Last-minute paid search tactics, management tips for Black Friday, Cyber Monday success

As the hours tick down to Thanksgiving weekend and the official start of the holiday shopping season, here are a few last-minute items to help ensure you're set up for success and can handily manage your paid search campaigns right through the season – even if you're B2B or aren't expecting a holiday bump.

Double-check these paid search tactics

Holiday promotion extensions. You can still add holiday occasion-based promotion extensions to your Google Ads campaigns. These can be added at the account, campaign or ad group level are available for

- Black Friday and Cyber Monday through December 15.
- Christmas through January 15.
- St. Nicholas Day through December 31.
- Hanukah through January 31.

Holiday in-market audiences. Google has a Seasonal Shopping in-market audiences for Black Friday Shopping, which includes "People who will shop sales around the United States Thanksgiving holiday (including Cyber Monday)" and Christmas Shopping, which includes "People who will shop for Christmas gifts."

Microsoft's holiday in-market audiences are currently limited to Valentine's Day, but you may find other in-market audiences

that are relevant to your brand.

Countdown customizers. Add a sense of urgency to your text ads with countdowns to let customers know when deals and shipping promotions are set to end. Microsoft Advertising and Google Ads both support countdown customizers.

Automated bidding reminder. Keep in mind that automated bidding strategies require learning periods, so it's best to not make changes that will reset campaigns back to the learning phase.

Retargeting exclusions. Now is a good time to double-check that your retargeting campaigns are set to exclude inappropriate audiences or bombard those who just bought from you with the same ads – or worse better deals.

Real-Time Holiday Management

For those of you managing campaigns in between second-helpings and weekend leftovers, a bit of prep work can keep you from having to stay fixated on your accounts. "By this time, you hopefully have all your ducks in a row tactically and strategically (bonus points for contingency plans), so a successful holiday campaign then really comes down to efficient analysis, effective optimization, and clear communication," says Megan Taggart, VP of marketing at digital marketing agency Aimclear.

Alerts and dashboards. Set up rules or scripts in your ad accounts, or says Taggart, "If you really want to get fancy, IFTTT triggers can be very effective for sending emails marked 'Urgent' – or messages to your phone as a call or text, removing the need to check emails every five minutes and allowing you to be more present over the holiday"

Query monitoring. With the expansion of close variants, monitor your search terms reports for "queries from close

variants and set thresholds in case some of those queries are not performing well yet spending a lot of money," says Frederick Vallaeys of Optmyzr.

Impression share monitoring. "Monitor for unexpected surges in traffic and cost or look for dramatic increases in impression share that can indicate a competitor has gotten much more aggressive," adds Vallaeys. "Now with average position no longer available from Google, monitoring impression share has become more important."

Communication. Be sure your team and stakeholders have access to the campaign/promotion schedule, budget plans and KPIs before the long weekend starts. "Finally, it's good insurance to make sure your laptop is within a stone's throw in the event of any last-minute changes, updates, or CM snafus – just make sure to keep it closed after Uncle Ned busts out the cask of homemade Eggnog," advises Taggart.

Don't blow your B2B budget

While some B2B businesses get in on Black Friday promotions with deals, many are preparing for spending slowdowns when their customers are out of the office during the holidays.

Mindful budgeting is particularly important if your B2B campaigns have keyword overlaps with consumer intent queries that increase during this season.

"In the B2B world, Black Friday/Cyber Monday (BFCM) doesn't translate to an uptick in traffic and sales like it does for e-commerce advertisers," says Melissa Mackey, Search Supervisor at B2B agency gyro.

"For most B2B advertisers, the opposite is true – we have to worry about holiday-related drops in traffic that affect our ability to spend allocated budgets," says Mackey. "To compensate, we'll either heavy-up early in the month in

anticipation or reduce the November budget to allow for what amounts to nearly a week of slow traffic and lead volume. The effort on our part happens prior to the actual Thanksgiving weekend in deciding how we'll plan for the dropoff."

About The Author

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