

How I was able to increase PPC revenue 5X in 3 months: Step by step guide

- To begin, I want to state that our company has been doing PPC and digital strategy since before people knew what a cookie meant. Shopping ads never existed and there was only one type of ad you can run. We have witnessed 5+ versions of Adwords, 200+ new features added/removed and personally beta tested new Adwords functions before they were released.
- PPC can be scary to any business owner because it can get costly and if not handled with care then will affect bottom line and revenue directly and with immense force. However, once you know what you are doing – it will become as easy as playing a game.

Before we begin with how we achieved our results. It's important to know the history and background of the account in question, how we operate and approach optimization. If you want to skip all that - [click here to get the meat!](#)

Let's start with some basics.

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How did we acquire the account?

We acquired the account after our clients digital agency dropped the ball and plummeted their sales and revenue. It came as a referral with low expectations and a lot of built in frustration.

For those of you who want to know more about the client's niche... Here you go!

What does the client do? They are a service-oriented business with a growing monthly client base. Very geo targeted – meaning they only run in a few cities and not national.

What niche are they in? They are in the fitness and health niche.

Before I delve deep into the actual deliverables. Here's how we approach clients and build relationships - our 3 core principles

Be transparent.

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Everything we do is recorded and noted using a project management system we setup with clients. They are directly plugged in, into what everyday tasks, monthly report and any minor optimization we do.

You probably like, damn – f**k that. That would mean the client can see how we do things and eventually do it themselves. Or you might be worried that you will get hammered with questions all time. Come principle 2.

Set expectations...

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There is nothing worse than to promise a client the world. Make sure you have a pricing structure in place with tasks, timelines and projects clearly scoped out. Scoped out? Yeah. Like exact points of what they should expect.

Ex: You should expect, weekly optimizations, monthly reporting (the reporting will include A, B, C, etc...) There is a lot of upfront work, but it will be worth it in the long run. Keep reading and you will get it.

Be totally honest and un-bias in your conversations with the client. Get straight to the point and don't be afraid of expressing your POV. There is nothing worse than agreeing with clients on everything. You are the expert so if they start pitching crazy ideas that won't work – then you should be honest and face that head on. Sometimes declining to do a specific idea will cost you a little \$\$, but that will pay off in the long run because you will win their trust (and that means the world!)

Discuss Objectives and Ask Questions....

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What is your target CPA? What is your current revenue from the account? This should all be in the reports but its always good to verify. You should ask questions about:

- Trends in the niche (you can also use [Google Trends](#) to back that up)
- Insider knowledge that they know from previous experience or being in the business for years

These are the most important findings (summarized) from our research prior to optimizing their account.

(If you'd like to know how we got this information and how we usually conduct our audits - that is also discussed below this summary)

Account Overall sales channels: 85%+ of their sales come in through PPC with the other 15% from referral traffic and branded search (which technically is being generated by PPC, but we will get to that later).

Adwords Account History: Account has been running for the past 3 years with a varying budget between 8k – 20k/month.

Analytics & Conversion Tracking: Basic analytics and tracking setup using Google Analytics. No goal tracking, no funnel tracking, no demographics and 20+ other features were not enabled. They were also tracking anything and everything as a conversion in Adwords. There were also clear issues with the data.

CPA & \$ Objective: Based on the numbers they provided us with, the CPA seems reasonable and their margins are healthy so our research indicated that their Adwords account will have great success. In some cases (for few businesses), Search campaigns prove to be too expensive.

Tools they were using: Google Analytics, Adwords, Unbounce (for landing pages) and Clark for live chat, ifbyphone (now dialogtech) for call tracking.

CRO point of view: The website had a lot of dead ends. Meaning if you navigate through the site, it was hard to understand what they were offering and if you did, you would most probably not find it. You actually had to put in an effort to purchase/get what you were looking for.

Pricing structure: They had a proper pricing structure with healthy margins and the person in charge had extensive knowledge of their industry.

Reporting: Overall sales and revenue reports were setup according to best practices. You can see everything from cost/sale to cost/lead to lead to sale ratio. No reporting was setup at a channel level though so they had no idea which ad was working best, what landing page was converting the highest, etc.

Enough with the account history... Let's get to the meat

Prior to starting any optimization or work, we did a series of audits of their account. Not just their AdWords account, but an overall audit of their website and competition as well.

What we started with;

Research, research and more research and then some more audits.

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I can't stress enough how much research is important to get you started on the right track. Existing accounts require much more research time than new accounts.

The above points about pricing, reporting, account history, etc... are just a summary of what we dug up. We sent the client a massive report with over 50 slides. Why is that important? They had to know exactly what is going on so they also set their expectations to how much work there is to be done! It's also to show them how much effort we put in to get that information.

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After the research, each task and project was assigned to a team member. A project management tool was setup to track and notarize activities. Trello is a great tool for that.

Seems simple enough right? Well, not really. For each project we created, we had to create tasks and for each task we had a checklist of items to cover and get done – so it does take time to get all that setup. But once it is, it will be a breeze for you and the client.

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Here are the series of audits we conducted to get the information I shared above.

Competition Audit

I don't want to expand on this a lot as I have an entire course on [Competitive Tools: Beat Your Competition.](#)

A great PPC competitive analysis tool is [SEMRush](#). [add affiliate link]

A. Conversion Tracking Audit

This client in specific had a lot of tracking in place but seemed to be completely screwed up and not working accurately. Not to mention, they are tracking anything and everything. For that reason, we started from scratch.

What is the base metric we will use to optimize the account with? Purchases and only purchases. I know what your thinking - what about Signups, click to chat, email form submit, etc.. Sure – those are great to track and you should definitely track that (and we did), however when you optimize an account – there are so many available metrics you can get lost – you simply can't optimize for each one. You have to focus on one! - then use the others as secondary metrics (or supporting metrics)

Keep reading and this will clear up as we go through the actual data and optimizations.

In Adwords conversion tracking (as of 2017) there is an option to track conversions as well as an option for you to choose which show up in the reports and which don't.

▼ Status: All enabled

☐		Name	Source	Category	Status	Count	Conversion window	Include in "Conversions"
☐	●	Order	Website	Purchase/Sale	Recording conversions	Every	30	Yes
☐	●	Click-to-chat session	Website	Lead	Tag inactive	One	30	Yes
☐	●	Form Submit Leads	Website	Lead	Recording conversions	Every	30	Yes
☐	●	Reached Create Account	Analytics	Other	Recording conversions	Every	90	No

Note: A red arrow points to the 'Include in "Conversions"' column header. A red box highlights the 'Yes' values in the 'Include in "Conversions"' column for 'Click-to-chat session' and 'Form Submit Leads'. A red text annotation 'Should be No' is placed next to the '30' in the 'Conversion window' column for 'Click-to-chat session'.

In our case, we setup all the different conversion points: Purchase, Signup, click to chat, Email submit, landing page submit and calls. However, we only had purchase to report within the adwords live dashboard/platform.

The others were still tracking and we can see their data in Adwords if we wanted to, but they were not reporting in the main dashboard where we do most of the optimizations.

Summary: This section, we were optimizing for purchases, but also looked at all the other conversions to support any optimizations when we had doubts about ad groups, keywords, ads, etc...

It goes without saying, please make sure you test your tracking and analytics setup before moving to the second point. How should you test your setup? [Watch this video](#) [LINK TO WEBINAR/VIDEO]

B. Mining Adwords + Google Analytics Reports

By mine, I mean we literally went in there setup reports and all kinds of different segments and started to look at all the data to find insights. If you are not familiar with how to use Google Analytics, you should [watch my free webinar about it](#). (Segment, reports and much more is discussed there.)

We looked at all types of reports with Google Analytics to figure out the buying cycle and see if there is any data there we can use within Adwords. What we found was incredible!

We found out that one of the most popular path people are taking to purchase requires them to interact with a PPC ad at least twice!!



This means multiple things - its a hyper competitive market and users frequently shop around before purchasing so we had to make sure that all our ads had consistent messaging and made sense at every touch point. In short, we had to optimize the ads to show consistently (but different imagery, messaging, etc..) at the different touch points to increase the chances a user converts.

To show ads consistently and frequently, you have to make sure that your impression/search shares are high. The impression/search shares, means the number of impressions (views) you got vs. the number you were eligible to receive. Budget and bids are usually the culprit here!

Adwords has way for you to check for impression/search shares.

Campaigns >> Modify Columns >> Competitive Metrics. Then check all. It will look something like this

Campaign	Budget	Status	Bid strategy type	Display lost IS (budget)	Display lost IS (rank)	Search impr. share	Search lost IS (budget)	Display impr. share	Relative CTR	Search lost IS (rank)	Search exact match IS
MAIN CAMPAIGN	\$250.00	Eligible	Manual CPC	—	—	86.38%	0.00%	—	—	13.62%	100.00%
MAIN CAMPAIGN	\$300.00	Limited by budget	CPC (enhanc...	—	—	17.66%	69.63%	—	—	12.71%	10.87%
MAIN CAMPAIGN	\$350.00	Limited by budget	Manual CPC	—	—	46.27%	38.28%	—	—	15.45%	46.27%

Explaining that to the client boosted their confidence in our abilities and I don't think they ever doubted our abilities after that.

B. AdWords Audit: How optimized is their account?

Now comes the most time intensive and detailed part of the job.

Since we got handed over what someone else had built, we had to look at every single aspect of the account.

We started with how the campaigns are structured. Are they separated by locations? Landing pages? Day of Week?

In our case, the campaigns were separated by day of week as well as landing pages.

This is a deprecated method after Google added in bid adjustment controls a few years back. That made it easier for users to segment everything within one campaign.

Then we went into the ad groups and looked at how the keywords were being grouped.

- There were a lot of ad groups with some having plenty of keywords while others having very little.
- Quality scores of keywords where from anywhere from 3 - 8 within the Ad Groups. We usually quarantine the low quality score keywords in separate ad groups!
- There were anywhere from 10 - 50 keywords within one adgroup. This means match types were not used properly.

Use this match type...	With this punctuation...	To trigger your ad on...	Example
broad match	none	synonyms, related searches, and other relevant variations	<i>adopt kittens chicago</i>
broad match modifier	+keyword	close variations but not synonyms or related searches	<i>+adopt +kittens +chicago</i>
phrase match	"keyword"	a phrase and close variants of that phrase	<i>"adopt kittens" chicago</i>
exact match	[keyword]	an exact term and close variants of that exact term	<i>[adopt kittens chicago]</i>
negative match	-keyword	searches without the term	<i>-puppies</i>

Next came the keywords. Specifically negative keywords. In my opinion, negative keywords are the backbone of any successful ppc campaign and I personally research them first before going after positive keywords :-)

Now negative keywords can be added at the campaign or adgroup level. What we found was that there were discrepancies between the negative keywords in the campaigns and positive keywords they were targeting. This was blocking relevant searches and killing the impression/search shares.

There were little to no adgroup level negatives. I use those plenty!

You need to make sure Adgroups are not competing with each other. Same thing with campaigns. That's why negative keywords are important.

SEARCH KEYWORDS	DISPLAY/VIDEO KEYWORDS	NEGATIVE KEYWORDS	SEARCH TERMS ▾
+			
☐ Negative keyword ↑	Added to		Level
☐			Campaign
☐			Campaign
☐			Campaign
☐			Campaign
☐			Campaign
☐			Campaign
☐			Campaign
☐			Ad group
☐			Ad group
☐			Ad group

Now comes the Ads/Creative section. With Adwords, there are always new updates/features, especially when it comes to creative. What is allowed/not has changed drastically over the years.

For example, now you have 2 headlines - before it was only one with 2 description lines. Even the character limits changed. They also added a lot of different ad types. The current ad types (as of June 2018) are:

- Text (for search/keyword bidding)
- Responsive (for display)
- Image (for display)
- App Promotion Ads
- Video (for display)
- Showcase Shopping Ads (specific to Google Shopping Network)
- Call-Only Ads (for local stores)

You can find all these explained in [detail here](#).

At this point we had done nothing but look at the campaigns, ads, keywords, structure, etc... However nothing was done. To fix the account, we now had to understand the data behind this setup.

Even though this was handed to us by a 3rd party, we would always assume they did some due diligence when setting the account. For this reason, we exported the entire account and started looking at each part separately. Starting by campaigns. Which campaigns are performing best? what settings are they using? Is it the keywords, landing pages or ads within the campaign?

We then did the same thing for ad groups. Which ad groups are performing best? what settings are they using? Is it the keywords, landing pages or ads within the ad group?

Rinse and repeat for keywords and ads.

Once your done, take that data and save it in excel sheet so you can come back to it when your actually optimizing the account later on.

[ADD GIF FUN OF EXCEL SHEETS]

After this process, it became crystal clear what was working and what wasn't. However, that doesn't mean we can simply go into the live account and update the crap out of it.

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Why not?

We prefer to transition the account into the new structure rather than drastically implement every change immediately.

Here are some reasons why not to :

- The client was still getting leads (not at their required CPA, but leads were still coming in). Drastic changes might cause that to stop!
- Chances of something going wrong when you upload 500+ changes to an Adwords account increase drastically compared to slow transitions/changes.
- Google looks at historic data and scores account, ad groups, ads and keywords accordingly. If you upload new things – all the history will be deleted.

Tip: Don't create new campaigns (if you don't have to), simply update the existing campaigns with the new settings, ad groups, ads, keywords, etc.... That way, you

won't lose the campaign history, ad history, etc. whilst making sure that your new setup is optimal for the client.

In order to understand whether you need to create a new account or work better in the existing one, you need to find out the QS of your account. Account's QS can be from 1 to 10. In order to calculate the QS, you can use this script. To add it to your account go to Bulk operations - Scripts - + Script

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Ns20DPcvtdpAHdGyZOVThdsb195HYUXPWKpwkn28Ds0/edit?usp=sharing>

If your account's Quality Score is higher than 6, then you'd better continue working in your existing account. If your account's Quality Score is lower than 5, it's best to create a new account. It will be easier to get a good QS for a new account, rather than trying to improve it in an existing one.

- If you happen to upload new ads, you will have to make sure they get approved and if they don't then you already lost time. You will need to revise and upload new ads all the while the client is getting no traffic. Keep in mind, our client gets hundreds of clicks hourly.

Tip: For ads, the best option would be to upload the new ads, wait for them to be approved, then pause the old underperforming ads. Don't update the old ads, because their historic data will be lost, don't forget the \$\$ you spent getting that data.

In this case, the account quality score was less than 5 so the best way to implement all the new changes is to setup the new account, campaigns, ad group, etc... exactly as we wanted them to be - using AdWords editor (the desktop version of Google Ad Words). Then and only then - we would slowly implement the changes on the same account.

C. Tools Audit: What are they using?

At the very start - I mentioned briefly the tools the client was using. From our extensive experience in the industry and plenty of customer base - we know which tools are best, cheapest and provide exactly what the client requires.

Here are the tools we recommended they switch to you or use. More about each one in other articles!

[Add image for them]

IfByPhone (now called dialogtech). We recommended callrail as they offer the same systems but with an easier interface, support is great as well as a huge difference in price.

[Add image for them]

ZenChat. We switched them to intercom. Their interface is great as well as support. A little pricy but worth it if your potential clients have plenty of questions.

[Add image for them]

Clickfunnels for landing pages. There are also UnBounce, Optimizely and you can use Google Analytics experiments (free) to test your landing pages.

[Add image for them]

Reporting. We use supermetrics + Google Data Studio. Nothing beats automated reports that look good and help the client understand what their money is doing.

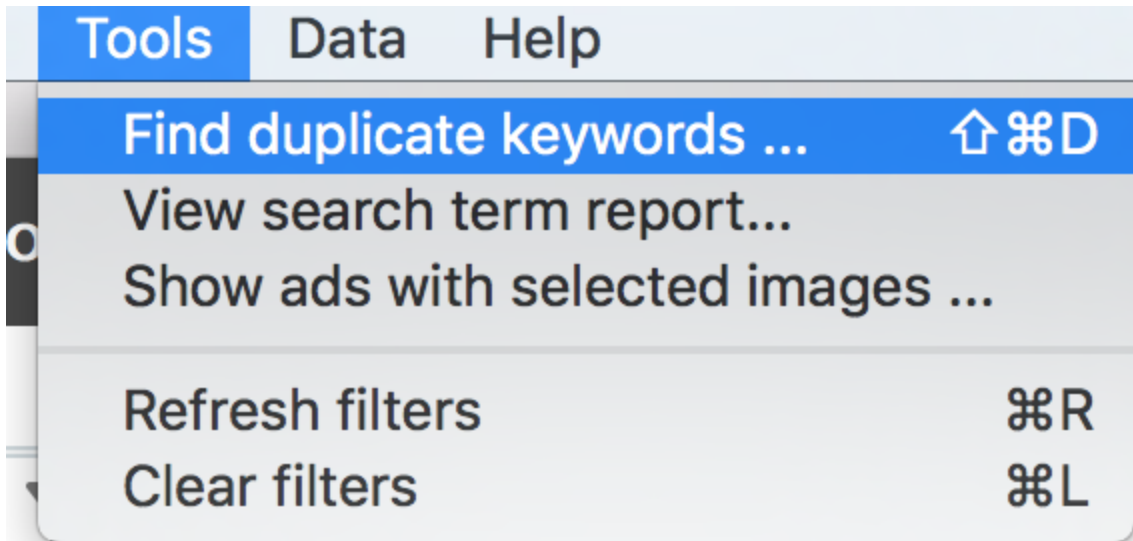
Now comes the best part! The actual optimization!

Before you start optimizing and deleting (my favorite part) things. Here are some helpful tips that will save you time with every optimization process:

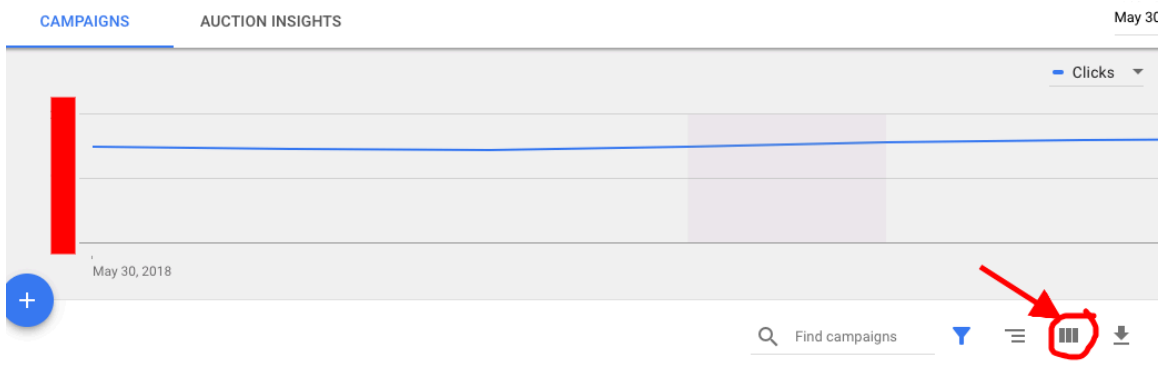
- Use Excel Files + AdWords Editor (the desktop version of AdWords) to implement the changes.
You will need to fill in such a file (follow the link) and then upload it to Google Editor.

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/15ckjBwleQfJVVYV9YPUgfX1X1xRlr9_3UhCXFqvyCMY/edit?usp=sharing

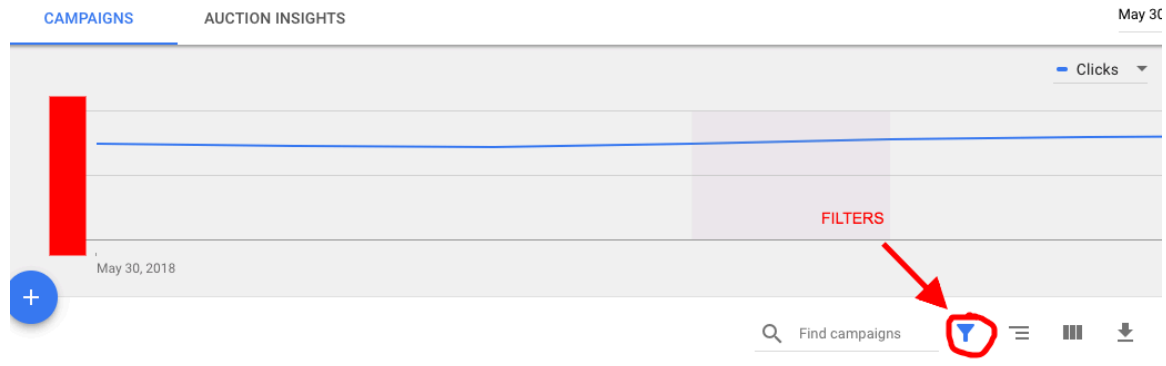
- Download the entire accounts statistics from the beginning of time and then sort through the data in the editor to understand what is going on
- Use Tools >> Google Duplicate Keyword Checker. This will help you compare match types and different keywords within ad groups to determine the best ones to run.



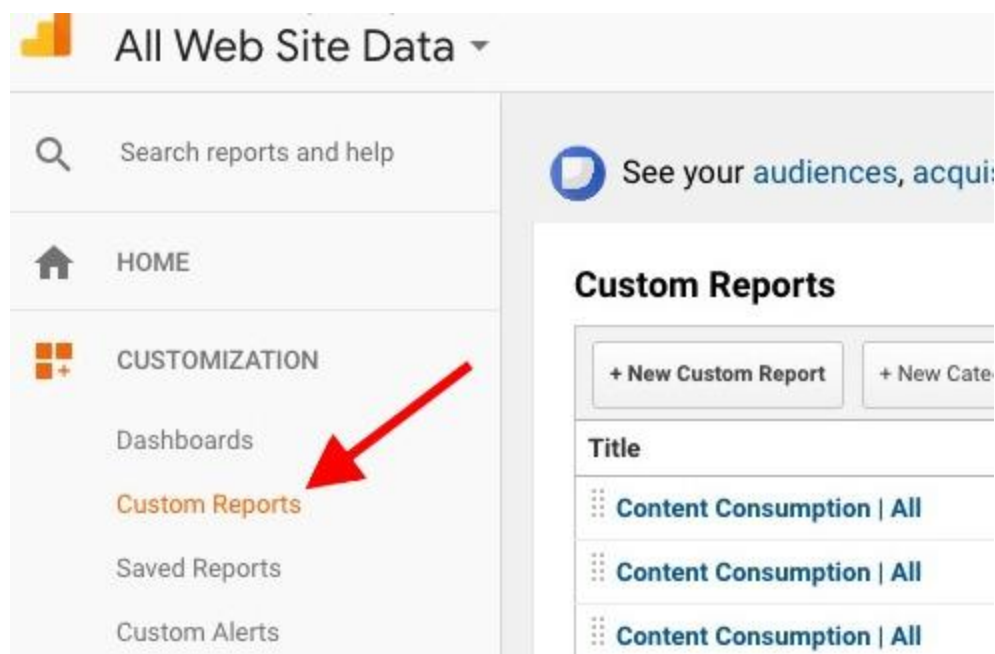
- Use the “Dimensions” Tab within Adwords (if your still using the old version), otherwise with the new Adwords, the Dimensions tab has been retired and you will have to use the columns filter which can be customized to show you amazing data points as well.



- Use filters in the Google Adwords interface to quickly find the information you need. For example, if you need to get all the search terms that brought the conversions, go to the search terms tab - Filter - Create filter - Conversions - conversions > 0. And then download this report.



- Use custom reports in Google Analytics if you need to analyze data for a website in general. For example, in order to understand which locations are most effective, it is not enough to see results from Adwords only. You probably should be wondering what the results have other traffic sources, are there any patterns. Custom reports are very convenient for this.



What did we start with? The account structure and here is the strategy we used for this client

We setup just enough campaigns to make sure that we get enough traffic within the given budget. We stopped the competitor campaigns as they were hemorrhaging dollars and focused on the core campaigns provides the most cost efficient leads.

The most successful campaigns aren't just those with the most conversions, but rather the highest conversion rates. Don't make the mistake of looking only at one

metric either - you should look at the overall benefit of a campaigns when optimizing it. If its low conversions but high conversion rates, its worth it to keep it for example. If it's assisting in conversions at a low cost, then it might be worth to keep as well. Really depends on the scenario.

A few things to stay away from:

- Don't have too many campaigns runnings. If possible integrate your small campaigns as ad groups within larger campaigns.
- Don't create everything from scratch. If possible, use existing campaigns with history and update those.
- Campaigns should have cross campaign negative keywords. This might sound technical at first, but we don't want the campaigns to compete with each other so you have to make sure they are not bidding for the same keywords. This should be done using phrase or exact negative campaign-level keywords only. We are not trying to create a wall around the campaigns, but more like a small fence to decrease the chances of them competing together. Over cross "negatifying" the campaigns will complicate things overtime so be gentle and add in keywords you are sure will help reduce the competition between the campaigns!
- Don't overthink.
- Don't structure the campaigns based solely on their type (Search/Display, etc..) - You should do that as well as seperate them based on your customers mind sets or different service offerings you are promoting. For example: Are they likely to convert at night vs. day? Maybe create separate campaigns for night vs. day.

Rant: These days Google Adwords includes so many bidding settings within one campaign that it over complicates things. Instead of relying on bid modifiers for location, time and day. You can get rid of one (whichever the most important one is to your success is) and use the bid modifiers for the other settings. Not sure if that makes sense, but I always try to simplify things rather than add on layers of bids.

I like to separate campaigns just enough. Its a personal preference - you should try whichever campaign structure works best for you and your management team.

1. How did we structure the campaigns?

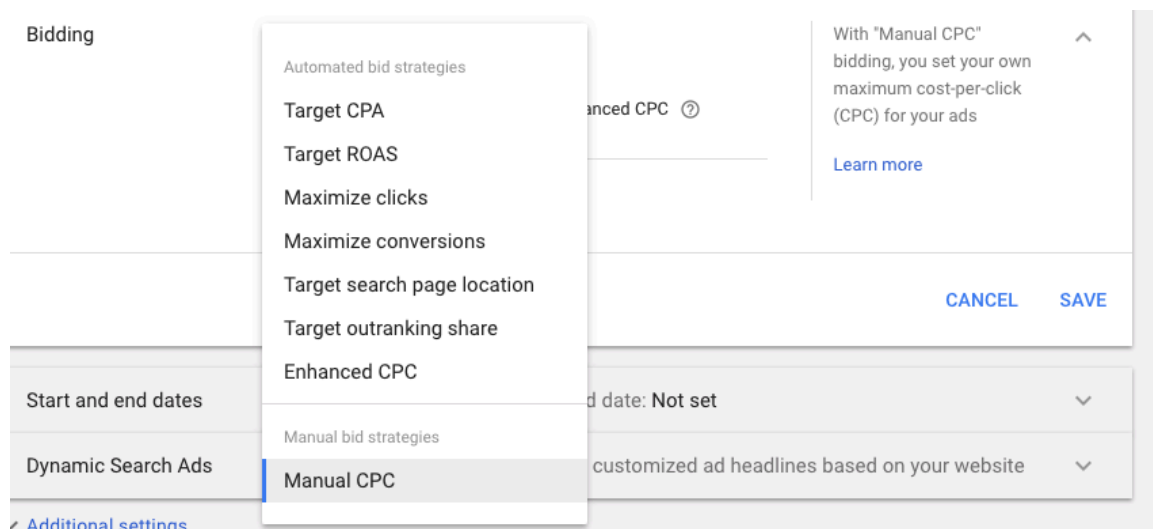
- There is a clear trend in the data that location has a major impact on conversions, so we separated the campaigns accordingly - by location.
- It was also clear that time of day played a key role, so we set up bid modifiers to make sure the ads are seen in the most likely times anyone would convert! (You can segment the campaigns as much as possible but keep in mind budget and again - don't overthink it. You can always optimize later)

- Each campaign has ad groups limited to 5 - 10 closely related keywords with all the different keyword groupings except for broad match type (that match type is a nightmare for the type of campaigns we setup)
- Setup as many relevant ad extensions as possible.

2. What about bidding?

I always go for CPC with search and display. Pretty much everything I can because I like to calculate things like that. However, that's not always the case. I think YouTube sponsored videos are CPM/CPV.

With bidding (depending how much account history you have), its best to use the Target CPA or even ROAS option, but you need have plenty of data (and accurate data at that for those to work). Best for ecommerce stores!!



I like to do enhanced CPC but you will need data in your account for that as well. Not as much as you need for target CPA/ROAS though!

Manual CPC is always good and contrary to what most people think - you don't have to be in your account all day! Combining Manual CPC + Automated Rules has provided me great results with plenty of accounts.

2. Did you do anything special with Ad Groups?

- Cross ad group negative keywords :-) I think at this stage, you would know what I am talking about. This helps reduce competition for keywords within each campaign.

- Use different match types. Broad modified, phrase and exact are recommended. Broad is not recommended unless your using more keywords than there are in webster dictionary as negatives.

3. How did you approach keywords?

- I like to start by collecting as many negative keywords as possible. I do this by going to Google keyword tool and typing in a general keywords I am targeting. I find all keywords that might provide irrelevant traffic and add them as phrase negatives.
- Grouping keywords is also important. The more relevant the better. I prefer to simplify things and have as many as possible within one Ad Group, however it is recommended to have everything as separated as possible. (Just depends on how much time you have to optimize!)

Money saving tip #1: The more negatives you have the less irrelevant traffic you get! This means that starting out with a ton of negatives is key to success with PPC.

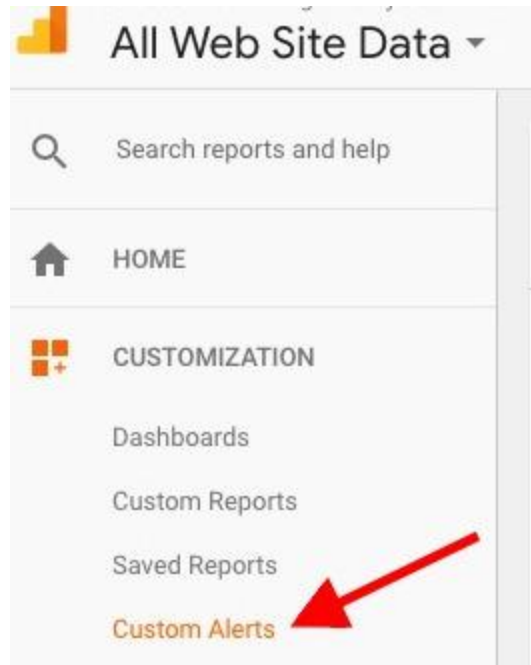
[HERE IS A LIST OF NEGATIVE KWs]

4. What about landing pages?

- We used a landing page for each campaign and are expanding to more.
- The landing page designs are being test continuously.
Unbounce, Optimizely, ClickFunnels and even building them with Wordpress + Google Experiments are all great ways to create landing pages.
- Landing page should CLEARLY represent what the offer is and MUST be optimized for both Mobile & Desktop.

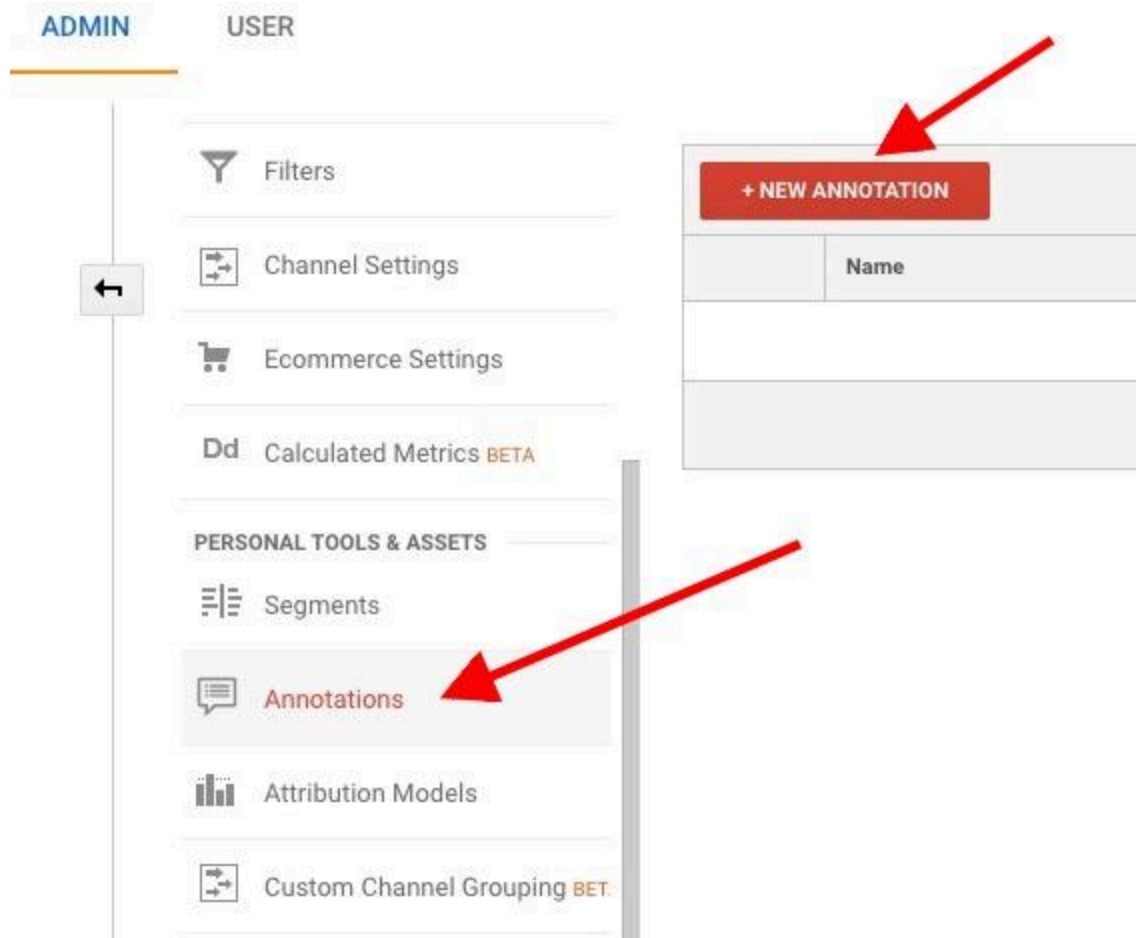
5. Random cool things you might find useful

- In Adwords Editor, there is an option to filter by duplicate keywords. (discussed above) This shows you if you have duplicates (match types are included) within your account and the best thing is that you can see each one's data right next to it. Turn off the bad and keep the good one on.
- Setup Google Alerts to monitor traffic changes day to day and week to week. For example, setting up an alert that emails you when brand traffic drops by 50% from the last day. Possibilities are endless. Be proactive!



- Keep notes and mark optimization using Google Annotations (in case you need to check again) or you can rely on change history (which keeps records of all the changes on your account, who made them, etc..). You can also revert

old changes with a click of a button!



This feature is probably the most underused feature in Analytics.

- Use retargeting campaigns combined with frequency settings to maximize your impact.

Settings

Budget	\$30.00/day	▼
Ad rotation	Do not optimize: Rotate ads indefinitely	▼
Start and end dates	Start date: [REDACTED] End date: Not set	▼
Devices	Show on all devices	▼
Frequency capping	Set a limit to how many times your ads appear to the same user on the Display Network ⓘ ☐ No limit on viewable impressions ☒ Apply limit on viewable impressions Number of impressions Frequency Level per day per week per month this campaign ▼	

CANCEL SAVE

Plenty more things I can point out - I think the post is long enough to keep my senior editor (mike) busy for a few days [smiley face laughing?]

What comes after ALL that rambling? Results & More Money

We work hard so that our clients can succeed. Their success is our success since there is always room for expansion when it comes to PPC or even SEO.

Even though this case study is about PPC. My long term goal has always been (and will always be) to transition clients/businesses to SEO traffic. Diversifying your traffic/channels should be your main focus.

Once PPC is generating leads, its time to use that data to move into other channels and start leveraging SEO for free traffic [article coming soon].

Here's a snapshot of what our client is experiencing!

Date	Impressions	Clicks	Spend	CPC	New Sales	CPL	Rev (-Media)	
Sept 2017	143,098	3,102	\$19,706	\$6.35	50	\$65.69	\$8,522	STARTING ROI
Oct 2017	150,729	2,097	\$12,215	\$5.82	43	\$66.75	\$15,892	
Nov 2017	134,717	1,888	\$10,890	\$5.77	32	\$54.45	\$12,809	
Dec 2017	141,779	2,220	\$13,614	\$6.13	47	\$72.03	\$14,199	
Jan 2018	245,932	3,974	\$21,500	\$5.41	77	\$71.91	\$32,939	
Feb 2018	211,738	4,287	\$21,500	\$5.02	58	\$70.96	\$17,633	
March 2018	251,079	5,312	\$21,000	\$3.95	82	\$65.22	\$49,090	
April 2018	227,214	5,389	\$21,000	\$3.90	94	\$69.54	\$46,587	
May 2018	231,072	5,794	\$21,000	\$3.62	88	\$66.04	\$41,273	5X+ ROI

[ADD GIF]

(Sorry Mike! I will leave this for another post)

If your read this far - I think you would really enjoy being on my email list. I only send important/valuable stuff (and do free webinars once in a while)

CTA the reader to the email signup box.

[EMAIL SIGNUP BOX]

What do you think? Everyone has something valuable to add, or a question that could add value to others. Comment below!