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GETTING MORE CUSTOMERS TO YOUR WEBSITE by Karla Patterson

In the global marketplace of the World Wide Web, there are many competitors for your target customers. The best way to get those customers to your website is through search engines. Up to 80% of all traffic to websites originates on search engines.

There are two ways to get your website listed at the top of the search results:

1. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) – The words and phrases that internet users use to search for information on search engines are called “keywords” or “keyword phrases”. A SEO professional organizes your site, adds relevant content, including important keywords and uses a combination of techniques to optimize your website for search engine response.
2. Pay-per-click Advertising (PPC) on Search Engines – Search engines allow advertisers to bid on specific “keywords” or “keyword phrases”. The amount that you bid on a keyword or phrase is the primary ranking criteria for your location in the search results. The cost of keywords is based on an auction style price structure, where the advertisers determine the price based on their bids, in addition to their base fee. These sponsored links are listed at the top, the side and the bottom of search result pages.

On the surface PPC advertising seems to be unlimited within your advertising budget, yet the real test is in your return on investment. When it comes to achieving a profitable return on your investment, SEO is the most effective method of converting interested visitors into customers.

The key to converting those visitors to customers is creating a relevant, information rich website that will satisfy the needs of people who are searching using your keywords. Optimized websites use simple, straightforward organization combined with pertinent information to make it simple for potential customers to navigate the site once they arrive. By including information that will answer their frequently asked questions (FAQ), it is easy for them to find what they need, when they need it.

SEO can be used exclusively to obtain natural search engine rankings, or can be combined with PPC advertising. Sites that use PPC advertising without optimizing their sites will reduce the return on their investment, because visitors do not automatically become customers. Knowing the pitfalls of PPC advertising will improve a company’s ability to get the most for their advertising dollars.

- Most internet users learn with experience that the non-sponsored (natural) search results usually contain more relevant information for their search.
- Your competitors are very likely to click on your sponsored search when they are researching their competition. This costs you advertising dollars.
- If you use automatic billing and the search engine software malfunctions, your budget can be

ignored and your account billing can run rampant. When this occurs, you are usually not able to reach the customer service department quickly, as they are swamped with requests.

- You should never allow the billing system to directly access your bank account, as with a debit card. By having the automatic billing go through a credit card, you have the ability to dispute any charges that are over your agreed budget.
- It seems that sites, which pay for advertising, are not often included in the natural listings. This situation seems to be improving.

Google Adwords and Yahoo Search Marketing (formerly Overture) are both providers of PPC advertising. These search engines place a link to your website as a "Sponsored Search Result" when an internet user enters your keywords. The amount that you bid on a keyword or phrase is the primary ranking criteria for your location in the search results. The way these two vendors provide these services differs, and I have listed the key points below.

GOOGLE ADWORDS	YAHOO SEARCH MARKETING
Your bid is dynamically lowered to 1¢ above the next lowest bidder. You can monitor bid prices.	You can monitor prices for effective keywords. You can then adjust your bid amount to position your ad within the top 2 or 3 results.
Your ranking within the search results is based on a combination of bid amount and relevant content. This prevents non-relevant sites from monopolizing the top positions.	Your ranking is solely based on your bid amount, so if you have a large advertising budget, you can monopolize popular keywords.
There is no billing minimum amount per month for your account, but if you do not get a certain number of hits for your ad, then Google will pull your ad. This forces you to keep bidding higher to get more hits.	There is a minimum monthly billing of \$20.00.
The account start-up fee is \$5.00	The account start-up fee is \$50.00.
You can set a daily budget for your advertising and schedule delivery during specific time periods.	You can set a daily budget for your advertising and schedule delivery during specific time periods.
You can target your ads to specific languages or countries.	You can run a worldwide ad campaign or a localized ad campaign, which targets customers within a 50-mile radius of your location.
You can get a maximum price for an individual keyword or a group of keywords.	You can only set a maximum daily advertising budget.
Your ad only shows up on Google searches. Google is one of the most frequently used search engines.	Your ad shows up on a number of search engines, within the Yahoo network.

Many companies choose to use Google Adwords and Yahoo Search Marketing to promote their websites and achieve quick search engine rankings. Although this advertising method can produce results, you will increase the return on your investment by including SEO as a part of your internet marketing plan.

About the Author: Karla Patterson is a [Multimedia Specialist](#) and [Website Designer](#). By combining video and the web, she helps small businesses communicate with their customers more effectively. She can be contacted by email at video 7 @ video7pro .com. Visit her website at <http://www.video7pro.com> for information on using multimedia to reach your global marketplace.