



hanapin marketing

*How to Choose The Right
PPC Agency*

Data Driven Reach. Human Driven Impact.



How to Choose The Right PPC Agency

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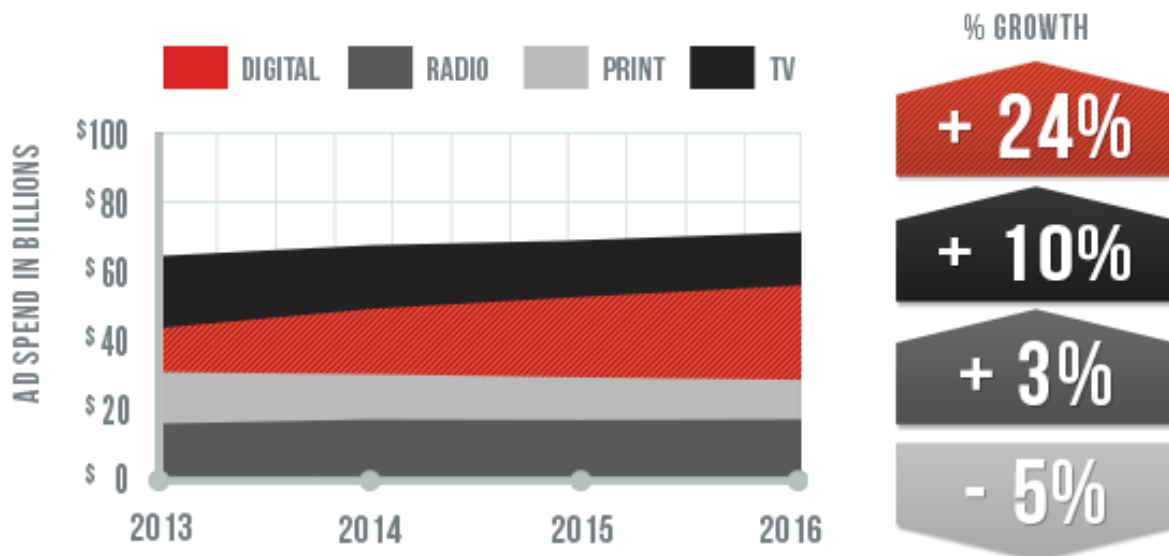
How to Choose The Right PPC Agency

Introduction

The data doesn't lie! Year after year, the search engine marketing industry continues to expand at double-digit growth rates. On top of that, online ad spend has taken over print ad spend. Why not invest where your competitors are likely doing the bulk of their advertising?

GROWTH IN ONLINE DIGITAL MARKETING IS OUTPACING ALL OTHER MEDIA.

US total media ad spending, by media. 2011-2016



Source: eMarketer, Sep 2012

Choosing a management agency that can maintain and expand your account in the long term based on your individual goals is vital to success in search engine marketing. Thus, to help in finding an experienced agency that is right for you, Hanapin Marketing has compiled this step-by-step selection guide, complete with tips, tools, and even some SEM trade secrets.



How to Choose The Right PPC Agency

5 Steps to choose the right Pay Per Click Company



STEP 1: MAKE A LIST

When beginning your search, build an inclusive list of potential agencies, starting with professional referrals from colleagues and other professional contacts. Find additional agencies through company databases such as Google's Certified Partner Search (more databases included in section VII of this whitepaper). While this list could be exhaustive and well-researched, you can often eliminate agencies that might not cater to your individual needs by reading through information on their website.



STEP 2: COMPARE

Now that you have developed a nice long list of agency candidates, begin making cuts. You can start by examining which agencies are the best fit in terms of budgetary expectations and the total overview of services offered under that agency's management. There are agencies that specialize in every budget range imaginable and most will gladly describe the budget range that they're best suited for. In addition, every agency should be able to provide an overview of the services included in your monthly management fee, which can further help you refine your list of agency candidates.



STEP 3: ASK QUESTIONS

Interviewing the potential PPC agency is the most important step in the selection process. The interview is your chance to really find the agency that will satisfy not only your advertising goals, but also complement your company culture. Before setting up an introductory meeting with any agency, build a list of questions that addresses both your company's marketing goals as well as your overall expectations for the partnership. Finally, make sure to include your ideal response for each answer. We've provided a sample interview question set in Section III.



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STEP 4: RATE

After each introductory meeting, it is important to analyze just how comprehensive each agency is in analyzing your needs and outlining a potential plan of action. Just as you shouldn't make a decision based on the initial conversation, the right agency will want to take the time to ensure that they answer all your questions and review your account prior to starting. At the end of the process, take some time to analyze your evaluation forms and rank or categorize the final agencies. We've provided a sample evaluation form in Section IV of this guide.



STEP 5: GO FOR IT

At this point, you're more than likely chomping at the bit to make a decision and get started. As you cycle through your rankings, be sure to weigh the strengths and expertise of each agency against your specific long-term vision and goals. Don't hesitate to make one last phone call or send one last email, as now is the time to be sure that any perceived obstacles aren't obstacles at all. Once you're ready to go, review your proposal completely to ensure your notes match the agreement before signing on.



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What to Ask a Pay Per Click Agency

1

CAN YOU EXPLAIN YOUR KEYWORD RESEARCH PROCESS?

Ideal Response: Extensive keyword lists (min. 1500 - 2000 words); smart and diverse utilization of match types; multiple keyword tools used; includes negative keywords of varied match types to eliminate irrelevant traffic, consideration of short and long-tail keyword relevancy for different audiences.

2

WHEN TAKING ON A PRE-EXISTING ACCOUNT, WHAT IS THE TYPICAL ACCOUNT STRUCTURE STRATEGY?

Ideal Response: Able to adapt an account without starting over; able to perform thorough account audits and reviews; must mention maintaining the historical integrity of the account and should consider the performance history for gauging their actions.

3

HOW DO YOU MEASURE SUCCESS?

Ideal Response: Tangible benchmarks; improving cost per click, ad positions, click through rate; reducing excess spend and cost per conversion; ability to track both keywords and ads; monitors bounce rate and conversion rate of keywords & landing pages.

4

ARE YOU ABLE TO HANDLE ACCOUNTS WITH MULTIPLE LEAD GOALS?

Ideal Response: Able to work with in-platform conversion monitoring as well as external reporting and analytics programs (e.g. Google Analytics); pragmatic tracking measures of sales, revenue, and conversion rates; should mention use of tracking URLs, Google Analytics conversion funnels

5

WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH LANDING PAGE OPTIMIZATION?

Ideal Response: Understand creative best practices; experience with web development and the right agency should welcome involvement and solicit recommendations openly in regards to all aspects of landing page optimization; commonly practices A/B landing page testing



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6

HOW DO YOU USUALLY REDUCE EXCESS SPEND?

Ideal Response: Firm knows that more spending is not the primary way to increase sales; specifically, discusses a proactive strategy to improve keyword quality scores; use of negative keywords to eliminate irrelevant traffic, historical data analysis to reduce non-productive spend, and dayparting and demographic targeting options.

7

HOW WILL YOU WORK TO GET ME AHEAD OF MY COMPETITORS?

Ideal Response: A transparent, prepared, and well-informed response that illustrates experience and expertise and includes detail regarding previous client successes. There are a variety of competitive analysis tools available to monitor your new and/or existing competitors (i.e. Analyze Competition feature in AdWords, Spyfu or a similar interface, etc.). More importantly, the right agency should also be able to explain how they process competitor information to improve performance on your particular account because research means nothing without effective implementation.

8

WHO WILL BE WORKING ON THE ACCOUNT?

Ideal Response: A professionally certified and senior employee or a team of certified individuals led by an experienced employee. Appropriate certifications would include Google AdWords Qualified Individual certification, with specialization in Search, Display, or Monitoring and Reporting.

9

HOW MUCH WILL I BE INVOLVED IN YOUR PROCESS?

Ideal Response: Search marketing firms vary in transparency, communication, and need for client involvement. Find a team that matches the involvement you are looking for whether you want to be updated daily, weekly, or monthly. Also, consider if you want to be involved in the keyword selection process or the ad writing process, and the level of control over spending, targeting, and creative decisions you wish to give the agency.

10

WHAT CONTRACTS DO YOU OFFER AND CAN I OPT-OUT?

Ideal Response: Contract lengths and terms can vary substantially, so be sure to match up an agreement that is aligned with your needs and preferences. You might find that a three-month, six month or annual contract better suits your needs, however you should also weigh how a longer commitment to the right agency can be commonly associated with shorter-term or month-to-month contracts.



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What to Ask a Pay Per Click Agency

11

WHAT KIND OF RESULTS CAN YOU GUARANTEE?

Ideal Response: An agency that is truly interested in building a long-term, results-oriented relationship will realize that this is a trick question. Beware of any agency that makes specific promises in regards to results and ROI. The best guarantee that you can get is that an agency will communicate frequently, over-report to your needs and be able to speak to goals that are aligned with your ideal performance.

12

WHAT MAKES THIS AGENCY DIFFERENT?

Ideal Response: Honest and distinct differences such as expertise, innovative team training, industry conference activity, industry recognition and familiarity with other segments. Make certain that paid search is what your agency of choice is best at, not just a line item on a long list of offerings.

13

WHAT INDUSTRIES DO YOU TYPICALLY SERVE?

Ideal Response: Diverse clientele; clients similar to your business or type of business (e.g. ecommerce, non-profit, etc.). Whether you are B2B or B2C company, the agency should have ample experience in both industry types.

14

CAN YOU PROVIDE ME WITH A CASE STUDY?

Ideal Response: Past client work that shows not only the firm's process, but also the accomplishments. It is not out of the ordinary to ask for proof of past performance and the case study should include a clear history of how the account expanded and how the PPC goals were achieved and built upon.

15

CAN YOU NAME SOME OF THE AGENCY'S BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND SUCCESSES?

Ideal Response: Prestigious industry awards & recognition; alternative industry successes (blogs, hosting conferences, etc.); Senior staffers' reputation within the industry; company growth.

16

MAY I CONTACT A CURRENT OR A FORMER CLIENT?

Ideal Response: While references are a great source of positive affirmation, be aware that reference checks are commonly used as a soft check into current or previous happy clients. Look for a transparent response and an eagerness to get you the information you desire. Be sure to speak to references that are matched not only to your current budget level, but also as closely to your vertical as possible.



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PPC Agency Evaluation form

WHAT KIND OF RESULTS CAN YOU GUARANTEE?

Agency Name: _____

Years of Experience: _____

Contracts Offered: _____

CLIENT TESTIMONIALS

Rate the firm's relationship with past and current clients (Refer to Questions 13, 14, 15)

1 2 3 4 5

PROVEN EXPERIENCE

Rate the firm's experience level: Awards & accomplishments, notable industry recognition, team certifications, years of growth (Refer to Questions 12, 13, 14, 15)

1 2 3 4 5

TEAM LEADERS

Rate highly if the firm's team is recognized in the industry; led by senior employees; certified; specialized; conference presenters; industry bloggers (Refer to Questions 8, 11, 14)

1 2 3 4 5

CREATIVE & ANALYTICAL BALANCE

Level of balance between abilities in PPC reporting and analysis and website/landing page/ad copy creation (Refer to Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

1 2 3 4 5

COMPETITIVENESS

Rate the firm's need for accomplishment and how they stay ahead of competition (Refer to Questions 3, 7, 11, 13, 14)

1 2 3 4 5

CAPITALISM

Evaluate the firm's ROI strategies and past accomplishments (Refer to Questions 3, 11, 13, 14, 15)

1 2 3 4 5



How to Choose The Right PPC Agency

PPC Agency Evaluation form

COURAGE

Rate the firm's willingness to take risk to improve account performance

(Refer to Questions 13, 14, 15)

1 2 3 4 5

PERFECTIONISM

Rate the firm's need to improve company, as well as individual, account performance (Refer to

Questions 2, 3, 4, 6, 7)

1 2 3 4 5

INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

Rate the firm on how it keeps up on industry best practices and new industry developments

(Refer to Questions 6, 8, 11, 14)

1 2 3 4 5

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Rate the firm's blog, training procedures, conferences attended

(Refer to Questions 8, 11, 14)

1 2 3 4 5

PROFESSIONAL MERIT & CERTIFICATION

Rate the firm's certification as well as the individual team certification

(Refer to Questions 8, 14)

1 2 3 4 5

COMMUNICATION

Rate the firm's communication protocol, transparency, and client involvement

(Refer to Questions 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15)

1 2 3 4 5

ADDITIONAL NOTES:



How to Choose The Right PPC Agency

Agency Verification

COURAGE

Another very important area on which to evaluate a potential PPC company is their commitment to Industry Certification. Below is a description of the two most common industry certification programs, as certification via these programs indicates an understanding of current industry best practices and up-to-date knowledge of industry strategies.

GOOGLE

Google conducts the most well-known industry accreditation programs. Google globally recognizes certified companies and individuals in a number of online marketing areas by requiring company spend limits and extensive individual testing evaluations. When choosing a PPC company, verify that the company you are hiring is a Google Certified Partner and that the account executive managing the account is a Google AdWords Qualified Individual.

Google Certified Partner – When a pay per click, search engine marketing, or searchengine optimization company is recognized by Google, Google confirms the business as a Google Certified Partner. Working with a Google Certified Partner, you can be assured that your company is working with professionals who spend at least \$10,000 dollars over 90 days and has a minimum of one AdWords Qualified Individual.

Google AdWords Qualified Individual – Google AdWords Qualified Individuals demonstrate proficiency with, and thorough understanding of, the Google AdWordsadvertising platform. To be individually qualified, advertisers must pass both a Google AdWords Fundamentals exam as well as one of the three advanced exams offered by Google. Additionally, the advertiser must agree to the terms and conditions of the program. The advanced exams help to specialize search advertisers into niche pay per click marketing skill areas: Search Advertising, Display Advertising, or Reporting & Analysis.

BING ADS ACCREDITED PROFESSIONALS PROGRAM

Search advertisers can also be accredited through Bing Ads' Accredited Professionals program. To become individually certified with Bing, advertisers are required to pass one fee-based exam. To become qualified as a company, three of the company's employees must pass the accreditation exam.



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Resources

FIRM FINDING RESOURCES

- Top SEOs (www.topseos.com/)
- Search Engine Marketing Professional Organization - SEMPO (<http://www.sempo.org/home/>)
- Google Partner Search (<https://adwords.google.com/professionals/search/>)

PAY PER CLICK ADVERTISING SYSTEMS

- Google AdWords (www.adwords.google.com)
- BingAds (bingads.microsoft.com/)
- Facebook Advertising (www.facebook.com/advertising)
- LinkedIn Direct Ads (www.linkedin.com/ads)

HANAPIN PPC INDUSTRY BLOGS

- PPC Hero (www.ppchero.com) - Presented by Hanapin Marketing
- Hanapin Marketing Blog (www.blog.hanapinmarketing.com)





LEARN MORE WITH HANAPIN.

For help with your Paid Search Campaigns, or to talk to a paid search professional, contact us:

www.HanapinMarketing.com

812.330.3134



Hanapin Marketing is a paid search agency based in Bloomington, Indiana. Founded in 2004, the company manages & optimizes clients' paid search programs—increasing sales while simultaneously decreasing budgets. From ad copy composition to keyword research to landing page optimization, Hanapin's core objective is to maximize our clients' return on investment.