

How To Grow Your Business

Practical advice on how to grow your small business from Businessware

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In This Issue

- Simple Ways to Get Your Marketing on Track – common sense advice for painless marketing.
- Tips for starting your Pay-per-Click advertising campaign.

In this month's issue we look at simple, common sense methods to get help take the pain out of marketing your business and dispel some common myths. We also look at a key way to market your business in the internet age – Pay-per-Click advertising.

Tips for starting your Pay-per-Click advertising campaign.

We have all heard about the Pay-per-Click internet advertising revolution. We look at how you can start your own campaign to help you drive customers to your web-site and generate more sales.

Just Do It! It costs very little to start your campaign (Google charges £5) and its very simple. So start today and give it a go for a few days or weeks. We recommend you start with Google. We'll go through a few steps to get started (don't worry none of this will cost you anything).

First of all go to www.google.co.uk. Underneath the main search box click on the link that says [Advertising Programmes](#). When this page loads click on the [Google Adwords](#) link (on the left). Click on the big [Sign Up Now](#) button and when the next page loads select [Standard Edition](#) and click [Continue](#). Google offers lots of options to show your ads to people in any country or region. For these options select [English](#) in the language section and [Countries and Territories](#) in the section underneath and then [Continue](#). On the next page you can select which countries you want to show your ad to. United Kingdom (or your own country) should already be selected so click [Continue](#). You are now ready to create your ad.

Create Your Ad. Google allows you a headline and two short lines of text for your ads. You can also enter a URL (web address) to be displayed under your ad and also a URL to a page on your web-site where you will send someone when they click on your ad. There are several things you need to remember. When you create a campaign you will assign your ads against certain keywords. You can have ads that run against thousands of keywords. For exposure when people search on those keywords, Google works like an auction to decide whose ad appears higher in the list.

Simple Ways to Get Your Marketing on Track.

Marketing your business is the one area you **have** to do well. Even with the best product or service in the world, if no-one knows about it or you're not communicating the benefits to the customer then it will be an uphill struggle.

For most business owners, marketing is not their forte. Indeed it is a subject many shy away from, yet mastering it can be one of the most rewarding parts of running a business. Why is marketing deemed such an unnecessary evil? Well there are a couple of common misconceptions :

1) Marketing is like gambling; a way of throwing huge amounts of money away in a vain hope some of it will come back.

That's called advertising. Don't confuse the two. Marketing is about communicating with a specific audience of your target market about what you offer and the benefits it brings to them. Also marketing can be very precise, more like a science than gambling.

2) Marketing is a fancy word for selling.

Marketing is not about selling. Sales and marketing are two fundamentally different issues. Marketing drives potential customers to your business with your message of how you can help them ringing in their ears.

So how can we improve the marketing of our business in the simplest way? First of all ask yourself the question - "Am I tracking and testing what is currently working and what isn't?" Is that quarter page ad in the local paper bringing in the enquiries, is the banner ad on the trade portal web-site bringing in 1000's of visitors to your site, how many appointments is Doris in telesales bringing in each week? If you don't know the answer then you need to find a way of monitoring it and find out what is working for you.

Now that we know what's working the first thing we need to do is to do more of it. You could already have a very effective way of marketing your business but you're hiding your light under a bushel. Put more resources into it, roll it out on a bigger scale and find ways of improving it. If a quarter page ad in a trade publication is bringing in a good return, try increasing it to half a page or try another quarter page ad in a similar publication. If you send out 5,000 mailers a month why not buy a larger mailing list and start sending 10,000 a month. If you have a full-time telesales person who is bringing in a 300% return why not expand to 2 or 3 people. Not everything will scale exactly in this way but by rolling it out bigger each time you will soon learn.

Of course now you can also identify the things that are not working for you. If an advert or a mailing is not working then simply stop it. Unmeasured and unprofitable advertising is one of the single biggest ways small businesses choose to waste their money; now that you know it's losing you money, stop it and invest the money in another area. When we identify that something is "working" we mean it is directly profitable. Don't be seduced by the idea that there are hidden benefits to an advert that loses you money.

Fortunately with Google this is not all dependent on who is prepared to pay the most. Google owe their massive success to their relevancy search engine. The more relevant your ad is to the keyword someone searches on, the higher you will appear in the sponsored links section of someone's search. If Google deems your ad to be more relevant to the keyword than someone else's ad then you could appear higher even if you are paying less than them. This means you should consider including your keyword in both the headline and the body text of your advert for greater relevancy. For example if you are selling laminate flooring and you create an ad to run when someone types in Laminate Floors then you might want to consider including Laminate Floors in your ad headline and in your main ad text. The Destination URL is useful if you sell DIY equipment, for example, and you have a page on your site specifically for Laminate Floors. You may display your standard business web-address but point them to the Laminate Floors section of your site for this particular ad. This has become more important recently as Google are now rating the relevancy of ads not just based on the ad content but on the content of the destination page. When you have finished creating your ad click [Continue](#). Google will go away and make some suggestions about which keywords might be useful to you based upon your ad content. These can always be changed later. Click [Continue](#) to proceed.

How Much? Now we get down to the crunch! Be aware that you are never going to spend more than you want to. This is defined in your Daily Budget. We would always recommend you start off with a small amount, initially no more than £10 per day. How you reach your maximum budget is dependent on your Maximum Cost Per Click (CPC). How much you pay is largely dependent on how much your keyword competitors are paying. If others are paying 60p a click it is unlikely you are going to be competitive with 10p per click. That does not mean your ad won't get seen if you are not near the top of the ad listings. Don't get into a bidding war – it could prove to be quite expensive. You must also remember that your position in the ad listings is also dependent on quality score. Your quality score is a Google secret however it is generally perceived to be based on your click-through-rate (CTR). This takes the number of times your ad is shown (impressions) and works out the percentage that your ad is clicked on. If you have a high CTR then Google sees your ad as highly relevant to the keyword and increases your quality score.

If you want to immediately drive at increasing sales and profits in a way that involves almost no risk and no significant outlay, then target and communicate better with your existing customers. If you have a customer base who buys from you only sporadically then you need to let them know you are around. Maybe you have a new product or service that they may be interested in. Email or mail them some information on your plans or any special offers or simply give them a call. Commit to communicate with your existing customers regularly and you will immediately see the results. Remember that marketing to existing customers requires around only 10% of the effort and cost required to bring in new customers.

In addition to this also communicate with your potential customers, those who have enquired but have not yet committed to buying anything from you. The key word there is "yet". So many businesses let leads go after a couple of communications and in doing so are cutting off potentially huge sales. On average you will have to communicate, in some form, with a prospect at least 7 times before they become a customer. You may need a dozen or more contacts over many months. Never let any of them disappear into the ether. Accumulate their details and continue to send them information, offers, news etc until they themselves actually turn around and say "no more thanks". It has potentially cost you a lot of time and money to get them to contact you in the first place and you are literally throwing good money away if you let them drift off.

Most small businesses are totally reliant on one or two forms of marketing. This is not only inefficient but potentially dangerous. You need to have at least 5, ideally 10, ways of marketing and bringing customers into your business. It is very simple to grow your marketing by testing new methods. The best way to do this is to commit to trying out one new form of marketing each month on a small scale with no huge outlay. Over a twelve month period perhaps only 3 or 4 out of the 12 you tried have proved to be profitable. However that means you have just found 3 or 4 new ways of bringing customers into your business. As mentioned earlier, when you find something that works, slowly roll it out on a bigger scale. Growing your marketing portfolio is also a way of safeguarding as well as expanding your sources of business. You may find that one of your original tried-and-tested marketing methods starts to falter and no longer brings in the same level of results. If you haven't found several ways to replace it with, it could spell trouble. In marketing, attack is the best form of defence.

One key area to try and test, especially if you are marketing your web-site, is Pay-Per-Click (PPC) advertising. Pay-per-click advertising is a revolution in marketing as it enables you to advertise at the top or near the top of the search listings for the major search engines without it costing you anything. You only pay when someone clicks on your advert and takes them to your web-site. This can help drive huge traffic to your web-site in a very cost-effective way. It's a little bit like advertising for free in your local paper and only paying when someone gives you a call. In a newsletter last year we included some tips for starting your own Google PPC campaign and we've included it again on the left hand article. PPC is one of the most powerful marketing methods available today. For small businesses there is virtually no barrier to entry to advertise cost effectively on the fastest growing medium in the world. Given time to learn and master its nuances, PPC could be one of the most important weapons in your marketing arsenal.

Of course all of this takes time; your time. However marketing is often the key difference between successful businesses and those who are struggling. It varies on the type of business you are in, but at least 40% of your time, as the business owner, should be devoted to marketing your business. The best product that is marketed poorly will almost always come in second to a lesser product with superior marketing. So commit yourself to getting to grips with your marketing and expanding the number of avenues through which customers are driven to your business. Remember, marketing is the job you **have** to do well.

Useful Links

Pay-Per-Click Search Engine Marketing Handbook

<http://www.ppcbook.info/>

http://www.amazon.co.uk/Pay-Per-Click-Search-Engine-Marketing-Handbook/dp/1411628179/ref=sr_1_1/026-1546165-2958824?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1191580819&sr=8-1

<http://search.barnesandnoble.com/booksearch/isbninquiry.asp?ean=9781411628175&z=y>

Winning Results with Google Adwords

http://www.amazon.co.uk/Winning-Results-Google-AdWords-Goodman/dp/0072257024/ref=pd_bxgy_b_img_b/026-1546165-2958824?ie=UTF8&qid=1191580819&sr=8-1

<http://search.barnesandnoble.com/booksearch/isbninquiry.asp?ean=9780072257021&z=y>

