

Yahoo Search Marketing Handbook

By Jim Hedger, StepForth News Editor, [StepForth Placement Inc.](#)

Mona Ellesseily has nearly five years experience crafting Yahoo Search Marketing (YSM) campaigns for her clients but over the last 16-months, she has been absolutely immersed. As the Yahoo! (Overture) PPC expert working at Canadian paid search advertising firm [Page Zero Media](#), Mona has enjoyed a unique opportunity to learn, explore and understand the inner workings of Yahoo's premier PPC program. In the autumn of 2004, she was "challenged" by her employer, [Andrew Goodman](#), to write a book explaining the intricacies of establishing and managing a successful YSM PPC campaign.

The result of her work is the [Yahoo Search Marketing Handbook](#), a 102-page manual that starts with the basics, outlines potential pitfalls and gradually guides the reader towards establishing and maintaining winning YSM PPC campaigns.

"Yahoo works if you put the time into it," Mona said in a phone interview. Accounting for almost a quarter of all paid search advertising viewed on the web, Mona describes YSM as an important but tricky medium. While it shares many similarities with the better-known Google AdWords program, Yahoo Search Marketing has a number of unique parameters and a notably different user-interface. "Advertisers coming over from AdWords might have problems diving into YSM," Mona noted.

There are a number of features and terms used by YSM that might trip up advertisers and webmasters more familiar with Google AdWords. Mona tries to steer her readers through the differences between the two programs without assuming they are approaching PPC from a Google-centric point of view.

One of the major differences between the competing programs is Yahoo's keyword and ad matching options. Matching options allow advertisers to determine keywords to emphasize or exclude as YSM searches for contextually relevant venues to display their advertisements. They also allow advertisers to select regions where various ad groups will or won't be displayed. Understanding how to use these options can make the difference between successful, cost-effective campaigns and expensive failed experiments.

Partially due to Google's longer reach and partly due to YSM's user interface and operability, YSM advertisers have to work a little harder to create winning ad campaigns. "Even small campaigns can take a long time to set up, sometimes as long as 3 hours," says Mona. She noted that large campaigns with thousands of keyword phrase targets could sometimes take 40 hours or more to set up.

"Keyword research is more important working with YSM than it is with AdWords", Mona says. Google has a lot more distribution power and more network partners to serve advertising to. Marketing through YSM requires tighter targeting and strategic thinking as advertisers can pick and choose opportunities and venues.

The book is written with the expectation that the reader has some prior web design experience. Having a well built and optimized website is important for making sales and satisfying long-term customers but if working in the realm of pay per click marketing, the ability to quickly create and modify individual pages

is critical. In the handbook, Mona discusses the creation and optimization of landing pages tailored to specific PPC conversion goals.

There are a number of labour saving tips, techniques and tools available to YSM advertisers. Knowing how to best use them is crucial to the art of managing a number of ad groups. The handbook is divided into sections, starting with an explanation of the YSM interface. Other chapters discuss crafting editorial content, Yahoo bid strategies, how matching options work, potential financial problems, customer service issues, and include screenshots, case studies and to-do lists.

Writing a how-to book about search marketing is fraught with peril. Often, the moment the book is published it has already become obsolete. Mona is already working on the outline for a second edition. Buyers of this edition will be automatically subscribed to regular book updates via the "Page Zero Advisor". Mona is also planning to produce a series of Podcasts that book buyers and subscribers will be able to access.

The hardest part in writing this edition of the handbook was working on the outline. It took Mona over a year to figure out how to best structure the book and research the material. Flushing it all out only took a few months. The second edition might prove much easier, especially since Yahoo has recently provided her with a lot of new material.

Earlier this week, Yahoo announced major upgrades to YSM's interface and technologies. Yahoo outlined a number of added or improved features in a [press release](#) issued on Monday. Scheduled for summer 2006, the press release says the upgrades, "... will include,

- **Intuitive Control Panel** - provides a simplified interface with user-tested navigation, allowing advertisers to easily understand their performance and providing them opportunities to modify or enhance campaigns every step of the way
- **Enhanced Geographic Targeting** - leverages Yahoo!'s WhereonEarth technology, which draws from 15 years of geo-targeting expertise to enable Yahoo! to more accurately understand and match to user search intent ("Soho, NY" versus "Soho, London") and colloquial terms ("restaurant near Fenway Park" is in central Boston, MA)
- **Fast Ad Activation** - provides a streamlined content review process that allows advertisers to launch most new ad campaigns in less than 30 minutes
- **Ad Testing** - supports automatic rotation of multiple versions of ads to determine the most effective, and, over time, displays the highest-performing ads more frequently
- **Visible Quality Index** - scores ads based on quality, bid and other relevance variables, and will be made visible to advertisers to enable them to gauge and optimize placement when the quality-based ranking model is implemented
- **Share of Clicks Forecasting** - displays data regarding the bid needed to achieve an estimated specific share of expected clicks, helping advertisers to set and reach traffic and conversion volume goals
- **Goal-Based Optimization** - enables advertisers to let Yahoo! automatically help find the least expensive way to meet their business goals -- defined as Cost Per Acquisition or Return on Ad Spend
- **Assists** - shows advertisers the full value and contribution of every campaign by allowing them to see how ads drive both immediate and deferred conversions across multiple campaigns -- not just the last click that led to a conversion"

The press release ends noting, "Future versions of the new platform will include additional distribution options and audience targeting based on factors that could include demographic information or online behaviour, as well as additional ad formats enhanced with graphics or rich media."

Updates should be available shortly after Yahoo releases its new platform, Mona said. There are currently about 420million Yahoo subscribers. It is the second largest search engine and one of the world's most visited sites. Its PPC program actually pioneered the paid search advertising market. It drives a lot of traffic.

Mona smiled across the phone line when asked to describe her overall impression of Yahoo's paid search platform. "YSM can be confusing and a pain in the rump but once you understand it, it can be a very effective advertising medium." She should know. She just wrote the book on it.