

# OUT ON YOUR OWN

## Getting the word out there

Companies seeking a global presence may find the answers in Google's online advertising programme AdWords

**G**oogle AdWords, the online advertising programme run by the search engine provider, has played a vital role in enabling Irish cosmetics company Voya to get off the ground, according to co-founder Mark Walton.

Walton established the Sligo firm with his wife Ciara in 2007 to sell organic skincare products made from seaweed. Its use of Google AdWords had, he said, enabled it to gain traction in international markets.

The idea for the business grew out of the seaweed baths run by the Walton family in Strandhill. Four years on from establishing the business, Voya is hitting sales of €1.5 million and will shortly move to a new production facility in Sligo town.

It sells a range of 100 products to spas and 30 to consumers, including visitors to its website [www.voya.ie](http://www.voya.ie).

Walton believes the online route is an absolute necessity for Irish retailers operating in a tough market.

"We had a website from day one. In our business, you can't go without one. It's like a brochure for your products. Any company with a retail product should have a website. There is huge scope, but there is a bit of a land grab online at the moment. The internet is constantly changing and offering new marketing opportunities.

"Google AdWords is possibly the single most important online resource for advertising your product, but it is complementary in that you do need to consider other tools like Search Engine Optimisation, Facebook and blogging for example."



Elaine O'Regan

As Walton sees it, the biggest benefit Google AdWords offers is its transparency and the way in which it allows advertisers to analyse sales data.

"When you go to trade fairs, or use marketing or ads, it can be difficult to measure the response from potential customers – and exactly how this activity converts into sales. Our business involves a lot of marketing, so being able to quantify this is very important," he said.

"The feedback you get with AdWords is instant. It is very transparent. You can see if someone clicked on your ad and bought your product. You know the cost of the process and the profit you made on the sale."

According to Claire Walsh, Google AdWords expert, the aim of the service is to enable anyone selling a product or service over the web to manage their online advertising.

"It is a performance-based advertising program that enables businesses to advertise on Google and its network of partner websites. It is built on an auction-based system that calculates the minimum amount necessary to maintain your position on the search results page," said Walsh.

AdWords allows companies to



Mark Walton, co-founder of Voya: 'We had a website from day one'

COLIN GILLEN

create ads and choose keywords related to their business. When people search on Google using one of their keywords, their ad may then appear alongside the search results.

Launched in the US in 2000, AdWords hit the Irish market in 2002, partnering with website owners, news pages and blogs to display ads.

It uses two formats: search and display advertisements. Search ads are text-based. They are displayed on the top and right-hand side of the Google homepage when you are viewing the results of a particular search. Display ads can use text, image and video content.

"Display adverts can be more elaborate ads and are shown across a network of relevant websites across the web," said Walsh.

Walsh said AdWords offered companies several benefits, including the ability to 'pause' ads, make

changes and target customers in specific locations using different languages.

"Users can easily see how their ads are performing. They can generate reports on different aspects of their advertising campaign – for example, how the ads are performing overall or how many times keywords generate clicks through to their website," she said.

"They can then use that data in order to make changes accordingly. Most importantly, the advertiser only pays for the number of clicks per ad – that is to say, when someone is actually prompted to take action when they view your ad."

Before embarking on your AdWords strategy, Walsh said it was important for start-ups to think carefully about their goals.

"Then, if you are planning on setting up an AdWords account, make

sure you have a holistic message and that your ads are clear, reflect what you are offering and convey information about your website," she said.

"Take the time to really think about your strategy and what you are hoping to achieve. Make sure you have clear goals set out so you can properly gauge your performance and make appropriate changes where necessary."

Walsh said it was vital that companies monitor their AdWords campaigns on an ongoing basis.

"Sometimes companies can set up an AdWords account and then forget about it and leave it to run on its own.

"It's very important to monitor your performance. Make sure you know how your campaigns are doing and regularly check to see if any changes need to be made," she

### Top tips for AdWords

Claire Walsh, Google AdWords expert, has this advice on online marketing for start-ups.

■ Before beginning your advertising campaign, have a clear and defined strategy to set out the goals you want to achieve.

■ Ask yourself: who are my customers, where can I find them and how do I want to reach them?

■ If you have a shop in a specific location, make sure your customers know where you are. You can also increase your visibility by setting up your business on Google places ([www.google.com/places](http://www.google.com/places)).

■ If you are selling a product online, ask yourself if potential customers can easily find what they are looking for, and if your ads clearly reflect what you are offering.

■ Once you have your strategy in place, make sure you understand the Google AdWords system and how it works. My advice to new users is always the same; research is key.

■ There is a wealth of information about AdWords on the web, including blogs, help centres and even a dedicated AdWords Small Business Centre, which details a step-by-step guide to setting up your AdWords account.

■ Once your account is set up,



Claire Walsh

check your performance regularly and use the data available to expand and evaluate your campaigns.

■ You pay only when someone clicks on your ad. It is up to you how much you spend on each click and where your ads appear.

■ Google has information services for first-time AdWords users. There are the AdWords Help Centre, Help Forum and Online Classroom.

■ For general tips, check out [www.gettingbusinessonline.ie](http://www.gettingbusinessonline.ie), which offers information on how to get online or improve your web presence.

said. The search engine provider has contextual targeting technology that automatically matches ads with its partners' webpages. You can also use placement targeting to tailor advertising campaigns to specific sites – or site sections – on which you

want your ad to appear.

Additional features mean advertisers can tailor their ad campaign further to target specific demographic groups, for example, based on age or gender; location or language.