
PPC MARKETING

Your guide to full-funnel targeting

Understand how PPC can help you achieve your marketing objectives at every stage of the sales funnel.

**VERTICAL
LEAP**

WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

This guide is written for marketers who want to get more from their digital marketing by increasing visibility and conversions at the various stages of the sales funnel.

WHAT WILL YOU LEARN?

- Which channels work best at each stage of the sales funnel
- How PPC can contribute so much more than just conversions
- Why every digital marketing strategy should include PPC

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THE MARKETER'S CHALLENGE

Understanding whether any marketing channel is right for your business requires an understanding of your objectives. Of course, the ultimate business goal of marketing is to make more money, but the nature of every industry, market and individual company means that the route to that goal has to be achieved in different ways.

If you sell everyday products via an eCommerce website, marketing becomes a lot simpler – tell potential customers you exist and you've got a fighting chance of a sale. However, if your products/services are a more complicated proposition, then choosing your marketing tools is a bigger challenge.

To understand this better, let's begin by returning to marketing 101: the sales and marketing funnel.



Most marketers have seen it and if they haven't, it's likely that they are using the basic principles of it already. The funnel illustrates the journey of a new customer from first to last interaction before making a purchase or equivalent. For some businesses, this process can happen the first time a user engages with them. For others it can take months or even years.

The clever marketer knows that they need to take a holistic approach to advertising. This means not only going after the low-hanging fruit but also generating new awareness, building relationships and nurturing potential customers through the funnel.

This is particularly important for businesses that need to educate potential customers about the benefits of their particular, often niche, product or service. Once they've generated that awareness, they then need to maintain it, often through long buying cycles.

In an ideal world, marketers would have an unlimited tool box to promote messages that are relevant to each segment of the process. Inevitably, the marketing budget will always have the final say on what advertising channels they pick.

Let's scrutinise PPC as an advertising channel and understand how it can influence the various stages of the funnel.

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?

Broadly speaking, established PPC channels include the following formats:

- Search
- Display (banners)
- Remarketing
- Shopping
- Social
- Video

Any of these can arguably be used to affect elements of the funnel, although some are more suited to particular parts than others. Here's a typical breakdown of how that might look in practice:



When implemented strategically, with consistency of brand and messaging, these channels can form a completely joined-up campaign, allowing you to encourage users through the entire journey.

Other than the part of the funnel you're attempting to influence, there are several considerations that might affect what channels you choose:

- 1) **Budget**
- 2) **Audience relevancy**
- 3) **Compliance or censorship issues**
- 4) **Website functionality**
- 5) **Current website traffic**
- 6) **Social profile status**

Some of these factors can be adjusted with relative ease, such as your social profile; others require additional resources – like adjustments to website functionality. Some are out of your control altogether, such as industry compliance issues. However these factors affect your business or product will form a fundamental part of your decision making process.

It's worth noting that, while we are using PPC as a general term for online advertising, most of these channels do offer the option of other pricing models based on specific metrics such as impressions.

Now that we've established what types of channel are available and some of the considerations necessary for them to be viable, let's explore them in more detail.

SEARCH ADVERTISING

Before we take a look at what works best where, let's begin with search. It offers a unique opportunity versus other channels and can influence any element of the buying cycle.

The age old challenge of marketing is getting in front of the right people at the right time; the individuals who want what you offer – the people you have solutions for.

With this in mind, users of search engines are therefore the perfect audience. They are literally telling us exactly what they want and we have the chance to be in front of them at that key time.

Understanding a user's intention allows us to know where in the funnel they are. We often have the opportunity to identify their intention based on the nuances of language used in their search queries.

A user at the top of the funnel might be using research terms such as 'how', 'what is', 'advantages of' etc. A user closer to the end of the funnel, meanwhile, will be using terms such as 'buy' or specific product details like brand names, model numbers or other specific attributes. This makes search advertising an ideal solution for content promotion as well as direct response campaigns.

How search advertising supports your SEO

In 2011 and 2012 Google ran two large scale experiments known as the 'Search Ads Pause' studies, which showed that having a search ad is important even when you have great organic visibility. The study showed that even with an SEO result in position one, 66 per cent of ad clicks are incremental, meaning if you removed the ad, they wouldn't be recovered by the organic result. This means that even if you have a top organic position for a keyword, a search ad can provide a lot of additional traffic.

Organic search vs paid

One of the first questions advertisers ask themselves before doing search PPC is whether or not they are getting good traffic from search without paying for it (organic). Recent changes to Google's SERPs now sees up to four ads at the top of the page above the organic listings. Notice in the image opposite, that we only see one organic link above the fold for this particular search.

Depending on how many competitors operate within your market, there's almost always a chance that you're missing at least some traffic to ads sitting above the organic listings.

There are some instances where businesses operate in such niche markets that they have very little opposition in SERPs from paid or organic sources. In these situations, search PPC

is less vital but should always be kept in mind to fend off new competitors that enter the market.

The screenshot shows a search for 'Mobile Phones' with approximately 47,000,000 results in 0.43 seconds. The top of the page is dominated by paid advertisements from various mobile phone retailers and comparison sites, including uSwitch.com, Carphone Warehouse, Mobiles.co.uk, and Business Mobile Contracts. Below these ads, there is one organic search result from 'moneysubmarket.com/mobile-phones/'. A red box highlights this single organic link, which is positioned below the 'fold' of the search results page.

We only see one organic link above the fold for this particular search.

Budget

You'll hear many PPC experts say: "If you put £1 in and get £2 back then budget is not an issue", which is true of any advertising campaign – particularly PPC where ROI is so easy to define. Note, however, that search campaigns often take

time to refine and understand where to focus your budget to achieve that return. Depending on the volume of traffic moving through your ads, this can take anything from a few months to a few years.

An idea to try



A great way to reach new customers, especially in highly niche industries, is to target people who are searching for your competitors on Google. Bidding on competitor brand and product names is entirely legitimate, though you cannot use their brand names in your ads. Competitor brand name keywords tend to require a much lower bid than generic keywords. If you're promoting a service, then bid on keywords which suggest the user is unhappy with your competitor's service, for example '{competitor} complain



BRAND AWARENESS

Brand campaigns don't often have a tangible outcome in the short term, so are typically ignored by many small to medium-sized businesses. These companies frequently opt to focus on easy wins that point to ROI. However, without brand awareness campaigns, the sales funnel inevitably becomes narrower.

- ✓ YouTube
- ✓ Display advertising
- ✓ Social promotion

Videos

YouTube is the world's second largest search engine. Niche products and services, particularly those new to market, often need a degree of education for potential customers. Video can be a fantastic way to help audiences understand concepts quickly in an engaging format, rather than large technical documents or web pages.

Another huge benefit of YouTube advertising is that it's typically very cheap compared with other channels. This allows you to push your brand message far and wide for a lower cost. Certain adverts on YouTube only charge you if the user has watched 30 seconds or more, allowing you to push your message even further, guaranteeing that you only pay if your message has been seen.

How social advertising supports your content marketing

Social advertising should be an integral part of every content marketing strategy. Sharing and boosting your content on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn allows you to target your content to users based on their interests. If users share your promoted content on Facebook, additional clicks from those shared posts are free of charge!

Display

The Display networks allow you to really target your message to the right individual as you can target via demographic, topic and even placement. If your target market is women between 25 and 40 with young children, you can choose this demographic. Then, you're able to control your placements and 'negative out' any that you feel don't quite fit, i.e. you would probably keep in placements like Ebay or Mumsnet, but remove websites that reference teenagers.

Due to the large number of sites on the display networks, you can build up a large number of impressions at a low cost. Although your click through rates are likely to be lower than on the search network, this doesn't mean that people are not recognising your brand.

As you are engaging people when they are potentially not looking for your product or service, this is a branding exercise and one that again allows you to get your message out very cheaply.

Social Advertising

Social promotion can allow you to be as broad or as targeted in your approach as you wish. Using Facebook, you can target by demographic and also by topic or interest. For example, if you were Amazon, you might target people who like John Lewis, as both have similar target audiences.

With Twitter you can target via keywords or hashtags and even at times when specific TV shows are on. If your brand was being represented on a programme, you could look at capturing the multiscreen audience and stream adverts during those slots.

Like the display network, Facebook and Twitter allow you to get your message out at generally a lower per-click cost than other channels. You must remember, though, you are showing your message at times when people may not be actively looking for it, so click through rates can be lower. However, with the right message, you can be highly successful using these channels.

An idea to try



Run a competition and promote it through social advertising. Competitions are a great way to generate excitement about your products and services and encourage people to engage with your brand. When running a social ad for a competition, urge people to share the promoted post, as additional clicks from shared posts are free of charge.



NURTURING

If you have a longer sales cycle, or some customers just need more time to complete a purchase or information request, there are various methods to allow you to nurture this.

- ✓ Remarketing
- ✓ Dynamic ads
- ✓ Customer Match

Remarketing

You can build remarketing audiences in both Adwords and Google Analytics, though the latter allows you to be a lot more specific with your targeting. With GA you can specify all sorts of requirements, from source to time on site and bounce rate.

You can show different creatives to different people, depending on the actions they took on the site. If someone only visits the homepage, you might just want to show them a brand message, whereas if they visit the homepage and a category page, you could show them a message from that category, as that's where their interest may lie.

You could also use Dynamic Remarketing Adverts which can show specific products to the individual once they have left your site.

Another good way to use remarketing, if you're a lead generation website, is to use different messages depending upon criteria. For the first week after a user visit, you show them an advert that links to your 'About us' page. If they engage with that advert, you can then show them another that links to case studies. This gives them more information and hopefully pushes them down the sales funnel.

Customer Match

This is a relatively new feature in Adwords which exists on Facebook as well. It allows you to target people based on their email address. This is really useful if you do have a multistage sale, such as offering free samples and attracting samplers back to your website. You could target the list of sample email

addresses, perhaps even directing them back to a page which offers a discount for people who ordered a sample. This will help you guide these individuals down the funnel and will hopefully stop them shopping around if your product is not unique.

How Customer Match supports your email marketing

Customer Match targeting can run alongside your email marketing campaigns, targeting the same email addresses and promoting the same messaging.

An idea to try



Customer Match audiences can also be used to exclude those people from your target audience. If you don't want to show certain ads to existing customers, exclude a Customer Match audience. You can also exclude users who have recently purchased or logged in to your website using traditional remarketing audiences.



CLOSING

One of the best ways to search for customers who are ready to close a sale is through the search adverts, as discussed earlier in the article. This is where you can put the targeting methods in other channels to good use. Due to the lower cost per click and impression, they can also serve as effective tools for converting customers.

- ✓ Facebook
- ✓ Remarketing
- ✓ Customer Match
- ✓ Shopping campaigns
- ✓ Social media

If you were looking at how to convert customers, you might want to look at how to manipulate word of mouth, to help generate leads. To do this, you could target friends of people who like your service. Virgin Media regularly does this on Facebook as their social team knows that friends are likely to have seen the service or even interacted with it. They know that people who like the Virgin Media social page tend to be customers so may have said good things about the service – meaning the friends should be easier to convert. It also says at the top of the advert which friends like the service.

As highlighted in the nurturing section, this is where you can start closing customers using remarketing and Customer Match. If you have a multistage cycle, this is the point at which you could change your message to get those customers to convert. This could be through an offer or discount that would be relevant to that customer base.





Using tools such as countdown adverts to create a sense of urgency around the offer may increase the need for customers to act fast.

Shopping campaigns

This type of campaign is available on Google Adwords, Bing and also via a shopping feed in Facebook. Here, the system uses an algorithm to look through a list of products you provide to show relevant results. Therefore, if someone searches for 'red fence', it would try and match the search query to products in your feed. This is not always as accurate as you would like it to be, though, so ensure you manage your feed correctly to ensure you get the best results.

Opposite is an example of how the shopping campaigns appear on Google. As the query is so broad, Google does not know if the user wants a fence panel or paint, so it offers both as an option.

Shop for red fence on Google Sponsored ⓘ

 Wolseley Electric Fence £19.99 Screwfix.com	 Ronseal One Coat Fencelife £7.99 Wickes ★★★★★ (295)	 Gardman 10m x 0.25m Border £17.00 Cleverboxes	 Gardman Border Fence - £19.99 UK Garden Pr...
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Shopping adverts can be very powerful and, when done well with the correct segmentation, can produce fantastic results. They show up for searches where people have a buying intent and are positioned right at the top of the screen, to encourage customers to convert.

Customer retention

Depending on the product or service you sell, this part will vary greatly. When you have converted a customer, try turning them into a brand ambassador by prompting them to like your social media profiles. Facebook is especially effective, allowing you to create an audience and target them exclusively

for a 'likes' campaign. You can then attract their Facebook friends, extending brand awareness. Additionally, you could ask ambassadors to leave a Facebook review, so that it's seen by friends and family.

An idea to try



A great way to make your customers feel appreciated is to use remarketing on display and social networks to thank them for their recent purchase and offer them a discount on their next purchase. Don't use this technique for products which are likely to be purchased as gifts though, or you might end up spoiling the surprise!



CONCLUSION

Whilst not all suggestions are correct for every brand, if you review what you are currently doing and look at what stage of the funnel this is affecting you'll see what other opportunities are there for your brand or company.

One of the best things about paid search is how you can track return on investment and how you can trial different channels to work out exactly what is working for you.

NEXT STEPS

New to PPC?

A good first step would be to draw up a list of keywords that you want to rank for. Use the keyword tool to assess your budget requirements and what results you might expect when considering your budget and click cost.

This will allow you to assess how it will work for your business and if you need to either scale up or scale down your ideas. One thing to remember is: don't try and do it all at the same time. Start with a search campaign and then expand into the other areas as your return on investment grows.

Existing PPC campaigns not performing?

If you're already running PPC campaigns but they aren't performing as well as you'd like, get an audit done. Our team of experts will review every aspect of your campaign, identify

areas where we can save you money and then expand the campaign to get a better return on investment.

If you need any help with either of the above, call our PPC specialists on:

0845 123 2753

or email:

info@vertical-leap.uk

The logo for Vertical Leap, featuring the words "VERTICAL" and "LEAP" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The text is slanted upwards to the right. Below the word "LEAP", there are several horizontal white lines of varying lengths, creating a sense of motion or a stylized 'L' shape.