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Pay-Per-Call Advertising: Is It The Next Big Thing?

By Dean Phillips

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Is a phone call better than a click? Pretty soon advertisers will be able to make the final call on that question.

Advertising developers are pushing a new type of paid search ad dubbed "pay-per-call."

The technology for pay-per-call was actually introduced in April by Ingenio, a San Francisco-based company that develops technology for delivering online ads.

Five-year-old, privately held Ingenio has 90 employees and expects 2004 revenue of \$65 million to \$70 million, says Marc Barach, chief marketing officer. He says it's been profitable the last seven quarters.

Barach says Ingenio has received a patent for the main technology that enables pay-per-call. It deals with call-switching software and hardware that track and route 1-800 calls made by consumers to advertisers.

In paid search, advertisers pay companies like Google to place their ads prominently on their results pages for specific search terms.

The main type of paid search involves pay-per-click ads. That's where advertisers pay a certain amount each time someone clicks on their ad.

Pay-per-call takes that idea one step further. Here's how it works: Advertisers pay a certain amount only after a user

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dials the 1-800 number that appears with the ad. In theory, advertisers will be getting an even more interactive response than if someone merely clicks on their ad.

Pay-per-call ads are currently in the process of being tested. The target market appears to be mostly small businesses. The ads will be programmed to appear in local searches, which target a specific ZIP code. Local search is a quickly developing market.

Advertisers will have to pay more per call than per click, but if the pay-per-call ads provide a better lead than the pay-per-click ads, developers and analysts alike expect the

market to really take off.

Jupiter Research says U.S. advertisers will spend \$3.2 billion on paid searches in 2005, up 23% from an expected \$2.6 billion this year, so a lot of advertising dollars could be at stake.

Developers think bigger companies will also use pay-per-call, if they see small businesses having success.

"The customer sees the ad, calls in and the call is routed through our software and hardware to the advertiser's phone," Barach said.

Advertisers know who called, where they called from and how many calls were made by any caller.

Ingenio has just completed most of the testing on its pay-per-call technology, and the first big distributor is signed up.

Barach says Internet marketing company FindWhat.com of Fort Myers, FL., is promoting the ads with clients.

FindWhat runs online ad campaigns and places ads for clients on search engine networks.

Spokeswoman Karen Yagnesak says FindWhat is starting to distribute pay-per-call ads on hundreds of search engine and portals, including Terra Lycos and Verizon SuperPages.com.

FindWhat says interest is "strong," but it won't say how

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many advertisers it's signed up for pay-per-call.

Barach says pay-per-call gives small companies a "bigger bang for their buck." These companies can't afford to waste advertising dollars trying to get clicks that don't lead to sales, he says.

Phone calls give companies a much better chance of making a sale, Barach says.

Another plus for small companies is that pay-per-call doesn't require that they have a website.

According to researcher Kelsey Group, 70% of small and midsize U.S. businesses don't have a website.

"Pay-per-call opens Internet advertising to millions of businesses that wouldn't otherwise participate in it," Barach said.

In the case of FindWhat, advertisers will bid to get placed in the results of certain search terms.

That's a method commonly used with pay-per-click as well. FindWhat expects that the minimum price will be about \$2 per call, much higher than the pennies, that advertisers pay per click.

FindWhat says there will be no extra charges for multiple calls from the same consumer made within a 10-day window.

In addition to paying \$2 per call from a consumer, FindWhat might charge advertisers up to 10 cents for each minute they talk after the first, free 10 minutes.

FindWhat is waiving the 10-cent charge for now to encourage advertisers to try pay-per-call.

Personally, I love the pay-per-call idea! If someone is willing to pay \$2 for a telephone call, I would consider that a pretty solid lead.

Just One Click Away!

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A thriving way to help optimize your online image is to consider using the pay-per-click advertising. What pay-per-click means is that you purchase sponsored links on the pages of search engine results. Search engines are used every minute of the day, which means advertising your website with pay-per-click will greatly increase the advertising of your website.

By advertising your website with pay-per-click, you are helping to advertise your business in what is usually an inexpensive way that is growing larger and reaching more people everyday. You can also tailor your pay-per-click advertising to fit your business or company budget needs. This is a plus for those of you who are starting out on a budget and want to stay away from paying a lot for advertising that may or may not be seen. By advertising your website with pay-per-click, your ad is surely going to be seen. More advantages to advertising your website with pay-per-click include the speed of advertising, the increase in traffic to your website, and the ability to research and compare data to see what works best for your website.

There are times, however, when advertising your website with pay-per-click can prove to be costly. For example, it will cost you more to use competitive keywords than it will to use that are not as competitive. Finely tune your keyword strategies. You can find information on the Internet on this or you might want to consider consulting a professional. Also remember not to bite off more than you can chew. Start with one pay-per-click provider first, using ads you have tested, and then extend your campaign accordingly.

Advertising your website with pay-per-click can be a very quick, inexpensive way to get your website and business rolling. Drawbacks can always pop up, but if you educate and prepare yourself, you will be able to make the most out of advertising your website with pay-per-click.

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for more details on work at home



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