



Business Insights

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Identifying and stopping click fraud

Many small businesses include pay-per-click marketing strategies as part of their internet marketing plan. Many are equally frustrated by the latest reports indicating high rates of click through but few sales. If your cost per click keeps rising and your sales continue falling, click fraud may be at the root of the problem.

Click fraud will always exist, whether it's malicious computer programs automatically clicking through or someone training a monkey to sit and click. Affiliate marketers may continually click through on ads, hoping to raise earnings. All of these dishonest practices can be exceptionally damaging.

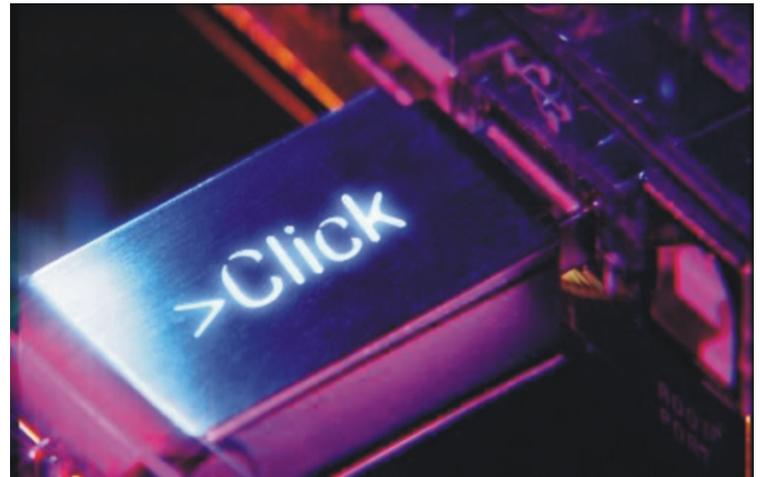
Small businesses can identify and stop click fraud by taking the following steps:

1. Avoid signing up for ad networks. Although many of these promise to earn companies money, the rate of click fraud is much higher for companies that participate in ad networks than for companies that rely upon search engine marketing.
2. Learn how to identify the IP address of competitors. Monitor click-through campaign reports for competitors' IP addresses. If competitors are at the root of the problem, contact them to get them to stop. If the problem persists, threaten legal action.
3. Warn all employees not to click on ads for your business. Some disgruntled employees have been known to do this in order to damage the budget.

For personal computer users, look for the following warning signs that a botnet has been installed on your computer without your permission:

1. Be sure to install top-notch virus protection software on computers, especially PC's which tend to be more vulnerable to attack. Virus programs may infiltrate computers with botnet viruses.
2. Watch out for slowed performance and slow startups. These may be a sign that other programs such as botnets are loading behind the scenes.
3. Schedule frequent updates for Internet browser software, virus protection, and other patches.

If you believe your business has been the victim of click fraud, report it to the major search engine companies together with the IP addresses of the click throughs. This will assist greatly in the identification process and stopping all future fraud. Never leave things to chance.



Plan for snowy days ahead

Businesses are seriously risking closure if they fail to factor in future disruptions due to adverse weather, such as snow and flooding. Statistics show that 80% of small businesses affected by major incidents close within eighteen months.

The recent heavy snowfalls across the UK have already affected thousands of businesses. Whilst most will have received some degree of goodwill from their customers for failures to supply goods or services in a timely manner, businesses that fail to plan for such events ultimately risk their customers seeking alternative suppliers.

Small and medium sized concerns are failing to include the risk of snow in their business insurance policies in the belief that severe and disruptive weather will not affect them. Few plan for snow and whilst for many the disruption is relatively short-lived, for some it can result in several days or even weeks of disrupted trading. In today's uncertain economic conditions, it is worth considering every eventuality.

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