



**P P C**  
**ASSURANCE**

## Counting Clicks



### **Counting Clicks; Varying Methodologies & Discrepancies**

Sometimes there will be a discrepancy between the total number of clicks reported by your PPC (pay-per-click) Advertising network provider (Google AdWords, Yahoo! Search Marketing, MSN AdCenter, etc), and any analytics reporting service, including PPC Assurance.

There are a variety of factors contributing to this discrepancy, most notably the fact that various analytics packages and your PPC network provider use different methodologies to count your clicks.

In this document, we explain how PPC Assurance counts your clicks and what is required to ensure complete accuracy. That you will find a discrepancy between the numbers provided in PPC Assurance and those recorded in your PPC provider's reports, does not always reflect a problem, and we will report to you if this discrepancy is acceptable. However, PPC Assurance will also notify you if the discrepancy is larger than expected.

### **Counting Clicks**

When a visitor clicks on a link displaying your ad on an advertising network, the following takes place:

- your PPC Advertiser counts the click and charges you for it,
- depending on the ad network a unique click identifier is appended to the referral, ensuring only unique clicks from that network are counted.
- the visitor is redirected to your web site.

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**ENQUISITE**

“Half the money  
I spent on  
advertising is  
wasted... With PPC  
Assurance – I now  
know which half!”

*Marketing Manager*

You should be aware that your PPC network provider cannot ensure that a visitor obeys the redirection instruction, and actually arrives at your web site. Regardless of whether a visitor actually arrives at your site or not, your PPC network provider will register a click-through and may charge you for it.

PPC Assurance counts clicks when a visitor actually reaches your site. If a visitor does not arrive at your web site, or if for some reason they do not complete the redirection instruction, PPC Assurance does not count that click. PPC Assurance counts the traffic that arrives at your site while your PPC network provider counts the traffic that leaves their network of sites.

We recognize that there is no such thing as a perfect counting mechanism. PPC Assurance’s counting mechanism requires visitors to have JavaScript turned on. If a visitor’s browser does not allow JavaScript to run, then PPC Assurance does not ‘see’ this visitor and can not count it.

Using statistics publicly available [1-4] and PPC Assurance’s own analysis of log files we are able to estimate the percentage of your visitors that have Java scripting turned off. This number allows PPC Assurance to estimate the expected discrepancy between PPC Assurance’s counts and your PPC network provider’s reporting. If the observed discrepancy is larger than expected then those missing clicks are reported, and should be considered as a potential problem, requiring further investigation and possibly clarification through discussion with your ad network provider.

There are a variety of reasons why the click counts could differ. You should keep in mind that if your site was down for technical reasons, then there will be no visits to record during that down time period. Therefore, this “missing” traffic is in fact likely valid, your business simply was not open when customers arrived. In general, you should not worry about any discrepancy if they are due to your site having technical difficulties (down periods).

If your site has been working properly, then it is a fact that a number of visitors never reached your site and that clicks generated by those visitors are cause for concern. This circumstance will require further investigation and possibly clarification through discussion with your ad network provider.

It is well known that malicious programs (bots) can click on your ad but ignore the redirection instruction, or not execute any JavaScript on your page if they do arrive. As such they are invisible, and fall into what we term as the “missing” click category. An abnormal increase in your missing click counts may be indicative of click fraud, and definitely requires further investigation by your ad network provider.



[1] Global usage share data, TheCounter, [www.thecounter.com/stats](http://www.thecounter.com/stats)

[2] Global usage share data, W3Schools, [www.w3schools.com/browsers\\_stats.asp](http://www.w3schools.com/browsers_stats.asp)

[3] JavaScript usage estimates, 2007-JSIR-LT Internal Report, Enquisite Software Inc.

[4] JavaScript usage estimates, 2007-JSIR-DY Internal Report, Enquisite Software Inc.

These missing clicks are certainly of interest to your ad network. While some ad network providers manage extremely sophisticated algorithms to minimize your campaign's exposure to click fraud, they are unable to see the traffic that actually arrives at your web site.

PPC Assurance provides an objective third-party audit of your campaign, so that when issues in your PPC campaign arise, you can approach your ad network provider with meaningful information about every single click. In the case of missing clicks, this means you can provide them feedback on the traffic you received and they can properly investigate the issue by examining their own transaction log files and comparing the traffic that arrived at your site against that which they attempted to direct to your business.