8 PPC mistakes to avoid

PPC advertising is a powerful means of creating new customers and building web traffic. It is, however, not without pitfalls, traps and tripwires.

To help spare you from getting tripped up, I've listed eight common mistakes I've run across regularly in managing PPC campaigns.

8. Neglecting Geographical Targeting
Whether you're an international giant or a small local business, geographical targeting is critically important. Use it to avoid wasted spending by targeting only the areas that offer above average ROI.

For small businesses, maximum return might only occur within a 10 mile radius. Also, advertisers selling higher-end services can benefit by targeting higher income regions.

Finally, large advertisers benefit breaking out campaigns on a geographical basis as country-by-country performance can vary greatly based on a wide range of factors such as disposable income, need, spending habit, currency strength, etc.

7. Leaving out Negative Keywords
Negative keywords prevent your ads from being displayed when unattractive modifiers acadvertiser your broad and match phrase terms. For example, the keyword "Chicago legal services" might be a great keyword, but "free Chicago legal services" is a resource draining keyphrase.

Adding negative keywords is easy, and you can find great ones through Google's keyword tool or by going into the keywords tab and selecting "See search terms all."

6. Ignoring the Existence of Match Types
PPC newcomers often fail to realize the tremendous power of different keyword match types. Below lists how each of the four match types handle the keyword "red kite":
Exact Match: Triggers ads only when the exact phrase "red kite" is queried.
Phrase Match: Triggers ads that include the exact phrase "red kite" and any words or phrases that surround it such as "red kites" or "red kites miami."
Broad Match: Displays ads for an even wider range of keywords, including variations that only loosely match such as "fly kites" (although more control can be used through broad match modifier.
Modified broad match would have prevented these irrelevant clicks (many costing almost $10 apiece) by ensuring that both "website" and "security" were included in every search query that the ad was to be shown. Learn how to make the "+" symbol.

There is significant opportunity within each of these keyword umbrellas. For example, broad match keywords often have a lower bid price than their exact match counterparts, and can be relatively controlled with an abundance of negative keywords. Additionally, you can find opportunity in the long-tail with specific high bids dedicated to longer tail keywords with less search volume.

5. Selecting keywords that are too broad
Many advertisers make the mistake of targeting keywords that are too broad. I believe it's better to err in favor of specificity, as broadness leads to excessive costs, low conversion rates, and negative

ROIs.

A perfect example is when an advertiser selling sausages advertises for the keyword "appetizers." While a fine salami makes for a great starter, who's to say the searcher isn't a vegan looking to whip a quick appetizer for dinner guests? Look for keywords that communicate not only direct product/ service, but also intent (in this case "fine sausages online" while produce higher returns).

4. No Ad Testing

Ad tests are paramount in determining the words, phrases, and propositions that appeal the most to your target audience. Maybe it's a tempting offer (free shipping) or a quick testament to your advertiser's credibility (90 percent success rate). Ad testing is a powerful way to improve campaign performance.

Start by trying three different ads per ad group (set ad rotation to EVEN). I first recommend testing three fundamentally different ads. Once you have a sample of 200 or more clicks per ad, you should be able to begin to determine winners. Be careful not to judge by CTR alone, as high click through rates can actually be detrimental to a campaign if they do not result in conversions.

For more advanced ad testing, experiment with subtle copy refinements to further boost returns. Concentrate on different adjective and adverbs. Remember to keep your last winning ad as a control.

3. Sending Users to your Homepage

As much as possible you want to control the user experience. Of web visitors. Use research and analytics to determine what matters to your visitors and then deliver an appealing and engaging experience to fit those preferences and needs.

Sending a user to your homepage enables users – not you – to control their experience.

Instead, use landing pages that specifically relate to the users search intent. This should include headlines, content, text, images, and call-to-actions.

2. Being a one-trick pony (Adwords-only advertiser)

Google Adwords has more than a 2:1 advantage in market share, but many advertisers miss the significant opportunity offered by Bing/Yahoo. As I've previously written, a Bing/Yahoo campaign can be created in a few minutes and usually delivers lower CPC's and cost per conversions. It's a great way to give overall performance a 20-33% lift almost instantly.

1. Not Conversion Tracking

This is the king of PPC campaign killers. With the absence of conversion data, you are essentially flying blind. Conversion data lets you quickly understand the financial returns of a campaign at all levels: ad group, ad copy and keyword. This data affect every aspect of campaign optimization from ad testing to landing page performance to setting bids.

Both Google Adwords and Bing Ads make it relatively easy to set up conversion tracking. There's no good excuse for running PPC ads without first setting up a reliable means of conversion tracking!