

Pay-Per-Click vs Search Engine Optimisation



Which, Why and When

A question we are constantly asked by our customers is *what is the difference between Pay-Per-Click, otherwise known as PPC or AdWords, and Search Engine Optimisation, or SEO?* This document is aimed at answering that question with a minimal amount of jargon and in an impartial way.

Pay-Per-Click / Adwords

PPC is the use of programs such as AdWords to get your site found on the front page of Google Search. It is fully flexible. You choose the Country, State, Region or Town that you want your site to show for. If you only want people from Sydney to see your ad, no problem. You then choose the keywords that you want to show your site listing for. You choose a cost per click, and a maximum daily budget, write an ad and away you go. You instantly get seen by your market. Then all you have to worry about is getting the most out of your ads and visitors. The hard work of being found is done. Time to go live? 24 hours usually. You choose the costs per keyword, and based on volumes, you can determine and control your cost per action (sale, lead etc) for every term, every day.

I have always recommended that people commence PPC for their sites, ascertain its strengths and weaknesses by controlling and tracking visitors, and then ascertain the top volume keywords based on the number of searches per day.

Search Engine Optimisation

SEO is the art of getting your web site to rank on the front page of Google, based on its merits. This metric includes text, information, images, resources, type of code used to make your site, popularity of the site, geographical location and many, many more factors that can change daily. The Google search algorithm will then crawl your site regularly and if you don't have an active update program, that is new text, new information and something to offer, you will slip down the page. It really is an art form and at the end of the day, there is no guarantee that you will ever make it onto the front page of search for the words that matter, i.e. the big search volume terms. Many SEO programs have time to ranking periods of between 3 to 12 months. It is a very long time to wait to get found by your clients. You also have to accept the geographical restrictions that Google places on you. If you only want to show in New South Wales, you will show anywhere in Australia. Relevance of search is also important here, there is not much point being top listing on yellow Chevy taxi doors if there is only one search per year for that term in Australia. The potential sale from that one search will not support the expense in getting there.

Summary

Both PPC and SEO require some skill and expertise to maximise the benefits of either. I believe that companies should have an overall online marketing strategy which includes both PPC & SEO, as they both have their place.

For companies trying to get their website found, start with a PPC campaign, find out which keywords work, fine tune it and then start optimising your website for SEO. It will take some time, or it may not happen at all, for your site to rank highly with search. In the meantime you can guarantee being on the front page of Google by running a PPC campaign.

If you are planning a campaign and need immediate results, then PPC is really your only option.

The table below summarises the pro's and con's of each;

	<i>PPC</i>	<i>SEO</i>
How soon will I get onto Google's front page?	Typically within 48 hours	Varies, you may never get there, or it can take months
Can I limit my visitors to a specific geographic area?	Yes, down to your city area	Only by country
If Google change their search algorithm, will it affect my site?	No	Yes
Can I control costs?	Yes	Yes
Can I change how my listing shows on Google's search results	Yes	No
Can I control which page I send visitors to from search?	Yes	No
Can I spread costs over a period of time and achieve results at the same time?	Yes	No