



Turning 10 Paid Search Mistakes Into Pure Profit

Learn How To Improve Your Results Today!

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SEARCH-CENTRICSM MARKETING



One of the most alarming conclusions we reached while talking with hundreds of companies about search engine marketing practices is the sheer number of mistakes almost everyone seems to be making. These are mistakes costing companies untold millions of dollars in bottom line profits. That's why we are pleased to share "Turning 10 Paid Search Mistakes into Pure Profit" with you.

Paid search is by far the most challenging form of advertising around. While search could easily become the most productive form of direct marketing on the planet, it comes with a tremendous amount of complexity and some negative ramifications when done incorrectly.

Search done well requires:

- Human intervention by trained analysts
- Adjusting to a marketplace where competitors see your every move
- An understanding of how other media impacts search
- A commitment to "do it right"
- Using top-shelf technology wisely

A scalable SEM operation cannot be managed on a spreadsheet (one of the most common mistakes we've found) or with basic garden variety tools. You need leading-edge technology capable of crunching data relating to tens of thousands of keywords, across multiple engines, with each word and/or cluster of words tied to a specific measurement of ROI. And that's just the beginning! You cannot simply use a black box that you set up and let run on its own, commonly called "set it and forget it." You need people trained in a client's specific goals and objectives to make the right decisions when faced with Gap Bidding, Bid Jamming and other decisions.

In terms of competition, this is truly an open marketplace. With the click of a mouse, you can see everything your competitors are doing and vice-versa. This takes a lot of getting used-to. You'll even be faced with challenges you have never encountered before, like a guy working out of his garage selling the same products as your company; only he can outbid you because he has no overhead. You may have heard the term "level playing field" before... yet not realize just how level the field was until you started playing on it.

There is a reason why hundreds of thousands of companies who did not spend huge sums of money on search three years ago are doing so now... because they've learned that it works. By reading the following 10 Paid Search Mistakes, we hope you will avoid many of the common pitfalls. At SendTec we can provide numerous other paid search tips. Why not call or email us right now to learn more!

Not Enough 3, 4 & 5 Word Phrase Keywords

Problem

Not developing enough keyword phrases longer than 2 words.

Why It Happens

There are five reasons why this problem occurs:

- It's easier to pick out all the single and 2-word phrases that are generally very broad in nature and employ broad match tactics.
- The ROI payback on longer keyword phrases is assumed that it isn't worth the effort.
- It's too much work for an in-house employee, especially when he or she has other duties.
- Lack of knowledge into how people are actually searching and on what terms.
- Relying too heavily on broad matching as a solution to cumbersome keyword management

Commentary

A good keyword program has a mix of single-phrase keywords that have a higher volume but are less profitable, along with lower volume but more productive multiple-phrase keywords. It's hard to make single-phrase keywords work profitably due to their higher costs and lower conversion rates. So... it's imperative to build out to less cost competitive, higher conversion multiple keyword phrases. The optimal mix varies across industry categories, but a good rule of thumb is to shoot for 60% or more of your search traffic coming from multiple-phrase keywords. The right mix can lead to maximizing your search volume potential while still reaching your desired cost per acquisition allowable. Additionally, beware of the higher cost and decreased relevancy of broad matching. Broad matching tactics are not a substitution for keyword development.

Recommended Solution

We suggest:

- Design a keyword program that incorporates a multitude of different 3, 4 and 5 keyword phrases.
- Employ keyword development tools like WordTracker to help generate variations of keyword concepts
- Eliminate reliance on more costly but simple tactics such as broad matching



Non-Qualifying Description Copy

Problem

Writing copy that doesn't qualify potential prospects. For example, writing a general copy line such as "wide selection of men's suits" that leads to a site selling high-priced suits most people cannot afford.

Why It Happens

There are two reasons for this problem:

- A lack of understanding of how copy affects clicks - the broader the copy, the higher the probability of unqualified visitors
- A flawed copywriting philosophy - make it broad in order to meet the competition

Commentary

Many marketers think that site visitors are the holy grail of search engine marketing. Nothing could be further from the truth, especially when it comes to paid search. The only thing that counts is obtaining qualified visitors, conversions and positive ROI, and those are directly affected by your copy. Keep in mind that you only pay the search engines when someone clicks, so make the click worth the price you are paying with qualifying copy.

Recommended Solution

We suggest:

- Descriptive copy, which bridges the search experience between the keyword search requested and destination he or she arrives at your site.
- Consider communicating within the descriptive copy the actions desired to be taken. If you want someone to request info, let them know that before they visit.



Sending Searchers to a Non-Relevant Landing Page

Problem

Sending searchers to an unexpected page that doesn't match the search listing.

Why It Happens

Three reasons can account for this problem:

- Failure to regularly test all SEM links.
- Lack of focus on developing relevant landing pages.
- Webmaster not communicating changes on website to SEM staff or provider.

Commentary

Imagine this scenario: you spend a lot of time, effort and money to develop your SEM program, including keyword selection, copy, etc. Consumers click on one of your links and instead of getting an expected page which relates to the search term, they get:

- Your home page.
- A broad category page.
- A totally unrelated page.

If you were the consumer, you would abandon that site immediately. And that's exactly what happens when the final destination page doesn't match the search listing.

Recommended Solution

We suggest:

- Become very familiar with your website's navigational hierarchy
- Best determine relevancy landing page based on nature keyword search and its potential filtered targeting.
- Set up a SKU/web page matrix that provides the URL where every SKU is featured, so that it becomes easy to avoid this mistake.
- Deliver upon the promise of a top-notch user experience.



Poorly Designed and Focused Landing Pages

Problem

Landing pages or web sites that disappoint or do not communicate to consumers coming upon visit from a search engine.

Why It Happens

There are three reasons for this mistake:

- Not recognizing that the entire SEM experience includes the website.
- Failure to recognize the impact of call-to-action communications.
- Poor design that was never corrected for SEM and SEO programs.

Commentary

Consumers arriving on a landing page or web site from any source have certain expectations:

- Ease of finding merchandise.
- Imagery that depicts what they were looking for.
- Easy navigation around the site.
- Simple checkout or registration process.

Consumers arriving from search engines are probably most apt to abandon your site if it is not consumer friendly; especially if they just came from a page listing numerous competitors and other sources for the very same merchandise. It is imperative to bridge the user experience.

Recommended Solution

We suggest:

- Buy the book "Call To Action: Secret Formulas to Improve Online Results" by Bryan and Jeffrey Eisenberg. Read it thoroughly and implement the tactics that apply to your business.
- Implement a user experience task force whose focus is on improving site experience.
- Review and analyze your weblogs to understand your website "bounces." This means your "one page only" site visitors.
- Consider employing customer survey on your site, either homegrown or through someone like BizRate.com.



Too Much Reliance On Bid Management Technology

Problem

Employing a "set it and forget it" automated bid management strategy with a rigid group preset rules and no human intervention.

Why It Happens

People are mesmerized by technology and think it them to make sales without doing much work. Specifically:

- They are seduced by automated technology; not hard to do in a world where so much is automated and in real-time.
- They believe that automation is critical, based mostly on what they've read and heard.
- They don't understand the importance of human analysis and involvement.

Commentary

In the world of search, you need to look at bid management systems as tools to help people make better decisions instead of automated systems requiring no human participation. There is no technology in the search marketplace that guarantees success. That says it all. Quantitative variables alone do not communicate the whole performance-analysis-picture. You must also consider qualitative factors, such as offer and marketing messages of competitors.

Recommended Solution

We suggest:

- Use search technology to:
 - Retrieve information and data
 - Crunch numbers and produce reports
 - Sort data into meaningful buckets for analysis
- Use people to:
 - Analyze information and data
 - Make decisions based on a clear understanding of the business



Allowing Affiliates To Bid On Trademarks

Problem

Allowing affiliates and resellers to bid on your branded products and company trademarks.

Why It Happens

We've identified three reasons for this:

- Marketers don't realize the negative impact affiliates can have on performance.
- Marketers don't understand that by allowing affiliates to bid on branded terms it may actually raise marketing costs.
- Marketers feel that having their affiliates on the search results page gives their brand/product greater visibility, coverage, and reach.
- Fear that affiliates may protest and quit the affiliate program, thus impacting sales.

Commentary

This may be one of the worst practices in search. On a very top level, you are allowing people, many of whom you've never met, to use your brand for their own profit. Some may not use approved graphics and copy; others just blatantly disregard your branding goals. Building brand recognition costs lots of money and affiliates pillaging your brand just shouldn't occur.

Recommended Solution

We suggest:

- Force all of your affiliates to agree to a Rules of Engagement document, that states they cannot bid on branded terms, but they can bid on everything else.
- Assign someone to monitor your branded search terms on all engines, at least once a week to ensure compliance.
- Enforce the policy, and display no tolerance.



Bidding To The Top Position Mentality

Problem

Thinking that always having the top listing position is necessary.

Why It Happens

There are three reasons that account for this problem:

- Assuming the top position is best.
- Not understanding that other positions can yield more optimal results without impacting volume.
- Being told by someone who doesn't understand SEM that it is critical to have that top position.

Commentary

The only thing that counts with respect to position is to determine the position that yields volume and profitability. It very well might be #1, but it could also be #5, (or) anywhere in between. If you can grab the top position without paying through the nose, grab it. If there is a wide disparity in bid prices between #1 and #5, you will probably do quite well in positions #2 to #5.

Recommended Solution

We suggest:

- Your bid management technology or SEM agency should be able to help you identify, for each key word/engine combination, what position will yield an acceptable volume and ROI.
- Formulate a bidding strategy that focuses on gap bidding, position bidding, and bid jamming in order to find the pockets of opportunity.
- If you cannot manage something this comprehensive in-house – consider outsourcing your SEM activities to an agency who can.



Not Analyzing What Competitors are Doing in Search

Problem

Not observing what your competitors are doing and how it can hurt you.

Why It Happens

There are usually three reasons for this mistake:

- Not enough time in the day for this.
- Not knowing how to monitor competitors and what to look for.
- Not understanding how important this is.

Commentary

Unlike any other mass marketing channel, in SEM, everywhere you go, your competition is always there. It's important to keep this top of mind, because the actions that your competition take can directly impact your SEM performance. Learning their strategies may lead to new keywords, improved marketing communication, and more effective landing page strategies that you may not be using. Failure to pay attention to your competitors when you can easily (see) what they're doing could be a huge error.

Recommended Solution

We suggest:

- Identify your competitors and formulate a plan for monitoring their activities.
- Identify the top keywords that account for 80% of your budget spend and monitor those closely every day.
- Adjust bidding strategies to take advantage of bidding gaps and more aggressive opportunities that can grow your program.



Not Understanding The Significant Differences Between Search Engines

Problem

Not understanding or ignoring differences between the major search engines.

Why It Happens

There are three reasons for this mistake:

- You think they work the same way.
- Too difficult to deal with this issue.
- Asking "How important could it be?" ... then dismissing it.

Commentary

While Google, Yahoo and the other engines operate in very similar fashion, there are some notable differences that you need to understand. They could easily affect the way in which you approach each engine. The primary ones are:

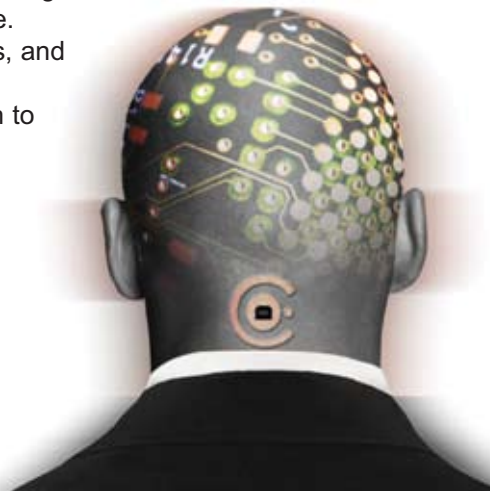
- Some search engines, most notably Yahoo, colloquialize. This means that the singular form and plural form of a keyword are one. In other search engines, most notably Google, you must submit both to have visibility on each format.
- Some search engines are an open auction environment, allowing you to bid into a position. Other search engines provide an invisible bidding environment wherein you set a price and some form of relevancy score algorithm is applied that determines your position and click price.
- Copywriting character limitations vary from search engine to search engine. Some engines allow for as many as 60 characters in the title line and 250 characters in the description while others may only allow for 25 characters in the title line and 70 characters in the description.

These subtle differences can have a major impact on your campaign performance. More importantly, outside of just the tactical semantics, the consumer demographic varies across these engines, making quality site visitor / clicks worth more or less based on the search engine.

Recommended Solution

We suggest:

- What works in one search engine may not necessarily work in another engine. A uniquely tailored strategy needs to be applied to each search engine.
- Strategies should be different on keywords, marketing communications, and potentially even landing pages based on the engine.
- Ensure that you track each search engine separately, all the way down to the keyword.
- Leverage your learnings in one search engine and apply to another.



Not Looking Out For, and Dealing With, Click Fraud

Problem

Avoiding dealing with click fraud.

Why It Happens

This problem occurs for three reasons:

- Not being aware of click fraud.
- Assuming "it can't happen to us."
- Not knowing what to do to deal with it.

Commentary

Click fraud is the dark side of search. Fraud can take many forms, including the following:

- Fake impressions to reduce relevancy scores.
- Distribution partners fraudulently clicking on ads for personal gain.
- Websites set up specifically to run search ads, intercept traffic, and inflate clicks, better known as "click pimping."
- Distribution partners apply search ad links in banner ads, pop-up ads, and emails.
- Competitor attacks.

Search engines claim they have protections, but this is a murky area. The bottom line? You simply need to protect yourself, especially when bidding on expensive keywords where every fraudulent click can hurt.

Recommended Solution

We suggest:

- Realize that click fraud is a reality and aim to diffuse its impact with your bidding strategies.
- Setup safeguards in your reporting and analysis to uncover outlier data that may suggest fraud is occurring.
- Evaluate your weblogs to better understand where click fraud activity is originating.
- Prove your case to the search engine providers and be persistent in demanding refunds.

