

Boost Your Business with Online Ads

Due to the ease and popularity of search engine technology, customers can search for information about products and services instantly. Internet search advertising is now one of the fastest-growing outlets for businesses of all sizes.

Businesses who want added visibility often invest in small, text-only ads that appear atop or alongside the search engine results. Such ads are ideal for small businesses, as they offer tremendous flexibility to control costs and can be tailored to specific search keywords such as geographic area or a specific product/service.

Internet ads also allow small business owners to test various marketing approaches almost instantly. For example, florists can quickly change from prom to wedding season or an air conditioning service can exploit an early heat wave. What's more, results from these types of ads can be tracked, and return on investment measured in tremendous detail never available with traditional print types of advertising.

If your business uses a Web site to sell or market products and services, online marketing will be critical to your success. Targeted ads attached to keyword search results are the clear winner among Web-based marketing methods. Their simplicity, low cost and popularity among small businesses have pushed flashy banners aside as the main method for connecting buyers and merchants online.

Best of all, Internet advertising is relatively simple to implement. In the two most popular search ad outlets—Google AdWords at www.google.com/ads and Yahoo! Search Marketing at <http://searchmarketing.yahoo.com>, you bid on the keywords or phrases for your campaigns. The higher the bid, the higher your ad will be listed in the paid results. You pay only when someone clicks your ad and visits your site. A prospect that reads your brief ad but doesn't click it costs you nothing.

Both Google and Yahoo have built-in tools to help you monitor track the effectiveness of your Internet ad campaign. One important statistic is the "click-through rate"—how often the ad is clicked in proportion to how often it appears. Ads with high rates are obviously good; low-rated ads should probably be modified or deleted to maximize cost-effectiveness. In addition, Google also offers free "Google Analytics" that can help analyze your Web site statistics

SCORE provides free and confidential mentoring to individuals who want to start their own businesses and to current business owners who want to find ways to grow their business and increase profits. All SCORE Volunteers are experienced business professionals. Contact the Norfolk SCORE Chapter to schedule an appointment or, if you are interested in becoming a SCORE Volunteer, contact us at 455-9338. Visit our website at www.scorehr.org, or email us at scorehr60@whro.net.