



4 Steps to Better Business Leads from Search

Best Practices in B2B Marketing

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So you got a click on your PPC ad. Now what do you do? The job of the B2B search marketer is only beginning when a prospect clicks. As MarketingSherpa points out, the decision to click is microscopically unimportant compared to all the things you are asking from a prospect after they've clicked: stick around and read your copy, fill out a form, risk getting their privacy invaded, take a meeting, recommend your product, make a purchase, and so on.

When the goal of search marketing is to drive high-quality leads to sales, no B2B pay-per-click campaign is complete without these additional "post-click" steps:

- Send clicks **targeted landing pages** that are optimized for the ad and keyword.
- Gather explicit and implicit data from prospects to **analyze and score leads**, passing the hot leads to your sales force.
- Use **lead nurturing** to stay in touch and build a relationship with leads that are not yet sales ready.
- Track leads through the revenue pipeline, measure the impact of each click on revenue, and **apply closed-loop learning** to tune your campaign and optimize bids.



Without each of these steps in place, a click is just a click, and a click by itself is a waste of time and money.

Step 1: Landing Pages

A good landing page provides two main benefits to a PPC campaign. First, search engines like Google care about the relevancy of the landing page when ranking ads, meaning a high-quality landing page gets better ranking (and more clicks) for less money. Second, a relevant and optimized landing page can have dramatically higher conversion rates, meaning you get more leads for your money. These two factors combine to drive dramatic ROI for landing page improvements.

Despite this, few B2B marketers use landing pages to their fullest advantage. According to Forrester Research, only about a quarter of B2B search ads take the prospective customer to keyword specific landing pages. The challenge is that [landing page optimization](#) requires building and maintaining dozens of landing pages, one for each ad group – and testing multiplies the complexity of the problem.

Most landing page software, such as Offermatica or Google Website Optimizer, focuses only on landing page testing. Testing is incredibly important, but it's not a complete solution by itself since it presupposes the marketer has the ability to create targeted landing pages for each ad group in the first place. What's needed is a solution that assists with both landing page creation and landing page testing.

Step 2: Lead Analytics and Scoring

Even if you do get a conversion, it turns out that only 25% are sales-ready. You need the ability to find these hot leads and pass them to your sales team as soon as possible, before they get cold or a competitor contacts them first.

You can do this with lead scoring, which requires two kinds of information: (1) demographic / behavioral and (2) lead source. Examples of demographic / behavioral information include title, company, and BANT criteria (budget, authority, need, and timing); examples of lead source information include where the lead came from, what kind of offer created the lead, and lead age.

Demographic and behavioral information represent the biggest challenge for online marketers. The most obvious way to get it is when the prospect fills out the registration form – but research shows that every additional field on the form reduces conversion rates. (A more subtle problem is that the searcher is likely to be an influencer, not a decision maker, and asking certain BANT questions can be off-putting.)

There are two main solutions. The first is progressive profiling, in which you get to know a lead over time by asking additional questions each time you interact (kind of like dating). One quick way to do this is to ask the prospect for additional information on the thank you page after submitting the form. Prospects who make it this far have expressed quite a bit of interest so they may be willing to give you more data now that you've built trust by sharing useful content.

A second solution is to use directed behavioral segmentation. Rather than sending clicks to a single landing page, this approach uses a "landing path" – a series of pages that collect information based on how the prospect navigates. For example, suppose your sales process sends large prospects directly to a sales rep while small companies go to a lower-cost inside sales channel for further qualification. Instead of requiring a prospect to fill out a form saying how large her company is, the first page of your landing path could present two options: "Solutions for large companies" and "Solutions for small and medium companies". By making a choice, she is implicitly helping you segment and score her response. (One caveat: each additional click can reduce conversion rates, so be sure to test the optimal landing path length for your business.)

"Marketo has an exciting vision of building sales-marketing alignment through a single revenue pipeline, sophisticated lead management capabilities, and analytics that tie marketing investments to pipeline and revenue."

CSO Insights

Step 3: Lead Nurturing

If only 25% of leads are sales-ready, what do you do with the other 75%? Some of those prospects may be truly unqualified, but as many as 70% of them will eventually buy a product from you – or your competitors. Prematurely passing this type of lead to sales is a recipe for disaster. Since sales reps are compensated for driving short-term revenue, a long-term lead like this creates the impression that search-generated leads are no good. As a result, the sales rep is more likely to ignore the next lead he receives – which is why reps end up ignoring 80% of all search-generated leads.

The solution is to use [lead nurturing](#), a disciplined marketing-driven process of helping qualified prospects who are not yet sales-ready move through their buying process. Lead nurturing is not just sending a monthly email newsletter to your entire database, or calling prospects every few weeks to see if they are ready to buy yet. It is about progressively understanding more about the prospect's needs, and using targeted one-to-one communications to build your company's position as a trusted advisor.

The benefits of lead nurturing go beyond better sales-marketing alignment and higher win rates. Research shows that prospects that are nurtured buy more, require less discounting, and have shorter sales cycles than prospects who bought but were not nurtured.

Step 4: Closed-Loop Measurement

Once the lead is passed to sales, the B2B search marketer's job is still not finished. Unlike B2C marketing, the time between the first click and a closed sale can be weeks or months or even years. Also, most analytic and search marketing solutions don't have automated access to the CRM system (such as salesforce.com) to know which leads become opportunities and ultimately generate revenue. This can make the process of measuring success and fine-tuning the search marketing campaign much more difficult.

There are two ways most companies try to solve this problem, both unsatisfactory. The first is to ignore it and measure PPC success solely on conversions. This is certainly easy to do because it is what the search engines support, but it creates a significant disconnect between marketing and the realities of what drives revenue for the business – always an uncomfortable situation. The second approach is to tie search marketing results to opportunities and revenue using manual analytics. In other words, generate a report in Google, another in salesforce.com, and spend a lot of time in Excel trying to tie everything together. I'm sure this scenario is familiar to many B2B search marketers. A better approach is to use analytics that automates this process by unifying your search marketing data with your CRM data.

Crossing the Click Chasm

For too many B2B companies, there is a chasm between the campaigns that generate clicks to a website and the activities that turn clicks into customers. This chasm creates lower response rates, inadequate lead follow-up, and poorly optimized campaigns. To succeed in B2B, search marketing needs to become an integrated part of a complete demand generation process that includes landing pages, lead analytics, lead nurturing, and closed-loop measurement. Only by focusing on what happens after the click will B2B marketers be able to ensure optimal results for their PPC campaigns.

About Marketo

Marketo provides affordable, easy-to-use marketing automation software that helps B2B marketing professionals drive more revenue and improve marketing accountability. Our solutions automate lead generation and lead nurturing processes over multiple channels, beginning with pay-per-click search marketing and landing page optimization. Our analytics bring accountability and respect to the CMO by providing forecasts and metrics that matter to CEOs and CFOs, and help turn marketing from a cost center into a revenue-generating part of the company.

Marketo's products are easy to use and easy to buy from existing budgets because they don't require annual contracts or upfront fees. Because Marketo is delivered using on-demand Software-as-a-Service, you can be running Marketo in less than five minutes, with no IT support.

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