THE ECOMMERCE MARKETER'S PPC PLAYBOOK

A guide to make PPC work for you

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INTRODUCTION

Why do you need this guide?

In a highly competitive digital world, pay-per-click (PPC) platforms like Google Ads are a powerful way for marketers to reach their target market at the right place/time to drive more traffic, more sales and greater return on ad spend (ROAS).

But if you have experience with PPC then you know how much work actually goes into the process of launching a campaign. You might be constantly looking for ways to make your PPC easier and more effective, yet this kind of guidance can be hard to come by.

Does that sound like you? So what do you do next?

Whether you're managing PPC in-house or through an agency, this eBook can help develop your own understanding of what's required (and what's not) to find success with your campaigns, outlast the competition and maintain a higher average ROAS.

But that's not all: we'll also be sharing some agency-side secrets with you (shh!) about common misconceptions and little-known facts that can improve your PPC outcomes in leaps and bounds.

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INTRODUCTION

Who is this guide for?

Digital/eCommerce Marketers

You want to get more campaign inspiration and refresh yourself on the essential principles and the what, why, where and how of PPC.

PPC advertisers

You want more know-how on crafting campaigns and bidding strategies that'll blow the competition away (while feeding your bottom line).

Anything else I should know?

Yes. This guide is just the first step to transforming your PPC results. The rest lies in your hands: conducting your own account audit, finding the hidden opportunities and tailoring each strategy to your business. If you have a reliable PPC agency partner, they should take care of all this for you so if you'd rather get the ball rolling quicker, contact alphawhale today for a complimentary session to get your PPC results on track.

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01
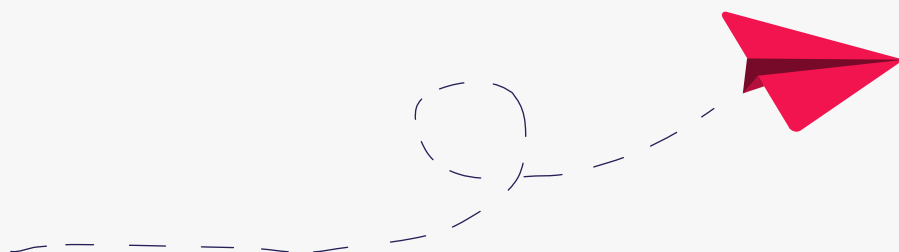
Choosing the right PPC channels for your business

01 CHOOSING THE RIGHT PPC CHANNELS FOR YOUR BUSINESS
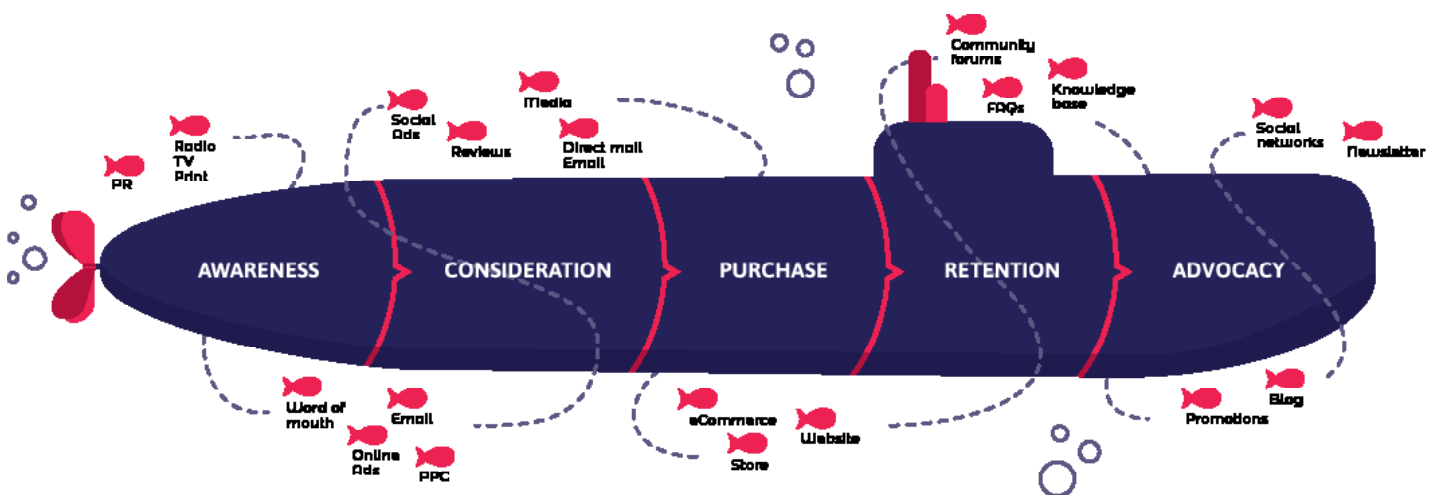
What channel should I be focusing on for PPC?

One of the most frequently asked questions by marketers is: What channel should I be focusing von for PPC?

There's a swathe of platforms that fall under the 'PPC' umbrella, but let's focus on the two most recognisable platforms that marketers deal with everyday: Facebook and Google Ads. So which do you choose for better results?

The answer is...

A combination of both - Facebook and Google. Here's why.

Consider the typical journey someone might go through online to discover your product/service.

AWARENESS   CONSIDERATION   PURCHASE   RETENTION   ADVOCACY

PR | Radio TV Print | Social Ads | Reviews | Media | Direct mail Email | Community forums | FAQs | Knowledge base | Social networks | Newsletter

Word of mouth | Email | Online Ads | PPC | eCommerce Store | Website | Promotions | Blog

01 CHOOSING THE RIGHT PPC CHANNELS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Maybe they start by seeing a Facebook Ad about your brand, but they don't click. What they actually do is jump on a Google search trying to learn more about you. They visit your site, get distracted and close the window. Later on, they see a remarketing ad from you and visit the website again - but this time they actually make a purchase.

This is all a part of the modern customer journey: it's convoluted!

Because of this, different advertising platforms will compliment different stages of your customer journey as they move through awareness, consideration and conversion.
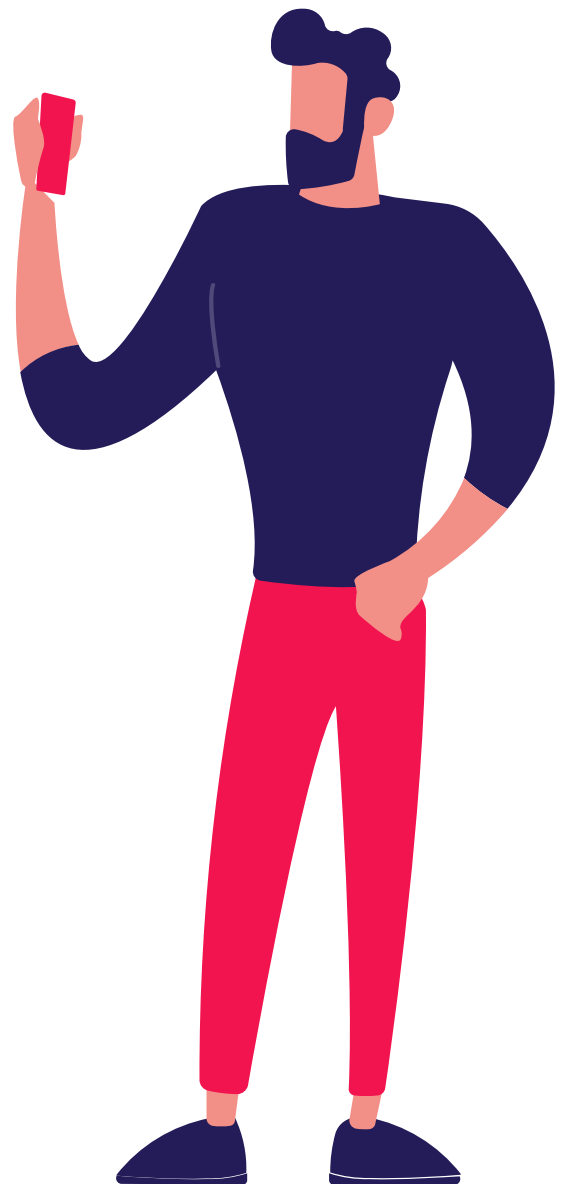
01 CHOOSING THE RIGHT PPC CHANNELS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Most brands use Facebook and Google hand-in-hand to boost results across all three stages of the flywheel. Commonly, Facebook is used to drive brand awareness/lead generation and Google Ads are used to 'close sales' i.e. increase website traffic and conversions.

One also contributes to the other. For example:

Advertising on Facebook can lead to a 34% increase in brand searches on Google.

If you have the budget, know your customer journey and business model; our advice is to always use Facebook and Google to complement (and not compete with) each other.

Although this guide will focus on Google Ads, we encourage you to explore the opportunities in leveraging both Google and Facebook Ads to strengthen your brand holistically.

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02

Your Google Ads glossary: terms & meanings

02 YOUR GOOGLE ADS GLOSSARY: TERMS & MEANINGS

Have you ever jumped into your Google Ads account, only to think "What… IS all of this?"

You're not alone. The Google Ads suite consists of a huge array of sub-channels: from text to Shopping Ads, YouTube, Google Display Network (GDN), Gmail etc. which means that there's a ton of features and terms to remember.
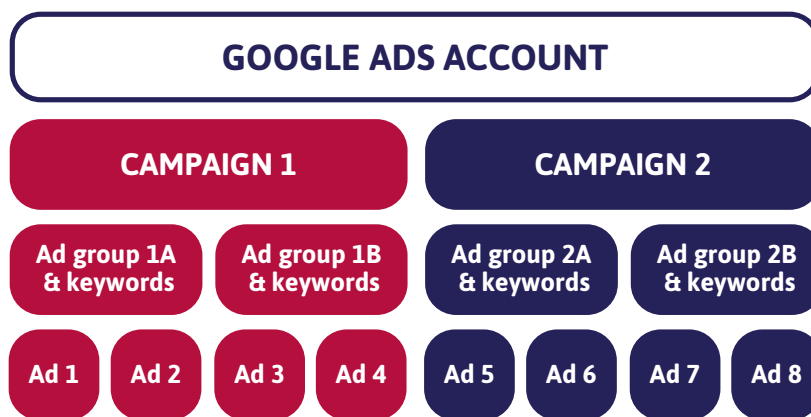
In the spirit of simplifying what others have complicated, here's your cheat sheet/glossary of terms to help you confidently explain your way around Google Ads and the important features your business can use.

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02 YOUR GOOGLE ADS GLOSSARY: TERMS & MEANINGS

1. Google Search Ads and general terms

A basic account structure in Google Ads might look like this with three different layers: your Campaigns, Ad Groups and then Keywords/Ads.

GOOGLE ADS ACCOUNT	
CAMPAIGN 1	**CAMPAIGN 2**
Ad group 1A & keywords / Ad group 1B & keywords	Ad group 2A & keywords / Ad group 2B & keywords
Ad 1 / Ad 2 / Ad 3 / Ad 4	Ad 5 / Ad 6 / Ad 7 / Ad 8

Think about it this way:

- Campaigns are your foundations
- Each ad group is a house
- Keywords help find the house
- Each ad is a way the house is presented

Account features, from A-Z:

Ad Groups

A set of ads that target a certain set of related keywords. Ad groups are used to keep your campaigns organised.

Bidding

There are thousands of businesses who want to sell their products/services to you by showing their ads at the top position in SERP (search engine results page). But not everyone can get their ads into position 1; that's when bidding comes into the picture. Bidding typically refers to what price you can offer, competitively, to show your ad in the first place of SERP.

02 YOUR GOOGLE ADS GLOSSARY: TERMS & MEANINGS

Bidding strategies

There are multiple bidding strategies in Google based on your business objectives/goals. These vary between manual (DIY) and automated (which Google run for you based on a certain goal). These include but aren't limited to:

~ Manual Cost Per Click (CPC)

~ Automatic Cost Per Click (CPC)

~ Enhanced Cost Per Click (ECPC)

~ CPA Bidding (Conversion Optimiser)

~ CPM Bidding (Cost Per Thousand Impression)

Campaign type

Campaigns are often used to organise categories of products or services that you offer. Campaign types include Search campaigns, Display campaigns, Shopping campaigns, and YouTube campaigns.

CTR

Click Through Rate is one of the most important KPIs across all Google campaigns, and measures the number of clicks that your ad receives per number of impressions. Ideally, a campaign CTR should be above 2%.

CPC

Cost Per Click is the amount that you pay to Google every time a user clicks on your Google ad.

02 YOUR GOOGLE ADS GLOSSARY: TERMS & MEANINGS

CPM

Cost per thousand views/clicks. This is the cost that you pay for every thousand views of your ad. This is the best bidding strategy for video campaigns.

Conversion Rate

Conversion rate is the percentage of visitors that have made a conversion (filled out a form or purchased a product) on your site out of the total number of visitors who have been to your site from an ad. This is a key way to measure the success of your campaigns.

Ad Extensions

Extensions are a Google feature that lets you provide additional information about your business like price, permanent offers (i.e. Free Shipping), average rating, extra links to pages on your site, etc. You can create ad extensions for free, but if a user clicks on an 'extension' Google will charge you as though it's a normal click.

Match Types

Also known as Keyword Matching Options, Match types help prevent irrelevant traffic visiting your site by helping control which searches on Google can trigger your ad. Each match type has its own advantage or disadvantage. Match types include broad, modified broad, phrase, exact, and negative match types.

02 YOUR GOOGLE ADS GLOSSARY: TERMS & MEANINGS

Negative keywords

These are the searches/keywords you don't want your ads to show up for. Adding negative keywords to the campaign is the best way of reducing unwanted traffic/clicks to your particular campaign or the whole website and are a great cost-saving measure.

Quality score

This is a metric that will help you understand how relevant ads, keywords and landing pages are to the search query. High-quality score leads to lower costs and better ad ranking. The ideal quality score of a keyword should be at least 5.

Return on ad spend (ROAS)

This is the ratio that determines the amount of money your ads gained (or lost) compared to the amount of money invested. For example, an ROAS of 13 indicates that for every dollar of ad spend, you've earned $13 in return. Not a bad result, by the way!

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02 YOUR GOOGLE ADS GLOSSARY: TERMS & MEANINGS

Google Display Network

Unlike search where you use keywords to match search terms of a consumer, the display network is more used for targeting an audience who has a specific interest. Display ads let you reach out to millions of people across different platforms and let you strategically show your message/product.

Google Store Conversions

This is a really important metric for eCommerce. A store visit conversion occurs when someone interacts with your ad on the google platform and subsequently visits your store location associated with your Google My Business account.

Now that you've gotten across the broad-level stuff, it's time to take a closer look at the top 2 Google Ads you should look at running: Search and Shopping Ads.

02 YOUR GOOGLE ADS GLOSSARY: TERMS & MEANINGS

2. Google Shopping Ads

When you see product image ads with the price displayed at the top of SERP, those are Google Shopping Ads.

The terms you need to know within Shopping Ads include:

Google Merchant Centre

If you are an eCommerce manager & looking to get your products online, the first step is to sign up with Google Merchant Centre as this is where the advertisers upload their product feed to make it available for the shopping campaign.

Product Shopping Ads

It's the type of ad with details about the product image, price, title of the product, business name etc.

Catalog Ads

Catalog Ads are for showcasing your local products using a local inventory ad feed from the Google Merchant Center account (GMC).

03

Quick wins: 7 strategies to uplift your PPC results

03 QUICK WINS: 7 STRATEGIES TO UPLIFT YOUR PPC RESULTS

If you're feeling confident about knowing your way around Google Ads, it's time to think about how you can get the kind of PPC results you want to see.

Remember: all of your competitors are in the same boat as you too. If you want to come out on top, then you need to be taking full advantage of all the right data, tools and people available.

Here are 7 PPC effective, achievable optimisation strategies to get you started on improving your PPC results:

03 QUICK WINS: 7 STRATEGIES TO UPLIFT YOUR PPC RESULTS

1. Take advantage of Google's new features when they roll out.

Here's the thing: Google Ads is extremely popular, so it's extremely competitive. That's why quick adoption of Google's new features is so important for getting competitive advantage.

The benefits of doing this are twofold: new Google features and advertising tools (i.e. Gmail ads being one of the more recent rollouts) aren't as widely adopted when they launch, which gives you the chance to cut through the noise and show up in places where competitors aren't. The second benefit is that new tools often cost you less to advertise due to the lack of competition.

A PPC agency who are Google partners (like alphawhale) should be at the forefront of Google's changes, and therefore take advantage of tools as soon as they become available. Agencies can also get beta access to new features in order to stay on top of how they can be used to bring you a better return.

Unless you have the capacity to continuously follow industry updates as they happen, a PPC agency partner should be the ones doing their due diligence on what's available to maximise profitability.

03 QUICK WINS: 7 STRATEGIES TO UPLIFT YOUR PPC RESULTS

2. Do a deep dive on last year's PPC results.

Any historical performance in your account could be of priceless insight so revisit any results you may have from last year to help you set benchmarks and iterations.

Avoid focusing on vanity metrics like impressions which don't tell the whole story, and ask more meaningful questions like:

- Does your account structure i.e. number of campaigns, ad groups or bidding methods need reviewing based on last year's performance?
- What audiences performed best, what demographic and psychographic information can you gather about them?
- What ads achieved the highest Click-Through Rates (CTR)?
- What ads achieved the most conversions?
- What ads had the best Quality Score?
- What ads had the most/least wasted spend?

Tip: use UTM trackers in your upcoming campaigns to better organise the data and assist with year-on-year measurement.

If you can't access last year's data or don't have any, you can still gather intel on your competitors to help set clearer benchmarks.

Here's how…

03 QUICK WINS: 7 STRATEGIES TO UPLIFT YOUR PPC RESULTS

3. Track the past and present PPC performance of competitors.

Tools like SEMrush can provide you with seriously revealing insights about your competitor's PPC strategy.

In your SEMrush account, go to Advertising Dashboard > Advertising Research and enter a competitor in the URL field.

SEMrush provide an example analysis using rei.com, a camping eCommerce site in the US.

Here's what the report can tell us about rei.com:

PPC traffic, paid keywords they rank for, position changes, PPC competitors, ad copies, ad history, landing pages and subdomains.
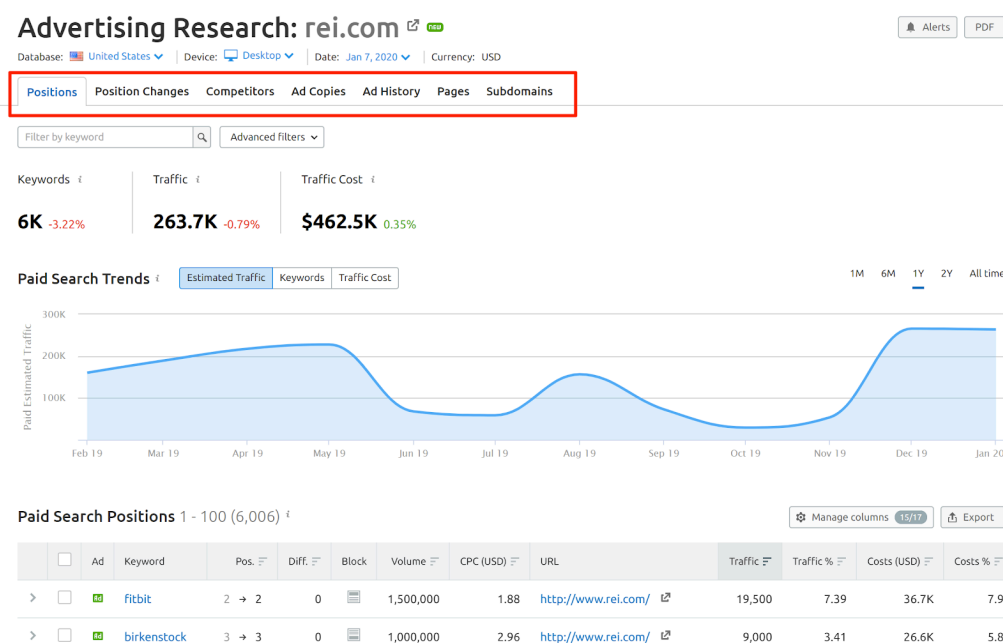
03 QUICK WINS: 7 STRATEGIES TO UPLIFT YOUR PPC RESULTS

Rei's display advertising mix: a breakdown of their media, HTML and text ads.
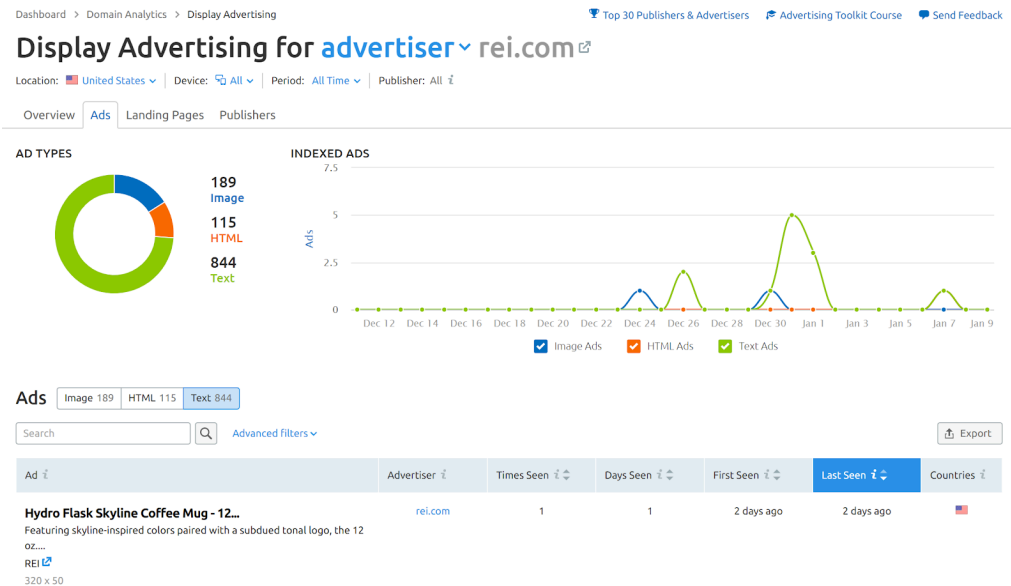
Use this data to inform your own advertising mix, messages and average bid.

03 QUICK WINS: 7 STRATEGIES TO UPLIFT YOUR PPC RESULTS

Then, head to Keyword Research > Keyword Gap where you can compare your keywords against up to 5 competitors.

You can search by paid keywords but also organic (which is definitely worth doing since organic ranking affects your cost-per-click).
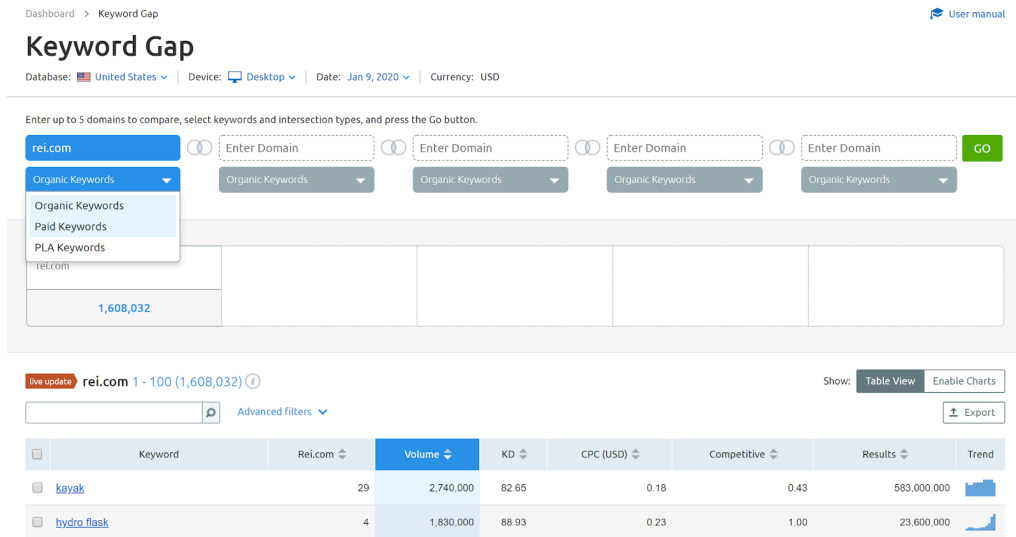
Use this report to shed light on your own keyword strengths and weaknesses - for example, what desirable keywords your competitors are ranking #1 for in paid search that you aren't.

03 QUICK WINS: 7 STRATEGIES TO UPLIFT YOUR PPC RESULTS

If you don't have access to SEMrush, use the Keyword Planner in Google Ads.

Select "Start with a website" so you can directly research a competitor:

This will tell you keyword information, bid estimates and how competitive the terms are.
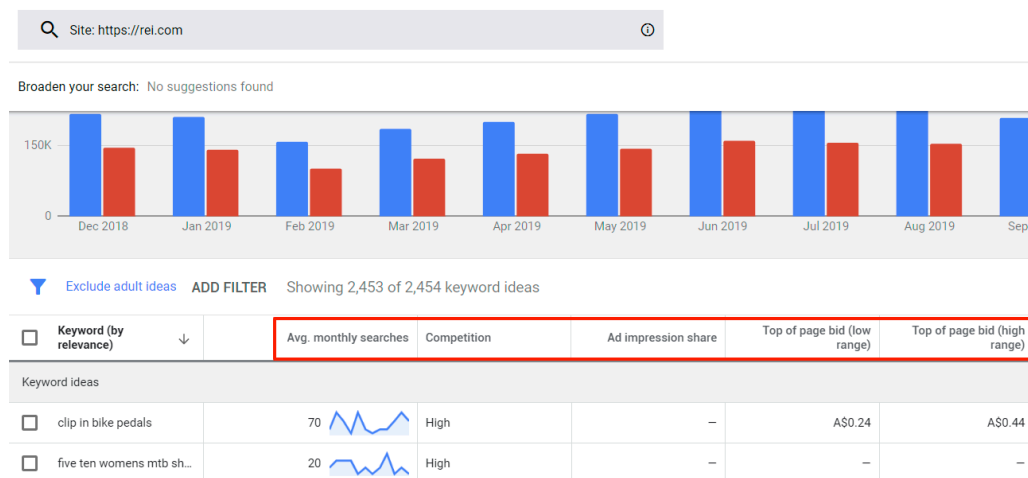
Note that you will not be able to see the ads/ad copy itself using this method.

03 QUICK WINS: 7 STRATEGIES TO UPLIFT YOUR PPC RESULTS

To see the actual ads your competitors are running, try searching directly for key terms you want to bid on.

This will tell you what kind of messaging and ad extensions competitors are using. Think about how well they resonate with your target audience, and how your own ads can improve on that.

Take this search result for Valentines Day jewellery:

03 QUICK WINS: 7 STRATEGIES TO UPLIFT YOUR PPC RESULTS

Another great tool for competitor ad research is [Facebook Ad Library](#).

Facebook Ad Library gives you complete transparency over the ad copy, creative and timelines of your competitor's ads in Facebook, Instagram and Messenger.

To start your research, simply type your competitor's name into the search field to see a complete breakdown of their active ads:
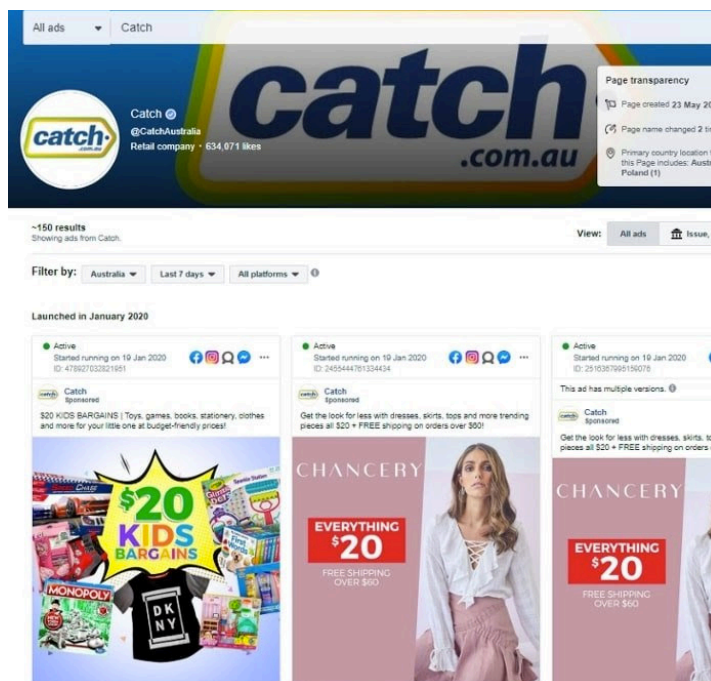
Tip: be sure to also research what landing pages these ads link to. It'll give you a better sense of how to optimise your own landing pages for conversions.

Also, take note of the Google Shopping Campaigns mentioned earlier.

Here's why they're important...

03 QUICK WINS: 7 STRATEGIES TO UPLIFT YOUR PPC RESULTS

4. Use Google Shopping Campaigns to spotlight popular products.

Google Shopping ads generate 85.3% of all clicks on AdWords. [Adthena]

Google Shopping Campaigns spotlight your brand/products and streamline user's shopping experience in a way that text ads can't.

Taking interested users straight to a product means you're bringing in more qualified traffic who are more likely to convert, while reducing spend wastage.

So if you haven't yet set up Shopping Ads, think about where you'd be sitting against competitors.

Shopping Ads now account for 76.4% of retailer's ad spend.

This is the kind of opportunity you cannot afford to miss out on!

Here are some simple ways you can optimise your Shopping Campaigns:

~ Revise your account structure. Rather than lumping all products into one ad group, consider if you can split them up by brand, price etc. for better control over your bids.

~ Make sure your product photos are attractive, and clearly describe the product so the user understands immediately.

03 QUICK WINS: 7 STRATEGIES TO UPLIFT YOUR PPC RESULTS

5. Plan your keywords ahead of time.

You might not know the exact promotion running or have all the creative in place, but there you can still create keyword lists in advance.

Keyword research tells you what terms to bid on for maximum visibility and cost efficiency.

Start by searching for the holiday-related terms you want to bid on.

For example, take the volume of searches for Valentine's Day gifts in SEMrush:

	Keyword		Volume	Trend	KD%	CPC (USD	Com.
☐	valentines day gifts	≡+	8,100	⋀	81.42	0.67	0.73
☐	valentines day gifts for him	≡+	5,400	⋀	83.57	0.98	0.77
☐	valentines day gifts for her	≡+	1,000	⋀	84.46	0.71	0.81

The last two columns tell you CPC and Competitive Density.

CPC is the average price your competitors are paying for a click on this search term.

Competitive Density tells you how difficult this term will be to rank for.

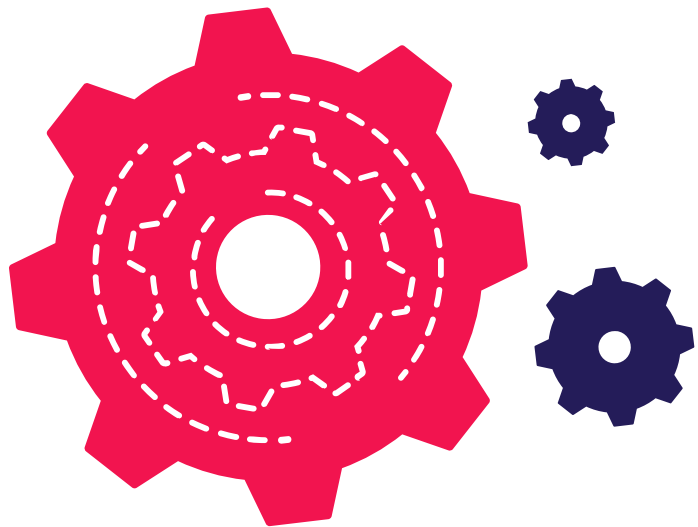# 03 QUICK WINS: 7 STRATEGIES TO UPLIFT YOUR PPC RESULTS

The closer Competitive Density is to 1.00, the more difficult the term will be to rank for, so we can see these terms might be harder to compete against. Information like this is important.

Use keyword research to track the terms you actually want to target, and what kind of messaging you want the ads to have.

For example, if your business offers quick delivery of goods, you could target keywords like last minute Valentines Day gifts rather than just Valentines Day gifts and promote fast delivery in your ads.

You're much more likely to get results that way instead of targeting generic terms - but this will all come to light in your keyword research.

Use keyword research tools like SEMrush , Moz or Google to get a better idea of what your audience is looking for.

03 QUICK WINS: 7 STRATEGIES TO UPLIFT YOUR PPC RESULTS

6. Use ad extensions to drive more real estate and clicks.

Google's ad extensions provide users with different kinds of information about your business to help boost credibility and drive clicks.

Here are some examples of ad extensions:

Valentines Day | Gift Baskets

[Ad] www.thebasketcase.com.au/ ▾   1300 733 933

★★★★★ Rating for thebasketcase.com.au: 4.9 - 227 reviews

Gift Hampers Australia Wide. **Gifts** Baskets Australia Wide. Create Your Own Basket. Call Now to Order. **Gifts** for all Occasions. Australia Wide Delivery. Quality Customer Service. Types: Chocolate, Wine, Cheese, Champagnes, Sweet Treats, Marvelous **Gift** Packaging.

Gifts for Newborn Babies · Christmas Hampers 2019 · Gift Baskets

You can also use ad extensions to communicate short-term sales such as flash sales, to save you from the admin of creating whole new ads from scratch.

Our top ad extension picks for holiday PPC include:

〰 Price extensions - which tell users the current price of a product.

〰 Sitelink extensions - to let you promote different pages on your site.

〰 Promotion extensions - to advertise special holiday sales.

〰 Review extensions - to relay positive reviews of the product to users.

03 QUICK WINS: 7 STRATEGIES TO UPLIFT YOUR PPC RESULTS

7. Create remarketing campaigns

Both Google and Facebook remarketing are great tools that can improve your brand recall and conversions.

Here are some reasons why:

~~~ You know that the customer is already interested in your product, which improves your ad relevance and quality score. This reduces your cost-per-click.

~~~ Driving interested customers back to your page to finish conversions will improve your conversion rates and reduce ad spend.

~~~ Your ROAS will be greater as a result.

The rule of 7 states that a customer needs to hear from your brand at least 7 times before converting. So using remarketing to show them what they've viewed before could be a huge push for them in the right direction.

And a final tip: when implementing any of these strategies, make sure you also monitor performance regularly and make necessary tweaks for continual improvement.

04

Common PPC mistakes to avoid

04 COMMON PPC MISTAKES TO AVOID

On the flipside to your success strategies, it's just as important for you to be avoiding the common mistakes that many PPC marketers are making.

These are often made because of a lack of training, research or too much focus on the wrong goals. In any case, if your PPC strategy isn't set up correctly you could end up paying a lot of money for low-quality or no leads.

Make sure that you're avoiding these costly PPC mistakes in your business:

04 COMMON PPC MISTAKES TO AVOID

The most common mistake to avoid: not setting the right goals (or not setting any goals)

If you want to properly measure your brand's online success, you need to firstly define your goals for the campaigns.

As an agency, we see a lot of businesses setting short-sighted goals with their PPC. For example, prioritising "top of page" results (instead of total impression share) and thereby using more aggressive bids which blow their budget.

The outcome of this? Their ads exhaust the budget and are switched off sooner in the day, which negates any benefit they might have gotten showing up first on SERP.

We recommend avoiding issues like this by setting clear expectations and goals that are aligned to not only your budget, but the way Google Ads will spend it.

For example, if you had a budget of $100 a week, you might want to ask yourself:

〰 How much can I spend in total, if the ads exceed my budget?

〰 How much will I spend per activity?

〰 If I have a really high bid, would I be burning through my budget more quickly?

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04 COMMON PPC MISTAKES TO AVOID

Mistake #2:
Not knowing your competitors

Data is key to your PPC strategy, and this includes data on your competitors. You need to know everything about your competitor's services like strengths, weaknesses and USPs. You should also look into the keywords they are bidding on and what landing pages they are taking the customers to.

The best way to discover or learn about your competitors is to do a Google search. Check out the top search engine results (SERP) that will give you ideas for your own ad copy. Don't forget to take a look at "Searches related to xxx " at the bottom of the page, this is one of the best ways to discover other related keywords that your target audience is looking for.

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04 COMMON PPC MISTAKES TO AVOID

You can also use tools like SEMrush for keyword & competitor research. By plugging in your competitor's domain, you can find incredibly valuable information about their PPC strategy and performance including position/ position changes, other competitors, ad copies, ad history, landing pages and subdomains.

Here's an example of what you can find on SEMrush about a competitor:

04 COMMON PPC MISTAKES TO AVOID

Mistake #3:
Not defining or tracking your goals

If you want to properly measure your brand's online success, you need to firstly define your goals for the campaigns. Goals vary from business to business. For example, a local florist might have phone calls as their goal, a plumber may have a form submission as a goal and a fashion retailer might have a purchase/check-out as their goal.

Set up tracking for your goals in [Google Analytics](#) and constantly keep checking how these goals are performing versus the spend on the campaign:

04 COMMON PPC MISTAKES TO AVOID

Mistake #4:
Failing to use the negative keyword list

Negative keywords are one of the first things to set up in your PPC optimisation routine. Putting up a negative keyword list will prevent your business ads showing up in unrelated queries. Having a negative keyword list will help to improve your click-through rate & bounce rate too.

For example, if you own a men's denim fashion label, then you need to add children's and women's denim queries as negatives to your list. This helps ensure you only drive relevant traffic to your website.
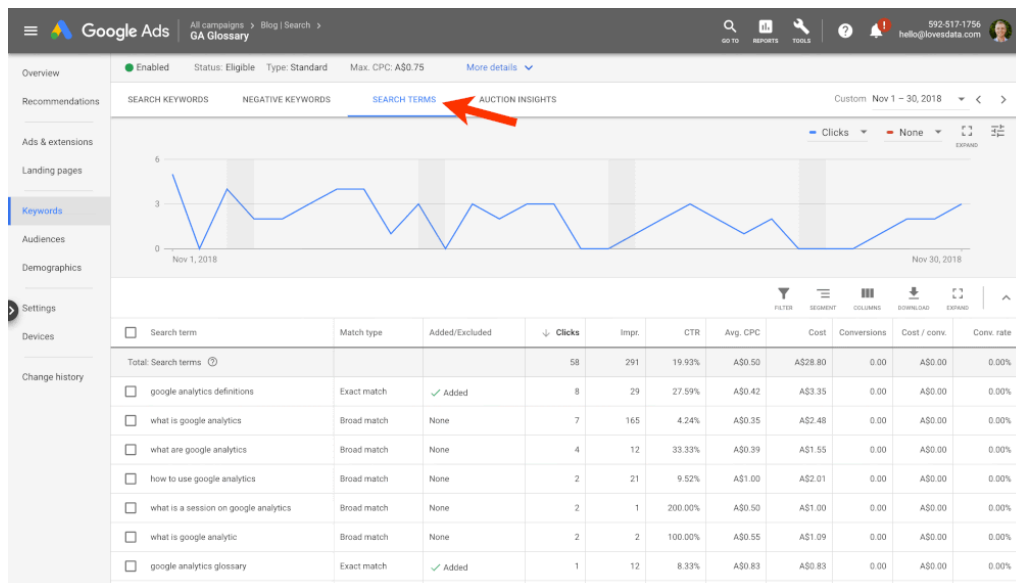
04 COMMON PPC MISTAKES TO AVOID

Mistake #5:
Not using the holy grail (Search Term Report)

Search Term Report (STR) is one of the best features provided by Google Ads. This report gives you the information about all the terms that were searched by users to find a business like yours.

STR helps you understand the nature of traffic that your website is receiving. Depending on the search terms, if they are related to your business then you can add them as keywords, if not add them to a negative keyword list to avoid irrelevant traffic to the site.

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04 COMMON PPC MISTAKES TO AVOID

Mistake #6:
Incorrect targeting

Failing to target the right audience and platforms to show your ads means you are not reaching out to the right people who will click and convert. Your Ad campaigns, especially the display ones, need to have the right targeting to avoid showing your ads on sensitive content platforms as well.

You can target people based on their age, gender, marital status, income, interest and habits etc.

04 COMMON PPC MISTAKES TO AVOID

Mistake #7:
Not being compelling with your ad copy

The end person you are trying to reach is human, so don't be too boring with your ad copy! You need to make a meaningful impact when a customer reads your ads, even if character limits are working against you. Search to see what your competitors are running and brainstorm how you can make your version even better.

If you don't have compelling ad copy, you could be missing out on a lot of potential clicks. Add in some flavor to drive more traffic to your site!

04 COMMON PPC MISTAKES TO AVOID

Mistake #8:
Letting Google bid for your keywords

If you are a beginner in managing Google Ads, an automatic bidding strategy can be good for a while. But with an automatic bidding strategy comes the default setting and bids which could ruin your entire account performance.

Google gets paid every time someone clicksin your ads, even when that click doesn't transform to a lead or conversion. With automated bidding strategies, Google will try to get you as many clicks as possible to the site but these may never lead to conversions.

Hence, you need to manually bid your keywords in order to receive the right traffic and leads.

		Keyword	Status ↑	Max. CPC	Policy details
☐	●				
		Total: All but removed keyw... ⑦			
☐		certificate]			
☐	●	[google marketing certification]	Eligible	$2.75	Approved
☐	●	"adwords certification" ☆	Eligible	$2.50	Approved
☐	●	"google adwords certification" ☆	Eligible	$3.00	Approved
☐	●	"get google adwords certified" ☆	Eligible	$3.00	Approved
☐	●	+google +certification +program	Eligible	$4.09	Approved
☐	●	adwords search certification ☆	Eligible	$3.00	Approved
☐	●	"google marketing certification" ☆	Eligible	$2.75	Approved

CONCLUSION

Is your PPC team striving for the best possible outcomes?

If you're not currently getting the kind of ROI on PPC that you'd like to see, we hope this guide has helped you revisit PPC fundamentals as well as new strategies you can implement.

Having the right people on your team is key to driving stronger PPC results. Regardless of whether you work in-house or with an agency, the people behind the work must demonstrate a strong ability to do the job well.

A good agency partner should specialise in your industry, know about Google's updates ahead of time and work with you to shape and fulfil the right goals for your business (while steering away from vanity metrics and short-term outcomes).

If you're feeling confused, frustrated or curious about how you can revamp your PPC campaigns to drive better profitability, we're here to help.

Speak to a PPC specialist at alphawhale today for a no-obligation assessment of your current account structure and performance.

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think bigger, dive deeper