

Mark Pocock interviewing Google expert George Lane

If you want to know more about how to use Google Adwords, their Pay Per Click system, then I've got a real treat for you this week.

Let me introduce Google Adwords expert George Lane to you. George has helped companies generate extra sales of £1.2 million through his Adwords expertise.

George has very graciously given up some of his time to answer some of the main Google Adword questions around. So you can make your own campaigns more profitable by generating more clicks at lower cost.

So away you go George.....

Can you give me a short intro about yourself?

Well, I used to be a plumber & heating engineer before getting into the marketing business. Actually that's what got me into it – I learned about pay per click and direct marketing to build the plumbing business, then got into it from there.

Anyway, I'm a little less bad at marketing than I am at plumbing, so opted for least dirty and strenuous of the two.

What services do you offer clients?

Only two: getting traffic and converting it into sales. Of course there's more going on under the hood – and an awful lot of detail, but when you boil it down, that's all I really do.

It seems to work though, according to my clients. Kicking sales up by 6 or 7 figures isn't unusual these days.

What are the most common mistakes you see in a person's PPC campaign?

There are tons of niggly technical mistakes I see all the time, but the most common – and the most damaging – are to do with marketing in general and how people approach PPC.

The number one mistake (and the one that causes the greatest losses) is mismatching your product to the market and making an irrelevant/lame/nonexistent offer.

I know, its basic marketing.

But common sense seems to vanish when people open an Adwords account.

The trick is to keep everything – that's keywords, ads, landing pages, the whole lot – as relevant as you can possibly make it.

That means you adjust your ad and offer based on the keyword your prospect is searching for.

For example, if you're a widget dealer and you're bidding on the keyword "blue widgets", make sure your ad, landing page and offer for that keyword contain plenty of references to blue widgets.

Same goes for every other keyword you're bidding on.

What can a PPC person do to improve their Click Through Rates?

Three ways:

1. Go through the exact searches people used to find your Adwords ad. Then add any irrelevant words/phrases you come across as negative keywords. This'll reduce wasted impressions and bump up CTR. (Running the Adwords Search Query Report is a good place to start)
2. Match your ads to your keywords. Start with one keyword per adgroup, and write an ad specifically for that keyword.
3. Split test your ads. Yes, it's the oldest tip in the pay per click book, but it's been flogged to death for a reason: it works. Just don't get too obsessed with CTR. Use the Super Split Tester tool to decide a true winner based on revenue per impressions: <http://www.supersplittester.com>

What's the most important thing a newbie to PPC should bear in mind when they set up their Google account for the first time?

Choose your keywords carefully.

Start with a couple of the most relevant ones as exact match's (that means putting the keyword in [square brackets]) and test. You can always add more later.

Also avoid any settings where it seems Google is offering to "help". For example, bidding on your behalf, deciding winning ads for you, etc.

Believe me, these options only help Google get more money, not you.

Name 3 ways people can reduce their cost per click?

1. Increase your quality score. The higher the quality score, the lower your cost per click. You can do this by increasing CTR, Relevancy and Landing Page Quality.
2. Check your server logs/Adwords reports for modifiers of your main keywords – like locations, sizes, model numbers, colours etc. Then bid on these "long tail" keywords that have near zero competition and super low cost per click.

3. Split test your landing pages to increase conversion. If you're converting higher than your nearest competitors, you can afford to pay more for a click, and still make money.

What's the biggest difference you've seen in managing a new client's Adword account?

There are so many, it's hard to tell. But one that always sticks with me is a driver training company I worked with. They got a 428% lift in enquiries, without spending any more money on Adwords.

They tell me that means about £1.2M in extra sales this year.

How should someone choose a PPC management company?

That's a tough one. You see, most people choose a PPC management agency before they've got the rest of their marketing in order, which is a huge mistake.

They expect the management company to wave a magic wand and somehow increase sales. But the problem is, if your website doesn't convert already, or if your sales process sucks, no amount of PPC optimisation is going to save you.

There are two ways to fix this. The first is to hire a damn good direct marketer or direct marketing agency before you start buying clicks. They'll help you fix up the basics before you go to battle on Adwords.

Otherwise, you should speak to PPC companies' with broader direct marketing experience as well as Adwords skills.

Remember - pay per click on its own is useless. You have to combine it with a kick-ass high converting website to make your investment pay, or you'll slowly go bankrupt.

Your PPC agency should not only understand this, but actively help you increase sales after the click as well.

What's the biggest difference you've seen in taking over a PPC campaign until you've got one running efficiently as you'd like it?

It depends what you metrics mean the most to you...

If it's CTR, I've pulled consistent 40-60%'s in some cases.

If it's cost per click, I've dropped them by around 70-75%, without losing traffic.

If it's conversation rate, some clients have gone from around 5% up to 47%.

And if it's cost per acquisition, one client was paying about £130 per lead, and after a bit of testing, that was reduced to just under £30 (in a market where cost per click was £8 - £12, which is quite remarkable).

Any tips on writing great PPC ads? Where do you get ideas for writing effective PPC ads?

It's a fine balance between writing good compelling copy but at the same time, keeping the ad relevant to what the prospect is searching for.

For inspiration, you can check out what article or book headlines are working well on Digg or Amazon, then rewrite them for your market.

But often I just use some good old direct mail swipe files or I use one of these formulae:

Ad Headline: Keyword

Ad Line 1: Benefit

Ad Line 2: Feature or call to action

Ad Headline: Benefit/Promise

Ad Line 1: Proof

Ad Line 2: Call to action

(Hint: Try to get the keyword into the headline and at least once in the body copy.)

Of course, there's no right or wrong way to write Adwords ads. Split test them and learn as you go.

What words have you found most effective in your PPC ads?

The words the person just searched for.

The more your ad mirrors the prospects search term, the higher your click through rate will be.

Is there any difference in registering your campaign in the US and the UK?

I've never noticed a difference, but some people swear there's a difference in cost per click between a dollar and a sterling account. I think Google is a little too long in the tooth to be duped by such a simple cheat though...

My advice is to have your account match the currency you're selling in. If you're selling in dollars, register your account in US dollars. If you're selling on pounds, register it in pounds. It makes calculating ROI so much easier – you don't have to factor in currency conversions and currency fluctuations.

How can people avoid the Google Slap?

Build tight, relevant Adwords campaigns.

Make the prospects journey from keyword to ad, and ad to landing page totally consistent with the original keyword.

(It really is that simple. Much to the consternation of some ebook peddlers, there are in fact no quality score or Google slap "secrets".)

Any final thoughts?

Remember two things:

1. Google loves relevancy. If your ad to landing page process is relevant to the keyword, you'll trump 98% of your competitors on click costs, click through rate and quality score.
2. Get your money back fast. Make your sales process tight enough so that you at least break even on your Adwords spend. Consider relatively low cost sacrificial front end products to pay your Adwords bill. This'll help you scale up rapidly while building a list for back end sales.

George's web site is www.laneconsultancy.com