

## 5 Steps to Guaranteed Website Success

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How easy is it to gain substantial levels of business from your company website?

VERY easy!

But that's just our view because we're specialists in helping clients to win business through company websites. We live and breathe website success and our clients keep paying us each month because we get results.

In our experience, just because we're experts in our field and find it easy, doesn't necessarily mean that it's easy for the majority of companies to win business from websites. After all, most companies are busy focusing on their core products and services and it's rare to have people within the company that have such a depth of expertise.

This guide provides you with the 5 steps that will guarantee success from your company website. We're not pretending that there's a quick-fix solution, and you'll certainly have to invest time to implement these 5 steps, but there's nothing here that can't be done by any company that already has a website. As you read through the guide you'll notice that it's text-heavy and has no pretty pictures – this is because we considered it to be of more value to keep focus on core issues instead of filling pages with graphics that have little value except as a device to break up the text.

We hope that you find this guide useful and if you have any questions about these 5 steps there are contact details at the foot of each page and we're happy to have a quick, no-obligation chat to help you move forward.

So let's look at the 5 steps in brief ....

## The 5 Steps

Step 1 – Track your enquiries

Step 2 – Analyse your website traffic

Step 3 – Refine your website to increase enquiry levels

Step 4 – Use intelligent PPC

Step 5 – Analyse the competition

And finally .... never stand still – make the 5 steps an integral part of your company culture and they'll continue to reward you.

## Getting the best value from this guide

It's always tempting to try and skip ahead and implement parts of any guide. The best value that you can gain from this guide though is to implement the steps one by one. This means that it's not necessary to plough through the whole guide at once but simply the first step and when that's completed, the next step, and so on. This allows you to dive straight in, achieve a little at a time, and then reap the benefits.

## Step 1 – Track your enquiries

“We want lots of enquiries and sales from our website!!”

Sound familiar?

It's not uncommon for senior management/owners in organisations of all sizes to make such demands on those who are responsible for getting success from the company website.

But are such demands reasonable?

Yes – providing that the management/owners are tracking where their sales are coming from. If the senior management haven't bought into Step 1 then real success from the company website is going to be very hard to achieve. Here's an example why ...

ABC Ltd have a website and they also market themselves in a range of other ways (for example, print advertising, business networking, sales staff). They gain numerous enquiries/sales each month but they're not keeping track of where each enquiry/sale originated from. It's probable that ABC Ltd are throwing away money on some marketing activities that aren't getting a reasonable return on investment but their overall view is “we're getting business so it doesn't matter where it comes from”.

But it DOES matter! If ABC Ltd knew that their website was generating the majority of their enquiries but their print advertising was generating negligible amounts then it could make sense to slash back on print costs and allocate more budget to the website. But all the time that ABC Ltd are in the dark then their competitors are in a position to take advantage through maybe having a clearer picture of what marketing activities are working best for them.

The process of tracking enquiries needs to become “Company Culture” and implemented by everyone from the very top to the office junior. The message has to be clear: “If we have an enquiry or sale and we know which of our marketing activities generated it then we have insight into how to best allocate future budgets”.

What's important to focus on is that all enquiries (whether or not they led to sales, because such information still has many uses) are recorded in some format. That format could be as simple as a regularly updated pen and paper log, a more advanced spreadsheet, or a piece of software designed to log enquiries. No companies are without pen and paper and few companies are without spreadsheets – therefore, there are no excuses for not tracking enquiries.

### Who does the tracking?

Anyone who picks up a phone, opens the post, speaks to potential customers, or receives emails or communications via the website. In short, anyone who has contact with potential customers – generally, most people within a company.

### What needs to be tracked?

The basic information that's essential to record is as follows ...

1. Date of the enquiry
2. Time of the enquiry
3. Method of enquiry (phone, email, enquiry form etc.)
4. How the person found out about the company (referral, website, etc.)
5. What they were enquiring about

Point 3 above is important because when combined with point 4 the two items of information paint a picture of where the business is really coming from. For example, ABC Ltd could have the perception that 60% of their enquiries came in via telephone, which could send a message that various forms of marketing are encouraging people to pick up the phone. However, the reality could be that people are phoning after initially finding out about the company via the website. This may be positive (they found what they wanted and phoned) or negative (something about the website confused them but they persevered enough to phone). Either way, the website created the initial enquiry even though the person used the phone to make contact.

### Digging deeper into tracking

While it's certainly useful to know that an enquiry originated from the company website being found by the potential customer, it's much more useful to get a deeper insight into what led that person to the company website because that provides a view of what forms of marketing are working. It's not often practical to ask enquirers the question:

"You said that you found us via our website but can you tell us whether it was via a search engine, or a directory, or another source, and while you're there, can you also tell us the exact phrase you typed or link you clicked on when you were looking for us?"

Let's be realistic – that's too much. However, depending on the rapport with the enquirer, some extra elements of such information can be gained and should be recorded in the enquiry tracking system for analysis purposes. For most companies though, when wanting to get a better insight into what led an enquirer to the website, the analysis of website statistics (explained in Step 2 of this guide) will make life a lot easier.

### Using the enquiry tracking information

There's little point in tracking the sources of enquiries if that information isn't going to be actively used. This is where the management/owners really need to take an interest in the enquiry tracking log on a regular basis because that log makes it clear what's working and where there are opportunities for refinements.

Depending on the numbers of enquiries taken over a given time period, the enquiry tracking log should be summarised for ease of reading. For most companies it's adequate to view the enquiry logs over a weekly or monthly period but some companies may require daily analysis if the enquiry levels are particularly high.

Summarising the enquiry tracking log is made easier when enquiries are logged in a spreadsheet or other IT solution. For example, if there's a column for 'Originating source' and that column contains information such as 'website', 'referral', etc. then it's very easy to assess how many enquiries originated from each source over a given time period.

Let's say that ABC Ltd tracked all their enquiries for the period of a week and at the end of that time they summarised their enquiries as follows ...

Originated from website – 20

Originated from Widgets Monthly magazine – 5

Originated from leaflet drops – 2

Originated from referrals – 2

The opportunity is then there to compare the expenditure on each form of marketing to the number of enquiries gained. Of course, it's never quite that simple because it may be that the quality of an enquiry from one source was worth so much more than a higher number of enquiries from another source but the important issue here is that there's a view of where the enquiries are coming from.

Of course, that position could be reversed. It may be that print media is generating a lot more enquiries than the website. Again, it needs to be understood what the real issues are – is it that readers of the printed material are more likely to convert to enquiries or is it that the website is so poor that it can't gain good numbers of conversions to enquiries?

What's important is to always challenge the figures and to dig deeper into what those enquiries led onto (i.e. did they convert into sales or something that may later be useful?).

### The incomplete enquiry tracking log

How useful is it to have an enquiry tracking log that has gaps in it? Well, it's clearly more useful than having no enquiry tracking at all, but every gap is a lost opportunity to gain a greater understanding about the potential customers.

This is why it's so important for senior management to show a strong interest in the enquiries tracking. If there are blanks in the log then they should be challenged. Of course, it's not rocket science for someone to put false data in (because they've made an oversight and want to cover it up) but as long as everyone understands that management could ask for more information about any specific enquiry at any time (and in many cases such information can be pulled out of website statistics software), then the message is loud and clear that "the management of this company want to get the best results from marketing investment, which is ultimately to the benefit of all staff". This tends to focus attention on ensuring enquiry tracking is accurate.

### Avoiding the knee-jerk reaction

Assuming that everyone has bought into the concept of tracking enquiries and that enquiry tracking logs are complete, within a few weeks there will be plenty of information available that provides insights into where the enquiries/sales are originating from.

It's at this stage that knee-jerk reactions to the information can be dangerous.

If a company has analysed, say, a month's worth of enquiries information and the figures imply that a form of marketing isn't working, then it's not necessarily the case that it's not working. If it's the website that's perceived to not be working then the remaining steps of this guide will help. But if it's another form of marketing that's perceived to be weak then there could be various reasons why there are problems.

Although it's often the case that print advertising is wasted money, the real issue could be that the print publication and readership are fine but it's the advert itself that's weak – or the timing/positioning of advertising. In the same vein, if it's perceived that the sales staff don't bring in enough business it may not be all their fault but could be that the website doesn't inspire the potential client that the sales person has spent so much time impressing. As soon as that sales person has finished the dialogue, the potential client is often likely to look at the website and if they don't like what they find then they may not want to continue the relationship. In such a situation it would appear as if the sales staff weren't generating enough business when the reality would be that it was the supporting systems (i.e. the website) that failed.

Knee-jerk reactions to marketing are dangerous. For example, there are huge numbers of companies that make comments such as "advertising in Google is a waste of money" but the reality is:

1. They haven't set up their advertising campaigns efficiently.
2. Their websites aren't strong enough to convert the visitors to business.

Whatever the information provided from tracking enquiries, it's usually advisable to sit on the fence for a longer period of time before making any snap judgements that something doesn't work. The situation is usually that it hasn't yet been given the opportunity to work – this is particularly true with websites and all associated marketing. We advise allowing a business quarter to gain a true insight, although that doesn't stop some decisions being made during that period of time.

### Concluding Step 1

If you don't know where your current enquiries are coming from then there is little point moving onto Step 2 of this guide because success from Step 2 is reliant on Step 1 being followed.

Custwin have experienced numerous situations in which potential clients have requested that thousands of visitors are generated to company websites. This is always achievable but if there's no enquiry tracking system in place then it's very hard to measure how well the new visitors are converting to enquiries.

The first question that Custwin asks clients after each month end is: "what's your perception of the number of enquiries that have been gained from the website?". That comparison of numbers of website visitors to numbers of enquiries perceived to have originated from the website is vital in order for any company to progress with gaining huge success from their website. Without that information recorded in an enquiry log, any company is blind to what marketing activities are and aren't working.

## Step 2 – Analyse your website traffic

Before you make any attempt to actively market your website in any way, it's vitally important to have a full understanding of how well your website is currently performing. You may possibly assume already that it's underperforming (particularly if enquiries/sales are low) but there's no substitute for actually knowing hard facts about what's really going on with your website.

Analysing website traffic is not everyone's cup of tea. In fact, it CAN get immensely complicated. In our experience though, if you're not analysing your website traffic in detail then your long-term success from the website is doomed to failure, however much you market the website or make changes that you think will work. This applies even if you're gaining what you consider to be a sufficient level of enquiries from your website at the moment – inevitably, other websites will outperform yours because they've picked up on the weaknesses that your website has but that you're currently unaware of.

Awareness of the importance of analysis is so low though that we've never been in a situation where we've analysed website traffic for a new client and have found that the site is working well. In our experience, the vast majority of websites are gaining a small percentage of the potential business they could be, but through understanding of how people move through their websites and taking appropriate action, the picture improves significantly.

### Opinions opinions opinions

Everyone's got a nephews cousins older brother (or sister) who is supposedly an expert with websites and can provide important insights into what needs to change within a company website. Nowadays, everyone is supposedly an expert and has an opinion. We even pride ourselves at being able to tell a potential client what's wrong with their website within seconds of looking at it.

There's nothing that paints a picture quite so well though, as looking at the website statistics that show what real people think of a website through their visits. Nine times out of ten the picture isn't pretty but at least the statistics provide the opportunity to take action.

### But we've got a website statistics package

Most companies have some form of website statistics that are provided in report form or that are available to log into. Unfortunately, the majority of such information is, at best, noise, blocking out the real issues, or at worst, rubbish. While it may be particularly interesting to some people what screen size resolution most visitors had or what times of day they visited the website, such information is only useful at a much later stage of analysis when it's used more for tweaking the website to an optimum level of efficiency.

For most companies in a situation where more business needs to be gained from the website there are only a few important types of website statistics that need to be examined:

- What path did each visitor take through the website and did they get to a page that we consider to be a 'goal'?
- What date and time did they come to the website, and how does that link up with the enquiries logged?
- What pages of the website did most people land on the first time they entered the website?
- What keyword phrases did those people type into search engines, or what other online source brought them to the website?
- What pages did most people exit the website from?
- What are the most common paths that people take through the website?
- What organisations were the visitors from? (this is often of interest to many companies)

Or, to put those bullet points another way ...

"Who were they, what brought them to the website, where did they go, and did they get to a page of the website that we wanted them to get to?"

At this stage, in our opinion, and based on several years of experience, no other information is important with regards to the website. Yes, it's certainly handy to ensure that your website caters for Firefox as well as Internet Explorer users, or to ensure that Apple users can view your website properly, BUT such issues are small in comparison to the issue of most importance, i.e. "do the majority of 'typical' website visitors convert to enquiries/business?" When you have the luxury of gaining plenty of business from the website then you can dedicate the time/resources to the niceties.

### Where to start

There are so many website statistics tracking packages available on the market. Many are free, some cost a bit and others cost a lot. We've used many of them over the years and can see pros and cons to each one. As yet, we haven't identified any one package that has everything needed but at a price affordable to most businesses. There are though a couple of packages we use a lot of the time for clients – these are Webstat and Google Analytics ...

Everyone raves about Google Analytics – primarily because it's free. However, in our view, it has many limitations. Custwin certainly has clients running Google Analytics and it has some great features, but to get the best out of it takes a lot of effort and configuration and even then, in our view, it still misses out on some really important information needed.

For any company wanting to get started with website analytics, we recommend Webstat ([www.webstat.com](http://www.webstat.com)). We don't earn a penny for that recommendation, or get a Christmas card, or even a scrap of recognition for all the Custwin client websites that are running Webstat. What we do get though is the information we need and for a cost of \$10 US per month for the majority of website types, it's a tiny expense to gain such a useful amount of information.

On the previous page we identified bullet points of the most useful information that can come out of website statistics analysis and we use Webstat to extract that information for clients who prefer to use our expertise to pull out the key information and apply our experience to make recommendations. However, Webstat can be used by any company either through self-tuition or through initially using our help to get started and then using our expertise as and when required.

### When to start using website statistics tracking

Website statistics tracking software should be installed as soon as possible. It's a five minute job for most web developers to install and it starts tracking visitors movements from the moment it's installed.

It's an unfortunate situation that many web companies don't proactively encourage their clients to log in to website statistics systems (or actively want to discourage the clients, providing them with periodic reports instead). However, with Webstat (and many other systems) it's easy to log in via the Internet and to get instant access to all statistics related to the website.

The real benefits of installing website statistics software at an early stage is that within a few days you'll get an insight into how many website visitors you get and where they go on the website. Until that stage it may have been your perception that no-one visited the website (because enquiries may have been low or non-existent) when the reality could be that you've been gaining higher numbers but that the website isn't performing effectively enough to convert them into enquiries/ business. It may still be depressing to discover you have more visitors (but they don't get in contact) but it's better to see proof of that than not to know.

For most companies it's likely that there are a reasonable number of visitors to the website each week but as a benchmark of what's a useful number of visitors to analyse we'd recommend that you need at least 500 visitors within a month before any conclusions can be drawn from the statistics. This doesn't mean that you necessarily have to wait for a month to start analysing your website statistics because if you're getting about 125 visitors a week then you'll know you're on the right path.

### What if the website visitors are too low?

Sometimes a website has such a low profile online that it's not capable of generating to the level of 500 visitors per month. While it would be tempting to analyse based just on the visitors that do visit the website, the numbers are too low to give a useful insight into typical visitor behaviour. In this situation, and only if we considered the website to be of an adequate quality, I'd recommend stimulating visitors to the website through Google pay per click (PPC) advertising. This involves creating a small advertising campaign in Google, focusing on not spending much money, but enough to generate a sufficient level of visitors to the website from which to analyse how they interacted with the website. This is a service that Custwin offers for free and would require about £100 from the client to cover the Google charges for generating the required number of visitors to the website.

### Already running PPC?

If you're already familiar with pay per click (PPC) advertising then it's likely that you're already generating plenty of visitors to your website. However, you may be finding that when you compare the number of visitors from PPC to the number of enquiries you're gaining, that there's a big mismatch between the two figures. This can lead to the perception that PPC doesn't work, which couldn't be further from the truth. PPC is only as useful as the website is strong and so website statistics analysis will help you to identify:

1. Where your website is weak and unable to capitalise on the clicks from PPC.
2. Where your PPC campaign itself may be weak.

PPC is covered in more detail in Step 4.

### The best use of website statistics tracking

In our experience, the best use of website statistics tracking is through the process we have outlined below, which should be undertaken daily in the early days of website statistics analysis (ideally first thing in the morning). This process is using naming conventions that assume you're using [www.webstat.com](http://www.webstat.com) but other analysis packages may have similar functionality:

1. Using the enquiry logging system (which you will have set up as part of Step 1) you will be able to identify all enquiries from the previous day and will have some insights into which of those enquiries originated from the website. You may discover though (through the website statistics) that the information logged in the enquiry logging system isn't quite as accurate as it originally appeared to be (which provides the opportunity to refine internal tracking systems). Log in to the website statistics system and get it to display the visitor paths for the previous day.
2. Because your enquiry logging system will have the time of day of each enquiry you can quickly scroll to the part of the website statistics visitor paths for that time of the day and you'll see the following key information about that visitor who went on to become an enquiry:
  - a. Whether they came in from a search engine or another source
  - b. What phrase they typed to find you (if from a search engine)
  - c. What page they landed on, which pages they looked at, and for how long, and which page they exited your website from
  - d. (Sometimes, where useful) which company they came from and from which part of the country/world.
3. From looking at the information gained in point 2 above you'll gain insights into why each enquirer found you, what pages motivated them to get in contact, and additional useful information. IF you hadn't yet responded to the enquiries from the previous day (which is often the case) then you can use the additional information gained here to your advantage when you make contact. For example, if someone had specifically searched for 'small blue widgets' but their email enquiry had only referred to widgets generally then you'd know to angle the response around small blue widgets.

4. Apart from looking at the visitor paths for each enquiry gained in the previous day (to gain a greater understanding), there will be many other visitor paths within each day which didn't result in enquiries. This is your opportunity to ask yourself the question: "If there were X enquiries yesterday but there were a lot more visitors, then what deterred those other visitors from getting in contact?".

By looking through each visitor path, although time-consuming in the early days until you get used to the process, you can get a much stronger feel for what is and isn't working within the website. It's highly probable that some of your website visitors would never have been potential customers anyway – for example, you may appear in Google search results when people type a phrase that doesn't appear to be directly relevant to your business (but that the Google system read as being relevant to the search phrase used). In cases like these you can safely ignore the visitor paths as being 'non-relevant' and instead focus on those people who had typed phrases in the search engines or came to the site from other sources, and that you think should really have got in contact.

Over a period of days and weeks you'll get into the habit of comparing your enquiry log (as created having followed Step 1) to the website visitor statistics, plus analysing the other visitor paths during each day. If undertaken in bite-sized chunks each day it's a much easier process than trying to analyse weeks worth of information at a time. Within the first days and weeks, through using the website statistics tracking, you'll build up a clear picture of the following key information:

1. Which sources online bring you the most traffic.
2. Which pages of the website get stronger results from visitors.
3. Which parts of the website (or the way the whole website flows) result in lost opportunities (and so can be refined as part of Step 3).
4. Which companies are interested in your company (this level of detail isn't relevant to all business types, for example, business to consumer companies).

When used over a longer period of time, website statistics analysis can provide particularly useful information about which online sources generate the most business. For example, (when combined with the enquiry tracking system you set up in Step 1), you may be able to identify that certain websites consistently generate traffic to your website and that traffic converts to enquiries at a good rate. Alternatively, you may identify a website that said it would generate leads to your site but that hadn't been worth the investment and so you would be better to allocate such funds to other forms of marketing at renewal time.

### Do it yourself or get help?

Website statistics analysis is of fundamental importance to the success of any website. If the statistics show that the website isn't converting the existing level of visitors to enquiries at a sufficient level then it's not wise to be actively promoting the company website in any way (including on business cards, printed material etc.). More damage can be done from actively promoting a weak website than by holding back unveiling the website to the world.

The purpose of this 5 Steps guide is to demonstrate that any company can gain substantial website success through following the recommended path, but Steps 2 – 4 of the process may appear daunting - at least in part. Step 2 has focused on website statistics analysis. Step 3 focuses on making website changes to improve the visitor conversions to enquiries. Step 4 focuses on the creation of intelligent pay per click (PPC) marketing campaigns. Most companies find that they are happy to handle elements of these steps, given the right way to get results - but at the same time it's also useful to know that there is assistance when needed. For this reason, Custwin are happy to be contacted to provide no-obligation advice (obviously, within reason).

Custwin have been asked countless times to set up PPC campaigns for companies and in the majority of cases we have to identify that the company websites aren't as strong as they need to be. In such situations it's a difficult decision for companies because although we can certainly generate the much-needed visitors to client websites, there is the caveat that the visitors won't convert to business at the level we'd expect them to unless the website was stronger. It's not unusual for clients to take that chance and what usually happens is that the level of visitors rise, some business is gained, but then we revisit the concept of website statistics analysis instead of trying to raise the website visibility further.

We hope that the information provided within this Step 2 has given enough information to benefit from website statistics analysis before attempting to aggressively market your website.

If you've read this far then you'll have implemented an enquiries tracking system and will be implementing or considering website statistics tracking. With these two steps in place, you'll either need to make website changes via Step 3 or will want to generate a lot more visitors via Step 4. Although not logically in the right order, some companies find it necessary to opt for Step 4 first because of the reasons given in the Step 4 detail titled When Step 4 comes before Step 3. However, the recommended path is always to follow Step 3 first.

## Step 3 - Refine your website to increase enquiry levels

Although some may be tempted to jump onto Step 4, superior results are always gained if budget is available to focus on Step 3 first of all.

The reason why Step 4 is so tempting is because most companies, regardless of how poor their websites are, would be able to generate increased levels of enquiries and sales through setting up pay per click (PPC) campaigns. At Custwin we've seen companies who have had enquiry rates as low as 1 person out of every 100 who visit the website, and many who have had slightly higher enquiry rates. For those companies it was actually acceptable because increased enquiries led to increased business. It's a short-sighted approach to winning good levels of business in the long-term though, as the following example demonstrates ...

ABC Ltd have a poor website. They've addressed Step 1 (i.e. they're logging enquiries) and Step 2 (i.e. they're analysing their website statistics). Step 2 identified that certain parts of the website were guilty of making potential customers exit the website without getting in contact.

ABC Ltd identified that it would require some investment to fix the problems on their website and so instead opted to jump to Step 4 and set up their own PPC campaign in Google in order to stimulate more visitors to the website. On the surface this was successful because they gained 5 enquiries out of 100 new website visitors, which converted to 2 customers. Those 2 customers covered the cost of the PPC investment in terms of profitability.

However, if the ABC Ltd website had been stronger then they'd have gained a lot more enquiries (and therefore sales) out of the 100 new website visitors. Therefore, the hidden costs of the poor website losing those other potential customers were:

- a. Those who exited the website are lost customers who cannot be further nurtured in the future, and who may also have referred other new customers onto ABC Ltd.
- b. Those who exited the website went to a competitor company, who have had the opportunity to build up a relationship with them.

- c. Due to the poor quality of the website, ABC Ltd are presented in a negative way to each non-enquirer and so those non-enquirers wouldn't bother clicking on the link to the ABC Ltd website at a later date, even after the website was refined, purely because they remember the original website.

More important than the points above though, ABC Ltd are in competition with other companies and that level of competition is only going to rise. If the website is only capable of converting relatively small numbers of visitors into enquiries then that will always be the case. Therefore, as PPC advertising becomes ever-more expensive (as it will continue to do for the foreseeable future), ABC Ltd will be forced (by Google, Yahoo, and others) to pay more money per visitor (in order to keep up with the competition within search engine results), which will soon become uneconomical.

This example shows that while it's possible to jump onto Step 4 in order to generate increased levels of enquiries via company websites, that success will be short-lived and companies will ultimately fail to gain long-term profitable business through their websites.

#### Website refinements – the recommended path to success

Whether having used Custwin to identify and resolve the problem areas within a company website, or having identified the problems in-house, a record should have been created that details the problems within the website and what needs to be done to fix those problems. The next stage is to fix the problems ...

Some companies have in-house website developers while most use external companies to undertake the work. The quality of website developers varies widely but in general, the more you pay, the better results you get. This isn't always the case though and we've have seen examples of £15K websites that haven't had as much effort put into them as £2K websites. We've also seen £1K websites that would cost £5K from other web developers. And then there are website changes that are quoted as being a few hours work but that then evolve into taking a lot longer, and so cost more.

Unfortunately, there are few companies that haven't had their fingers burnt by website developers who made great claims about their abilities, timings, or willingness to make website changes, but who turned out to be a bad decision.

For this reason, Custwin are always happy to act as an intermediary between companies and their chosen/potential website developers. Through expertise of how websites should work combined with expertise in how websites should link into online marketing, Custwin are in the position to ensure that website refinements are implemented effectively. The process that we always recommend is as follows ...

- a. Compare the website changes needed to examples of work that potential website developers have previously undertaken. For example, if the changes are focused around design (colours, graphics, layout etc.) then potential website developers would need to have good examples in their portfolios. Equally, if the changes are focused around flow from page to page of the website (leading the customer to a point of enquiry) then you'd need to see evidence of good examples in the portfolios of potential website developers. If potential website developers don't provide enough examples within their portfolios then don't give them the time of day.
- b. Take one simple proposed change to the company website and ask more than one web developer for a price and timescale to make the change.
- c. Assess the response time, costs, and how co-operative the web developers are. Remember, cheaper is not necessarily better and an immediate response can sometimes mean that the developer isn't busy because they have no work (which implies they're not in demand). What's important to focus on is the timescale given for the change to be made.
- d. When one or more developers have been identified as being potentials to use for the work then offer more of the changes required to the website and assess how the costs and timings change. At this point it's important that you've already looked at the portfolio of each website developer and have a feeling that they may be capable of undertaking all the changes.

- e. Having chosen a web developer, email them the full list of changes to gain a final pricing and request them to respond by email with the following information:
  - i. Confirmation that they will undertake the work listed, for the price quoted, and that they will ask if anything is unclear.
  - ii. Date by which the work will be completed.
- f. As the website changes work progresses the web developer should keep you informed but it's always worth making contact with them to assess how it's progressing. Web developers, in the main, are notoriously bad at keeping to schedules and as long as you, the company, haven't delayed the process (e.g. not supplying some text or graphics required), then there should be no excuses for not delivering the results on time.
- g. After the web developer has confirmed that changes are complete it's your responsibility to run through those changes in detail and to confirm your acceptance. Most web developers won't expect to be paid their final invoice for at least two weeks after the work is completed but they do expect clients to have signed off that the work has been completed satisfactorily so that there's no comeback at a later stage when the client actually checks the changes.

### Further assessment

After the website changes have been implemented then a process of re-assessment of website statistics needs to be started. Depending on the expertise of the person who identified the website problem issues, and on the proactivity of the web developer, the changes will have varying effects.

If the problems/website changes document was created by professionals then the responsibility for results is on the shoulders of the professionals. However, if the problems/website changes document was created in-house then the results are reliant on how the in-house resource(s) viewed the website statistics and what they perceived to be the answers to the problems.

For example, if an in-house resource identified that certain pages within the website weren't encouraging website visitors to move beyond those pages, one recommendation they make could be changes to the text within each page. However, it could also be the case that other elements of each page needed to be also changed, but that may not have been identified. Therefore, although the website changes would have a positive effect, they may not be as strong as could be possible if professionals were consulted.

Whether or not professionals are used to identify website problems and to recommend solutions, the results of the website changes still have to be assessed and the best process to achieve this is as follows:

- a. Ensure that a record has been kept of the exact problems with the website prior to the changes being made. Put a figure on the problems (for example, 80% of people who got to a certain page of the website then exited the website from that page).
- b. Measure, for a period of not less than 2 weeks, and ideally a full month, the change in results from the areas of the website that had previously been identified as problems.
- c. Assess how much of an improvement there has been. For example, an improvement from 80% of people exiting from a certain page down to 70%
- d. If the results aren't considered to be strong enough then go through the process of identifying further issues with the problem areas of the website and then arrange for changes to be made.

Obviously, it's preferable to get most website problems fully identified and rectified first time so as to avoid increasing web developer costs. Depending on how strong the in-house analysis expertise is, it can be more cost-effective to utilise the skills of professionals (particularly when factoring in how much potential business is lost all the time that the website is being refined).

Although the website analysis and refinements process can appear to take a lot of time (and there are budget considerations), it's very much worthwhile because it ensures that the website has a much stronger customer focus and so is fully ready to be brought to the attention of potential customers. Most companies don't expect a high percentage of visitors to convert to enquiries and business but when the website is actively marketed (e.g. via print media, PPC advertising, on the radio etc.) then people are visiting the website because they're specifically interested in what's on offer and so the costs of that active marketing need to convert into a good return on investment. If that good return on investment isn't achieved then the finger points at fault in one of the following areas:

- a. Weaknesses within the website itself that haven't been identified and rectified.
- b. Weaknesses in the active marketing (for example, an article in a magazine referring to a special offer on the website that turns out to be difficult to understand, or a PPC advert that's not focused enough and so attracts the types of visitors that would never go on to make contact with the company)

Our recommendation, when considering actively marketing a website following changes that have been made, is to implement the marketing on a gradual basis and to assess the results through analysing the website statistics. For example, running an advert or profile in an industry-relevant magazine would encourage visitors to the website because they'll see the website address in the magazine. What should be immediately noticeable is an increase of visitors to the website after the magazine is published. However, those visitors are only as useful as the numbers of them that get to a page in the website that's considered useful to the company (for example, the 'Contact Us' page, a page where a product or service can be bought, or a page where PDF downloads are available).

Over a period of a few weeks after the publication of the magazine, it will be clear from the website statistics how successful that marketing activity was. The results from that would be either positive or they would be negative and if negative it would be necessary to analyse whether it was the magazine piece itself that was at fault or whether it was problems within the website that needed to be further refined before attempting a further marketing activity.

There are many ways to market companies and it's beneficial to have a mixture of several. The method that Custwin spends the majority of time on (for clients), but that can be set up by any company themselves if applied intelligently, is pay per click (PPC) advertising. This forms Step 4 of the 5 Steps to Guaranteed Website Success ...

## Step 4 – Use intelligent PPC

If you've followed Steps 1 to 3 then you'll have got to the point where you have a good process to track where enquiries come from, will have a good insight into your website statistics, and will have made necessary refinements to the website and allowed some time to analyse how effective those changes were (in terms of gaining enquiries). If you haven't followed those steps then your ability to fully benefit from Step 4 will be very limited.

### When Step 4 comes before Step 3

As part of Step 2 you may have identified that parts of your website are weak and need changing. You may even have identified (either yourself, or through consultancy) that your website needs much more work doing on it than relatively simple changes. In normal circumstances it's always recommended to go through Step 3 (fix the problems) before moving onto this Step 4.

Unfortunately, such fixing of websites can require a fair amount of investment (unless simple changes) and budgets often aren't available. Therefore the thinking becomes "how can we generate extra business from our website that will then provide the additional revenue that can be re-utilised to fund necessary website redevelopment?". This is when the focus turns to advertising through pay per click (PPC) but it's only in situations where budget isn't available for website changes that Step 4 should be implemented before Step 3 ...

### A brief summary of PPC

For those unfamiliar, PPC refers to Pay Per Click, i.e. the Sponsored Links in Google (and similar in other search systems) and in simple terms, companies pay each time someone clicks on their adverts in Google after people type keyword phrases related to their business. For example, if we sell blue widgets then we may have an advert appear when people type 'blue widgets' into Google and that advert may appear as:

#### Blue Widgets Online

We sell all shapes and sizes of  
blue widgets worldwide.

[www.widgets.co.uk](http://www.widgets.co.uk)

When someone clicks on our advert they get taken to a relevant page on our website and hopefully they'll find enough there to get in contact or buy from us. Because we're paying each time someone clicks on our advert then we want to get a good return on that investment.

As you'll have seen as you search systems such as Google, there are varying numbers of Sponsored Links appearing on the page and some will appeal to you whereas others don't. This focus on appealing to the searcher is a critical part of successful advertising through PPC because the more your advert gets clicked on (compared to the number of times people search for certain phrases), the more likely you'll keep a good position on the page.

From the perspective of an organisation such as Google, it's very much in their interests to ensure that people have a good search experience. If someone types 'blue widgets' and sees various Sponsored Links appear but the number of clicks on any of those adverts is relatively low, then the view is that the quality of the advert isn't strong enough. For example, if you'd typed 'blue widgets' and saw the following advert amongst others, would you be likely to click on it?

### Machine supplies

Bolts, Washers, Widgets.

Buy Online.

[www.machinestuff.co.uk](http://www.machinestuff.co.uk)

Although the advert refers to widgets there's no reference to blue widgets, or even a wide range of widgets - and certainly there's nothing that jumps out of the advert to encourage people to click on it. In this situation, the advertiser would receive fewer clicks than their competitors and so would be demoted down the advertising ranks.

Organisations such as Google want searchers to be clicking on the Sponsored Links. It's how they make \$billions of revenue and understandably, they're going to do whatever it takes to protect that income. If advertisers use PPC advertising in an unintelligent way then they'll be penalised.

Penalising within a system such as Google is done in two ways:

1. If a keyword phrase (e.g. 'blue widgets') is set up, linked to an advert that displays when that phrase is typed, but the advert doesn't get strong enough levels of clicks, then Google will reduce the advert positioning (and sometimes stop the advert from displaying when the keyword phrase is typed).

2. If Google consider that the 'quality' of a keyword phrase linked to an advert isn't strong enough then it'll charge the advertiser more money per click in order to have the advert displayed and will often stop the advert from displaying when people type the keyword phrase.

Unfortunately, it's not quite that simple. The exact magic formula behind what systems like Google will and won't allow isn't available. If it was, then everyone would be trying to find ways to exploit the system. But generally, if the link between the keyword phrase, the advert text itself, and the website content isn't considered to be of a high enough quality, then systems such as Google will penalise the advertiser. This is logical because if the advertiser isn't focused on what the searcher is really looking for then the searcher may not be happy with their search experience, may not click on future Sponsored Links and so that damages the revenue and reputation of Google.

A common mistake made by companies is to get obsessive about being high in the Sponsored Link adverts. When those companies initially offer a certain value 'per click' when someone types certain phrases, and they see that their advert positioning isn't as strong as they want it to be, they start increasing their click cost allowances.

This is the biggest mistake any advertiser can make.

Business is all about competition – some types of business are more competitive than others and advertising in Google is no exception. Going back several years, when we started using PPC advertising on behalf of clients, it was extremely easy to send traffic to company websites for pennies per click. Fast forward to the present day and so many companies are advertising within systems such as Google that for some types of business the costs per click are expensive. The reality though is that the expense is (mostly, there are some exceptions) caused by the advertisers themselves, and not by systems such as Google ...

As an example, let's say that there are 50 companies that sell widgets and they all want to advertise in Google. The first company that started advertising may have got clicks at a relatively bargain price, because there was no competition. As more widget companies started advertising then the expectation is that new advertisers have to offer more money per click in order to be positioned above their competitors. Eventually there becomes a situation where all 50 widget companies are advertising and many of them want to be above their competitors. What happens in this case is that if a company increases the cost per click for any of their keyword phrases (e.g. 'blue widgets') then it will (usually) increase their positioning in the advertising results. When a competitor does the same they may jump ahead of the other company. This leads to an

ongoing 'game' of click costs leapfrog, often involving several advertisers.

Ultimately, the only winner of that game is Google, which benefits from increasing revenues as companies try to outbid each other to be high in the search results. We see this happening all the time and it's strictly against our recommendations to go down this path. Instead, the focus should be on what's gained out of the clicks to the website, whatever the positioning of the advertising, and only after good results are proven should any company consider trying to put themselves top of the search results through increasing their click cost allowances.

### Google isn't really your friend

Contrary to popular belief and all the hype about Google wanting advertisers to do well out of advertising in its system, it, and other similar systems (e.g. Yahoo) aren't really your friends.

It all seems so simple. Set up a PPC campaign with some keyword phrases related to your business, and the money will come rolling in. And it does .... for Google and others.

The reality is often different because companies set up PPC campaigns, following the guidelines provided (by Google for example) and the expectations are high. However, hidden behind the friendly face of such systems is a deep and complex system that, unless it's properly understood by the advertiser, will make money only for the search system.

With Google in particular, everything, in our opinion, changed when it floated on the stock market. Before that there were signs of change but it's been most noticeable since then. After all, it's a company that's accountable to its shareholders so the expectation is that Google will always be making more money, and so Google, rightfully so, has to focus on generating income.

Going back years, the Google system was very simple because it would allow you to use practically any search phrase you wanted to and as long as you got a good number of clicks on your advert in comparison to the number of people who typed each keyword phrase then everyone was happy. This, in our view, was a fair system. So, if we wanted to have a search phrase of 'blue widgets with purple buttons' then we could have it and the Google system had no problem with that.

Fast forward to the current day and you'll find that the more 'niche' a phrase you create, the more likely that Google won't allow it to be used, the excuse being that "the Google system doesn't consider that people will type that phrase and so you can't have it". You may say "excuse me, but I'm the advertiser and if we want 'blue widgets with purple buttons' then surely we can have that?"

Actually, no!

The reasons behind that change, and many other changes, are far too in-depth to go into here but suffice to say, Google (and other systems) is not really your friend. It pretends to be your friend and gives lots of supposedly useful advice but the reality is that if you only do everything that Google recommends then you will fail at PPC advertising.

So, let's look at the best way to use PPC, focusing in particular on Google ...

### Using PPC intelligently

We could fill a 100 page book with the in-depth workings of PPC, including the pitfalls, but the focus here is on what you can do to get the best benefits out of PPC.

There are numerous companies out there that have tried PPC advertising, failed, and have the view of "PPC doesn't work". Nothing could be further from the truth. OK, it may not have worked but that's not the fault of Google, Yahoo etc.

It's actually the fault of the companies that haven't approached PPC in the right way, which starts with Step 1 of this guide, working through to this point. Perhaps it could be said that Google, Yahoo, and others could be a bit more proactive about teaching new advertisers how to get the best out of their advertising, but is it really their role? For example, when you have printed literature created that has poor graphics or a link to your website that's weak, is it the role of the printing company to say "Actually, we won't take your money for the printing because we don't think it'll generate the best results"?

No, it's ultimately the responsibility of the advertiser to ensure that they've done everything within their power to get the best out of their chosen method of advertising.

Assuming that you've gone through the prior steps, particularly steps 2 and 3, you should be fairly confident that your website is able to convert a reasonable level of visitors into enquiries. With PPC we have the opportunity to really test how strong your website is. The following step by step guide explains how to use PPC intelligently. We'll use Google as the system of choice here ...

1. Take one page from your website that you consider to be the biggest hook that will encourage people to investigate your website further. For example, if wanting to sell widgets, it may be the page that introduces widgets and then leads off into other pages that detail specific types of widgets.
2. Brainstorm the types of keyword phrases that you believe people may be typing into Google, and that would ideally link them through to the website page you've identified. The trick here is to be either generic or specific. If, for example, your chosen website page is about widgets in general then you may have brainstormed keyword phrases such as:

widgets online  
widgets shop  
widget suppliers  
widgets supplier  
... and so on.

However, if your chosen page was all about widgets in different colours then you may have phrases such as:

blue widgets  
blue widgets online  
blue widgets shop  
blue widget suppliers  
blue widgets supplier  
red widgets  
red widgets online  
red widgets shop  
red widget suppliers  
red widgets supplier  
... and so on.

The next step is to condense down your list of brainstormed keyword phrases (we recommend a list of 10-20 as a maximum). The reason for this is because we want to focus our attention on a tight range of phrases, which makes analysis of results from clicks much easier. It's a common mistake for companies to create hundreds or thousands of keyword phrases, set them up in Google and then be unable to accurately measure the results. Nowadays, Google also frowns on PPC campaigns that have tons of keyword phrases within them (whereas years ago this wasn't an issue).

3. With your list of 10-20 keyword phrases and the url of the website page they're related to, you're now ready to write your advert text in rough. This advert text has the following restriction:

Title line – 25 characters maximum  
Text line 1 – 35 characters maximum  
Text line 2 – 35 characters maximum

We recommend that you make the title line as descriptive as possible because many people click on PPC adverts without reading the next two text lines. Writing effective adverts is a bit of an art form because adverts need to be written in a way that they not only attract clicks, but they also deter some people from clicking. As an example of this, consider the following advert text:

Widgets from £1,000  
High quality widgets for customers  
who expect the best widgets.  
[www.widgets.co.uk](http://www.widgets.co.uk)

That advert, in the title line, is basically saying: "Don't click on us if you can't afford £1,000+ for a widget", which is then backed up by the two supporting text lines.

A great way to draft potential advert text for your products/services is to type your keyword phrases into Google (e.g. 'widget suppliers') and assess how well competitor adverts grab your attention. Then focus on creating advert text that beats the customer focus of competitors. It may take longer to develop a draft advert this way but it's better to do this first than to later find out that competitor adverts get stronger rates of clicks, which would have a negative impact on the success of your own PPC campaign.

Having created your draft advert, linked to a series of 10-20 (maximum) keyword phrases, you're now ready to create your intelligent PPC campaign in Google ...

4. The purpose of this PDF is not to take you step by step through how to create a Google Adwords campaign but instead focuses on the pitfalls to avoid. However, we're happy to provide advice on the processes involved in creating a PPC campaign so please do contact us and we'll be happy to help.

By this stage you will have a series of keyword phrases and advert text, and having created a Google Adwords account you will need to create your basic PPC campaign by following the on-screen guidelines. As part of that process you will need to consider the following very important tips, which aren't often picked up on from within the Google system, but that will save you a lot of pain ...

- a. Enter your keyword phrases surrounded by quotation marks. This is known as 'phrase match'. For example:

"widget suppliers"  
"widgets online"

This is vitally important because it avoids you attracting irrelevant clicks through setting them up without those quotation marks (there's a long explanation available about why this is but all you really need to know is that it's necessary).

- b. If your business is only targeting a certain geographical area (e.g. 20 miles around your location) then you will need to set up geographical targeting. For example, if you're a Saab dealership and you have phrases in your PPC campaign such as 'Saab garage' and 'Saab dealers' then you don't want to be attracting clicks from people way outside your geographic target area. An additional consideration may be that you want to target internationally. In this case, choose your countries very carefully because too much visibility outside your core market can damage your online visibility in your core market where it matters the most. Again, there is a detailed explanation of this available but for the purposes of this PDF you just need to know that it's important to target your campaign carefully if wanting to target a specific geographic area or several countries.

- c. Always, without fail, go into 'Edit campaign settings' after setting up a campaign and untick the boxes called 'Search partners' and 'The content network'. Google has those boxes ticked by default, which implies that it's beneficial for you to be visible on numerous websites outside Google. In our view, it's a major disadvantage – particularly in the early days of PPC advertising. For now (you can, of course, change it at a much later stage), you should only have your PPC adverts displaying in Google itself and so the only box you're interested in the 'Show our ads on:' setting is 'Google Search'.
- d. If your type of business wants to attract certain types of clicks then you may want to go into 'Edit campaign settings' and click on the link to 'Turn on ad scheduling'. This allows you to have your adverts visible at certain times of the day on certain days of the week (instead of being visible all the time as is the default configuration). Custwin has rescued many PPC campaigns that were using clicks budget that had been attracting the 'wrong types of clicks'. For example, a model agency client wanted the phrase 'blonde models' to attract business clients wanting to hire blonde models. However, their PPC campaign was originally displaying day and night which resulted in high clicks after core working hours (presumably from people who just wanted to look at pictures of blonde models). By restricting that PPC campaign visibility to core working hours the budget went much further and the enquiries rose accordingly.
- e. Bid low on click cost allowances per keyword phrase. This means that it's better to test the water in the early days of a PPC campaign. It may be that competitors are high in Google search results but your aim at this point is not to be higher than them but purely to attract enough clicks to measure what results are gained from those clicks. As a general rule, offering about 20p per click and a daily click costs allowance of about £5 is sufficient when setting up a first PPC campaign. Obviously, this depends on the business sector (e.g. 20p per click in the air conditioning sector would gain no results at all because competitive pressures mean that £2 clicks are the norm).

As a rule, you'll find that if there are less than 8 competitors in the first page of Sponsored Links then 20p per click allowance is fine. If there is a second page of Sponsored Links but that page isn't full of advertisers then 30-50p per click is advisable. If there are three or more pages of competitors adverts then reconsider the keyword phrases you're using or perhaps consult us for further advice without obligation. The golden rule with click cost allowances is that you can always increase them over time but reducing them opens up a big can of worms. Never ever offer more than 50p per click when initially experimenting with PPC, however tempting that may be.

5. By this stage you should have created a Google Adwords account and should have created a campaign that contains an advert group focusing on a small range of keyword phrases that, when typed by searchers in Google will trigger the advert that you have carefully created. You are now at the point where you need to revisit Steps 1 to 3 of this guide but in a simplified way ...
6. As long as you've created a campaign that has no more than £5 a day click costs allowance and no more than 50p per click, you can safely leave it to run for at least a week. You can, of course, go into your campaign and see how many clicks you've gained but there's little point within the first week. As soon as the campaign goes live though you need to ensure that the following processes are in place:
  - a. Enquires that come in are being tracked (Step 1 of this guide). As soon as you have a PPC campaign live then you have the potential to be gaining new enquiries. Only if you're tracking when those enquiries come in, including what time of day, can you assess what caused those people to make contact with you through activity b ...
  - b. Every time you gain an enquiry, that you believe may have originated from the person finding you via the website, you should log into the website statistics system, locate the time of day that the enquiry came in, and assess what path the enquirer took through your website. Ideally, you would look at this information before you respond to the enquirer because their path through the website can provide you with valuable information and enable you to become better prepared for your response to the enquirer. Tracking visitor movements within your website is covered in Step 2

of this guide.

- c. Each time you log in to the website statistics system to find out more about how an enquirer moved through the website, you should also spend a little time looking at all the other people who visited your website between the time of the current enquiry and the time of the previous enquiry. Obviously, not everyone who visits your website is going to get in contact – often for perfectly logical reasons (for example, a misleading link from a natural search engine positioning). However, if your PPC campaign has been set up effectively then you should be expecting many of your visitors to be getting in contact/buying. Our recommendation is to take screenshots of visitor paths that didn't lead to a point that you'd consider to be a success, and to compile these screenshots into one document for internal discussion. The website statistics data will provide you with really important information, including:
  - i. The keyword phrase used (if the searcher used a search engine), and whether they came from PPC or a natural link.
  - ii. What path they took through the website.
  - iii. Where they exited the website.
  - iv. Sometimes, what organisation they were from

Over a short period of time you'll accumulate many such screenshots and will start to build up a picture of what parts of the website are and aren't working as well as they should be. In theory, having gone through Step 3 of this guide then you should have refined your website as much as possible and so when you start a PPC campaign and you discover that visitors aren't converting to enquiries/business at the rate you'd hoped they would, then it's time to take action. This action involves reviewing the screenshots of all those people who didn't get in contact, but who came to the website via your PPC advertising, and considering which parts of the website are weak. Sometimes though, you may find that it's not the website itself that's weak but that the way you've set up the PPC is misleading, or hasn't linked people into the page that's most relevant to their interests. Having worked with hundreds of companies who need help in analysing why their PPC clicks aren't converting into sufficient business, Custwin can advise you without obligation.

7. What will ideally be happening is that you're gaining a certain number of clicks on your PPC adverts, people are coming through to your website, and they're getting in contact at a reasonable level (10-20% of visitors is a reasonable level in our experience). If you're gaining sufficient levels of clicks (anything from 300 clicks per month upwards) but your conversions to enquiries/business aren't in the region of at least 10-20% then you must resist the urge to increase your clicks budget or expand your PPC campaign. The answer here is to follow steps 6a to 6c on the previous pages and to keep refining your website and PPC campaign until your conversion level has increased. Only after this point do we recommend that you consider expanding your PPC campaign through creating additional advert groups and/or increasing your Google advert positioning through increasing click cost allowances and budget. But even then, tread carefully and remember that Google is not really your friend and if you advance too quickly you'll definitely get your fingers burnt. Only through increasing budgets slowly and introducing new advert groups gradually, and analysing the results of those changes obsessively, will you properly benefit from PPC advertising.
8. But what if you're in the situation that you've set up your PPC campaign but the numbers of clicks aren't strong? There are various reasons why this may be, including ...
  - a. It could be that your adverts aren't appearing in strong enough positions in Google to attract enough clicks. Anything below position 4 or 5 would be classed as being too low. Resist the temptation to increase click cost allowances/budgets in a bid to get higher positioning – at least until the end of the first month of the campaign. It often takes several weeks to build the trust of the Google system and companies often find that adverts that start off in relatively poor positions start to improve after a few weeks without needing to increase budgets.
  - b. You may have chosen keyword phrases that are considered to be 'too niche' by Google. Years ago, it was possible to have practically any keyword phrase active in a Google campaign but for reasons too detailed to go into here, it may be possible for you to create certain keyword phrases but that doesn't mean that Google will allow your advert to be displayed when people type those phrases.

For example, a phrase such as 'buy blue widgets online' may make perfect sense as being a phrase that people would feasibly type. Years ago you could have had such a phrase in a PPC campaign – nowadays, something so specific would likely be blocked by Google. Within the Keywords tab of your PPC campaign you can hover over the button that looks like a magnifying glass. If you see a message showing of:

The keyword phrase that you have entered has a low search volume and is not showing any of your ads. If more users start searching for your keyword, your ad will begin to show. You do not need to do anything.

... then that's Google's way of telling you to use something more generic as a keyword phrase. Whether it's right or wrong for Google to tell advertisers what keyword phrases they can or can't have isn't for debate here but the bottom line is that advertisers are faced with having to use more generic keyword phrases that will cost them more money per click because they're more competitive.

- c. Your advert text may not be strong enough to attract clicks. You may have an advert that's getting reasonable positioning in Google but you're finding that the number of clicks aren't strong compared to the number of impressions the advert has (i.e. the number of times that your advert has been visible in Google when people typed the keyword phrase(s) related to that advert). In this case it's likely that your advert text needs to be stronger in order to attract more clicks instead of those clicks going to other adverts that appear on the search results page.
- d. There are actually a whole range of other reasons that may cause low levels of clicks and they're usually a combination of factors. Custwin are happy to be contacted and to advise you if you've considered the factors above but are still having problems with gaining a reasonable number of clicks from your campaign.

9. For many companies, following the guidelines provided here will be sufficient to get you well on the way to not only attracting visitors to your website, but for those visitors to be making enquiries at a reasonable rate, which of course leads to business.

Even with such guidelines though, it can't be said that PPC is easy. We spend a large proportion of our time keeping up-to-date with developments in the world of PPC and in maintaining PPC campaigns on behalf of clients. Those clients expect to get results and through our expertise, we keep those clients. We live and breathe PPC and website strategy and are constantly discovering new ways to squeeze even more benefits out of websites for clients.

To draw analogies, it's like giving a painting contract to decorators, getting a qualified electrician to undertake work on your house, or instructing a qualified accountant to do your book keeping and tax calculations. Those types of activities (decorating, electrical, and book keeping) can be done by anyone but it's highly unlikely that the results will be as good as when undertaken by professionals who focus on their areas of expertise. It's true that anyone can create a PPC campaign and indeed, most people can get something out of them. However, really getting the best results out of PPC is an area of expertise in itself.

## Step 5 – Analyse the competition

You'd think that it was enough to be undertaking Steps 1 to 4 of this guide. After all, if you're accurately tracking where enquiries are coming from, are analysing website statistics, have made changes to your website, and are getting success from PPC advertising, then what else could be needed?

The answer here is: don't get complacent.

The nature of competition in business means that your competitors will always be trying to beat you in some way. If you've gone through Steps 1 to 4 of this guide then you'll be in a strong position for a period of time but that will change and your competitors will respond in many ways (the focus here being purely on online but of course, companies can market themselves in a variety of ways), including the following:

- a. They'll increase their click cost allowances to raise their advert positioning.
- b. They'll amend their advert text so that it gains stronger rates of clicks.
- c. They'll add new keyword phrases and advert groups to their campaigns.
- d. They'll refine their websites to be stronger and more customer-focused than yours.
- e. They may even try to trade off your company name (this can be done in Google).

Every company that runs a PPC campaign should be producing regular statistics that show what positioning is being gained for adverts when certain keyword phrases are typed, and what the results were from all the clicks gained. When analysed regularly it'll be clear when competitive positioning is being lost in search systems such as Google and so action can be taken.

But analysing the competition goes a lot further than just ensuring that you're getting good Google positioning. Our recommendation is to keep a very close eye on the websites of competitors ...

### Competitor website reviews

Websites change on a fairly frequent basis. It should be someone's responsibility (or you can use technology to automatically keep track), to pick up on when competitors change their website (in a way that's more than just slight amendments).

If a competitor changes their website in a positive way they'll be gaining more enquiries from their PPC clicks. Every one of those PPC clicks that converts to an enquiry or sale is not only one less potential customer for your company but that lost customer may be pleased with the service they receive from your competitor, stay loyal to them, and recommend them to other people.

Sometimes it's not easy to understand how competitors can consistently keep paying for higher positioning in Google search results but usually the answer is because they've made changes to their website that mean more enquiries are gained. For example, if your competitor is paying 25p per click for the phrase 'blue widgets' and is converting more clicks into enquiries than you are for 25p per click on that same phrase then they're going to be gaining more business, which gives them deeper pockets to further invest in their online advertising and more website refinements.

Our recommendation is for companies to have an internal process that ensures:

- a. Important keyword phrases (e.g. 'blue widgets') are typed into Google (and other search systems) on a minimum monthly basis, and details are noted of the competitors that appear in the PPC results.
- b. Any new competitors that appear are given the highest priority of having their website analysed internally and its strength assessed compared to your website. If no new competitors are appearing then the opportunity is there to go through existing competitors websites to determine if there have been any changes.
- c. That staff are encouraged to find fault in your company website and to find positives in the websites of competitors. Perhaps through offering incentives, useful information will be gained that's not otherwise achievable when people are 'too close' to a company website.

Analysing the competition can be a time-consuming task but if you've got a PPC campaign running then it's an essential task because if you're paying to attract potential customers to your website then you want to ensure that your website is stronger than those competitors. If someone clicks through to your website first of all but then still goes to look at a competitor website, that's not necessarily a bad thing as long as you have the confidence that your website is stronger and so they'll come back to it.

As the last of the 5 Steps to Guaranteed Website Success, this step may appear to be an inconvenience, especially when the business has started rolling in because of steps 1 to 4. However, that ongoing success can't be guaranteed if you're not keeping a close eye on what your competitors are doing in order to start taking business away from you.

## Finally – keep it up and don't cut corners

All business people are busy. To effectively implement the five steps of this guide will not be a small task, but it's a task that bears fruit.

The task doesn't end here though because the five steps should be considered an ongoing process, with an aim to squeeze as much out of website promotion as possible. As an example, if you're spending £100 on clicks each month and that generates sales that have a profitability that doubles the £100 investment then that would seem to be a good result. However, if that £100 of clicks had resulted in 500 clicks at 20p each but the sales had actually come from only 5 of those clicks then 5 sales out of 500 visitors would be considered a poor 1%. This then raises the question of: "if £100 of clicks produces 5 sales that produce a good profit, then how do we get that 1% of clicks converting to sales up to 10% of clicks converting to sales – all within that same £100 of click costs?".

It's only through constantly analysing what's gained out of traffic to the website that you can get a regular picture of how well the website is performing and the aim should always be to increase the levels of success (which can only be done through regularly going through steps 1 to 5 of this guide and making constant improvements).

Custwin clients typically achieve at least 10-20% of clicks converting into business. No company could expect very high conversions from clicks to actual business because there are always window-shoppers, time-wasters, and people who won't buy at that moment. 10-20% may not sound like much but look at what even just 10% of clicks converting to business can mean for companies:

- £100 clicks budget per month at 20p per click = 500 visitors from PPC. If 10% of those visitors convert to business then that's 50 customers and if 50 customers doesn't eclipse a budget of £100 worth of clicks then there's a serious problem with the business model of the company.
- £100 clicks budget per month at 30p per click = 333 visitors from PPC. If 10% of those visitors convert to business then that's 33 customers and again, if 33 customers doesn't eclipse a budget of £100 worth of clicks then there's still a serious problem with the business model of the company.
- Even at 50p per click, £100 of budget brings 200 people to a website, which at a rate of 10% conversion to business equals 20 customers.

Of course, if the type of business is particularly competitive in PPC then there's a big danger in paying higher click cost allowances and the pressure on the website to convert into business is even higher. In our experience though, most types of business don't require particularly high cost per click allowances or high budget, which means that great profits can be gained. But only if the 5 Steps are followed.

We titled this guide '5 Steps to Guaranteed Website Success' with trepidation. The nature of people means that they'll always try to cut corners to get a faster result or will neglect elements of what's advised as time goes on. We can't do anything about human nature but we can conclude with the simple statement that we always recommend this process for clients and those clients that follow it fully are those that are staying streets ahead of their competition.

We wish you the best of luck and would welcome your feedback on this guide.