

Paid Search 101

By Jon Myers

I've been doing the paid search game for more than 10 years now. While there are a myriad of wonderful PPC tools, analytics, and tracking options out there, it's important to get the core functions right — a lot of people still don't. PPC is all about "unity," and it's important that this is the case in all five areas of paid search, so let's discuss them one by one.

1 Account Structure

Quite simply, this is the point of success or failure in a lot of respects. It's easy these days to come up with a very large list of words, but the initial keyword research for account launch is only a starting point. Structure is critical, and you need to consider the industry sector or product base you are marketing to, and most of all, keep the structure relevant to this.

Structure should either continuously evolve or be maximised after the initial launch period on an ongoing basis. Learn from the data: You might not get it right first time, but you will get a feel for it the more you do it. Always start the structure with a brand and non-brand split, but re-categorise and split main keywords into their own ad groups as you start to review the data. Most importantly, always think relevancy.

2 Keywords

As I mentioned, it's easy to let Google's tools generate a host of keywords and for you to then split them into relevant ad groups. But then how do you maximise their potential using the match options? This is what I would look to do from experience:

- exact match (all keywords)
- phrase match (all keywords)
- broad match (only major keywords, preferably in their own ad groups)

Broad matching can be dangerous because expanded matching to irrelevant search queries does happen (thanks Google); also, broad matching across ad groups can affect analysis. It is important to negative match to broad, phrase, or exact, as required. On the other hand, this setup is very useful because it allows use of the Google "Search Query" tool for keyword research. Google states that 20 percent of queries it receives daily "have not been seen in the last 90 days" and that "broad match accounts for over 1/3 of worldwide clicks and conversions."

The process to follow: Use the "Search Query Report" on an ongoing basis; manage keywords and phrases from broad match to

exact match to reduce CPC; and maintain maximum coverage in the market. Really, you have four options:

- already in account — no action required
- relevant, but not in account — add as exact match
- irrelevant — add as negative match
- already in account, but in a different ad group, which triggers the ad — add as negative exact match

An extra layer to this is the newer addition of the Google SBKT "Search-Based Keyword Tool," giving additional keyword research across PPC and SEO terms that would be added as exact match.

3 Creative

This is your chance to sell from the SERP page, so get it right. Using three or four in rotation is an optimal amount. Consider brand, targeted, sales-focused, and dynamic keyword insertion (DKI). Automatic optimisation limits testing options and is not recommended as best practice, but may be the best option if testing is unlikely to happen on your account. With Google, you can either serve all ads the same amount of time, or allow Google to control them based on the best click-through rate (CTR), but remember high CTR does not mean higher sales.

Granular categorisation allows targeted creative by ad group in the account. Target to landing pages wherever possible, and look at the creative your competitors are running — what's working for them? PPC is a very deal/sales-focused environment, so great deals win. Third-party tools such as Adgoooo will allow you to see who is being aggressive on your keywords, how long they are in market, the position they take, the ads they are using, and the CTR they have.

4 Landing Pages

Since Google started including landing page relevance into the quality score metric, good SEO practice has started to come into the mix. The more relevant the page that the keyword and ad text link to, the more reward in a lower CPC you will get. A good landing page has two parts:

- It's relevant and ties into your keyword and ad text.
- It is sales- and conversion-focused with a clear route to the end goal.

Don't let the size of accounts be a barrier to testing; it is not good practice to drive all

Want to learn more?

Jon will introduce the paid search session on Wednesday at 2 p.m. He'll also be speaking on two paid search panels on Thursday.

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the traffic to the homepage. PPC is great because we know what users are looking for when they type keywords into Google, so let's take them to a page that relates to what they're looking for.

5 Bid Strategy

This will vary by account, follow this premise: Manage brand and non-brand separately. Also, be careful of the nuances between search and content networks — they are completely different.

Brand should be uncapped on spend and with 100 percent exposure at all times. This is easily your cheapest acquisition area, so make good use of it; underpin your PPC campaign with a good foundation of business. On non-brand, it's important to work to your KPI target (this is generally based on max CPA x conversion % = affordable CPC), and this will govern the amount you can spend. Ideally it would always be great if this is uncapped on spent, but if restricted, aim to be live as often as possible by reducing bids to get as many clicks as possible with the available budget.

It may reach a point when you can't reduce bids any further, as it would do more harm than good, so look toward day-parting and being live at the key conversion points in the day. Monitor lost impression share for those keywords, and tie this in with your competitor monitoring.

Reviewing ongoing performance is essential. Keep track of your KPI targets; Google's systems can be used to track CPA by keyword, so there is no excuse. Don't just compare this week versus last week; instead, always be looking at the big picture for seasonal trends and opportunities. Full account reviews, including any necessary keyword additions or culls, should be done monthly. *



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