 minutes, 54 seconds



71 - 100

Twitter

Tweets shorter than 100 characters have a 17% higher engagement rate.

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