

# Blue Ridge Community College

Prospering In 2009 Conference

Web Marketing for Accommodations

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## I. Current Market Trends - What are people looking for?

People are still spending – but they are looking for the best deals they can get. Discounts, special offers, and coupons are HOT. According to a recent report from [www.ComScore.com](http://www.ComScore.com) (an internet marketing research company), **coupon usage is up 33%** from last year. One surprise is that high-income households are among the highest coupon-users and deal-hunters.

If you have a website, come up with a special offer and display it prominently on your home page. For example:

- Make sure off-season rates are prominently displayed or easily found
- Offer discounts for length of stay, slow days/months
- Create “value added” offers, such as partnering up with spas, local attractions, restaurants
- Create a “VIP Club” with perks for repeat customers
- Offer a discount or small gift for signing up for your e-newsletter or for referrals
- Put a printable discount coupon on your site
- If you are also running print ads, offer a discount for presenting the ad on check-in
- Create special “getaway” packages – go beyond the usual wedding/honeymoon/romantic getaways

I am sure that many of you are already doing at least a few of the above.

In today’s economy, do everything you can to show potential guests that you are offering a great deal for a very special experience.

Current trends also include an emphasis on day trips, taking vacations locally, and “staycations.” You should be sure to include these target markets in all your advertising and marketing methods.

Last but not least, be sure to thank you guests after they have departed with a thank-you note, postcard, or if they have signed up for an e-newsletter, send a thank-you message *right away*.

By offering something special for those on a tight budget, you generate customer loyalty. They will remember you, and they will recommend you to others.

## II. Why, When & What People Look For in Accommodations

- **Special occasions**, holidays, birthdays, babies, anniversaries, weddings, and other special occasions – **this is recession-proof!** In addition to the internet tips I suggest farther on, *connect with businesses in our area that cater to these events.*
- **Tourism.** We all know that right now, the entire tourism/travel/hospitality business is suffering. But that does not mean people have stopped traveling altogether. Right now, tourism can be divided into two categories: those with money who do a lot of traveling anyway, and those who may have to cut back on their vacation plans but don't want to give up completely.

In my research and experience working for those in travel and hospitality, I have found that both the people with money and those on a tight budget are price-shopping – but that does not mean they are looking for the cheapest possible trip. They are also looking at the quality of their accommodations, customer service and TLC, little perks, special features, what's nearby for activities and entertainment, and what makes your particular venue special and different from others.

- **Business Travel, conferences and retreats.** Though business travel has dropped, it is still needed. So if you own or manage a venue with facilities, promote that. Know what business travelers are looking for: price, facilities that include enough room, the digital & internet connections they need, and a way to unwind and relax after a long day of conferences or meetings. If you don't have these facilities, don't try to market yourself for it.
- **Family reunions or visits.** There are many reasons for family gatherings, and often, they are important reasons whether happy or sad. These visitors are likely to be looking for very specific dates, probably short stays, and convenience to where they need to be. For example, some visitors will want to be near a church for a wedding, a restaurant or hall for a reception, a funeral home, a hospital or nursing home. Others may be here for a reunion of a large number of people. They will want accommodations where they can all be in the same place or at least near each other, things to do and places to go, and chances are, they'll want your help planning all of that. Catering to family visits needs to emphasize your customer service and helpfulness.
- **Relocators.** Regardless of the current economic climate, many people are still looking to relocate to Asheville and western NC. These visitors are "more likely" to be economically better-off, and will need a place to stay while they check out everything we have to offer. These customers are less likely to care about price, more likely to care about quality, and again, assistance from you in guiding them to the features and amenities they consider important (anything from golf courses to educational opportunities.)
- **On-The-Road Travelers.** Those making a long drive to another state may want to stop overnight here. Emphasize good value for the price, easy accessibility, pet-friendly, and whether you have an in-house restaurant or are within walking distance of places to eat. If you offer smoking rooms, be sure to say so! Smokers specifically look for that and will be *very* reluctant to stay anywhere they'll be banished to a rainy sidewalk.

## III. Making the Most of Your Web Site

### A. If you have your own website:

Most likely you are found when people do a search, based on any number of possible criteria. Most likely they are starting with a location in mind, but not necessarily. The general public often search based on looking for “ideas” and “suggestions” for a place to go, a vacation, or a day trip. Possibly they want to go whitewater rafting or hiking and search on that basis. This is why it is important to tell potential guests as much as possible not just about your accommodations, but what else is nearby and what they can do during their stay.

You might also be found when someone lands on a “directory” type of site, such as the big ones like TripAdvisor, or more local ones like [www.asheville.com](http://www.asheville.com) or [www.ncblueridge.com](http://www.ncblueridge.com) . I will discuss this strategy in the next section.

Having your own your own site gives you:

- An online business card/brochure
- The best way to link up with other websites and online resources
- The best way to exchange links with other local & regional businesses with websites
- A venue for writing articles and content about activities and attractions for guests
- Online Reviews – if you have a web site, guests can post reviews of your accommodations on any number of other sites, from Google & Yahoo to TripAdvisor and more. Those reviews can contain links back to your site.
- Videos and virtual tours
- A place for guest testimonials

## B. If you do not have your own website:

Although I certainly recommend that you get a site, even a simple one, many of the internet marketing suggestions that follow are equally applicable whether you've got a site or not. For a professionally-built site expect to pay about \$1000 (possibly more depending on features you want.)

A few of my favorite site builders:

- [www.handwovenwebs.com](http://www.handwovenwebs.com)
- [www.blueridges.com](http://www.blueridges.com)
- [www.cgraydesign.com](http://www.cgraydesign.com)
- [www.quasisuave.com](http://www.quasisuave.com)

For do-it-yourself, I recommend checking out [www.coffecup.com](http://www.coffecup.com) , [www.xsitepro.com](http://www.xsitepro.com) , and <http://Komposer.net> . (Komposer is free site-building software that is built on the foundations of the old Netscape Composer, by some of the same developers. I am currently trying it out.)

You will also need your own Domain Name, i.e. your [www.mybusiness.com](http://www.mybusiness.com). Obtain this from [www.networksolutions.com](http://www.networksolutions.com) , [www.godaddy.com](http://www.godaddy.com) , or [www.dotster.com](http://www.dotster.com) . Costs vary between about \$10-\$35 a year. Network Solutions is at the higher end, but they have excellent telephone support should you ever need it. Absolutely pick a dot.com. Keep it simple, descriptive, and easy to remember. Avoid needing dashes or numbers.

For your own site, you will also need a Hosting Service. This is where your website files actually reside and makes them available to the entire web. I have two recommendations:

Mountain Area Information Network ([www.main.nc.us](http://www.main.nc.us) ). They are local, and charge \$150 a year. Their service and support is very good – but not available 24/7.

Hostgator ([www.hostgator.com](http://www.hostgator.com) ). This is the company I use. Their Linux Baby plan is only \$8/month, and their service, support and features are very good. A major reason I like them is that their features include *very simple installation* of a Wordpress blog.

If you need more information about how to set up a website, please contact me and I'd be glad to help.

## IV. Internet Marketing Opportunities & Linking Strategies

### A. Marketing Via Other Sites

1. Whether you have your own site or not, getting listed on other travel-related web sites is crucial to the hospitality industry for several reasons:
2. You need the support of links from other sites for search engines, especially Google.
3. Travelers use many different ways to find accommodations – so you need as much internet “presence” as you can get.
4. It is to your advantage to partner up and cooperate with *related* businesses and attractions, such as restaurants, event and wedding planners, florists, spas and massage services, national parks, outfitters, golf courses, the list goes on.
5. Encourage customer reviews. There are so many places guests can write a review that again, you want to spread your business name and website address as much as possible.

Following is an extensive list of places and sites that you should consider for adding your business. All of these sites have been thoroughly vetted and have shown a history of good results for my own clients in the hospitality & travel industry. Some are also applicable no matter what your business.

For all the sites I am listing on the next few pages, please double-check the listing and advertising pricing, as these tend to change. Even online directories and sites are feeling the pinch and are reducing pricing or offering special offers.

### B. Broad-scope online directories I recommend:

Open Directory	<a href="http://www.dmoz.org">www.dmoz.org</a>	Free
SoMuch	<a href="http://www.somuch.com">www.somuch.com</a>	Free
SearchSight	<a href="http://www.searchsight.com">www.searchsight.com</a>	Free
CyberWebSearch	<a href="http://www.cyberwebsearch.com">www.cyberwebsearch.com</a>	Free
Infignos	<a href="http://www.infignos.com">www.infignos.com</a>	Free
Clickey	<a href="http://www.clickey.com">www.clickey.com</a>	Free
Best of the Web	<a href="http://www.botw.org">www.botw.org</a>	\$100/yr *excellent
Starting Point	<a href="http://www.stpt.com">www.stpt.com</a>	\$99/yr
Aviva	<a href="http://www.avivadirectory.com">www.avivadirectory.com</a>	\$50/yr
Ezilon	<a href="http://www.ezilon.com">www.ezilon.com</a>	\$69/yr

Broad-scope directories continued -

Skaffe	<a href="http://www.skaffe.com">www.skaffe.com</a>	\$45 1-time
Seoma	<a href="http://www.seoma.net">www.seoma.net</a>	\$15 1-time
InCrawler	<a href="http://www.incrawler.com">www.incrawler.com</a>	\$25 1-time
JoeAnt	<a href="http://www.joeant.com">www.joeant.com</a>	\$40 1-time
FamilyFriendlySites	<a href="http://www.familyfriendlysites.com">www.familyfriendlysites.com</a>	\$50 1-time
Splash	<a href="http://www.splashdirectory.com">www.splashdirectory.com</a>	\$25 1-time
Gimpsy	<a href="http://www.gimpsy.com">www.gimpsy.com</a>	\$40 1-time
WorldSiteIndex	<a href="http://www.worldsiteindex.com">www.worldsiteindex.com</a>	£11 1-time

(Note on directories that are based on annual fees – all of them allow for cancelling at any time.)

### C. Online “Yellow Pages” :

- <http://listings.yellowpages.com/> Free listing without web link. \$54/month with web link
- <http://advertising.superpages.com/spportal/> Free listing does include a web link, reasonably priced options for enhancing it.

Recently, Google has been emphasizing these listings a lot more than they used to. Be sure you’ve got at least a free listing (which won’t include a link to your site), and consider upgrading your online listing so that it does include a link.

**Warning:** do not sign up for ANY online advertising program from a telephone company, Yellow Pages or any similar company offering such services. They usually require a contract at exorbitant price, and your money would be well-spent elsewhere. Concentrate only on the listing.

### D. Local Search:

It is absolutely critical that your business is accurately listed in the following (free) Local Search portals. These three are extremely important! Get listed, provide as much detail as you can, and link to your site. Each requires a login, but they will not result in any kind of spam.

- Google Local at <http://www.google.com/local/add>
- Yahoo Local at <http://listings.local.yahoo.com/>
- Local.com at: <http://advertise.local.com/>

## E. Geo-Targeted Local Sites

A big trend in site design and internet marketing are “geo-local” sites. Though some have been around for years, there are many more out there now. These types of sites are directories to anything and everything related to a specific geographic location. Following are a few of the local ones that are tried & true. They have excellent Google standing, rankings and results, so listing your business there will boost your own site.

- [www.asheville.com/lodging/](http://www.asheville.com/lodging/) - \$30/month
- [www.brwm.org](http://www.brwm.org) - Free, operated by MAIN
- [www.exploreasheville.com](http://www.exploreasheville.com) - Contact for listing info & rates
- [www.exploreblackmountain.com](http://www.exploreblackmountain.com) – Contact for listing info & rates
- [www.ashevilkenow.com](http://www.ashevilkenow.com) – contact for listing info & rates
- [www.ashevillecvb.com](http://www.ashevillecvb.com) – Asheville Area Convention & visitors Bureau
- [www.ncblueridge.com](http://www.ncblueridge.com) – Online travel guide to western NC
- [www.ashevillechamber.org](http://www.ashevillechamber.org) – Asheville Chamber of Commerce
- [www.asheville.bbb.org](http://www.asheville.bbb.org) – I recommend getting the BBB “badge” for your site

There are bound to be more that would prove beneficial to you. Check for any “official” site of your Chamber of Commerce, County Tourism & Development Authority, and any site that is specifically about the town and region where you are located. Also make sure that any associations you belong to are listing your *business on their site, with a link to you.*

## F. Specific Travel and Accommodations Sites of Value

Many of the following will be familiar to you – I hope I have found some new ones to add to your arsenal! All of these sites have proven to be valuable in referring prospects and guests to all types of accommodations during my experience working the travel & hospitality field.

- [www.ashevillecabinrentals.com](http://www.ashevillecabinrentals.com) (owned by [www.ashevilenc.com](http://www.ashevilenc.com) )
- [www.bbonline.com](http://www.bbonline.com) – for B&B’s and Inns Only - \$169 to \$515 per year for premium listing
- [www.virtualcities.com](http://www.virtualcities.com) – for B&B’s, Inns, small hotels, vacation rentals, wedding destinations
- [www.findrentals.com](http://www.findrentals.com) - \$199/yr, they advertise heavily on Google and elsewhere
- [www.vacationrentals.com](http://www.vacationrentals.com) - \$148/yr, boasts very high Google rank
- [www.vrbo.com](http://www.vrbo.com) – (Vacation Rentals by Owner) \$179/yr

The following four are a “network.” Pay \$299/yr to be listed in all four:

- [www.homeaway.com](http://www.homeaway.com)
- [www.A1vacations.com](http://www.A1vacations.com)
- [www.cyberrentals.com](http://www.cyberrentals.com)
- [www.greatrentals.com](http://www.greatrentals.com)

More sites for all types of lodgings and accommodations:

- [www.romanticasheville.com/advertise.htm](http://www.romanticasheville.com/advertise.htm) - excellent Google presence. Contact for rates.
- [www.hotel.org](http://www.hotel.org) – for members of the American Hotels & Lodging Association
- [www.forgetaway.com](http://www.forgetaway.com) – a Weather Channel site
- [www.lakerentals.com](http://www.lakerentals.com) – a Weather Channel site
- [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com) – you *can* request the addition of your venue for free
- [www.professionaltravelguide.com](http://www.professionaltravelguide.com) – targeted to corporate and business travelers
- [www.wegoplaces.com](http://www.wegoplaces.com) – free, but requires you put a reciprocal link on your site
- [www.virtualtourist.com](http://www.virtualtourist.com) – reviews & articles - contact them for advertising rates.
- [www.trails.com](http://www.trails.com) – site for travelers looking for outdoor adventure. Contact for advertising rates.

## G. Online Travel Magazines and Co-Op Advertising

Many regional print magazines and have an online version, and offer advertising programs for print, print & web, or web only. Four I recommend based on performance (a good rate of click-throughs from the ad to your site :

- Southern Living
- Blue Ridge Country
- Our State
- South Carolina Magazine

## H. Online Review Sites

For businesses in travel, accommodations, and hospitality, I recommend encouraging guests to write an online review. These are increasing in importance in two ways:

Search engines count them in their overall evaluation of a site.

Travelers are using them more and more for planning a trip.

You may be concerned that someone will write a bad review, or a competitor will try to bad-mouth you. The general wisdom in my business is that yes, you will “occasionally” get an honest, bad review, but the vast majority will be positive ones. There is even some evidence that the occasional 2-star review while most others are 3 and above, actually increases the likelihood that searchers will take the good ones as true, and pay more attention to them.

Online Reviews continued –

If you do encounter an honest bad review from a guest, some sites will allow the business owner to respond and try to resolve a problem and make the customer happy.

As for competitors “planting” bad reviews, all reputable review sites are aware that this can happen and have ways of watching for these. Bogus reviews are usually not posted at all, or deleted, and in most cases you do have recourse for contacting the site and reporting such reviews.

**Warning:** Never, ever write your own reviews or allow your employees to do so! Again, review sites have “ways” of detecting false-positives and there is a good chance they will ban you from their site if they catch you doing this.

**How to get customers to review you online:**

1. Ask them to on your website. You could simply say “Thank you for selecting us for your stay. Your opinion is important to us – please take a moment to rate us or review us online in Google, Yahoo, TripAdvisor or your favorite review site. Thank you!”
2. Go to TrustLink.org which was developed in association with the Better Business Bureau. Create a company profile, and then use their “widget” to place on your site. This is an easy way for customers to do a review – all they have to do is visit your site. (You can check out this feature on my own site, down near the bottom of my homepage at [www.weaversites.com](http://www.weaversites.com) . I would recommend placing yours in a more instantly visible place.)
3. If you have the guest’s email address in a written guestbook or log, send them a *personalized* email thanking them, and ask them to review you online. Your happy customers will be only too glad to do so.
4. Mail a postcard (even better, a note card) if you don’t have a legally-obtained email address.
5. Include ‘Review Us Online’ on your letterhead, customer receipts, and other printed materials your customers are likely to see.
6. Create Review Cards and leave them in guestrooms, public areas, and your restaurant (if you have one.) Keep them short and sweet. Include space for a hand-written review, as well as a suggestion for reviewing online. Include a checkbox asking whether you can use their testimonial on your site (for hand-written reviews.)

Online Reviews continued -

### Suggested Review Sites:

- Google Local - (just search for the business, and there will be a link for ratings)
- Yahoo Local – works the same way
- [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com)
- [www.realtravel.com](http://www.realtravel.com)
- [www.travelpost.com](http://www.travelpost.com)
- [www.we8there.com](http://www.we8there.com) – reviews for both dining and accommodations

The only difficulty to overcome with online reviews is that all require a (free) login – that’s part of the way these sites keep people honest. So, someone who uses Gmail will already have a login for Google, someone who used TripAdvisor probably has a login there, etc. There’s no way for you to know. Don’t worry about it – many of your customers will be familiar with doing online ratings and reviews.

Just remember, even a few good online ratings/reviews can do wonders for your online presence!

## V. Blogs

There is a very grey line between a “website” and a “blog” these days. You can either tack on a blog to your existing site, or you can use the Blog to *be* your entire site. You do need a site hosting account, and it does involve a software installation on the web server. The most widely-used and feature-rich blog software is WordPress ([www.wordpress.org](http://www.wordpress.org)).

The **first point** of doing a blog is that it allows you to interact and stay involved with your customers, prospects, and audience in general. It also allows for easy insertion of pictures, videos, and music. Blogs are also very “social-networking-friendly”. You can also add “static” pages to a blog that are just like the pages of a regular website.

The **second point** of doing a blog is that it’s an easy way for a site owner to regularly add new content to their site. Search engines absolutely favor sites that frequently updated. Just make sure your content is somehow related to your business and location.

For those in the hospitality business, I’d say the second reason is the more productive one.

There is one other way to do a WordPress site/blog: go to [www.wordpress.COM](http://www.wordpress.COM) (not dot.org) and you can sign up for a free blog there. However, I do not recommend this as the best way to go, unless it’s your only option. The reason is that your site address will be something like [www.mybusiness.wordpress.com](http://www.mybusiness.wordpress.com). It is always preferable to have your own, independently-hosted site for search engine optimization reasons.

Finally, the best part is that you can easily manage it all yourself!

## VI. Using Social Media/Networking

The value of “social networking/social media marketing” for businesses is debatable – in fact, it’s being debated like crazy throughout the professional SEO and IM online world. The truth is, online social networking is still a recent phenomenon, and figuring out how to make it work for businesses is even newer. There is no consensus yet. For businesses, it will take another year or two before we have a clear idea of what actually works, and for which types of businesses.

The primary objective is to generate interest in you and your products and spread that interest to others by word of mouth, as well as getting links to your site on other people’s Facebook page, or in a Twitter “Tweet”, for example.

The primary task for you, the business owner, is to *participate*. Social Media Marketing requires being social. Be engaging, interesting, helpful and resourceful. Hard selling definitely does not work!

My opinions and advice:

Although it is experimental, I would still encourage you to at least try it out, and spend a *little* time becoming familiar with various channels and participating. It may bring you customers, but think of it as a long-term process and a secondary part of your overall marketing and advertising efforts.

Social networking is *most* useful for establishing and strengthening Branding and Identity. This may or may not be useful to you, depending on your business. It might help with establishing name recognition of an independently-owned B&B or Inn, but not very useful for a franchised hotel.

Following are the most widely known and used networks. One of the best ways to get the most out of them is to search for *Interest Groups* to join – or create your own. Make sure to use different logins/profiles for personal and business. Trust me – I have learned that the hard way.

- [www.Linkedin.com](http://www.Linkedin.com) – best for professional connections, networking, and recommendations. A profile on LinkedIn carries very high search engine presence.
- [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com) – best for more casual communication and networking, but the business presence is growing.
- [www.Facebook.com](http://www.Facebook.com) – you can add a business page to your profile. You can also create your own Interest Group. (If you go that route, you should be prepared to spend more time on it to keep it fresh and interesting to others.) As of March 2009, I would wait a while before starting anything new with Facebook. Recent redesigns have been resoundingly booed by 95% of users, so more changes may be in the pipeline. Give it a few months and let the dust settle.
- [www.ning.com](http://www.ning.com) – the new kid on the block. Ning is a little bit like Facebook but much cleaner and easier to work with, and is rapidly gaining recognition. It is designed for people to create *their own* social networks, or you can look for an existing one to join.

## VII. Video for Your Site

Do a virtual tour of your property, inside and out. In the hospitality business, seeing is believing!

Creating a video is not hard – pretty much all you need is a digital video camera and a computer. There are many inexpensive, perfectly suitable video cameras available these days. Newer computers have a port for plugging your digital video camera. Very inexpensive adapters to connect to a USB port are available if your computer doesn't have a video-in port.

The way it generally works is that you create your video, dump it onto your computer, the log in at either YouTube or Viddler and upload your video to their site. It is now available for the entire world to see. Next, you want to embed this video on your site. To do this, you click on the button/link that accompanies your online version for "embed". This will provide you with a small piece of code that needs to be inserted into your site, where you want the video to appear. It's very easy to do.

While YouTube is more familiar to all of us, [www.Viddler.com](http://www.Viddler.com) is gaining recognition. It is free, it works pretty much the same as YouTube, but it has advantages. The most important one is that you can "brand" your video with your logo or business name. You can't do that on YouTube.

## VIII. e-Newsletters

An e-newsletter is a very effective way to generate customer loyalty, repeat business, and word-of-mouth. With e-newsletters, you already have an interested audience because *they* made the decision to sign up! Keep it short, simple, and offer your subscribers something of value – even if it is just free information. They are also great for advertising special promotions, events, and for thanking your customers. Better yet, offer new customers a coupon or discount for future visits or for referring a friend. That personal touch after someone has bought your product is golden.

Follow the Can-Spam Act! When sending out emails, you must be careful how you go about it. Unless the recipient has specifically requested information and updates from you (either online or by signing a paper list), your email *will* be spam. No ifs, ands, or buts.

The optimal way to do an e-newsletter is to have a signup box on your website. To do this you employ a service company. It is very easy to set up and use. Pricing structures vary, some go by the number of subscribers you have, some go by the number of emails you send out. But monthly costs average around \$30-\$50.

Recommended e-News companies:

- [www.constantcontact.com](http://www.constantcontact.com)
- [www.iContact.com](http://www.iContact.com)
- [www.mynewsletterbuilder.com](http://www.mynewsletterbuilder.com) (in Asheville)

## IX. SEO (Search Engine Optimization) for Web Sites

If you have a site, it is important that all search engines can find your site and all the information within it. SEO covers everything that can be done *on the site itself* to ensure your site isn't invisible, and to obtain the best possible search results/rankings.

If you already have a web site, the *first* thing you should do is make sure the fundamentals are covered!

The top most important factors to consider:

- Technical construction that allows search engines to see the information and follow all the links throughout your site. This means not using all-Flash or navigation buttons based on complicated programming. (Provide an alternative method for accessing the site contents, such as a text-based site map page as a workaround if necessary.)
- Text. That's all search engines care about. The information about your business and products needs to be in visible text (not embedded in graphics or Flash.) Your text should be written with the site visitor in mind first – *then* consider how you can insert important "keywords".
- Number of pages and extent of copy. Yes, size does matter ☺ But it has to be *relevant* content. Include information about places to go, things to do, our history, etc.
- Inbound Links. Links from other *quality sites of related subject matter* carry a great deal of weight, especially for Google results.
- Metatags. These are the Page Title and Page Description. They are used heavily by search engines to determine if your site is a good match for what someone was searching for. They also affect how your site description appears in the search results. Each page should have its own customized Title and Description.
- Updates. Sites that are never updated will languish. Try to make some changes, even minor ones, once a month.

## X. PPC (Pay-Per-Click) Advertising

The method familiar to most people is Google AdWords. These are the “sponsored listings” you will see along the right-hand side (and sometimes at the top) of a search results page. Yahoo also offers a similar program, as do many other venues.

Google works like this:

1. Sign up for an account. Billing is based on providing a credit card to charge against.
2. You set your budget. Google works on a max per day basis.
3. You specify whether you want to “prepay” or “postpay” for your ads. Choose prepay! The postpay method is much more restrictive on what you can do with your campaign. You deposit funds into your account (it’s charged to your credit card) and then Google will automatically charge your card again when your funds get low.
4. Do not worry about billing “surprises.” The entire budget and spending is entirely under your control, can be changed anytime you want, and you can also halt or delete the campaign anytime you want.
5. You can set additional factors, such as running your ads only in a certain geographic area, or only at certain days and times.
6. Your Campaign essentially consists of a list of keywords you select (Google has a tool to help you with this in the process), and a text ad you’ve written. Whenever someone does a search that includes one of your keywords, your ad will show up – depending. You have to specify how much you are willing to “pay per click”, and the amount you’re willing to spend is *one of* the factors that determines whether your ad appears, ad in what slot (#1 or #5, etc.) If a competitor is willing to spend twice as much as you, their ad is more likely to show up.
7. The way to success is to pick targeted, specific keywords, ad write your ad well – make sure it includes your keyword and if possible, has some attention-grabbing content. You can write as many ads as you want, to pair up with your selected keywords. The relevance and wording of your ad is another very important factor for when & where your ad shows up.
8. Monitor your activity, and accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative.

There are many other options and tools when using Google AdWords. Google does a fairly good job of providing explanations and help files for the whole system.

You should also consider PPC on travel-relates sites, such as:

[www.travel.yahoo.com](http://www.travel.yahoo.com) – their program charges a fixed \$0.47 per click.

[www.kayak.com](http://www.kayak.com) – this site has a huge audience. I believe the PPC setup is similar to Google.

Finally, another option you may want to consider is to advertise on Facebook. It is based on the same model as Google AdWords, i.e. Pay-Per-Click. The nice feature about Facebook is that you can target your ads by location, age, gender, and other factors. Since Facebook is not *yet* cluttered up with advertising, it is worth investigating.

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If you have any questions following this presentation, I would be glad to answer them. Please contact me by email (anytime), or call Monday-Friday, 9:00 – 6:00.

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