

Like a Switch on the Phone to Make It Ring...

First of a Two Part Series

Pay-per-click marketing brings your web site to the top of the heap, and can be a powerful tool for keeping your shop busy.

Talk to a dozen shop owners, and the one thing they'll all agree on is that the key to being profitable is getting the phone to ring. If they could control that, the rest would be easy.

Well, Larry Bloodworth and Lorraine Myers, of Certified Transmissions in Draper, Utah, claim to have discovered the secret to capturing those top listings and making their phone ring whenever they want. According to Larry, it's like having a switch on the phone to make it ring.

If what he's saying is true — and we have no reason to doubt him — this could be the breakthrough that we've all been looking for. Over the next couple issues of *GEARS* we're going to examine the unorthodox methods he's using to put his shop ahead of his competition, and we'll see whether they're something you'd want to try to duplicate for your shop.



Larry Bloodworth, owner of Certified Transmissions in Draper, Utah

The New Yellow Pages

Once, not so long ago, being successful in the transmission business hinged on your placement in the Yellow Pages. More than one shop closed its doors in its first year, simply because they made the mistake of opening just after the close of the Yellow Pages for their areas. Without that critical advertising edge, they just couldn't remain afloat.

These days the Yellow Pages are becoming more and more irrelevant. Today the key to putting your shop in front of your customers is the internet. Just a few years ago, ATRA's *What's Working* study revealed that more consumers are using the internet instead of the Yellow Pages when looking for a transmission repair shop.

Which means the internet can be an invaluable tool for your shop; just as an effective Yellow Pages ad was a few years ago. The key is to use it

properly... and a critical component of that use depends on maintaining your visibility through search engines.

The idea of internet search optimization is fairly straightforward: You determine the most popular keywords that people use when searching for your services, and embed them in your meta-tags and throughout your copy.

Of course, reality is rarely as simple as concept: Should you use *transmission repair* or *transmission repairs*? That simple "s" at the end of the word can make the difference between being seen on page one or page ten.

And what about regions? Transmission repair is regionally based: In most cases you don't really care about anyone who's more than a few miles from your shop. Even in rural areas, you don't want to be bothered with people more than maybe 50 miles away.

The key to internet success is



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"Spend \$60 bucks, get \$732. Everytime, Automatic. Like clock-work. It's like having the keys to a slot machine in Vegas. Can I be any more clear?"
Larry Bloodworth, owner Certified Transmissions, Draper, UT -



placement: The higher your rating in the search engines (primarily Google), the more successful your internet marketing will be. Simple, right?

Not so much. Because there are hundreds of nuances that can alter your placement; sometimes a difference as simple as adding that “s” to the end of a keyword can cause a profound difference to your position. So how can you be sure of getting your link to the top of the list? Pay-per-click marketing

Pay-Per-Click Marketing

With pay-per-click, (referred to by Google as Adwords), you agree to pay Google every time someone clicks on your ad. How much? That depends on who else is interested in those same keywords. It's basically a bidding war, with the highest bidder getting the best position on Google.

Google Adwords employs a process similar to the bidding process on eBay. You place a maximum bid for the keywords you want; they accept just enough for you to beat your competition. For example, say you wanted *transmission repairs* as your keyword, so you bid \$5 per click. If the next highest bid for that keyword in your area offered \$3, Google would charge you \$3.10 per click.

In exchange for that per-click fee, Google agrees to ignore their rules for placement and moves your link to the top of its list. Sort of like the *maitre d* at a fancy restaurant: You want the good table, so you grease his palm.

Of course it's not as simple as that; it never is. Remember, you only wanted people in your region. So Google lets you choose to pay for only those searches that originated from within a

set radius from your shop: 10 miles, 15 miles... you choose the area you want to pay for.

And maybe there are searches you don't want to pay for. Such as *transmission service*. Not that you wouldn't be happy to service someone's transmission; you just don't want to *pay* for the referral. Let them find you the old-fashioned way.

Google has that covered too, with *negative keywords*. You choose a list of words that would disqualify the search from pay-per-click. If someone uses those keywords, Google doesn't include your link in the pay-per-click placement.

It all seems very complicated, and it is. But when you sign up with Google, You can either call or send an email request to have a Google representative assigned to your account who helps you get started. Once you start using the program, they'll be happy to help you refine your settings, to make sure you're getting the results you're looking for.

You can learn more by visiting *YouTube* and searching for *Google Pay Per Click*; they have hundreds of videos that'll show you the ropes, and help you get more out of your pay-per-click experience.

Larry's Technique

With all that in mind, let's take a look at how Larry Bloodworth uses pay-per-click to switch his phone on and off. His technique is fairly involved, but it's hard to argue with his level of success.

Larry has spent a lot of time and effort refining his list of successful keywords; both positive and negative. For example, one of his discoveries is that anyone who searches for a specific transmission designation — such as E4OD or 4T60E — is probably a price shopper.

Not that he's unwilling to speak with a price shopper; he just doesn't want to *pay* for the privilege. So he lists those designations as negative keywords. If the consumer searches for *4T60E transmission*, Larry's link won't show up in the pay-per-click area. It may still show up under his lower, *organic* search placement; that is, the placement his site has earned based on its keywords, relevance, and visitor appeal.

Once he has his list of keywords — both positive and negative — he bids on those keywords on the Google site. Google offers a keyword tester, so he can test how his bid will affect his placement immediately.

And he applies his restrictions, such as regional limitations. Usually Larry starts with a 15 mile radius from his shop.

Then he waits for the phone to ring. If the phone isn't ringing enough, he might open his region a bit, to 20 miles. Or he might increase his bid a dollar or two. If he gets too busy, he goes the other way: reducing his region or lowering his bid. He can even shut the pay-per-click off entirely, with the click of a mouse, if he needs to.

So how's it working? According to Larry, “Spend \$60 bucks, get \$732.

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Every time. Automatic. Like clockwork. It's like having the keys to a slot machine in Vegas."

Tracking the Clicks

One critical element in the pay-per-click success story is tracking those clicks. It's imperative that you be aware of which clicks are turning into jobs, and which are just costing you for the click.

For this, Larry works with an internet tracking company. For a relatively small investment, they provide him with a few invaluable marketing tools:

First, they supply a set of codes to the end of his link on his Google listings. This code lets them track the consumer: They know the keyword that triggered his ad, the date and time of the call, and much more.

In addition, they provide Larry with a Java script that changes the phone number on his web site. They have dozens of unique phone numbers; by using a different number for each person who clicks on his ad, and visits his site, they can track which keywords

converted to calls. The calls are then seamlessly routed to the shop.

By learning which keywords are driving the calls, Larry can answer a number of questions about each customer:

- Which keywords convert into phone calls and which ones just generate clicks?
- How did they find his site; organic or pay-per-click search?
- Was it in the desirable 10 year old or newer vehicle?
- What were they looking for; were they just price shopping or did they set an appointment?
- Could they afford the repairs?

This information and more allows Larry to analyze his keywords and refine them to provide the greatest success rate.

And, with Larry's small, 4-bay shop on track to exceed \$1 million in sales this year, it's hard to argue with his success.

Not for Everyone

While Larry's success is undeniable, it may not be for everyone. For one thing, there's the issue of time: Larry puts hours of research and development into his pay-per-click marketing... every day. Not everyone would be able or willing to dedicate that much time into marketing his or her shop.

And, as Danny Sanchez of *Autoshop Solutions* — one of the speakers for the management track at this year's Expo — points out, your internet marketing should be balanced between professional web site design, and pay-per-click and organic placement. We'll talk to Danny about his thoughts and views on internet marketing in part two of this article.

Balanced or not, there's no denying Larry's results. Thanks to his work with Google Adwords and their pay-per-click ad program, he's able to turn his phone on or off seemingly at will; it's how Larry Bloodworth is *making it work* in Draper, Utah.



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