

Background & Reputation

In choosing a PPC management company you are ideally choosing a long term partner for your business, so experience and credibility are vital when selecting your vendor. In addition, the highly dynamic nature of the PPC field requires means that companies who specialize in PPC campaigns can typically offer you a competitive advantage over generalist search engine marketers. The following questions can help you determine whether a vendor is a good fit for you in terms of focus and experience.

- Does your company specialize in PPC management or do you provide other marketing services?
- How many members of your team focus specifically on PPC management?
- How many years of PPC experience does your team have?
- Do any team members have direct experience running PPC campaigns for themselves/their own businesses?
- Do you specialize in PPC for any specific industries? What type of specialized knowledge/services do you offer for these industries?
- What PPC marketing budget range do your clients have / do you specialize in?
- How many PPC clients do you have? Can we contact them?
- How do you keep up-to-date with the continual changes in the PPC market?
- What type of relationships do you have with the search engines (particularly the leading vendors—Google, Yahoo and MSN)?

Expertise & Capabilities

Look for a PPC management company that understands the big picture—how PPC fits you're your overall business goals—and provides full service capabilities, from strategy formulation through post-click analysis. While anyone can claim expertise, the real question is whether or not they can deliver what they promise. These questions will help you assess a vendor's true capabilities.

- What set of services do you provide in a typical campaign?
- What does the campaign management process look like?
- What kind expertise/experience do you have in my industry?
- What kind of competitive, industry and website analysis do you complete before managing my campaign?
- How do you integrate my PPC needs with the rest of my marketing efforts?
- How do you integrate my PPC campaign with my website to achieve high conversion rates?
- How do you integrate my PPC campaign with my current web analytics software?
- What kinds of specialists (*i.e.*, creative developers, campaign managers, business analysts, conversion enhancement specialists) do you have on your team?
- What kinds of results have you achieved for past clients?
- What kinds of results can we expect? How soon can we expect to see them?
- How will I be able to measure my results and my ROI?
- What kinds of result guarantees do you provide?

Technology

The use of innovative proprietary technology is a key indicator that a company has the depth and breadth of expertise needed to deliver exceptional results. In contrast, companies who simply make use of commonly available third-party tools may not have the know-how to deal with more unusual issues, customized needs, technological challenges or continually changing marketplace requirements. The following questions will give you a clear picture of a vendor's technological capabilities, and, by proxy, their PPC field expertise.

- What kind of technology/tools do you have to assist with each of the following? Were they developed in-house or are they third-party tools?
 - Keyword generation
 - Keyword selection
 - Budget optimization
 - Bid/portfolio optimization
 - Conversion optimization
 - Click fraud protection
 - Managing large campaigns and multiple accounts
- What kinds of reporting tools/capabilities do you offer to help me evaluate the success of my campaign?
- Do I have hands-on access to your tools, technology and reporting?
- What level of technical integration do you have with the top tier search engines?

Customer Service Philosophy

Customer service criteria tends to be more subjective and you will undoubtedly rely somewhat on your intuition in evaluating customer service. Look for a company that is responsive to your needs and will treat you as a partner, not just a client. Find one that takes the time to listen, and to fully understand your business and your goals, not just your search campaign. Complement your intuition with the following objective questions to get a well-rounded picture of your vendor's true customer service philosophy.

- Do you provide round-the-clock customer support?
- What level of training do first and second tier customer support staff have?
- Will I have direct access to a PPC specialist?
- How quickly do you return emails and phone calls? How quickly can I expect my issues to be resolved and what is the escalation chain?
- Are there extra charges for any types of support? Are there limits (number of inquiries or hours) on my support?
- How does an engagement proceed and what kind of timeframe should we expect for each stage? How quickly will our campaign be set up?
- What is involved in initial strategy formulation? What kind of information about my business do you look for before getting started? How will the strategy be aligned with my business goals?
- What kinds of (automated) reports do you provide and how often?
- What kinds of personalized, actionable analysis do you provide and how often?

Campaign Management Philosophy

Successful PPC management is equal parts art and science, and requires the appropriate application of both automated technology and human expertise. In addition, it is an on-going process, requiring managers who can provide constant attention and are committed to a continuous process of executing, measuring, analyzing and revising to deliver the best possible results.

As such, your vendor's campaign management philosophy is vital to your success. With the right partner taking care of your campaign, you can enjoy not only maximized campaign ROI but peace of mind as well. The following questions can help you distinguish the most committed campaign managers.

- Will I have a named or dedicated account manager who manages my campaign?
- How is my campaign strategy customized to my particular needs?
- What kind of visibility and control will I have over my campaign?
- Will you formulate a written operational plan with timelines and deliverables? How will we determine success at each stage?
- What services (strategy formulation, keyword selection, ad copywriting, landing page design, fraud protection, bid management, on-going optimization, etc.) are included my campaign? What services cost extra?
- Do you provide round-the-clock active campaign management and optimization?
- What kinds of analysis and management happen in real time?
- What kinds of analysis and management continue on an on-going basis?
- How and how often do we review campaign performance?
- What kind of results and attention can I expect 6 months from now? 1 year? 2 years?