

FOCUS ON IT / TECHNOLOGY

SEO vs. PPC



By Randy Rowe; Hureka Technologies, Inc.

Assuming you have a website, your 24/7, three-hundred-and-sixty-five day per year online brochure is up and running. The question is what now?

This article will attempt to educate the reader on the advantages and disadvantages of Search Engine Optimization and Pay-Per-Click.

Both have their advantages and disadvantages. Both will require a monthly investment, in either time, effort and the pocketbook.

Search Engine Optimization

This is a discipline that requires the most amount of time and effort. Both substantial. Learning to build a website is no easy task, even though there are various advertisements professing to the contrary.

To build a website that is search engine friendly requires much planning and preparation. Which platform to build on, site architecture and the latest algorithm updates can

take a tremendous amount of time and effort to read and implement.

As for the SEO, this too requires a daily time allotment.

The idea behind SEO is to place highly on the search engines based on the keyword/keyword phrase the inquirer typed into a given search engine. Preferably you want to be in the first position. The simple reason is that the fall off from someone clicking the second hyper link below the first organic position is substantial. There are any number of reasons why this happens; from the inquirer finding exactly what they need by clicking on the first link, to the telephone ringing, distracting attention thereby closing the browser and using a different key phrase when the topic is again searched.

Most businesses that use SEO wish to have three to five generic keywords in the first three positions on the search engines. An attorney's office that has specialized associates, one focused business, the second; divorce law and, the third; criminal law would want to see their practice come up first when any of these aforementioned inquiries were typed into a search engine . . . especially if there is more than one office serving an entire state or even nation. Finally, SEO is a fixed monthly cost. Whatever agreement has been reached with a company specializing in SEO, a business can plan accordingly and budget for the expenditure.

Pay-Per-Click

PPC, as it is often referred to, is another way to get a website in the absolute first position on a search engine. It too is based on keywords and keyword phrases, however, unlike optimization discussed earlier with a fixed cost, PPC is a bidding system that varies by the day, hour and even minute. While it is true that a monthly budget can be set, the unknowns can have a huge effect on the cost per click.

As an example, imagine an Arborist in business for three years. The business has

remained steady since its inception, mainly by placing signs on the lawns of their immediate client and running a pay per click campaign through Google. The pay per click budget has been set at \$300.00 per week, with the average cost per click at \$5.00. Under this scenario, the company should be receiving 60 clicks to their website per week for the keyword, "tree cutting" — 60 clicks x \$5.00 = \$300.00.

Let us further assume that it is the fall season, and many people have been looking for a fall clean-up of their yard and the trees trimmed to avoid falling limbs, in case of heavy snow or ice storms. In this scenario, we can imagine that the Arborist's 60 weekly clicks have been consumed by Tuesday evening, albeit there are still four days left in the week. That evening, a Noreaster' blows through, downing trees and limbs in a large area. With the pay per click campaign already consumed for the week, the Arborist must decide whether to add more money to his pay per click campaign to have his website in front of highly motivated potential clients or, just wait until the following week when his campaign resets for the next \$300 and the 60 clicks the budget should provide. Our Arborist decides to strike while the iron



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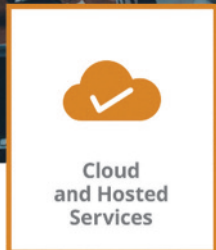
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is hot and decides to increase his budget, however, when he opens his pay per click account he sees that the price for the keyword, "tree cutting" is no longer \$5.00. but \$15.00! The Arborist planned to spend another \$300.00 to finish out the week, but realizes that the number of clicks, 60, that he was spending before will now only generate 20 clicks. Via analytics he knows that it usually takes 20 clicks with his PPC campaign to generate one job, so what before was three jobs at \$300.00 has now become one job. Is it worth the added investment? Only the Arborist can answer the question.

For some years the most used search engine — Google — has tested and reconfigured their search page countless times to the latest iteration we see today. Pay per click adds appear on top, a map with three businesses below, and then the organic placements. With all these changes, the organic placements still receive a large share of the first click when an inquirer types a search term. So, which is better, search engine optimization or pay per click? If a business has the budget, the optimal answer is to use both SEO and PPC. If not, SEO is likely your best bet.

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