

Six common challenges in optimizing PPC campaigns and how to solve them.

Optimizing search campaigns is the ‘meat and potatoes’ of every PPC team. However, it is also one of the most difficult to get consistently right. In this 6-step guide we are going to look at some of the most pressing challenges that face the PPC team when it comes to optimizing campaigns, why they’re happening and how to tackle them.

1. You’re Not Getting Enough Impression Share

In PPC, Impression Share (IS) is the percentage of total impressions your ad receives compared to the total number of impressions it is eligible to receive. The remaining percentage is known as Lost Impression Share (Lost IS).

So, why does Lost IS happen?

There are a few reasons, but here are 3 important ones:

- **Low keyword bids** – You are bidding too low on keywords in the auction, which means your competition can easily outbid you and push you down the page.
- **Budget restrictions** – Your maximum budget limit is too low, meaning you’re simply not ‘competitive.’ Your competitors can outspend you and exhaust your budget.
- **Poor Ad Rank** – If your ads are not performing well in the ad auction, it is likely that you are losing impressions due to rank. The two factors that contribute to ad rank are your max CPC bid and quality score, so most strategies for reducing impression share due to rank involve one of those two factors.

So, while your keywords may be aligned with user intent, there are other factors that are preventing you from earning impressions. If your ads aren't getting enough impressions, it's a poor start, which is unlikely to yield enough conversions for your campaign.

So, what can you do to offset this problem?

- **Set a competitive budget:** With a low budget, you'll struggle to make a meaningful impact. A budget that is too high could rapidly drain your finances. Look for a balance that ensures you can be competitive without risking it all. It may be advisable to run fewer campaigns with larger budgets.
- **Pay attention to Keyword Match:** A heavy focus on *Exact Match Type Keywords* will attract qualified users – but not at scale. You should aim for a mix of the other match types to spread brand awareness and generate clicks.
- **Use Placement Targeting:** Bidding on target impression share may help you to boost your impression share. Your ad may appear in one of several possible placements.

Use placement targeting to select the placements where you want your ad to appear. Google Ads automatically sets your bids to show your ad, based on your placement settings:

- Absolute top position (1)
- Top of the page (1 - 4)
- Anywhere on the page (1 - 8)

By considering how your ad performs in different positions you can determine the best position for your ad – and for your desired return on investment (ROI).

- **Local Search:** Your ad may be displayed more if it is relevant to local searches in a specific area. By knowing where your audience is, you can use geo-targeting to hone in on a specific state, city or even Zip Code. This allows for a greater degree of personalisation and more impressions.

- **Time-Targeting:** Knowing your audience at a deeper level will allow you to optimize your ad scheduling. Use day-parting and adjust the display time to show your ads whenever they are more likely to attract clicks from qualified users.
- **Device Bidding:** This can be set at the campaign or ad group level, and bid adjustments set for PCs, tablets, or mobile. They are highly useful to campaign organization and optimizing spend across devices.

2. Lower Click Through Rate (CTR)

After impressions, CTR is the next step towards lead generation. A high CTR is a good sign of effective targeting and ad copy. On the other hand, if your ads are generating a low CTR, you need to find the problem.

- **It's the wrong audience:** If you are bidding on the wrong keywords, you'll attract the wrong audience. You should be continually reviewing incoming searches, identifying search terms that attract irrelevant users, and add them to your negative keyword lists. Align your content, ads, and landing pages with these relevant keywords to attain more relevant qualified traffic.
- **Relevancy:** Ad copy text that is engaging and relevant for users will give a higher Quality Score and a better Ad Rank. Don't sleep on the offer, CTA, personalisation and aspects that your targeted audience really care about.

3. Your Competitors are Targeting your Brand

It's never a good look when a brand keyword search returns your competitor higher on the page than you. Emerging brands can be super competitive and can hijack organic traffic to gain market traction in a shorter space of time. Stealing traffic intended for you is a common problem and one that needs serious attention once it arises.

Here are a few tips to conquer the issue

- **Boost your bids:** Increase the bids on your own brand keywords, and outrank your competitors.
- **Talk to them:** Have an honest chat with the brand(s) in question and ask them to cease. Some will, others won't.
- **Trademark Policy:** Use a specialist third-party solution such as The Search Monitor to police infringements at scale to deter brands clambering over your turf.

4. Traffic doesn't equal leads.

Clicks are great unless they are all from irrelevant users who will never become leads.

Lead generation is where you persuade people in the consideration phase of the customer journey to become your customer. This is the most critical stage of every ad campaign. But for too many brands, it's a stage they struggle to excel at.

This could happen because:

- Your ad is triggered by irrelevant search queries.
- Your ad copy lacks a strong call to action (CTA).
- You have the wrong targeting approach.
- Your landing page is out of sync.

The problems can usually be traced back to something in your control, which means the solutions are also in your hands.

Here are some tips on improving your lead generation game:

- **Focus on relevant keywords:** Do not spread yourself too thin. Instead, focus on keywords closely related to your products or services. Use keyword research tools to identify relevant keywords and make it easier for prospects to find you.

- **Headlines Matter:** A great headline has the power to encourage an action. Are yours persuasive enough? Make sure you include anything that will encourage people to click, such as pricing, discounts, and local market connections.
- **Use a strong CTA:** Your call-to-action is the key aspect that elicits a response or inspires customers to take action. Would you click your ad if you were a customer? Do you know what drives their impulses to click? Research what drives a CTA, test, refine and get closer to your customer.

Specific keywords, compelling headlines, and a strong CTA are the key to the right leads being generated. Quality over quantity is the name of the game.

5. Low conversion rates

If your campaign is focused on brand awareness, you may be satisfied with the click traffic. However, conversions are the ultimate goal of many campaigns, and ROAS the ultimate determinant of success or failure.

If you're not meeting your conversion goals, it may be happening because of one of the following reasons:

- Disconnect between your audience and content.
- Poor landing page experience.
- High bounce rate.
- Bidding on low demand keywords
- Uncompetitive/uncompelling offer.

Let's take a look at some PPC optimization tips that will help you turn more of those ad clicks into conversions.

- **Improve ad relevance:** This is a big factor that impacts your Quality Score, and your conversion rate. Use keyword research tools to identify keywords that your target

audience is using. Bid on those, and craft ad copy around these terms to increase your ad relevance, which will then improve your Quality Score.

- **Optimize your Landing Page:** Your landing page should be finely-tuned to deliver a smooth customer journey; a direct line from click to conversion and a seamless customer experience. Unnecessary hurdles, poor loading, irrelevant content will simply encourage the customer to search again.
- **Reduce your bounce rate:** A high bounce rate is a side-effect of a poor landing page or irrelevant offer. Look to fix these so customers don't rebound to your competitor.
- **Use third-party campaign performance data:** Track the key performance indicators (KPIs) in your PPC ads to tweak and optimize your entire optimization strategy.

6. You're burning marketing budget

With up to 26% of ad budget simply wasted, you are putting a lot of pressure on the remainder achieving the campaign goals and justifying a higher future budget.

Your wasted spend may increase because of:

- Poor ad targeting.
- Low brand awareness.
- Imprecise goals.
- No proper performance analysis.
- Lack of testing and review.

So, what can you do to reduce your wasted spend? Here are some tips to take control of your PPC budget.

- **Conduct a competitor analysis:** Do you know who your competitors are? What bid strategies do they use for PPC advertising? Where is the market for good demand, low competition keywords? There is no point having a world-class bid management tool if you do not know where to point it.



- **Define your goals:** Like analyzing your competitors you need to define your goals before you launch an ad or start spending! Once you set the goal, your campaign will have more focus and you'll be able to qualify success and understand failure.
- **Set your maximum budget limit:** In many advertising channels you may exceed the budget limit. Your overall monthly limit should not exceed the figure you set it at. Protect yourself against wasted spending.

Optimizing campaigns in search is a tough and ongoing task. Smart Bidding has given many brands the option of automating much of this through Google. However, there are some obvious concerns with trusting the whole process to a third-party; without the right checks and balances you could be creating an even bigger problem than you bargained for. This is why more and more companies are investing in data-led marketing insights to spearhead their drive for results in an increasingly competitive market.

Since 2007, *The Search Monitor* has been a trusted market-leader in search data intelligence for some of the world's leading brands and agencies, ensuring that clients have timely, credible data to optimize their campaigns and achieve their marketing goals. Take us for a test drive at sales@thesearchmonitor.com today.