



It's Your Digital Marketing Power Tool: Read the Directions

By Susan Saldibar

What do you think about Pay-Per-Click? I'll admit, as a marketer, I've gotten burned in the past. I once had a (well-intentioned) intern put together a Pay-Per-Click campaign, only to find that several thousands of dollars (and keywords) later, I had no idea what worked and what didn't. And, you know what? Neither did he!

But here's the bottom line. Pay-Per-Click works. If you follow the steps to do it right it is one of the most powerful lead generation "power" tools available.

So why do senior living communities sometimes get cold feet when it comes to Pay-Per-Click? Usually, according to Ashley Nicol, Director of Client Success for G5, a Senior Housing Forum partner, it's because they either skip steps or don't plan properly. As with any power tool, you need to read the directions.

Mistakes People Make

So G5 has put together a list of mistakes people make with Pay-Per-Click campaigns, along with a few tips to avoid making them yourself:

1. **Unclear audience target:** This is central to any advertising campaign, PPC or otherwise. Take the time to identify your audience and their buying personas before doing anything else.
2. **Ads that don't reflect keywords:** Why pay to attract users who are looking for something you don't offer? Those users will never convert! Try replacing those expensive "broad brush" keywords with more specific "long tail" keywords. Instead of "Alzheimer's", for example, try "Everett WA Alzheimer's Care Community". You won't get as many hits, but the prospects you drive will be more targeted and qualified.
3. **Scatter-shot messaging:** Don't try to be all things to all people in a short PPC ad. Get specific. Define your target client's pain points and use one pain point per ad. And don't forget a call to action.

4. **Ignoring the free ad extensions:** Standard text ads are 95 characters and include a headline, ad text, and display URL (a shortened version of your full URL). Ad extensions allow for 140 characters so you can provide additional information, such as your address, phone number, unique sales propositions, and features/amenities. Ad extensions do not count against your character limit, and more visual space on the search engine results page is always a good thing.
5. **Forgetting to target geographic regions:** If you operate in major metro areas, just targeting a city name like Seattle or Miami may be too broad. You will be paying to attract users who may not want to travel 15+ miles to your location. Look for well-known local terms used in your neighborhood and use them in your ads.
6. **Poor or non-existent A/B testing:** A/B testing is key to comparing the performance of different ad text variations, no matter how subtle. With each ad, create at least two versions. Try swapping out images or targeting a slightly different pain point. That's how you will be able to hone in on what results in the most click-throughs.
7. **Optimizing for desktop only:** Most people now access the internet via their cell phones and the smaller interface means Pay-Per-Click ads are what show up in the search engine results. Also, mobile users may respond best to mobile-specific calls to action—like “Call Now!”—which allow them to click to call you directly from your ad.
8. **Not setting up tracking:** Tracking is essential to understanding how your website and advertising are performing in tandem. There are different tracking options (including free software such as Google Analytics) and methods available to you. Talk to your web person to identify the right option for you.
9. **Just “letting it go awhile” without review:** Cha-ching! You can rack up hundreds to thousands of dollars by putting your ads on auto pilot. You need to tune in and keep track of performance.

Above all, don't be afraid of Pay-Per-Click. Take control of your power tool. “It's important to take the time to get things right,” says Ashley. “This is where an expert can help,” she adds. “But make sure the people you hire are marketers as well as SEM experts. Because you'll need both.”



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