



Getting started in digital advertising

A guide for small businesses

Can digital advertising make you more successful?

Many of us now spend much of our lives online. Research suggests that in 2019, 87% of UK adults go online every day when just 35% did so in 2006.¹

Most of us now buy online, too, with 78% of UK adults having made online purchases in the past 12 months. About a third of 35 to 44 year olds have spent £1,000 or more online in the past three months, with clothes and sporting goods the most popular purchases (bought by 55% of adults), followed by household goods (48%) and holiday accommodation (42%).¹

Search engines such as Google, Bing and Yahoo are hugely influential. More than 80% of consumers are thought to use search engines to research products and services before buying them.¹

If your website is not found when people search online, you could be missing out on sales. There are simple, low-cost ways to improve your chances of ranking higher up on “organic search” results pages, but competition for “organic traffic” is fierce, which is why many businesses of all sizes use paid search advertising.

Paid search is among the most popular type of pay-per-click (PPC) advertising. With PPC advertising, you pay for the chance for your ad to be selected to appear at the top of search engine results pages, social media feeds or on other websites. Alternatively, some businesses use display ads. Either way, you only pay if



someone clicks on your ad. PPC probably will not provide all the answers, but it could be key to your marketing strategy's success.

Microsoft Advertising provides intelligent solutions that enable businesses to deliver engaging, personalised experiences to more than a half a billion people worldwide.²

Read on to learn more about pay per click and the role of analytics and search engine optimisation. Find out how to manage digital advertising budgets and measure your return on investment. You can pick up top tips from experts Yiuwin Tsang and Amy Wilkinson of digital marketing agency Disruptive Thinking, and gain insight from successful small businesses.

We want you to harness the power of digital advertising, so you can attract more customers and take your business to new heights.

1. Office for National Statistics, 2019 2. comScore qSearch (custom), worldwide, September 2019. The Microsoft Search Network includes Microsoft sites, Yahoo sites (searches powered by Bing) and AOL sites worldwide. Data represents desktop traffic only.



How does pay-per-click advertising work?

You have probably seen pay-per-click ads thousands of times when searching online for information, products and services. Businesses of all types and sizes use pay-per-click advertising to great effect. So, how does it work?

When it comes to paid search, you cannot simply pay more to ensure that your ad appears. Rather, you bid for keywords relevant to your products and services, which are likely to be among the words potential customers enter when searching online.

Search advertising platforms, social media sites and others provide keyword tools, which can help you choose the right ones.

These tools can also inform you of how many average monthly searches are made for keywords you are considering, how much competition there is for them, and how much you should bid. Keywords with more competition command a higher price.

Pay-per-click ads are selected by ad auction. This is an automated process that determines which ads appear, and is guided by its keywords, bid price and website landing page relevance.

Even if your bid is lower, your ad can still be served, provided your webpage is considered to have greater relevance to the search.



The business benefits of pay-per-click advertising

A key benefit of pay per click is your business only pays if someone clicks on your ad, which can make it a highly cost-effective way to drive traffic to your website. A click might cost you 50p, yet it might lead to a £5, £50 or even £500 sale.

Another clear advantage of pay per click is you can set a maximum monthly spending limit, which you will not exceed unless you increase your budget.

Pay-per-click advertising can also enable you to better target those most likely to buy from your business. In addition to picking keywords that they are likely to use when searching online, you can also specify, for example, where geographically you want them to be served, because you may only provide your services locally. Generating the wrong leads can waste much of your time and budget.

Pay-per-click campaigns can be set up and running quickly, so you can potentially attract new customers and make more sales right away. It can take far longer for other marketing options to work.

Pay-per-click ad campaigns are fully measurable. It is easy to view key data so you can decide whether your ad is achieving the desired results and return on investment. If your ad is not working, you can make immediate changes to try to improve your success.



EXPERT NOTE



“ Test five or six variations of each of your PPC ads. Start with a small budget and find out what works best before launching the full campaign. ”

— Amy Wilkinson, director and co-founder at Disruptive Thinking

SUCCESS STORIES

Dhruvin Patel – founder of London-based Ocushield, provider of blue-light screen protectors and filters for PC monitors, laptops and mobile devices

“Ocushield began trading in 2015, while I was still at university. For two years, we relied solely on organic search engine traffic, but you will only reach a certain percentage of target customers that way, so, in 2017 we first tried pay per click.

“The results were excellent — right from the start — and it has become key to our success. Without pay per click, our business would look very different. More than half of our sales come directly from paid search marketing, and it contributes to about a third of our organic search traffic. Our website is search-engine optimised and we advertise on Facebook, but pay per click is crucial.

“Pay per click is a highly cost-effective solution. Almost immediately, you can see what works and what does not, so you can improve your ROI. And you can vary your spending month to month, in line with demand or what is current.

“Some months we spend up to £10,000 on pay per click, in other months, much less. We are continually running various campaigns. Previously, we paid agencies, but now we do it ourselves. It is fairly straightforward to get started yourself, but once you see results, I would recommend bringing in expert help to improve your campaign success.

“Your ad wording and presentation is key. Your ads must read well, look good and engage. Avoid jargon; keep the language natural and concise. Above all, give people a clear, highly appealing reason to click on your ad.”



DID YOU KNOW?

In the UK, PC search share of the Microsoft Search Network is **21%**.¹

1. comScore qSearch (custom), September 2019. The Microsoft Search Network includes Microsoft sites, Yahoo sites (searches powered by Bing) and AOL sites in the United Kingdom. Data represents desktop traffic only.

Seven steps to launching your PPC campaign

1

Set clear objectives

Whether it is building brand awareness, increasing your web traffic or improving sales, decide what you need to achieve. What does “success” look like for you?

2

Focus on your target audience

Who are you trying to reach, where are they online and what do they want from you? Decide which key messages will best engage them.

3

Choose where to advertise

Search engine, social media or another website — how will you reach your target audience? Create an account and learn how to do it well. Many platforms and sites offer free tips and tools.

4

Set your campaign budget

How much will you need to spend to achieve your objectives? If they are sales-related, what is a realistic conversion rate? [Set a campaign budget that is likely to deliver your desired results.](#)



5

Choose your keywords very wisely

[Choosing the right keywords](#) is crucial to your campaign success. Your target audience should use them when searching, and they must align with your ad and landing pages. Set your maximum keyword bids and choose the right keyword matching option. "Broad match" will trigger your ad more often, but "phrase match" or "exact match" keywords can help drive clicks from searchers who are more likely to convert.

6

Write your PPC ad

There are many [dos and don'ts](#) when it comes to writing copy for your ads. Keep it simple. Be clear, concise and specific. Use relevant keywords and attention-grabbing headlines. Highlight your product or service. Include a clear call to action (example: Buy Online Now!) and link to a relevant landing page.

7

Test and improve where necessary

Set your daily campaign budget. Test different ads to find out what works best, and try different keywords and ad copy. Use analytics to measure results. Learn and get better!



EXPERT NOTE



“ Using negative keywords can prevent your ad from being triggered by irrelevant searches, which will only waste your PPC budget. ”

— Yiuwin Tsang, digital marketing business development at Disruptive Thinking



Optimising your website for search engines

Most of us use search engines for initial research before we buy products or services, even if we ultimately buy in store. Businesses of all sizes compete to rank high up on search engine results pages because it generates significantly more clicks.

Search engine optimisation (SEO) can help ensure that more people visit your website. SEO can not only boost your organic search rankings, it can also influence whether your ad is triggered. If your landing page isn't optimised, it can undermine your ad.

Optimising your website can be quick, cheap and easy. Get it right and you can win more traffic and better target those most likely to buy from you, although it can take a while for your site to climb up organic search rankings.

When optimising your website, [choosing the right keywords](#) is essential. They must be relevant to the page and appear in sufficient density, in headings, subheads, body copy, page titles, descriptions, image tags, etc.

Inbound links from other websites to yours can help boost your rankings as well. Although there is much you can do yourself, agencies and other professionals can optimise your website and specific landing pages for you for a fee.



EXPERT NOTE



“ Make sure your website content is genuine, clearly structured and valuable to the user. Then, search engines will reward you. ”

— Amy Wilkinson, director and co-founder
at Disruptive Thinking



Analytics: measure what matters to increase your returns

Digital advertising provides many learning opportunities. Where necessary, you can make changes — big or small — so you are more successful and more likely to maximise your returns.

This is possible thanks to web analytics, which enable you to find valuable meaning in user data. You can use analytics to “measure what matters” and optimise your campaigns accordingly.

You need to know what action people take after clicking on your ad. Do they soon click away or visit other pages? Maybe some buy, but how do your conversion rates compare to your goals?

Data might show that you are getting a high click-through rate but a low conversion rate, providing a clear message that your landing page may need some improvement. Perhaps visitors to your website are clicking away to pages where the call to action is weaker, so they do not buy. Most likely these issues can be sorted out.

Whether it is click-through rate, average ad position, average cost per click, conversion rate or impressions, analytics allow you to view the numbers that matter so you can better understand your ad’s performance.

Measuring the overall success of your campaigns is also easier with analytics. You can also use analytics tools to learn more about your website visitors and better meet their needs.



EXPERT NOTE



“ Don’t be overwhelmed by analytics. Focus on key numbers and your main objectives. Measure what really matters and act on it. ”

— Yiuwin Tsang, digital marketing business development at Disruptive Thinking

SUCCESS STORIES

Phil Pegden – co-founder TempaGoGo, a platform that enables businesses to work with local recruitment agencies to hire temps

“Since starting the business, we have relied heavily on pay-per-click advertising. We have used social media and radio advertising, but PPC has proved most effective. For a small investment, PPC enabled us to attract our first clients. This meant we could refine our product, before increasing our marketing spend.

“PPC offers many benefits. You can control your costs and better target clients most likely to buy. You can test different ads and use learnings to refine how you market your business.

“About 70% of our sales come from pay per click. We have seven campaigns running at any time, each with many ad groups. We are bidding on between 1,000 and 3,000 keywords at any time. Setting up a campaign is simple enough, but getting the most out of platforms takes time. You must use analytics to measure performance. We have integrated our sales platform, so we know which campaigns, ads and keywords lead to sales.

“My advice? Start with the basics; experiment; expect poor performance at first, but learn and improve. Log in every day to analyse key data.

“Google’s important, but do not forget about Microsoft Advertising. It is cheaper and you can import your whole campaign in a few clicks. It is particularly good if you are targeting businesses, because many of them use Microsoft’s browser settings that default to Bing.”



DID YOU KNOW?

You can add your listing to Bing Places for Business for free, so that customers searching on the Microsoft Search Network and Bing Maps always find the right information about your business.



Setting budgets and calculating your return on investment

One of PPC's key advantages is you can set your average daily or monthly budget, which caps your spending. You can also choose different types of daily activity. For example, to have your ads appear throughout the whole day across the entire month, or have your ads served as frequently as appropriate early in the day, until your daily budget is used up.

So, how much budget should you commit? Obviously, many businesses set out to achieve a certain volume of unit sales or total revenue. Bearing in mind costs and margin, they will know how much it is worth spending to generate those sales. Past experience might tell them how much they need to spend to deliver those sales.

However, weighing return on investment (ROI) is not always straightforward, as some use PPC advertising to help raise awareness of their business, while others base their ROI on a customer's lifetime value. They might spend £25 a month over three years, which amounts to £900, in which case it is worth paying much more than £25 (i.e. the value of one sale) to acquire them.

Your campaign objectives must be achievable and measurable, and your budgets should enable you to achieve them. The more campaigns you run, the better you can get and the more you will learn about how much budget to spend.



EXPERT NOTE



“ If your ROI isn't good, find out why. Don't just dismiss PPC. Your ad or your landing page might be responsible. Question all touch points. ”

— Amy Wilkinson, director and co-founder at Disruptive Thinking

SUCCESS STORIES

Melanie Hopwood – founder and managing director of Plymouth-based beauty salon Brow Envy

“Our results from advertising on Facebook have been phenomenal. For example, our sales increased by 28% between April 2018 and April 2019, almost entirely because of Facebook advertising. It brings up to 15 appointment enquiries a day and about a third come from new customers. We are better able to convert prospects on Facebook, because they can inbox message us or comment on our posts, so we can then send them a direct message.

“We continually run campaigns; changing ads every few weeks. We spend between £100 and £300 a month on Facebook ads. We also use ads to tell customers about competitions and awards we have won, as well as media coverage we have had. It helps to keep Brow Envy in their minds.

“Facebook advertising allows us to be very visual; we can engage people with an amazing photo or introductory offer. Customers often tag their friends, introducing us to many new customers.

“We can switch off or edit ad budgets quickly if they are not working. Being able to target people by their postcode and interests is a highly effective way to target the right customers and avoid wasting vital budget by showing ads to people who will not be interested.

“You need a clear strategy for each Facebook ad campaign, as well as a ‘Plan B’. Your call to action must be clear and your ads should be visual. They should reflect your personality as a business.”



DID YOU KNOW?

You can sign up for free to use Webmaster Tools, which could help you to improve your website’s search performance. Get access to free reports, tools and resources.

What if a PPC campaign isn't working?



Revisit your keyword choices. Are your keywords specific enough? Are you using enough variations? [Use free advice on how to select keywords](#). Expand and refine your keyword list.



Reconsider your keyword matching choices. A "broad match" might bring many triggers, but not from enough target audience searches. Using "phrase match" or "exact match" keywords could greatly improve your click-through rate.



Using [negative keywords](#) can also prevent your ad from showing up in irrelevant searches.



You may need to [increase your keyword bids](#) if you are not getting on the first search engine results pages.



Your ad may need major or minor surgery. Find ways to [make your ad more engaging and compelling](#).



EXPERT NOTE



“ Linking from your ads to product- or service-specific landing pages that are most relevant to search queries can boost your click-throughs. ”

— Yiuwin Tsang, digital marketing business development at Disruptive Thinking



Using [ad extensions](#) enables you to include more information about your business, which can boost visibility and click-through rates. Ad extensions are free to add to your ads, with the usual charges for any clicks you get.



You need to [select the right landing page](#). If not, you can get a high bounce rate or low conversion rate.

Four other things to consider



Social media ads

Using LinkedIn ads can be a great way to target a global network of professionals and the organisations they work for. Other options include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest and YouTube. Be where your audience is.



Remarketing campaigns

This is where ads are later served to those who have previously visited your website, thanks to cookies placed in their browser. Remarketing campaigns can easily be set up and it can be a highly effective way to reengage and convert those who have already showed interest in your products or services.



Display advertising

Online display ads can be banner, image or text ads, and they can be used to target specific audiences on a PPC basis. They can be more eye-catching and work well if you are aiming to increase brand awareness or push a product that relies on a visual sell-in. You can add visual elements to your ads to make them stand out.



Offline marketing

Most businesses use a mix of marketing tactics — online, offline or both — and these can work in tandem. For example, you might hold an event, publicised by online marketing. At the event, you could ask attendees for their email addresses for subsequent marketing campaigns or you could encourage them to visit a dedicated webpage, so you can better analyse your event's success.

Successful marketing requires sound knowledge of your customers. You won't always get it right — it is a learning process. With digital advertising, finding out what works takes time and effort, but it can ultimately bring great rewards.



Audience targeting

Reach your ideal customer



Personalised experience

Deliver the right message at the right time



Optimisation

Increase performance and reduce management



You run your business.
We will help you find your customers.

-  Automated bidding
-  Shared budgets
-  Location targeting
-  In-market Audiences
-  Remarketing

GET STARTED WITH MICROSOFT ADVERTISING

 ads.microsoft.com

 [@MSFTAdvertising](https://twitter.com/MSFTAdvertising)

 0800-633-5915

