
Pay Per Click Prodigies

More and more companies in Devon and beyond are selling their services on the Internet, with some hotels and guest houses, for example, using it as their sole means of advertising.

To make a booking or sale, though, you've got to be seen. One of the most effective ways is to have your name come near the top of the list in a search result. Search engines like Google and Yahoo! offer sponsored results (usually in a column down the side of the results screen), where advertisers can pay to get their names higher up the list. These advertisements are paid for only when somebody clicks on the link to a given Web site, hence the term Pay Per Click.

Plymouth-based Open Eye Marketing offers a service to get your name higher up the sponsored results lists, by 'bidding' for search keywords. Say somebody does a search for 'bed and breakfast Brixham Devon' and you run a B&B in Brixham, you'd like your advertising to respond to 'Devon' and more to 'bed and breakfast', but you'd probably be most interested in it responding to 'Brixham'. Open Eye Marketing could therefore design your advertising to bid more and get higher up the list when Brixham is mentioned, than just Devon. The company's MD, Andy MacLean, says you get very targeted advertisements this way.

Using its techniques, Andy claims the company can typically get businesses many good 'leads' every day and for comparatively small amounts of money. You tell the company how much you want to spend on advertising per month — the average figure is £150-£300 — and they will bid for the keywords where search results are most likely to do well for you. Depending on your area of business, keyword bids may cost a few pence, up to a few pounds per search, but you only pay for those where the customer clicks on your link and moves through to your site.

And Open Eye Marketing can do better than that. By tracking which sites and which keywords provide the most useful 'click-throughs', they tweak where your ads are placed to get the best return for your money. No wonder search sites are so successful.