

“The dirty secrets of search campaigns”

Whenever we run paid search campaigns for new clients we see a consistent pattern of concerns expressed when the campaign starts to roll out. This is mostly just a lack of understanding amongst the executives and sales teams who have expectations that are simply not realistic. This whitepaper addresses those common concerns and offers insight and explanations that can be easily shared. We hope it helps you run successful campaigns and manage expectations.

Why do different people see different ads on the same keyword?

Google employs complex algorithms within its search engine to help deliver what it believes are the best, most relevant results to each individual user. For organic results, all users typically see the same results because the algorithm being used is focused on the websites pages, content and relevance to the keywords used. It does not typically look at user behavior.

For ads, the methodology and algorithm is very different. Google wants to show ads to users it thinks will click on them. The search takes into account every individual's history of searches, web behavior and click history to select the ads from its advertiser list that it thinks will generate a response.

As an example: Your target, say an IT Manager, has established his behavior by searching for lots of IT terms; clicking extensively on IT related keywords, vendor names and related content. He also, as he travels across the web, visits a high percentage of pages that house IT content. His search and behavior profile skews heavily towards IT and so he gets many more ads from IT vendors.

Your sales staff/executives have very different search and behavior patterns. Indeed, no two individuals are the same. Google adjusts the ads it shows (or the order of the ads) on a case by case basis. If you do not see an ad you know the Google algorithm has analyzed you and decided you are not worth showing an ad to, based on your profile.

REMEMBER: The Google ad algorithm is written to maximize the revenue generated for Google through obtaining the maximum number of clicks.

Why do I see my competitor's ads and not mine?

Firstly, most users don't click on their own ads, so Google automatically assumes they are not interested and removes them from the mix. Ironically, many company employees will click a lot on competitors' ads in order to check out what they are

doing and saying; thus actually increasing Google's 'desire' to show you more ads! As a result company employees typically see lots of competitor ads.

How can I get our ads in front of my staff?

Firstly, you need to have them display a behavior that leads Google to consider them a good click prospect. If they see an ad: Click on it! Do more IT searches; and click on more of the ads on those pages. Start acting like an IT or network manager and eventually ads will start showing up.

Is there any negative effect of my staff looking for our ads?

Yes. If they look for ads and then do not click when they see them, they will lower the click rate and negatively impact overall campaign performance. Once they see one ad, tell them not to go back and look again. Even if they click each time they see the ad, Google is also smart enough to think they are trying to artificially inflate click rates and will also penalize the campaign. It's a no win game!

So if we are not seeing our ads then who is?

Your customers. Probably also your competitors. These are the groups that have behavior profiles that will result in them seeing our ads. Trust Google to get your ads to those who are interested. It is designed to do just that!

What is the 'ad ranking score' and how does it affect my campaign?

The Google ad algorithm is also looking at a number of different criteria for evaluating how closely linked the ad and landing page is to the user's original search. It uses a combination of things like click rate and content analysis in its evaluation. For example: The organic search algorithm displays your corporate home page as the most relevant page to send someone to for a specific company search.

On the reverse, the ad algorithm probably gives the corporate home page a score of only 2 or 3 out of a possible 10 for ad ranking. Why? Because often the home page has relatively little information about your company, no actionable call to actions, few inbound/outbound links, lots of graphics and little real solid content.

The effect of a low ad rank is that you have to bid more to place higher in the keyword list. You may appear a lot less than other advertisers and ultimately Google simply limits the amount it will scale the campaign.

Example: After week one of a recent client campaign, Google had captured only 30% of the available impressions on the keywords. BUT of the balance of impressions

only 5% could be obtained by increasing the daily budget limit. The other 65% of the balance effect was due to low ad rank. This means increasing the daily budget would still could not get us many more impressions. Changing the landing page and increasing ad ranking did.

If ad ranking is low Google believes the rest of the impressions are not worth showing (however much you assign to the budget), because the ranking simply means the user is unlikely to click anyway. Remember, Google is not in the business of serving ads if it does not think there is a good chance of getting a click (and remember this also tracks back to the user’s profile).

Wow! This is complex stuff! Can we make changes to improve things?

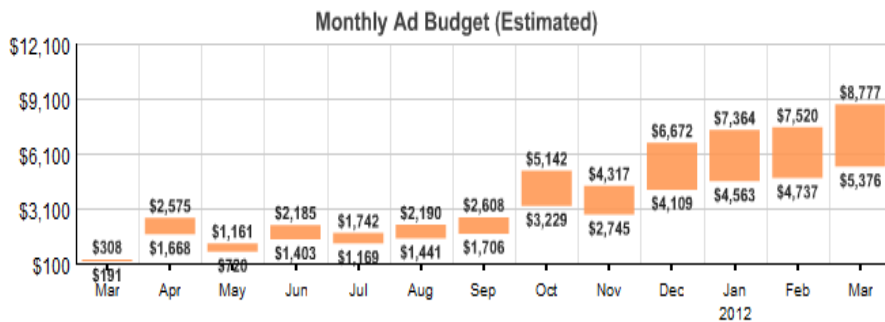
Yes, but be careful. The Google algorithm hates manic campaign changers and often an obvious change has a negative effect.

Example: Let’s push up the bid to get more impressions.

Result: You rank higher and get more high cost clicks from a smaller user audience and thus burn through the daily budget faster; resulting in fewer clicks and impressions than before!

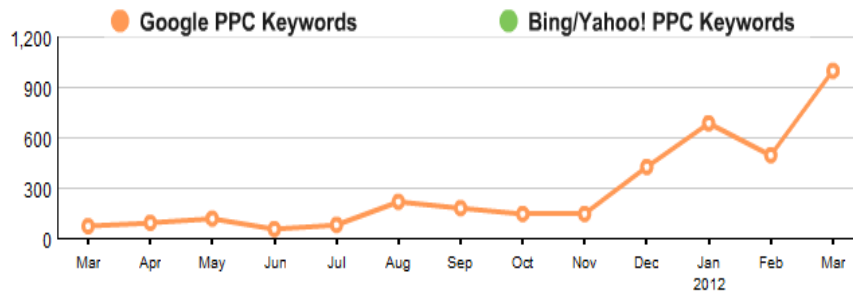
PATIENCE is important! Especially when campaigns start. The best search programs are those that have found a good, even pace; balancing click rate, ad ranking, daily budget, bid price and keyword optimization. But with the temptation to try and juggle things for instant success, most people change parameters and then mess up all the others. Let the campaign settle and then start making adjustments.

The data in the graphs show an analysis of recent search activity by a technology



company. The key take-away is that this company started slowly and allowed the campaign to steadily improve over time. Eventually, as rankings improve, they were increased the budget spend to buy all the impressions they could get and then finally they were adding more keywords once they had proof that search was effective.

This is actually a very well managed campaign and should be a good template for setting any expectations of how search campaigns are a long-term growth investment. Those who try and beat the Google system will always lose!



Slow, steady growth in spend and keywords

How can we improve our campaign?

The best actions you can take:

1. Improve ad ranking:

Make ads with a strong call to action. A better click rate = more chance Google will show the ad.

Make landing pages more relevant to the original search and your ad content (what you promise). The Google algorithm is very sophisticated in its ability to research the content on the page and it knows intuitively if the keyword the user searched is addressed well by the content you intent to present to them.

2. Increase daily budget. Google will want to try and spend all your money so it will at least try and present to the maximum number of people it thinks will click on the ad.

3. Finally, let the campaign settle then eventually adjust bid prices, optimize to actions if possible and add more keywords to expand the campaign.

Good Luck and happy search marketing!

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About Just Media, Inc.



Just Media, Inc., is an independently owned media buying agency based in Emeryville, California, founded in 1996. We work with national and international, blue chip technology clients in categories ranging from healthcare to education, financial to travel, and more recent sectors such as solar and green tech. Our guiding principle is that the only results that truly matter are what we provide for your brand, today. Our more experienced approach to media evaluation provides consistently stronger results. Our expertise is creating media strategies and developing Lead Generation & Branding campaigns in all media formats including; digital, search, print, out-of-home and TV.

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