

Research and development

Claiming R & D tax relief on SEO and PPC campaigns

Search engine optimisation and pay per click campaigns are nowadays core elements in the marketing mix. However, SEO and digital agencies may be unaware that they can claim tax relief for their work in some cases.

As a general rule, the day to day SEO and PPC activities do not qualify for relief - in these cases, practices are well established and you will have a good idea of what works and what doesn't.

+ WHILE THE RULES ON R&D TAX CREDITS ARE COMPLEX, THE TRICK IS TO UNDERSTAND THE TYPE OF ACTIVITIES THAT MIGHT BE ELIGIBLE AND SPEAK TO AN EXPERT TO CHECK IF YOU HAVE A CLAIM.



The projects most likely to be eligible are the complex and challenging campaigns, where you are required to come up with innovative solutions and where there is uncertainty about how effective it will be or whether it will work at all.

To illustrate the point, here are four common areas for claims:

1. Unclear Guidelines

Google and other search engines change their algorithms frequently and their guidelines are often ambiguous. In some cases, established techniques such as the use of keywords may fail to deliver the expected results and SEO specialists may have to experiment to find out what works while being mindful of those unpredictable and unexpected risks.

2. Overseas SEO

Dealing with western search engines can be difficult enough but improving rankings on sites such as Yandex or Baidu is a lot more challenging and uncertain. Again, the work may involve experiments and trialling different solutions to find what's most effective.

3. Developing SEO Tools

Clever SEO agencies are increasingly developing their own tools to automate the process or measure some aspect of SEO performance. This enables them to then offer this as a standalone product which could then generate ongoing income. This type of product development work is a common theme in R&D tax credit claims.

4. Ranking Pay Per Click

Many clients are surprised to find that the success of pay per click campaigns may depend on their website ranking - if Google considered it not so relevant for the target audience, their ads will achieve little visibility. In some cases, resolving the problem is not so straightforward.

If you require further advice in relation to R&D tax relief, contact us at:

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