PPC UNCOVERED
[REMASTERED]

An Advanced Guide To Paid Search

CHAPTER 2
Tech, Tools and Data

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

While the last instalment of this series dealt with the creation of a paid search strategy, in order to adequately execute the strategy you create, you're going to need to ensure you're armed with the right tools for the job. Thankfully, for paid search professionals of any level of experience, PPC is one of the better provided skill sets in search marketing – with seemingly endless numbers of tools for almost every PPC requirement.

However, with so many sites providing various services, tools, macros and more for the paid search professional, it would make for an excessively long read were we to go through each separately. Instead, we'll deal with some of the more well-known tools and technologies to make sure you are gathering the right data, serving the right ads earning the best possible return on investment (ROI).

WHAT MAKES A GOOD TOOL?

The most reasonable place to start – before we get into a description of some of the best tools available – is to define what makes for a good tool.

With two of them (Bing Ads and Google Ads), the main reason is simply because they are vital to a successful paid search project as they account for so much of the market for PPC ad placements – but for other tools, where there is a choice of options, there are a number of key things to be on the lookout for.

1. **Cost –** while it may seem obvious, it is important not to assume that expensive is bad or vice versa. Cost should be evaluated in accordance with the possible returns – in the simple ROI calculation.

2. **Need –** how much do you need the tool? Is its use likely to repay the investment you make? You could easily purchase access to the finest, best recommended tools – but if you're going to use them infrequently, are they necessary?

3. **User Interface (UI)/User Experience (UX) –** how easy is the tool to use? While some tools can promise a lot, if they offer a confusing or frustrating experience or are in any other way difficult to use, it may be a sign you need to look elsewhere.

4. **Functionality –** while specialisation is important in a tool (see the old saying: 'Jack of all trades, master of none'), there are some tools that do have crossover with others – check to make sure that the functions you use on one isn't covered adequately by another. Ideally, the fewest tools required to complete tasks to a high standard is the right number.
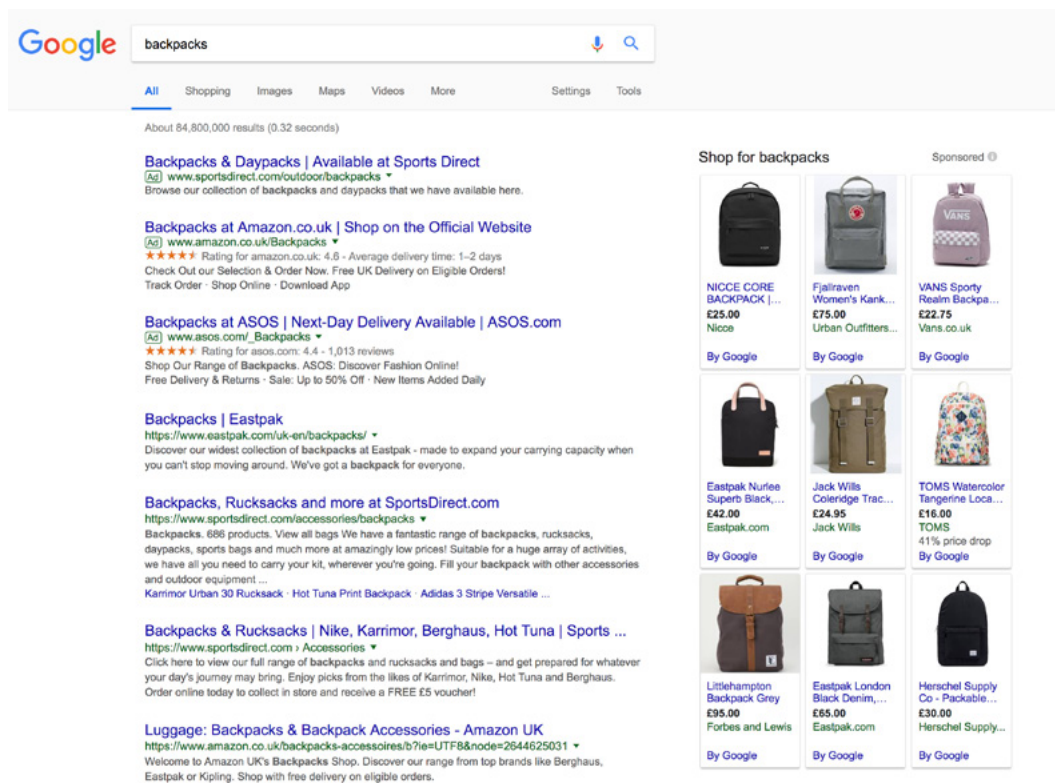
GOOGLE ADS

WHAT IS GOOGLE ADS?

Essentially Google Ads is an advertising platform which allows businesses to place search results for your website on a search engine results page (SERP) by paying for them. This falls under the paid search or PPC section of the industry and is a complex process of targeting the searcher with highly relevant adverts that they may be inclined to click on through a highly advanced algorithm.

The ads appear at the top of the SERPs and are often the first three or four positions. Google identifies them as with the 'Ad' icon to the left of the URL on the second line of text. Others appear on the right of the main results and again have the 'Ad' icon or the 'Sponsored' tag at the top.

The principle of these ads is ultimately to increase conversions for a business's website. Well written


and highly relevant ads will allow businesses to target potential customers at the point at which they are searching. In order to get the conversions, businesses will need to use Google Ads to build ads based on their keyword research and the terms with which they want a specific ad to show up for.

Below is an example of an ad that appears when the user searches for 'mens gloves'. This House of

Fraser ad will be triggered based on their bid for the keyword and the complex Quality Score that they are assigned, but more on that later.

Like we mentioned above, it is important to remember that you may not be the only business
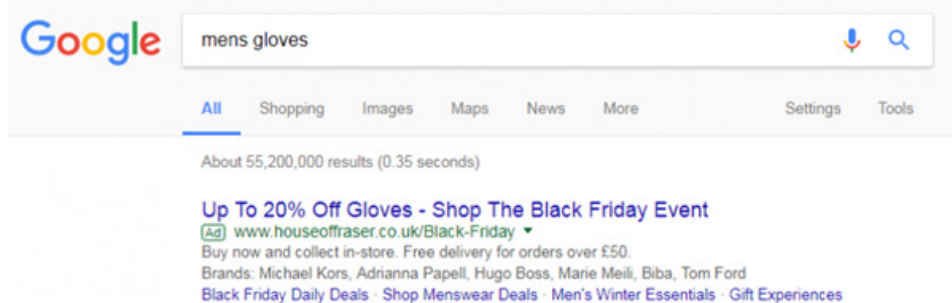
bidding on a specific keyword and that there is a complex bidding algorithm. As you can see in the below image, when we expand the clipping for the exact same search for 'mens gloves' we are now offered three ads. The first is still the one belonging to House of Fraser, but there are now two more ads for 'Helly Hansen' and 'Amazon'.
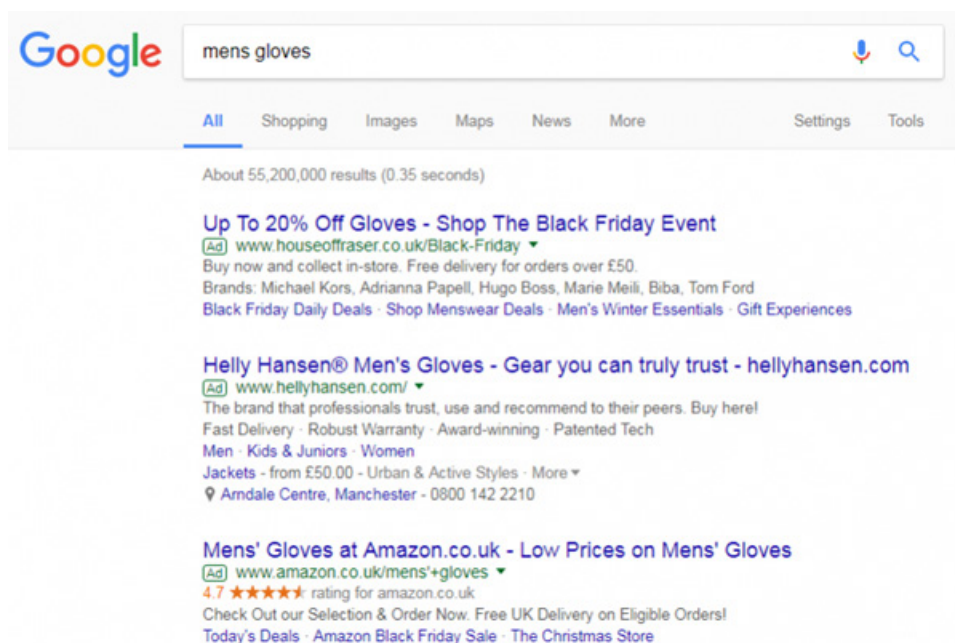
If you want your ad to appear at all, you have to bid against other companies on how much you're willing to pay Google Ads every time a searcher clicks on your ad. The more you bid the more likely your ad will appear in the search results. However unlike other real-time bidding models, it's not just the highest bid that is taken into account but Quality Score.

According to Econsultancy:

"

Google looks at how relevant and useful your ad is to the searcher and the search terms they've used. It also looks at how many clicks your ad has received previously, also known as its click-through rate (CTR) and how relevant your landing page is.

For instance if the searcher types 'Nike Air Max' and your advert appears saying "buy Nike Air Max here", once the ad is clicked this needs to lead the searcher directly to a page featuring Nike Air Max trainers. If it just goes to your generic homepage, it's not good enough.

The higher your Quality Score, the better. Even if your maximum bid for a keyword is less than a rival bidder, you still may appear above their ad if your Quality Score is better.

"

HOW TO BUILD AN AD IN GOOGLE ADS

When it comes to using Google Ads the first step once you have signed up is to initiate the build of new campaigns and ads. There are relatively few steps to this process but each of them is vital if you are to get the traction that you want. It goes without saying that the first step is to sign in to your Google Ads account, from here the following step should be taken:

1.   Click the Campaigns tab.
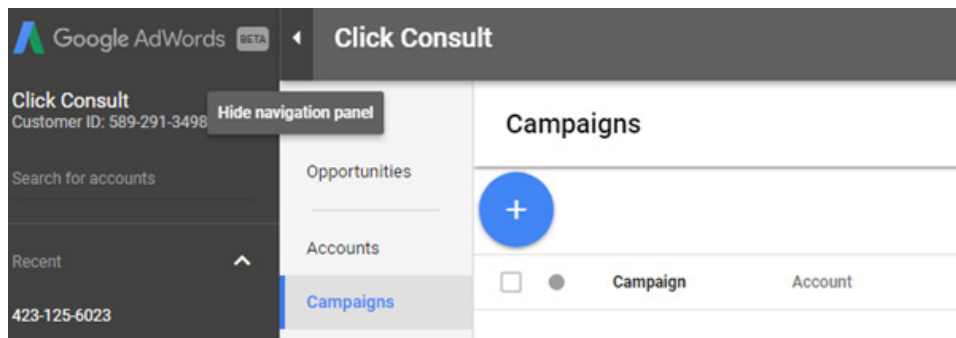
2.   Click on the '+' button.

3.   Select the type of campaign that you wish to create.
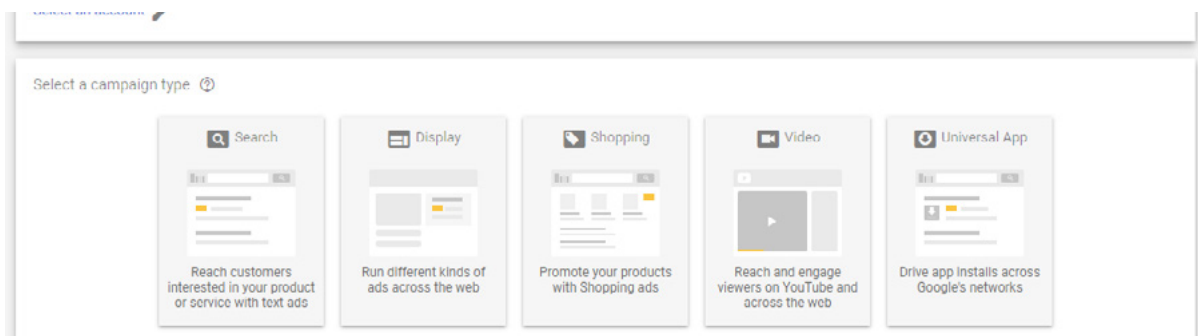
4. In the example we have selected to create a 'Search Network' campaign. Once this has been completed you can then choose whether or not you want to set up a goal. There are three main metrics that you can choose from here:

Optimising for Sales
Drive sales online, in app, by phone or in store. The sales goal recommends settings and features to help you reach customers who are ready to act and:
- Shape how people engage with your business with extensions
- Get clicks that are more likely to lead to a sale
- Reach customers as they browse sites, videos and apps that partner with Google

Optimising for Leads
Get leads and other conversions by encouraging customers to take action. The leads goal recommends settings and features to help you attract people to your business and:
- Increase your potential customer base with audience targeting
- Shape how people engage with your business with extensions
- Expand your reach by showing ads to people as they browse sites, videos and apps that partner with Google

Optimising for Website Traffic
Get the right people to visit your website. The website traffic goal recommends settings and features to help you drive relevant customers to your website and:
- Increase visits to your site with a bidding strategy customised to your campaign
- Reach new customers with relevant, dynamically generated ad headlines
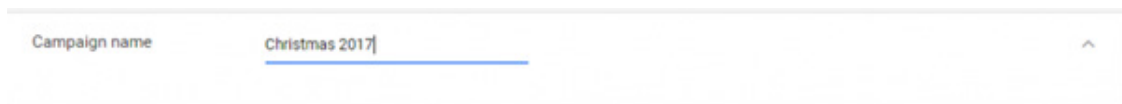- Shape how people engage with your business with extensions
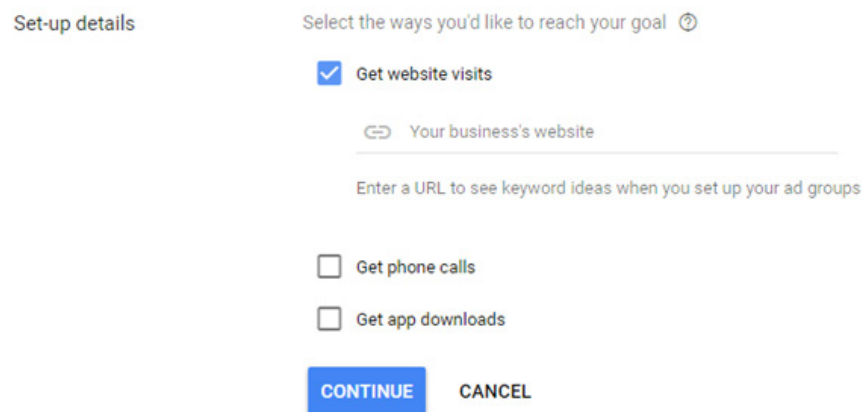
5. If you choose our target at 'Sales' you're then offered three possible options as to how we can reach our goal.
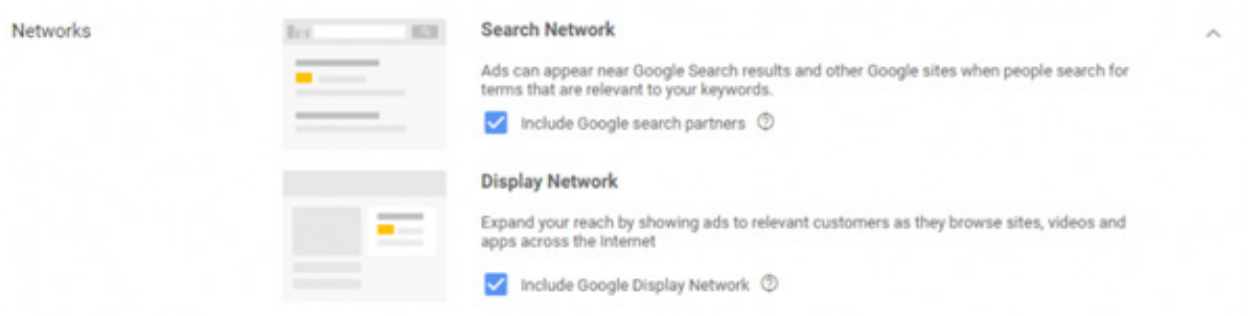

6. Enter your URL and then click continue. This will take you to the 'Select campaign settings' tab.

7. Fill in the page as instructed. Start with a campaign name. A top tip here is to make it a memorable name. Many businesses run several campaigns and have several users. If it is easy to identify then it is easier to manage. Personally we wouldn't recommend calling a campaign something like 'Campaign 1'.

8. You then have the option to choose which network to display on. Note that you can choose both here.

9. You need to choose your location and the language in which you want create the ad for. This normally defaults to the United States and English. For the purpose of our campaign we are changing the location to target the UK and remaining in English. This allows us to see our potential reach and we can also choose to exclude certain locations. This is useful if you want to remove geographical locations that you may not conduct business with or ship products to.

10. Following this you will want to set both the bid strategy and the daily budget of the campaign. Your daily budget is the most you're willing to spend each day on your campaign but be warned the actual daily spend may vary so it is vital that you track your spend. In terms of the strategy for these conversions there are several options to choose from.

The budget can be spent in two ways:

- **Standard:** Spend your budget evenly over time.
- **Accelerated:** Spending budget more quickly. This may cause your budget to run out early.

11. The next step is to set up your ad groups here you can choose your keywords and get some suggested to you based on your URL. Add in all those that you wish to target and those that are highly relevant.

12. You are then ready to create the ads. Google recommend that you create at least three ads that closely relate to the theme of your keywords. Follow the template here and fill in the 'Final URL', 'Headline 1' , 'Headline 2' boxes. You can then add in the 'Display Path' and the 'Description'. There are also three different preview options so that you can see how the ad will render on different platforms.

It's worth noting that before your saved ad starts showing to customers, Google Ads reviews its content and formatting to make sure it meets their advertising policies.

BING ADS

WHAT IS BING ADS?

Microsoft's answer to Google Ads, Bing Ads will appear pretty familiar to anyone familiar with Google Ads. Instead of appearing in Google searches, however, ads placed through Bing Ads will appear on Bing searches. As with Google, the ads appear both at the top and right hand side of most search results, marked 'Ad'.
Much of the advice for Google ads holds true for ads placed on Bing, with only a few minor changes

to character limits and options (see the comparison in the next section).

While most brands will have a Google Ads account, Bing Ads accounts are less prevalent. However, to reduce friction, there is an import option available which allows advertisers to import their existing Google Ads campaigns to Bing ads (in the top menu, click on 'Import Campaigns').

Bing offers the following advice for importing your campaigns (alongside some nice little animated videos – both of which can be found here):

1. With Bing Ads, you can show ads to tens of millions of people that you can't reach with just Google Ads. The Bing Network audience also spends more money online!

2. You can import your Google Ads campaigns directly into Bing Ads. Then, set up automatic imports to keep your Google Ads and Bing Ads campaigns in sync.

3. We'll map your Google Ads settings to the closest possible Bing Ads settings. Just give them a look to make sure everything is working right.

4. We can't start running your ads without a payment method. Set a backup payment method too, so you know you're covered.

5. Keep cruising down the path to success with these recommended steps. Welcome to Bing Ads!

HOW TO USE BING ADS

While Bing is quite similar to Google Ads, there are subtle differences, so we'll offer a similar walk through here for Bing.

HOW TO CREATE A CAMPAIGN

The first step for constructing an ad in Bing Ads is to create the campaign it will run as part of. If you haven't imported your campaigns from Google Ads, you'll need to select your account and select 'Campaigns' from the top menu.

As you can see, you can then select 'Create campaign' by clicking on the button. This will take you to
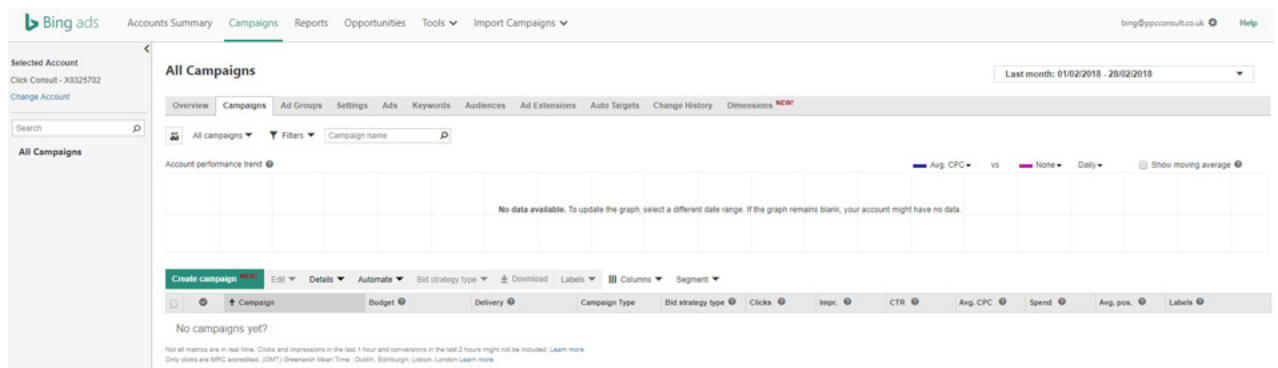
an option menu from which you can select your campaign goals.
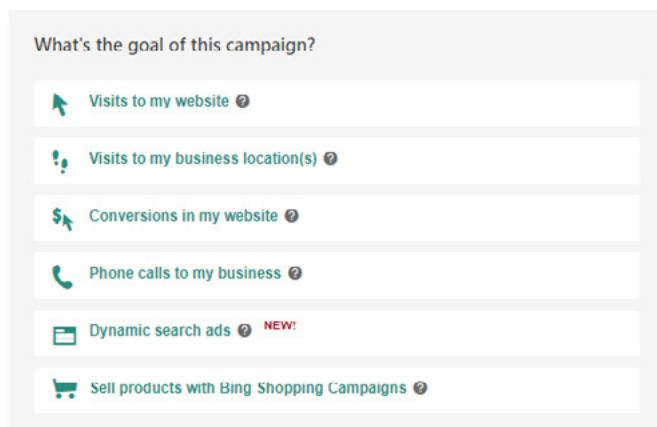
These options are fairly self-explanatory, with the first four intended to increase the volume of a site visits, physical visits, conversions or calls and the last two to set up a particular Bing product type (Dynamic search ads or Shopping Campaigns).

- Dynamic search ads: - useful if you have a large website or number of products and you want ad customisation to happen automatically based on the content of your website.

- Shopping Campaigns: - useful if you want to increase product sales, as you can showcase your inventory on search results pages (SERPs) with product images.

Once you've selected the aim of your campaign, there are four steps to completing the initial set up process.

HOW TO CREATE A CAMPAIGN

CAMPAIGN SETTINGS

Again, these are reasonably self-explanatory, but for the sake of clarity we'll go through each in turn:

- Campaign name: - within the available 128 characters, you will need to name your campaign in a clear, concise and memorable way. It needs to describe the campaign and be easy to find when you need to amend it and have multiple campaigns running.

- Campaign budget: - we'll deal with budgets a little more in another chapter, but it's safe to say that you need to ensure that your budget is affordable and is delivering an acceptable return on investment (ROI) to help grow your business or achieve the campaigns aims.

- Language: - as the image shows, this is fixed once you move to the next step, so ensure you've selected the right language for the campaign.

- Location: - this will determine the locations that will be served your ads. Depending on the aims of your campaign, you can choose to have it appear in your specific country, in all available countries, or within a set 25 mile area.
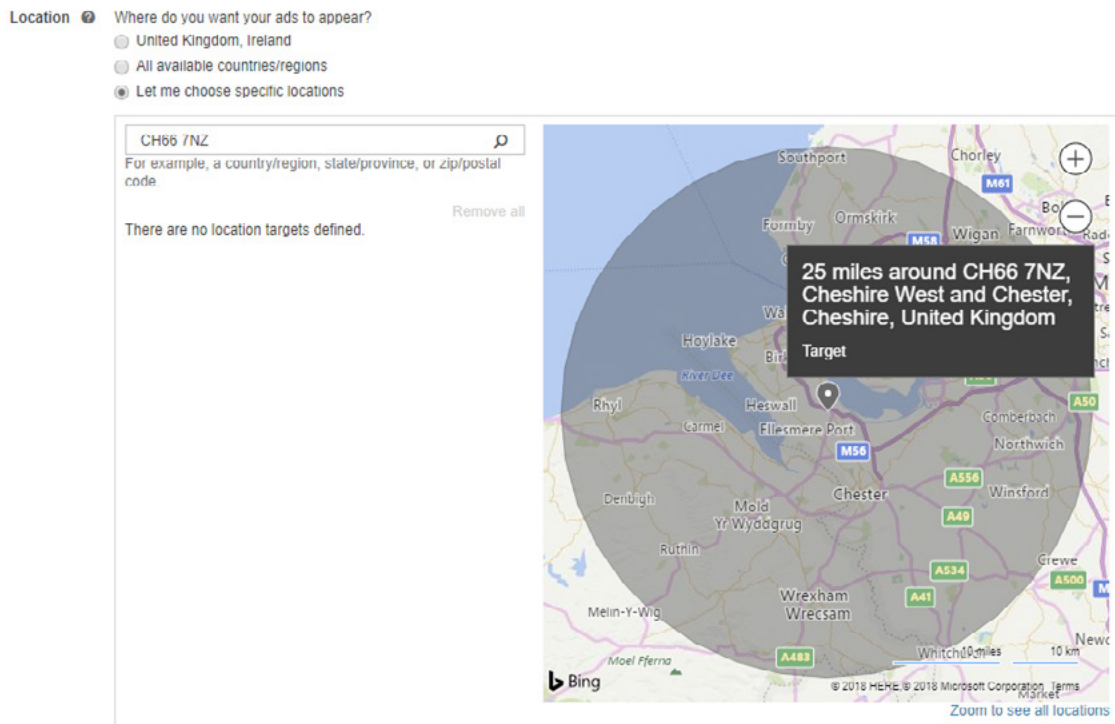
- Who: - this allows you to set one of two (or both) options for who will be shown your ads:

  - People in your targeted locations: - your ads will appear only for people who are physically in your targeted location(s).

  - People searching for or viewing pages about your targeted locations: - your ads will show to people outside of your area, but only when they search for or view webpages about your targeted location(s).

Ad groups & keywords

The next section of the process is to select the keywords and ad groups for your campaign. As a beginning, this screen has an ideas box which can give you some ideas for both ad groups and keywords (if you want to develop your keyword strategy, you can find out in the previous instalment of this series here). You get these ideas by filling in your URL and industry and clicking the search icon.

By adding some of these keyword ideas to an ad group, building out a number of ad groups and adding more, or importing them from your keyword research, you can then refine the keywords using match type syntax:

Match Type	Broad match	Broad match modifier	Phrase match	Exact match	Negative match
Syntax	keyword	+keyword	"keyword"	[keyword]	"keyword" or [keyword]
Availability	Search network	Search network	Search network	Search network	Search network

Once you have the keywords you want and the syntax in place to ensure they're used in the right contexts, you can move to the next step.

Ads & ad extensions

This step is where you'll actually create the ads that will be shown in relevant searches and is second only to your keyword research in terms of importance. The right ad, shown to the right people at the right time can do wonders for a brand. The initial screen you'll see looks like the following:

We'll go in to the top box in more detail in a moment, but the bottom box in the image above (and the boxes below that) provides the chance to add extensions.

Sitelink extensions

Sitelink extensions are additional links that will display below some search ads. By filling this in, you can differentiate your ad from the competition and potentially offer a second solution to the search query in the same ad.

Callout extension

Callout extensions are a great way to highlight a specific appropriate offer, product or service – such as free delivery, 24 hour support etcetera.

Structured snippet extension

Comprised of a header and a list of between three and ten values that relate to it, structured snippet extensions allow you to add context to your ads.

Location extensions

By adding your business locations to a location extension, you can automatically display the closest location to the searcher. Particularly useful for brands reliant on store or physical location visits, the extension will show the nearest location within a 50 mile radius of their position. These are created at a campaign level and are applied to all ad groups in that campaign.

5 tips for writing ad copy

We go in to greater depth in our blog 'Writing effective ad copy', which – while it's out of date as far as character limits go – contains a wealth of actionable advice, but here are five key things to consider:

1. **Think like your consumer –** what are they looking for? What is most important to them in their search at each stage of the conversion funnel and how can you cater to it?

2. **Be concise**

3. **Employ capitalisation (sparingly) and punctuation to good effect –** caps and exclamation marks are generally associated, at a base psychological level, with warning and importance, they naturally draw the eye.

4. **Make the most of your USP and offers –** as the old saying goes: 'don't hide your light under a bushel', by which the historic, virtually nonsensical metaphor essentially means 'if you've got it, flaunt it'. If you're cheaper than everyone else then say so, if you've a sale on then make it known.

5. **Use imperatives and CTA's –** as with the first lines quoted above, you want to inspire action in the consumer, compel them to do what you want them to do, let them know what a devastatingly short time they have to act, and that they have to act now!

Budget and bids

This section is where you'll set the budgets for your campaign (we'll deal a little more with this in the bid optimisation section).

COMPARING GOOGLE ADS AND BING ADS

The following table gives you a brief overview of the, nowadays minimal, differences between the two main ad platforms.

Function or tool	Google Ads	Bing Ads	Difference
Offline Editor	Google Ads Editor	Bing Ads Editor	Both offer the ability to edit keyword lists and campaigns offline. Like the desktop environments, there is little to differentiate the two
Ad Type	Display Ads	Content Ads	Both are a similar offering, but only Display Ads are available in Europe
Search Network	Google Search Network and partner websites	Bing and Partner Websites	Both appear in their respective SERPs and in their own groups of partner sites
Budgeting	Allows budgers to be set per day	Allows budgets to be set day by day and/or month	Bing offers additional budget options
Character Limits	Two headlines, a description and two paths, with respective character limits of 30, 30, 80 and 15	Two titles, ad text, two paths with the limits set at 30, 30, 80 and 15, though there is more room if dynamic text is used	Both virtually identical unless using dynamic text with Bing
Negative Keywords	Negative keywords with broad, phrase and exact match	Negative keywords with broad, phrase and exact match	While the Bing offering has always been similar in this regard, it now matches Google Ads
Remarketing	Remarketing possible	Remarketing possible	While not always the way, both now offer remarketing options
Shopping	Shopping Campaigns	Shopping Campaigns	As above, the Bing offering now mirrors that of Google Ads
Dynamic Search Ads	Dynamic Search Ads	Dynamic Search Ads	Again, the Bing offering now mirrors that of Google Ads

AD COPY TESTING

Best practice, and that which Click Consult follows, is that of creating three keyword relevant ads per ad group. Each of these ads use a separate call to action which allows for A/B (split) testing to determine the ad which achieved the best results. Testing doesn't end there, however, you can then proceed to test the winning ad against two more iterations and on and on in a process of constant refinement over time.

Ad customisers are also a powerful feature when it comes to ad copy – as they allow for far greater personalisation based on previous interactions, location, time of day and more. This personalisation is then dynamically inserted in to ads and has been shown to improve Quality Score and improve click through rate.

All ad copy should be subject to extensive A/B testing and, while standard copywriting rules apply (see our blog on writing effective ad copy), there are always benefits to testing even your most treasured ads. By ensuring that you schedule constant refinement, you can ensure your approach is both achieving the best possible results and also agile – allowing you to respond to improved offerings from Bing or Google regarding extensions and the like as a matter of course rather than as an unplanned reaction.

FEED OPTIMISATION

We offer an additional Feed Optimisation service that uses our in-house technology feedTRAX™. With our system we would be able to conduct ongoing optimisation based on search term performance and product performance to improve current feed Quality Score and general performance. We will test and improve product titles, descriptions, and categories as they are the main factors Google's algorithm takes into consideration when matching searches to products. We also introduce custom labels to improve the Google Ads campaign structure and test different techniques of feed optimisation to choose the best one for a given industry and product.

However, while we try to communicate as much of our expertise as possible, the calculations behind the feedTRAX™ would take more than just an eBook. As such, the following will help you to create and optimise your own feed.

CREATING YOUR DATA FEED

What is a data feed?

A data feed is a file which comprises of a list of your products, using groupings of accepted attributes which define each product in a unique way. While attributes such as the condition and availability attributes have standard value, others – such as 'id' or 'title' are unique user inputs. Describing your items using both required and suggested attributes will help consumers to easily search for and find your items. This feed is then uploaded to Google Merchant Center for use in Shopping Campaigns.

What is Google Merchant Center?

A Google tool, Merchant Center allows you to upload your brand's products and data to make it available for Google Shopping and other services. In order to advertise specific products in SERPs (see below), you will need to: have a Merchant Center account, upload your product data, and create a Shopping Campaign in Google Ads.

Sign in or sign up

To begin with, you'll need to log-in or sign up to Google Merchant Center. The latter involves a few simple steps – including naming your store, agreeing to the T&Cs and verifying your site through either uploading an HTML file to your site, placing an HTML tag in your header, or via your Analytics or Google Tag Manager account.

We can leave Merchant Center there for the moment, because we won't need it again until we upload our data feed.

Creating a data feed

While it's possible to create an XML feed, we're going to create a spreadsheet for ease (specifically Google Sheets – which I have literally done nothing but bang on about for weeks).

There are eight main types of data split into a fairly extensive variety of attributes. While not all of these are compulsory, we're only going to go through the basics here, so you can find a full list of the attributes here.

Basic product data

With these attributes in mind (and the other required attributes listed over at the Google Support site linked to above), you can now start to build out your data feed. The attribute names go in the column headers, with relevant data in the cells below. Any required fields not filled in will cause the associated product not to appear in Shopping Results.

Click to access dummy sheet

Once the data feed spreadsheet is filled in, you can look to upload it to Merchant Center. First you'll need to return to GMC, select 'Products', then 'Feeds', then click the plus symbol to upload your data as a primary feed.

This will bring up a wizard – the first being 'Basic information' which asks you to select a 'type' for the feed, a target country and a target language, as well as offering a tick box to include the feed in 'Shopping.'

Step two is for the feed name and input method. Having completed the data feed setup in Google Sheets means you can select your sheet by highlighting the 'Google Sheets' option from the list.

The third and final step is to select an existing sheet and upload your feed.

In order to check your data, you can preview the list and their status by selecting 'List' from the 'Products' menu. Check carefully for errors.

OPTIMISING YOUR FEED (FOUR KEY ATTRIBUTES)

Image attribute

This is the image that will appear in the ad and should exactly represent the description you give it and the terms you're targeting with the ad – from size, colour, material to brand, pattern etcetera. It needs to be high quality, and show the product off to the best of its ability.

Link attribute

This is vital insofar as it is not unknown for site structure to change from season to season, if you fail to ensure that your link attribute is kept up to date, you may find that you lose custom due to consumers finding either the wrong product, or worse no product at all when they click through.

Product_type attribute

A key part of the description of your product within your feed, the product type is vital to ensuring your ads appear for the right key terms and should therefore be based on your primary keyword research. You will also need to match the categories against your descriptors. Think of it like a journey through your site: UmbrellaTerm > SubDivision > Category > SubCategory > Item.

Title and description attributes

This should accurately and concisely describe your item. This title will show up in the shopping results, so you want to ensure it works hard enough to attract the click, but is descriptive enough of the item on the landing page that it cannot be seen to have misled the consumer.

OPTIMISING FROM GOOGLE ADS

In addition to a well optimised feed, there are also methods to improve your Shopping Campaigns from within the Google Ads platform.

All products

The default setting for Shopping Campaigns is 'All products', this will use all products in your Google Merchant Centre. This is a fine campaign to begin with, and standard best practice recommends that you retain a single 'All products' campaign – as there are likely items that will not fit in to the subsequent campaigns you will create that may otherwise be missed.

Product groups

In addition to an 'All products' campaign, you should be looking to create campaigns per category and one ad group per product. This can be done in Google Ads by selecting one of the attributes that you have in your product feed to differentiate your stock.

Bid strategy

This is a part of your optimisation that will take experimentation to perfect. However, there are a couple of best practices which can be followed initially while you experiment with the finer details:

- Your 'All products' bid should be set lower than product specific ad group bids to ensure that while no products will be missed, your less optimised ads will not supersede the product specific variation.
- To begin with, set your max CPC for product specific ad groups the same as those of existing ads in order to monitor their relative performance.

Messaging

Messaging is another opportunity to make your ads stand out from the crowd. While they are not a prerequisite for running product specific ad groups, you can add a promotional message to product specific ad groups. You have 45 characters with which to make an impression using this message, so put your best foot forward – do you offer free delivery, is there 10% off, or are there other USPs you can brag about?

3RD PARTY SOFTWARE

While there are a host of tools available, the following three are some that the paid search team at Click Consult have found to be all but irreplaceable - and which are used in conjunction with our own set of 15 in-house tools.

DoubleClick Search (DS) is a search management platform that helps agencies and marketers efficiently manage some of the largest search marketing campaigns in the world, across multiple engines and media channels. Streamlined workflow and powerful reporting features enable buyers to efficiently run campaigns, while strategic bid optimization improves campaign performance. Native integration with the DoubleClick Digital Marketing platform (DDM) allows buyers to manage and track digital campaigns across a single platform, enabling rich, cross-channel buying, reporting and attribution.

Marin Software is industry-leading marketing software that allows advertisers and agencies to measure, manage and optimise ad spend across the web and mobile devices. The platform is used to create, target and convert online audiences based on their recent buying signals across search, social and display interactions.

Kenshoo is bid management software and a social advertising platform, the only Facebook Marketing Partner with native API solutions for ads across Facebook, FBX, Twitter, Google, Bing, Yahoo, Yahoo Japan, and Baidu. It powers digital marketing campaigns in more than worldwide.

CONCLUSION

While you may be able to execute a perfectly serviceable PPC campaign using only your wits and your Google Ads account, the proper building of sustainable success in paid search relies on data, testing and technology. While you may not wish to use the third party tools we have recommended here, there is a lot to be said for the role of tools in improving the efficiency of campaigns and teams alike.

However, there is one caveat in the push for seamless operation in PPC – and that is that automation will, as things stand, always benefit from the application of human experience. Remember when seeking out automation that it should be a tool to improve efficiency and not to make decisions.

As we spoke about during the section on auto optimisation, there is little substitute for an ongoing process of iteration and the application of human knowledge to a wide variety of variables. So pick your tools smartly, ensure they do what you need, are easy to use, have a demonstrable ROI and, above all, they are there to augment your PPC experience, and not replace it.

GET IN TOUCH WITH US TODAY

ABOUT US

Click Consult is a multi award-winning digital and search marketing agency with a focus on organic (SEO) and paid search (PPC). Part of global consumer brand business Ceuta Group, we have a team of 70-plus specialists and a portfolio of more than 60 clients worldwide.

Our complementary services include content marketing, outreach, social media, conversion rate optimisation (CRO) and international/multilingual search marketing. We can also offer training and consultation to support your teams or existing strategy.

Click was named Organic Search (SEO) Team of the Year 2020, adding to our long list of other awards and accolades, and also ranks within Econsultancy's 'Top 100 Digital Agencies', and Prolific North's 'Top 50 Digital Agencies'. We're also a Google Premier Partner, a Bing Select Partner and feature in The Drum Recommends.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Blog
Click Consult regularly posts actionable insights on its blog – dealing with all aspects of search marketing. From technical SEO to PPC, content marketing and Analytics advice, the Click Consult blog has something for everyone of any ability.

eBooks
Click Consult produces in depth eBooks on aspects of search marketing on a regular basis, dealing with the latest best practices, changes to standard practices, methods of improvement and more.
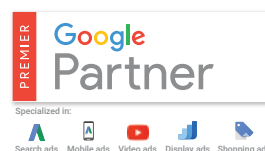
Infographics
Sometimes what you need is a quick point of reference about complex subjects. Thanks to its team of highly talented designers, Click Consult is also able to distil its vast experience into easy to understand visual content.
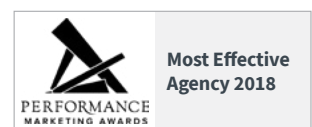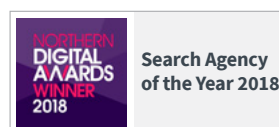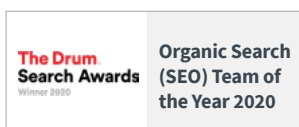
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