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Organic Search Engine Results vs. Pay Per Click Advertising

One of the most important decisions facing online companies rests in deciding how to allocate minimal marketing funds. Inevitably, startups need to determine whether organic search engine results or pay per click advertising will prove more beneficial to their bottom line.

Given the relatively small budgets with which online startups typically operate, deciding how to spend marketing dollars can be a daunting and frustrating task. Often, the question of whether to engage in pay per click advertising or rely upon organic search engine results for hits proves to stir the most heated arguments. Indeed, both tactics have advantages. Therefore, understanding a company's relative importance within its marketplace is critical when making this marketing decision.

Typically, when a website is initially online, any hits tagged on the URL originate from organic search engine results. Thus, for example, a company that sells stationery over the internet, may find that some of its hits come from internet users who go to Google or Yahoo and search for "paper retailers." When a user arrives to a website without the aid of an ad or sponsored link, a hit driven by organic search engine results is said to have occurred.

However, in the world of modern online marketing, organic search engine results prove extremely weak when driving users to a relatively unknown site since a general search for "paper retailers" is likely to bring up the largest online companies first. Therefore, startups increasingly rely on pay per click advertising to drive online business. Nearly all major search engines provide customers with pay per click advertising options. Typically, these programs allow online business to, in effect, bid for their position on a search result. Thus, a company who bid, for example, \$5.00 for every click through on a search of the word "stationery" would be listed higher than one who bid only \$3.00 when a user searches for the keyword.

Regardless of the strategy with which a company chooses to market its services, small businesses are encouraged to use pay per click advertising to build business. Startups who choose to rely on organic search engine results will likely witness both low traffic and low sales since they will be competing against much larger companies for attention online.

The decision of how to most effectively use marketing dollars is a critical decision for nearly all online companies. However, understanding the relative importance of an internet business versus its competition will help determine the advertising options that can provide the greatest returns to a company's site and, in turn, its bottom line.