



# PAID SEARCH AUDITING CHECKLIST



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## INTRODUCTION

Paid search auditing is one of the most difficult tasks to undertake with a legacy account – which may have had several owners in the course of a few years. Errors creep in, different people take different approaches, and eventually you can end up with a functional but inefficient mess where there should be a Google Ads account.

For that reason, we've put together a list of tasks that you should undertake when you inherit an account – but it also provides a checklist that you can follow with a new account to ensure that you're setting it live in the best possible condition from the start.

If you need more information on other aspects of paid search, you can check out our [PPC Uncovered series](#), but for now we're going to deal with an audit/set-up process that should have you firing on all cylinders.

It's impossible to cover everything in an easy to digest checklist however, so make sure you experiment!



## STRUCTURE

The structure of your accounts is among the first things to lose coherence as it gets older. For that reason, it's as good a place as any to start an audit.

### SEARCH CAMPAIGN STRUCTURE

Campaigns should be structured around your business and campaign objectives. For example, own brand keywords should always be in their own campaign as they can be expected to perform well; likewise generic keywords should be a separate campaign as they are expected to have a lower click-through rate (CTR) and conversion rate.

In addition to this initial separation, ads should also be grouped by theme and intent. This allows for ads to be better tailored to the product or service they are advertising and also to the keyword they are targeting.

Further groups can be set up for research level queries ('how to', 'how much' etc.) and, if needed, for specific actions like driving calls to your business.

### DISPLAY CAMPAIGN STRUCTURE

In addition to the splitting of campaigns involved in a search campaign, display campaigns should also look to use dynamic retargeting. Remarketing campaigns are a great way of bringing visitors back to your site who haven't previously converted (or even to tempt repeat custom).

Set up audience lists for users that have visited particular sections of the site. This way you can retarget them with ad messaging specific to the products they have demonstrated interest in previously.

The ad messaging can also vary based on how long it has been since they last visited the site, so that they are given new messaging at different intervals to compel them to return to the site.

Remarketing campaigns can also use a number of advanced types of audience lists, in order to generate the best return. For example:

- **Customer Match** – Allows you to upload your mailing list to remarket to. You can work with your email marketing team to help co-ordinate the best strategy for reaching these people.
- **Similar to audiences** – This strictly isn't Remarketing as these are new users displaying similar characteristics to people in your other Remarketing lists. However, our recommended strategy would be to target people similar to your list of previously converting users
- **Smart lists** – This is a list of users that Google believes are 'ready to convert'. This is determined by a number of factors such as engagement metrics from their previous visit.

## SHOPPING CAMPAIGNS

Shopping campaigns, for many online retailers, are going to be the core of your Google Ads spending – and for that reason, it pays to ensure that this campaign is structured as well as possible. This means setting up three types of campaign:

- **High priority campaign** – Should be used for top products or ‘bestsellers’ that you want to prioritise over other stock to ensure you’re always maximising visibility for these.
- **Medium priority campaign** – Should follow the same structure of the Search campaigns, so that categories are split out, to allow for more effective reporting and optimisation.
- **Low priority campaign** – This should be set up as a ‘Catch all’ in case any products are not captured by the medium or high priority campaigns.

In addition, at Click Consult, our best practice advice is to split out the Shopping Campaign structure and dedicate one item per ad group. This will allow you to control spend and monitor performance at a more granular level while refining search queries for each individual product.



## ADS

Your campaigns are just where things start, however, once you have the shape of your account in order, the next thing is to apply similar thinking to the ads themselves – ensuring that you are narrowing the focus of your ads so that performance of specific keyword or product focused ads can be tested to a high level of significance and grouping ads within tight themes.

### AD CUSTOMISERS

Using ad customisers, you can create personalised text in order to change the ads based on signals such as location, time of day, device and audience without changing the base ad. This will allow the ads to be as relevant as possible as well as improve [Quality Score](#) and click-through rate.

### AD EXTENSIONS

Ad extensions are a type of ad format that show extra information (“extending” from your text ads) about your business. Some can be added manually and others are automated. These include (but are not limited to) the following:

- **Sitelinks Extensions** – offer further links to sub-pages of your site.
- **Call Extensions** – allows click to call from ads.
- **App Extensions** – enables click to download for app ads.

Ad extensions tend to improve your ad’s visibility, often appearing above the search results, rather than along the sidebar. If two competing ads have the same bid and quality, the ad with greater expected impact from extensions will generally appear in a higher ad position than the other. This can also improve an ad’s CTR.

### KEYWORDS

Your keyword list may actually be the one thing to benefit from a lengthy existence – especially if it has been at all maintained. However, if you need to start afresh, [you can download our guide](#).

### KEYWORD MATCH TYPES

In a correctly structured account, we would expect to see the highest proportion of ‘exact’ keywords, then ‘phrase’ then ‘broad match modified’, with the lowest (if any) being broad. Broad match modified keywords, by default, match to ‘phrase’ and ‘exact match’ search queries this applies when bidding on phrase match too – it matches to ‘exact’. By ensuring each keyword has all relevant match type variants built in, you can better control your CPC spend and the relevancy of search queries matching.

### NEGATIVE KEYWORDS

Ad group negatives are seldom used to their full potential, yet we would always advise that brands add in, at the very least, ad group level negatives to prevent cross-matching between ad groups, so that traffic always comes through the most relevant ad group.

## BID MODIFIERS

Sometimes a click is worth more to your brand if it comes from a mobile device, at a certain time of the day, from a new vs. returning visitor, or from a specific location. By setting your bid adjustments, you can increase or decrease your bids to gain more control over when and where your ad is shown. Bid Modifiers stack to create highly targeted bids in real time.

### DAY PARTING

By analysing your traffic, you can build out progressive bid adjustments on exceptionally good or poor performing days of the week, and hours of each day, in order to increase the overall performance of your account.

### DEVICE

Again, by analysing your paid traffic, you can determine the performance of devices of computer, mobile and tablet traffic. You should consider assist value, and lead quality per device in these calculations, and these bid adjustments will need regular reviewing and updating, but they can help you to drill down and ensure you're spending your money on the devices that deliver.

### LOCATION

For any brand with a localised dimension to their business, there should be clear deviations in the performance of specific locations in terms of CPCs, CTRs, Conversion rates and ROI. These should be reviewed for each campaign and set up to prioritise the appropriate locations with bid modifiers.

### DEMOGRAPHICS FOR SEARCH

Demographics for Search offers account owners the opportunity to bid separately for different ages and genders, and further increase efficiency for the account. Most brands should have a consumer persona – and this option offers you the chance to see whether you're right in your choices while cutting CPC and improving ROI.



## LANDING PAGES

You should always make sure that the most appropriate ad group, and keyword relevant destination URL is being used. Having a highly relevant landing page will not only improve your conversion rate but will have a positive effect on Quality Score – which can lower CPC.

## ATTRIBUTION

Google Ads as standard uses last interaction attribution model which assigns 100% of the conversion value to the last clicked keyword. In our optimisation strategy we perform attribution modelling to take our bid optimisation one step further. We recognise the value that different keywords play in the path to conversion and optimise accordingly.

We can see that the current attribution modelling used for conversions is the XXX Model. We will analyse different attribution models to determine which one leads to the maximal bottom line conversions, when used to optimise against.

## ANALYTICS LINKING

Your Google Ads account should be linked to the correct Google Analytics property. Linking Analytics to your Ads account can help when analysing consumer activity on your website. This information can then shed light on how much of your website traffic or sales comes from Google Ads, and therefore improve your ads and website.

After linking Google Analytics and Google Ads, you can do the following:

- Import Google Analytics goals and transactions into Google Ads as conversions
- View Google Analytics site engagement data in Google Ads
- Create remarketing lists in Analytics to use in Google Ads for targeting specific audiences
- Automatically view your Google Ads click and cost data alongside your Analytics site engagement data

## WEBSITE CALL CONVERSIONS

Website call conversions dynamically insert a Google forwarding number resembling a regular local phone number. This measures calls made by these people viewing your site who have come through a PPC ad.

Any resulting calls will be tracked as call conversions in Google Ads. You can then attribute the call conversion and conversion value back to the keyword and ad that drove the customer. This free feature will provide us with further data to analyse and optimise your Google Ads campaigns.



## CHECKLIST

- Are your campaigns correctly structured – tightly themed and focused?
  - Are your Display Campaigns using the right lists to ensure top performance?
  - Are your Shopping Campaigns tightly focused – using individual product IDs as a base?
  - Are your ads sufficiently targeted and grouped by theme?
  - Are you using ad customisers to improve your ad performance and relevance?
  - Are you improving usefulness and relevance using ad extensions?
  - Have you built a sufficiently comprehensive keyword list?
  - Are you employing the right mix of exact, phrase and broad match types?
  - Have you compiled a list of negative keywords to differentiate ad groups and remove irrelevant keywords?
- 
- Are you making the most of bid modifiers to take advantage of your best performing:
    - Time of day
    - Devices
    - Locations
    - Demographics
- 
- Are your ads pointing at the most relevant landing page for the query/keyword?
  - Are you using the right attribution model to ensure credit is given to the right channels?
  - Have you linked your Google Ads and Google Analytics accounts?
  - If appropriate, have you set up website call conversions to monitor inbound calls?

## CONCLUSION

As stated at the beginning, we wanted to ensure this was a nice introduction to auditing your Google Ads account – something often overlooked but incredibly important. While that means we've trimmed what we cover in opposition to our own agency auditing, we think this list of key considerations should help to set up your account and offer a greatly improved ROI for those brands that implement the recommendations well.



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## 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.

## HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

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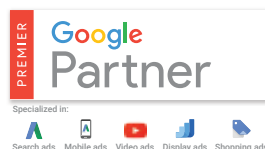
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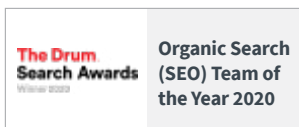
## OUR ACCREDITATIONS



**The Drum**  
Recommended



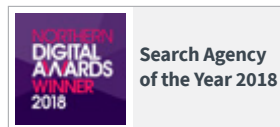
## OUR AWARDS



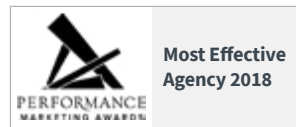
Organic Search  
(SEO) Team of  
the Year 2020



SEO Agency of  
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Most Effective  
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## OUR TECHNOLOGIES

monitor **TRAX** rank **TRAX** feed **TRAX** link **TRAX** pro **TRAX** page **TRAX**