

**Arts Audiences
New Media Mentoring Scheme
Mentoring Report**

Mentor: Google Ireland

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This report was written by Conor Malone specifically for publication on the Arts Audiences website, and for subsequent discussion on the Arts Ireland group on LinkedIn.

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This report is not a step by step guide to setting up google ads campaign. Google themselves have excellent tutorials on how to do this that explain far better than I available at www.AdWords.com.

Rather than just repeating what can be found online elsewhere, I have instead chosen to list 10 relevant points regarding Google Ads from my experience during the mentoring programme. I've also tried to limit the tech-speak and jargon. These points are especially relevant to users, like myself, promoting an arts venue in a rural settings but, hopefully, will be of use to all.

1. Make The Leap...

It's very easy to talk yourself out of giving Google Ads a try. Initially during the mentoring campaign I felt like my father must have, when I tried to show him how to programme the VCR about 25 years ago (a reasonably intelligent man with a mental block when faced with new, unfamiliar technology).

Many venues especially in rural areas can rationalise this reluctance, making the argument that their internet traffic isn't a large part of their market, due to slow speeds and poor broadband penetration.

Since we introduced internet booking at the Balor approximately 16% of our ticket sales are online transactions. This compares to 80-90% for some Dublin venues. The internet isn't going to go away however. As broadband improves, internet usage in rural Ireland and internet business will expand accordingly. By getting in on the ground floor now you can develop your online marketing strategies very cheaply.

Google ads are charged per click, which means that if customers don't click on the link you aren't charged. Cost per click for my ads averaged out at about €0.36 per click. After a month running various campaigns I had still spent less than €50. My website traffic increased by 20% and internet sales for a targeted performance were up to 25% (still not earth-shattering but progress is progress). When broadband and internet traffic does eventually reach the levels experienced in urban areas the work you do now will have you positioned to take advantage with honed, sophisticated online marketing.

2. Install Google Analytics

Nobody buys advertising space in a newspaper without gathering data on print run, readership etc. Similarly, why would you pour resources into developing a website and not gather data on readership, traffic etc? Google analytics is extremely easy to install – it just involves adding some HTML code to your webpages. Your web designer should be able to do it in a matter of hours. If you have basic understanding of HTML it is quite possible to install it yourself.

Analytics gives you information on web traffic to your site – the number of unique users, where they came from, bounce rates (the number of people that land on your site and leave straight away), average item spent on site, average number of pages viewed, which pages are viewed the most etc. Etc.

Used in conjunction with AdWords, you can see exactly how effective different ad campaigns and keywords are working for you. Even if you don't have any campaigns running, you can still use analytics to monitor how effective your website is. And, incidentally, Google analytics is free to use.

3. Choose Your Keywords Carefully

Choosing the keywords for your ads is essentially the same process as used for attaching meta tags to pages on your website. These are the words that, when input into a search engine, can trigger an impression of your ad - you are effectively trying to guess what words your potential audience member puts into a google search. If your keywords are too general, ads will appear to people who are not interested in what your offering leading to low click through rates (see click through rates below). Too specific and you are excluding potential customers from seeing your ads.

4. Input Negative Keywords

When creating your campaign, AdWords has a feature that allows you to list keywords that will not lead users to your ad. For example, Balor has connotations associated with Irish mythology, on-line role playing games and an American university. By listing these as negative keywords, I ensured that people searching for 'Balor' interested in these topics (rather than the venue) were not shown an ad for The Balor Arts Centre.

To give another example if, say, The Linenhall has to run a google ads campaign it may wish to list words to do with linen and the textile industry as negative keywords. The Theatre Royal, Waterford may wish to list Castlebar and Mayo as negative keywords.

Why bother doing this you may ask, if people not interested in the arts centre won't click on the ad anyway, so it costs me no money? If your ad has poor click through rates (see below) it has a negative impact on where your ads are ranked on a page, how much they cost and how often they appear.

5. Click Through Rates

AdWords keeps track of your click through rates. This is the number of times people actually click on your ad impressions as a percentage of the number of times your ad appears. As a rule of thumb, any click rate greater than 1% is good. If you're getting lots of ad impressions but no click throughs you may want to change your keywords. Keywords with poor clickthrough rates will eventually have a negative impact on your listings rankings and on the rate you pay per click.

6. Set Maximum Limits

Initially, when starting a Google Ads campaign you don't know exactly how much each ad click through is going to cost you. This, for me, was the biggest mental hurdle to overcome when choosing to use Google Ads. How could I justify placing an ad when I didn't know how much it was going to cost? My experience of using Google Ads has shown me that this is not an issue. When running an ad campaign you can set maximum limits for the overall campaign spend, daily campaign spend and how much you are willing to pay per click. This allows you to allocate a budget per day or campaign and not worry about going over budget. When your budget has been reached, AdWords will notify you and you can then assess the campaign and decide to end it or to extend the budget. These maximum limits can be changed as often as you change your mind. Campaigns can be paused or restarted with one simple click of a mouse.

7. Per Click Bidding

The actual cost per click is determined by an automatic AdWords auction. The lower you set your maximum bid per click the less chance you have of your ads actually being shown. AdWords will suggest a maximum per click price, which you can then adjust according to your budget. My current campaign is costing me approx €0.36 per click.

8. Experiment, experiment, experiment

I'm fairly sure that one of the ways I drove my mentor crazy during this project was constantly asking what's the best setting for this, how much should I set this at etc. etc. Every event is different, every venue is different and every campaign is different. There is no hard and fast magic optimization formula for you google ads. Tweak and experiment with various price settings and keywords keeping track of data such as click through rate, website hits etc to see what effect your tinkering is having. Remember, you are only paying per click so a wrong move here or there is not the end of the world and is easily rectified.

9. Allocate Time For Google Ads and Analytics

Analytics and AdWords allow you access to an exhaustive amount of information on the internet traffic to your site. You can, quite easily, spend an entire day trawling through different data that is all useful and of interest. Of course, it's also possible to lose sight of what data is important to you. More importantly, time is a precious commodity for us all and hours spent wading through google statistics is also needed elsewhere.

My method is to allocate a precise time period – say 2 hours every Friday morning – that is dedicated to examining google data and refining and tinkering with my ad campaigns. This means that I don't get to miss any essential trends while at the same time limiting how much time running a google ad campaign eats into my overall schedule.

10. Get an Insight into your customers thought processes

One of the most fascinating things I found with the AdWords report was the insight into the customers mind gained by observing which keywords were being successful (and, equally important, unsuccessful) in eliciting click throughs. This gives you a fascinating insight into what words catch a potential customers eye.

Information gleaned from this can be used when compiling press releases, brochure and website copy and advertisements in other media. Google Ads reports give you an invaluable insight into your customers thought processes that can be applied to your entire marketing campaign.