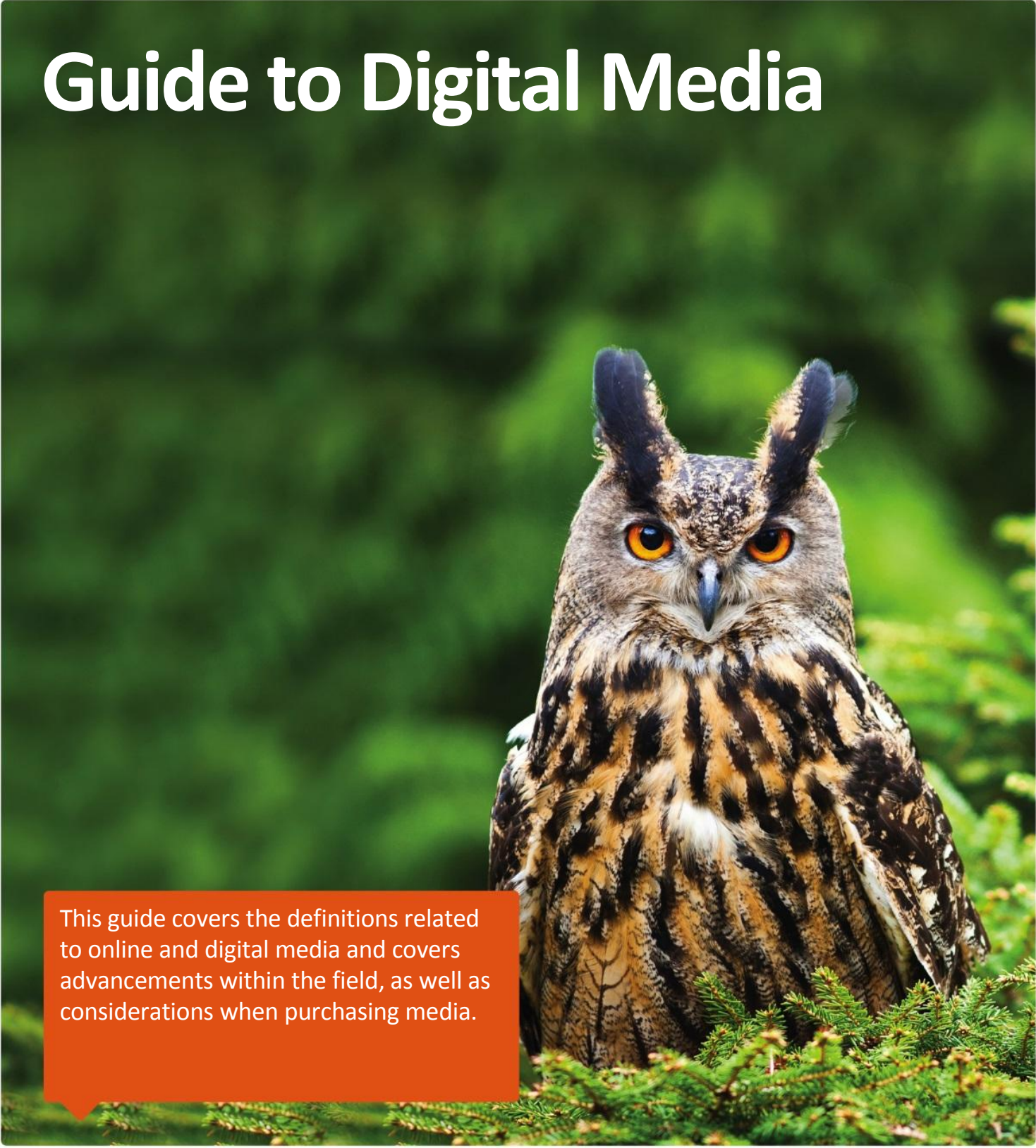


Guide to Digital Media



This guide covers the definitions related to online and digital media and covers advancements within the field, as well as considerations when purchasing media.



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CIPS Guide to Digital Media

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Abstract

This guide is aimed at those in the procurement profession wishing to be involved in the buying of digital media. It is a rapidly developing area which is swiftly becoming the largest proportion of many marketing budgets.

This guide covers the definitions related to online and digital media and covers advancements within the field, as well as considerations when purchasing media.

Introduction

Digital media is a very new field in marketing buying. Only in the last ten years have the Internet and the personal computer taken off as a viable marketing medium. Particularly recently, with increasing internet speeds and far greater numbers of households using broadband connections, digital media has become an exciting platform not only for web content but also for video, social and viral content.

In February 2008, Google overtook ITV and Channel 4 to become the largest advertising channel in the UK, also posting a 31% surge in quarterly net income. Online spend is also increasing at such a rate that companies such as ITV that have been focused on more traditional TV advertising are now seeing TV spend slowly reduced in favour of new digital media methods.

UK online advertising spend has grown from being the seventh largest spend in 2003 to being the third largest in 2007 with a growth rate of 38% year-on-year. As a result, it is very important to realise the value of digital media commercially, as it is an advertising market that is growing nine times faster than the market as a whole.

Definitions

Affiliates (cost per sale)

An affiliate is an individual, or company, that markets and sells a merchant's products in return for a set fee or a commission. It is a largely low risk method of digital media selling, requiring a payment only on a sale so any outlay is always covered. Often, contracts are arranged by large affiliate sites such as TradeDoubler and Commission Junction that operate programs with UK retailers such as lastminute, Apple and BT. Super affiliates are sites that generate all revenue through selling other services, these include moneysupermarket, confused.com and comparethemarket; all of which generate millions through the sale of financial, travel and insurance products.

The risk of cost per sale is low as pay-out only occurs when a sale is generated and often not for a number of months after. It is also a particularly effective method as sites have suitable encouragement to promote your product at no cost to you, however the program and the affiliates have to be managed tightly to yield significant results.

Blogging

Blogging is a method of user-generated content. Blogs are normally not attached to any specific product and are therefore excellent tools for spreading viral messages and press releases. If a press release is notable and worth sharing, blogs will be the first place it is seen. Blogs are also an effective tool for companies to publicise news and are an effective tool in generating natural links to a website.

Click-through/Conversion Levels:

The number of people who eventually purchase, sign-up or download a product in relation to those who clicked through, i.e. those who, upon seeing an ad, click on it. Typically, better landing pages, banner ads or better-targeted cost-per-click text generate the highest conversion levels.

Contextual Advertising

Contextual advertising is a means of showing ads (usually cost per click, sometimes cost per impression) on a website based on the content it is showing. For example, if a page is about holidays, the contextual advertising program will automatically show holiday related ads from the pool of ads in the database. The largest publisher of contextual advertising is Google AdSense which allows publishers who sign-up to display ads on their sites. This program is connected to AdWords and those currently running an AdWords cost per click campaign can elect to have their ads displayed contextually on websites, as well as on the sponsored search listings.

Cost per application

Cost per application is the least common form of the 'cost per' advertising methods as it is only normally offered on free software. For companies offering free products that wish to increase their market share (for example, the Mozilla Firefox web browser) a fee is offered for every download of their product, encouraging sites to push their product to all that they can. As there is a pay-out for every free application download, it is not as common because frequently the increased market share is not enough to justify the cost. The risk is low and each pay-out generates a new user, however, the rewards are often low or non-existent.

Cost per click/Paid Search

Cost per click is an advertising medium in which the purchaser pays out for every click that goes through to their site. Again, a low risk medium as it requires no initial setting up costs. However, a click does not necessarily guarantee a sale, and the site in turn has to be targeted to generating these.

The largest cost per click advertiser is Google AdWords, which operates a cost per click sponsored listing alongside their normal search engine results. Cost per click results are almost always found alongside normal search engine results and both Yahoo and MSN offer similar programs. The risk of cost per click is moderate. A click does not by any means generate a sale and the landing page needs to support the ad and work effectively. However, it has guaranteed and quantifiable results in terms of search engine positioning.

Cost per display

Cost per display is an advertising medium in which the purchaser pays for a set amount of impressions or displays. Usually these will be found on portal sites such as msn.com, and almost always take the form of banner ads. Payment is often for a run of 100,000 views or any other set amount so an initial outlay is required in addition for the banner design budget. Cost per display ads are, therefore, particularly useful for increasing brand awareness and interactivity within them can become viral, i.e. being passed amongst Internet users.

Out of the 'cost per' advertising methods this is the highest risk and the banner ad or graphic needs to be able to convert the views that the ad is getting. Which is why it increases the importance of good landing pages – *see landing page*

Cost per lead

Cost per lead is similar to cost per sale (affiliate) and often used for products that do not have any initial cost such as a credit card or a loan. The advertising purchaser pays out every time a potential customer sends the company their details and this is often a much smaller fee to cost per sale, as a sale is not always guaranteed. However, the details and the potential to convert are valuable so it is still a particularly viable medium. The risk is higher than cost per sale but still lower than cost per click as customer details are provided, often allowing targeted email marketing at a later date.

Geotargeting

Almost all Internet advertising formats enable geotargeting, which allows for ads to be displayed based on the location of a user. Geotargeting enables campaigns to be fine-tuned through narrowing the audience down to the target countries.

Google AdWords

The generator of 99% of Google revenue, creating billions every year for the company and the number 1 sponsored search engine listing/cost per click program in the world.

See also, Cost per Click

Google AdSense

The Google service that displays AdWords contextually on websites based on page content.

See also, Contextual Advertising

Keywords/Keyphrases

Keywords and keyphrases are words or phrases that users type in to reach your site in either natural or sponsored search engine listings. If a user types in 'holiday' when searching, this is an example of a keyword. Keywords and phrases vary in popularity from brand names (low popularity usually) to highly searched keywords such as holidays, loans and credit cards. Search Engine Optimisation teams will often attempt to target the most popular (and competitive) keywords as these will yield the greatest results, but also the greatest cost to achieve them.

Landing Page

A landing page is the webpage that follows an advert, whether it is a video that a user clicks on, a search engine sponsored listing (cost per click) or a banner ad (cost per impression). An effective landing page is often required in order to minimise the risk of cost per click and cost per impression, as this page has to convert either an impression or a click into the eventual lead or sale. An effective landing page (or microsite) is an essential aspect of any cost per impression or click campaign, as both are worthless without the eventual conversion.

Natural Links

Natural links are the method that search engines use to rank sites naturally, ie. the more natural links a site has, the higher up in the listings it is (roughly speaking). Natural links can be obtained naturally, which is the ideal, through offering content worth linking to or by creating viral media, which incites people to link. Natural links can also be obtained by paying sites to link to you, although as a result this makes them unnatural and search engines look down upon this practice, often removing sites from search engine listings altogether.

Natural Search

Natural search is obtaining high listings on the 'natural' search engine listings, ie. those unaffected by AdWords. All search engines feature their main results naturally, uninfluenced by direct advertising and these will almost always be the largest feature on the page and as a result are the most attractive position to be in. However, these cannot be influenced by just paying a set fee or per click, so they have to be obtained naturally or by employing a search engine optimisation company.

Achieving high listings in natural search varies in risk and difficulty depending on the keyword search. Getting the number 1 listing for your brand name is low risk and particularly easy but getting the number 1 listing for a highly competitive term like 'holidays' is risky and often requires investments approaching millions. Natural search listings also change regularly; search engines will change their search rules to prevent it from being manipulated. Often, a number 1 listing can only last for a week before it needs to be updated.

RSS Feeds

RSS feeds are a form of constantly updated content often utilised in releasing breaking news and press releases. They are quickly updateable and can be read on websites or in news aggregators, often found within email clients. They can be an excellent tool for generating user interest and in generating natural links so it will often be suggested by search engine optimisation companies. Nevertheless, a valuable tool to be used alongside other routes.

Search Engine Optimisation

The process of optimising a website so it ranks higher in the natural search listings. Search Engine Optimisation (or SEO) companies often charge a set fee which varies, depending on which keywords you desire to target, charging increasing amounts for the more competitive keywords. Often some keywords are unattainable and whilst search engine optimisation may come across as a one-time cost, it requires constant work to keep the most competitive terms. Once a high listing is attained however, there is no cost per click or per user; the only cost is the upkeep of the position.

Social Media

A subcategory of digital media that revolves around the user. Social media include Facebook, YouTube and Flickr, with the users generating content and discussing it amongst themselves. Companies can exploit this. For example, if they create a video then that also provides a discussion point for users or a facility to download the media if they wish to share. Sharing is one of the fundamentals of social media and a successful video that gives something to the community will be shared virally. This provides an excellent avenue to creating hype around a product and to creating a 'cult following' although it is a very risky medium that is particularly hard to achieve. However, when successful, the results can be huge and incredibly valuable.

Social Networking

Social networks are communities of users that network with one another based on similar interests or communities of users that network with people they already know. The largest of these include Facebook, MySpace and Bebo, but social networks also include discussion groups that may revolve around a specific product or an interest such as photography.

As an advertising medium, they can provide a large number of users that can often generate a cult following around a product and they provide the perfect base for a viral marketing campaign to 'breed'. Social networking is also incredibly useful as a method of research, allowing companies to monitor a product following and to assess issues or concerns about a product passively, i.e. monitoring without participation or discussing the dialog within the forum.

Viral Marketing/Word-of-mouth

Viral marketing is a technique that relies on users to pass on or forward a message, rather than an advertising company broadcasting it. If a message does turn viral, growth is incredibly rapid and exponential, often reaching millions of users in days. YouTube and Facebook have greatly increased the potential for viral marketing with millions of users constantly looking for new 'cool' messages to spread. A notable recent viral campaign was the Cadbury's Gorilla, which has been viewed over three million times on YouTube. Also notable, is the American 'Will it Blend?' campaign marketing the ultimate blender; the entire series has been viewed over 25 million times.

Viral marketing is incredibly risky and when it goes wrong can often be viewed by the public as facetious. However, the rapid growth and cult following that can surround a product if it does become viral can be huge with the message being spread at no extra cost to the advertiser. In addition, viral marketing often builds on being user generated so it does not require any huge initial production costs; this in turn creates a huge return in relation to money invested.

Web 2.0

The theoretical evolution of the Internet to include social media and social networking. The core values include simplicity, interactivity and user involvement. Web 2.0 is a term to be aware of but the aspects pertaining to it (social media, RSS feeds, viral marketing) are far more important from a purchasing perspective.

Google



Fig 1. Google Headquarters

Introduction

Beginning with Google before all other specific topics may not make sense at first glance, but the power of Google's monopoly both abroad and in the UK makes it the most singularly powerful force in controlling how digital media operates and how it is purchased. Hitwise lists that, in February 2008, Google accounted for 67% of US searches and in the UK (March 2008) this figure was 87%. This in turn gives them a great deal of monopoly power in the search engine market, dwarfing, for example, the market share of Yahoo search, which amounts to 2.91% in the UK (March 2008, Hitwise).

Control of this amount of the natural search market in turn exerts a huge amount of control over cost per click advertising within the UK. Cost per click advertising cannot generate significant results with the share of Google competitors, so any UK purchasers wishing to utilise cost per click advertising are effectively forced into using Google AdWords.

Elsewhere, Google owns YouTube (the largest video site in the world), Blogger (one of the largest blogging services and online content creators), DoubleClick (one of the largest cost per impression advertisers), GMail (third largest email service – 5-6% US market share) and Google Earth/Maps (22% US market share and data covering the globe). As a result of this, Google's power is incredibly varied and vast. Importantly, it shows no signs of slower growth with recent figures posted showing a 31% increase.

The power of Google in natural search

The market share that Google enjoys in natural search allows Google to have unrivalled power over the rules and regulations it enforces in the market. Recently, Google announced that it disliked sites that purchased links and sites that sold links on them, delisting sites that it found to be purchasing or selling links excessively. Essentially, Google wants results to be generated naturally, ie. by somebody wanting to link somewhere not by being paid to link somewhere and as a result they try to restrict the amount of link purchasing and manipulation of their

results as much as they physically can. In addition, companies do not need to use AdWords and cost per click if they are ranking highly naturally, something which, as a result, directs revenue away from Google. It is in the best interests of Google to make achieving high natural listings as hard as possible in order to force companies into using their AdWords system.

In the past Google has very publicly delisted companies for breaking the rules set out in the Google Webmaster Guidelines. In February 2006, BMW was found to be hiding links in the background, a practice Google regarded and still does regard as bad SEO. Upon finding that the bmw.de site was breaking the rules, the organisation was completely wiped from Google, with searches even for BMW returning other sites. This is indeed a formidable example of the power Google exerts over the Internet. Within the week BMW was forced to comply with Google's demands to be placed back in the search engine.

It is worth pointing out, however, that Google does not necessarily have an issue with search engine optimisation and this alone will not cause any issues. Google has stated that it encourages search engine optimisation as it optimises content for the organisation, however Google is completely against anything that contravenes its good practices (practices which update on a weekly and monthly basis) and this includes link buying. If found to be breaking the rules, Google does not hesitate to remove sites without any written notice whatsoever.

Google's Advertising Product Portfolio

AdWords and AdSense

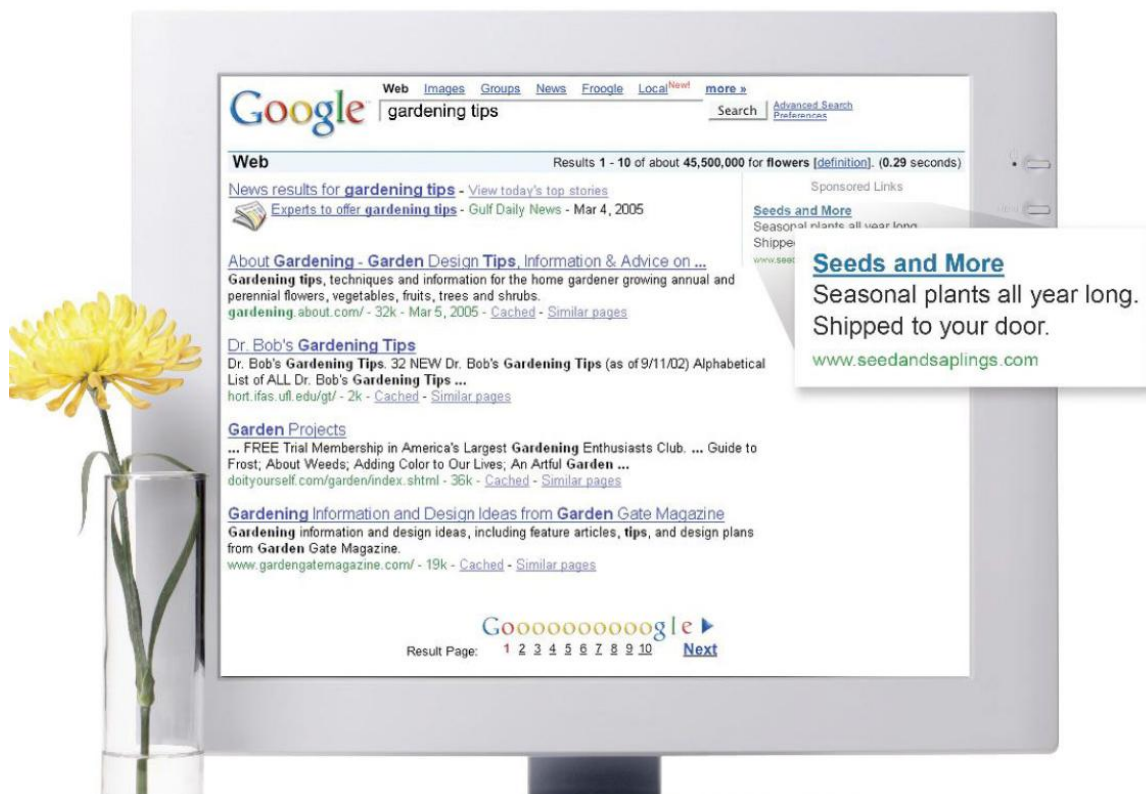


Fig 2. Google Adwords Listing

Google's main revenue generator is AdWords and this, in turn, is the largest advertiser in the UK and the largest cost per click advertising medium in the world. AdSense is a side product worth understanding as it runs advertisers' sponsored listings on websites in the approved AdSense network, a network that advertisers can opt into when signing up to an AdWords program.

The way that AdWords works requires no initial set-up fee; simply you pay for every click that goes through to your site. The more you pay per click, the higher up in the sponsored search engine listings you become. Theoretically, the more clicks you receive from the higher position, the higher the click-through you receive (particularly as click-through is higher on the first page of results than on the succeeding pages). Clicks can cost as much as a few pounds per click for competitive keywords and as these don't all convert, this can quickly add up and become costly. As a result the landing page that succeeds the click is incredibly important in creating a sale/lead, as is the text used within the small advert.

Adwords also offers limited cost per impression options, allowing banner ads to be displayed on websites through the AdSense service. In March 2008, Google also acquired DoubleClick, a cost per impression site that already services clients such as Microsoft, Coca-Cola, Visa and Nike, so expect the possibility of this being integrated into the AdWords service in the future.

Beyond this, Google is extending AdWords to become a platform on which to launch all ads. Recently, they launched programs to advertise on a cost per impression basis (ie. per reader, per viewer, per listener), effectively offering easy advertising through AdWords on TV, radio and in print. This utilises recent purchases in radio and print companies in the US.

DoubleClick

Although currently separate from Google AdWords, as a new subsidiary DoubleClick is an important part of Google's product portfolio. Running banner ads from companies such as NASDAQ, Ford, MTV and Cisco, means that DoubleClick is an integral advertising avenue and a starting point for any cost per impression campaign.

YouTube

YouTube is currently an avenue for Google AdWords to be displayed upon, but most notably it is the number one route for any viral marketing campaign to develop. In January 2008, YouTube had over three billion video views amongst 79 million users so the viral campaign potential is huge. In addition, Google is currently considering running 30-second video ads before YouTube clips; these will probably be available through the AdWords service. With three billion videos being watched in a month, this offers huge potential for digital media advertising, although it remains to be seen if Google will go through with this plan.

Issues for Procurement

Environment

The online advertising environment differs enormously from purchasing a run of ads on the TV or within a publication. Natural listings in search engines have no contract whatsoever and there is limited or no control over them, the power lies solely in the hands of the search engine. Similarly cost per click advertising requires no strict contract, no guaranteed results,

just an agreement that you will pay out a fee for every click (even if this click was fraudulent). Agreements in affiliate (cost per sale) and cost per impression marketing are tighter, but often it is still the service provider, ie. the site that displays the banner ad, who has the upper hand and will pull an ad if it is not adding to the user experience.

Viral marketing particularly is a whole new environment online, with no set rules at all, effectively allowing a company to do what it wants. There are no contracts with companies, no set fees to be paid per user views, just an ad set wild into the World Wide Web.

Fluid environment

Facebook Members Over Time

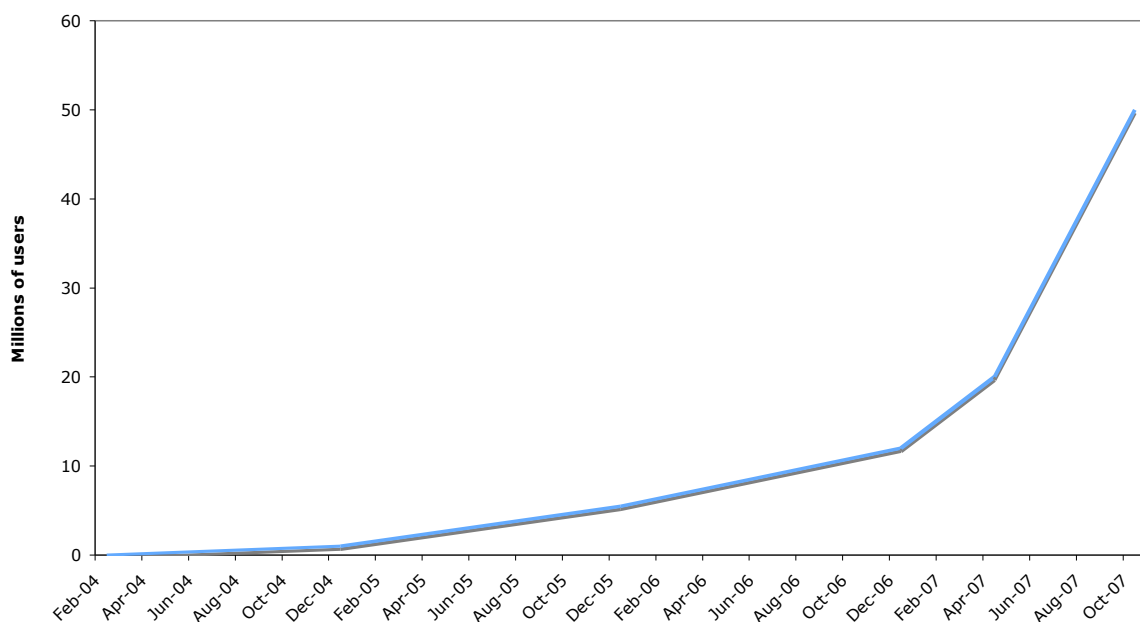


Fig 3. Facebook.com history trend (millions of users) – data sourced from facebook.com

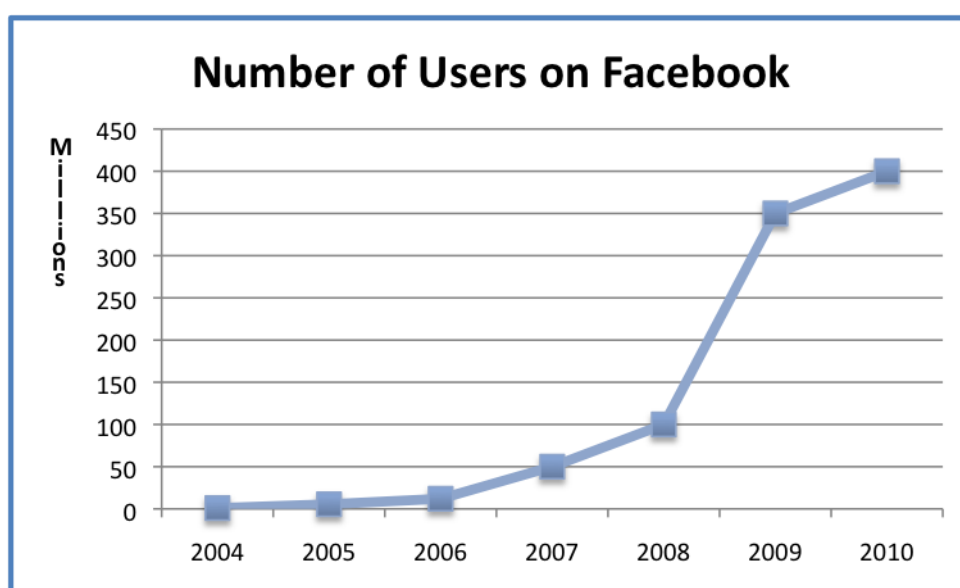


Fig 4 An update from Facebook on users: Source: Facebook.com

<https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=graph%2Bshowing%2BFB%2Busers%2Bsince%2B2004&>

[tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=2zPyUva_N4SM7QaQ8oDYCw&ved=0CCoQsAQ&biw=1060&bih=646](https://www.google.com/search?tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=2zPyUva_N4SM7QaQ8oDYCw&ved=0CCoQsAQ&biw=1060&bih=646)

As outlined in the previous chapter, the Internet is particularly fast moving and fluid. The number one search engine today did not exist 10 years ago. YouTube was not in existence four years ago, Friendster was the most active social networking site four years ago, two years ago it was MySpace and today, arguably, it is Facebook. The Internet and the various advertising mediums change incredibly quickly so it is important to stay on top of this or to use a firm that specialises in digital media.

Other aspects are also particularly fluid, including the rules that search engines impose. Purchasing links was fine two years ago, and five years ago you could get to the top of the listings with nothing more than a few text changes. Similarly, advertising mediums advance and evolve; once simple graphics were used; now interactive media is the norm.

Fraudulent clicks, inflated statistics

Fraudulent clicks are being reduced but still need to be considered. In 2006, a study posted the percentage of fraudulent clicks on the net at 15-20%, whilst Google has recently stated that it is as low as 0.02% on its service. The truth probably lies somewhere around the 5% mark and, as a result; it must be taken into consideration. Competitors will often click on your ads because you are charged for every click. Particularly with small businesses, it is possible to lower conversion rates significantly and even destroy advertising budgets. Although it is not such an issue on a larger scale, it can still make a notable dent.

In the same category, there can be an issue with inflated statistics. Most common in cost per impression purchasing, the amount of views/impressions a site generates could be inflated by robots or faulty statistic generators and there is often no independent adjudicator to verify these.

Landing pages (creating conversions)

Beyond the initial advertising spend, the landing page needs to be considered in detail since it will be the page that determines whether a click will go on to becoming a sale. A major consideration of any advertising spend has to go beyond where the budget goes and must involve how a user will be converted from their initial click on to the page once they have then clicked through to the ad.

Risk

Risk varies greatly between digital media advertising methods. Being an entire medium, digital media offers the low risk, moderate return methods such as cost per sale upwards to the high risk, high return methods of viral marketing. One of the major benefits of digital media is that high risk and high return methods do not necessarily incur large costs and indeed viral marketing can often work better on a low budget.

Questions procurement should ask when dealing with digital activity

1. **Reporting structure:** unlike off line media, the progress of a digital campaign can be measured throughout its duration so checking campaign performance as it unfolds site by site, placement by placement, is key to getting the best results. The agency should have a frequent reporting structure in place, meeting the client on a weekly basis at least to discuss the potential improvements that can be made.
2. **Reporting metrics:** given the accountability of digital, it is important the performance of the placement is judged by metrics that are most closely allied to a client's final business metrics. By way of illustration, a travel company that provides holiday should have its campaign evaluated on the volume and value of the sales that its activity drives, not just against a cost per acquisition target.
3. **Post Campaign analysis:** all campaigns should be properly reviewed once finished, thereby ensuring that active campaign management was applied throughout the duration of the campaign. Look for active amendment of site and placement bookings that then led to improvement in performance metrics. In addition, evidence should be given that the campaign has been fully reconciled, that delivery was as per final schedule, and any funds not reconciled are reimbursed to the client.
4. **In house resource:** find out if the agency has dedicated in house resource to deal with the different specialist areas that are found in digital. Amongst others, capability in paid and natural search, copy writing, research, affiliates, trading, mobile and social media should be visible (brief dependent). If the client has decided to go for separate digital agencies to carry out these disciplines, there should be evidence of integration between agencies, to ensure that the client understands the cross media effect on efficiency between the different channels.
5. **Inter agency collaboration:** some clients have separate agencies for on and off-line media. There should be clear examples of integration, with both agencies trying to understand what the halo effect of the off line media was on the digital efficiency. The client should request the agencies provide effective and manageable plans of the communication channels between themselves and the client. This helps the parties to manage digital activity where multiple agencies are involved.
6. **Media owners SLAs:** for the most part, digital media owners allow complete flexibility in terms of the ability to amend buys and also cancel them at short notice. It is important that this flexibility is fully understood by the client, and that it can be used to their advantage by the agency. Annual roll on agreements should be avoided where possible and it is advisable, where a client is implementing digital activity for the first time or where a new digital activity is planned, for procurement to consider approaching this on a trial basis initially to further enhance client flexibility.

7. **External resource charges:** it is important for procurement to determine upfront the costs (normally £ per day) of any external resource that may be needed to work on the digital activity. This is cost for resource over and above what may be agreed in a SLA. Digital media can be a complex and time-consuming medium in which to work and it is best to know resource rates in advance in the advent of unplanned or unscheduled additions required on the activity. Furthermore, where an account team is provided to a client by a third party to manage the digital activity, the account team structure and the grade of individuals should be reviewed by procurement. The appropriate mix of senior (for strategy, account management) and mid to lower grade (for day to day activity input) resource should be sought and “top heavy” account teams should be avoided.

The future

This document will not necessarily be applicable in two years so fast is the pace that the Internet evolves. So, when considering any current digital media spend it is important to consider the future and how the Internet will be changing.

The growth of broadband

Sites such as Facebook and YouTube are effectively the results of the growth of broadband; this growth will continue to influence digital media, particularly as speeds increase and more households move to a broadband connection. Broadband itself has enabled media to be viewable over an internet connection, something we are already taking for granted and the always-on connection has meant that the Internet has become far more tightly integrated with how we use our computers.

Currently, Apple is a particularly good indicator of how the digital world will change. The recent product launch of Apple TV, which allows the viewing of films downloaded via an Internet connection in real-time is by no means perfect, but an excellent indicator of where we are heading. It will not be long before films can almost download instantly and High Definition TV can be watched online reliably which will dramatically change the way TV ads, in particular, work.

The iPhone is also an indicator of the spread of the Internet to various devices. You can now watch YouTube videos on your phone wherever you are. Beyond the phone, the Internet will integrate itself into all the rooms, particularly the lounge, as computer technology hits a more affordable price point with the increase in laptop purchases.

3D Worlds



Fig 4. The Mercedes-Benz presence within Second Life

Currently, Second Life is the site of note, although currently this is by no means a particularly viable medium. Second Life does, however, offer a snapshot into a new evolution of the web, this being the 3D representation of ourselves. As the Internet technologies advance, Second Life, or a successor, will be able to recreate people, products and events all in a virtual world. This will allow for a whole new medium in which to advertise and research products, ultimately a platform that may eventually replace social networking as we know it today.

Google, MSN, Yahoo

As of April 2008, Microsoft is in talks to purchase Yahoo, although its proposals have largely been rejected to date. If it succeeds however, it may indeed create a more viable competitor to Google and, even if they do not succeed, it is an excellent indicator of how the market in which the big three 'mega-portals' exist is shaping up. Microsoft is currently trying to claw at the Internet market share which Google enjoys, having pretty much saturated the PC market. It has, however, been trying this unsuccessfully for a number of years now, but a purchase of Yahoo may change matters.

Yahoo is currently quite static and is not expected to gain significant market share from Google in the next few years. However, the network is still viewed by approximately 130 million users per month and should certainly not be ignored. Yahoo still has a market share of just over 20% in the US for search results and because of this any global marketing campaigns should still consider their cost per click program.

Google is still growing at a very swift rate but there are signs that they will not be able to maintain this growth forever. Despite buying numerous companies in various areas, AdWords still generates the huge majority of Google's revenue and the company relies heavily on this. Google will probably maintain or increase its market share over the next couple of years and its significant share of the market dictates that if you pay attention to anything in the digital media world, then it must be to Google.

Further Information

Useful Websites

- Google AdWords - adwords.google.com
- Hitwise Internet Trends and Stats - hitwise.com
- Internet Advertising Bureau - iabuk.net

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