



by Doug Knorr with Phil Callighan



## Turn It Around

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# Drive visitors to your website with pay-per-click strategies

ONE OF TODAY'S MOST MISUNDERSTOOD MARKETING STRATEGIES IS PAY-PER-CLICK.

HOW DO YOU INTEGRATE IT AND HOLD IT ACCOUNTABLE?

If you've followed our earlier recommendations for creating website content that is loaded with useful information, transparency and engaging functionality (see "Turn It Around" in the March issue of *Home Furnishings Retailer*), you undoubtedly have a great website.

The next challenge? Getting visitors to that great website so they can discover why they should visit your store.

There are three fundamental methods you can use to do this:

1. Traditional media
2. Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
3. Pay-Per-Click (PPC)

To drive visitors to your website using traditional media, consistently add your website URL to everything you print. This includes your business cards, ROP ads, circulars, direct mailers, follow-up



customer postcards, news releases, in-store and window signage, truck signage, billboards; the works. It also includes radio and TV spots. Treat your website URL as a standard part of your address. If your website is a good representation of your business and you let the public know how to find you online, you can be pre-selling prospective customers 24/7!

When space or broadcast time allows, add a brief message why a consumer should visit your website. You could simply say, "Visit our website, [sellalot.com](http://sellalot.com), to:

- 1) Download coupons, helpful articles and online specials
- 2) Sign up to receive advance notice of sales/events
- 3) See what's new
- 4) Use our online room-planner software

Or whatever other enticement you think will appeal. There are several limitations in using traditional media to drive traffic to your website. You never know exactly when a consumer will be in the market for home furnishings and pay attention to what you have to say about your website.

In addition, traditional communication media is a step removed from the website-visiting process. A customer must access a computer, log on to an Internet browser, type-in your URL correctly and reach your site.

In contrast, search engine optimization (SEO) and pay per click (PPC), the other two methods of driving traffic to your website, kick in only when a customer is already online and is actually seeking "home furnishings," "furniture" or some variant of that



## URL, search engine optimization (SEO), and pay per click (PPC)

are all methods of driving traffic to your website.

product category. You'll want to use both SEO and PPC to maximize your website traffic.

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of improving the volume and quality of traffic to your website from search engines by using "organic" (natural or algorithmic) search results. Search engine websites do not charge companies for organic results that are displayed as a result of a keyword query. We'll discuss organic SEO strategies in next month's issue of NHFA's *Home Furnishings Retailer*.

Search engine websites do charge for paid advertising messages or pay-per-click ads that appear above or adjacent to the organic search results they deliver. These ads can be effective, and unlike conventional advertising, you only pay for the viewer attention you actually get.

With the Pay Per Click (PPC) Internet advertising model, you pay the host only when your ad is "clicked" by a viewer.

PPC advertisers bid on search terms — keywords consisting of words or phrases, and possibly product model numbers, in order to determine where their paid ad will appear.

Websites that utilize PPC ads will display relevant PPC advertisements when a keyword query matches an advertiser's keyword list, or when a content site displays relevant content. Such advertisements are called "sponsored links" or "sponsored ads," and appear adjacent to or above organic results on search engine results pages.

Blogs and advertising networks also often employ the PPC advertising model where you specify where and when your ad will appear in order to encourage a website visit.

PPC can be especially useful when opening a new store, launching a new website or generating awareness in a new, very crowded or highly competitive market.

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It's obviously important to carefully choose which keywords or phrases to bid on for your PPC ad to appear with.

Be sure to include synonyms, prefixes/suffixes, modifiers and misspellings.

Google has a popular PPC model that allows you to choose how much you wish to invest on a weekly or monthly basis with your PPC campaign. Once the volume of click throughs reaches your investment level, your PPC ad no longer appears until the next week or the next month begins.

For example, let's say you bid 65 cents for your PPC ad to appear alongside organic results each time consumers search for "furniture store las vegas."

Based on that bid, you also choose to invest \$65 for one month on Google for this PPC campaign. Once 100 people have "clicked" on your ad to reach your website, your ad will no longer appear that month when people search "furniture store las vegas."

Given those bidding parameters, your ad might be seen by 300 people during the first week of the month and of those, 100 clicked on it. Of the 100 who clicked through your PPC ad, maybe 70 of those visited your site for 30 seconds or less. Perhaps 20 visitors were on your site between 30 seconds and 2 minutes and 10 visitors stayed on your site for more than 2 minutes.

If you regard visits of two minutes or more as warm leads, that means your PPC campaign cost you approximately \$6.50 for a warm lead (\$65/10). However, if you regard any visit over 30 seconds as a warm lead, your results are approximately \$2.10 per lead (\$65/30). You can actually measure the cost-effectiveness of your ad. Further, the cost of PPC can be even more affordable because Google allows you to regionalize your PPC strategy around your store(s).

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Yet another way to measure the effectiveness of PPC is to review website analytics. If PPC click throughs went to a specific landing page on your website that invited visitors to opt in to join your e-club or to download a coupon, then you would be able to see exactly how many visitors took some functional action when they visited that page. That would give you an even better indicator of the response to your PPC campaign.

It's obviously important to carefully choose which keywords or phrases to bid on for your PPC ad to appear with. Be sure to include synonyms (for example, "furniture" as well as "home furnishings"), prefixes/suffixes, modifiers and misspellings. Misspellings are especially important if you have a store name with an uncommon spelling. (For example, La-Z-Boy is often misspelled Lazyboy.) You want to think as a consumer does in looking for what it is you offer.

It's also important to developing a specific landing page that provides the information and targeted merchandising that will generate greater response and sales.

How do you know what keywords are most effective for you? There are several online research tools to help you learn the popularity of keywords that are searched and what competitors are bidding on. In addition, take a close look at your website analytics to see what terms people are using to currently find your website.

Recognize that relevance and performance play key roles in determining where and when your PPC ad will


appear. The closer the landing page for your PPC ad matches a keyword search, the higher your quality score.

Due to quality scoring, one advertiser may pay less to be in a higher position than another.

Since PPC ads appear adjacent to organic search results, it also pays to test appearance positions on search-results pages.

For instance, there may be one, two or three "sponsored links" ads that appear above the organic search results. There may also be a column of PPC ads appearing to the right of organic search results. By monitoring the click-through rate and the cost-per-click, you can begin to identify what is the most effective position. You may find that position three or four down from the top of the PPC ad column delivers better results than when you bid to be in the "first" or top of column position.

If this is all news to you, as it is to most busy retailers, don't worry. Recognize that competing successfully in the digital arena usually requires professional assistance. Consider it an essential investment as you would working with an architect or contractor to build a physical store. The return on your investment can be well worthwhile. When you develop a marketing program that integrates traditional media, SEO and an efficient PPC strategy, you will drive more prospective customers to your website and entice more qualified leads to your store.

Bottom line: create engaging website content and use PPC to drive online consumers to your website. You'll generate more in-store visits and take a big step toward turning it around in 2009! 



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