Google Claims AI Overviews Monetize At Same Rate As Traditional Search via @sejournal, @MattGSouthern

Google claims that search results with AI Overviews generate the same amount of advertising revenue as traditional search results.

This claim was made during Google Marketing Live when the company revealed plans to expand AI Overview ads to desktop users and more English-speaking markets.

If true, this could reshape how marketers perceive Google's AI-powered future. However, the claim raises questions about how Google measures success and what it means for your campaigns.

Marketers need to understand what lies behind these claims and what they indicate for the future of search advertising.

AI Overviews Reaches Massive Scale

Google launched AI Overviews on mobile in the US last year. Since then, the company has quickly expanded the feature worldwide. It now processes AI-generated responses for users in more than 200 countries.

Shashi Thakur, Google's VP/GM of Advertising, stated during the press session:

> *"We started rolling out AI overviews in search on US mobile last year. At this point, we are reaching a billion and a half users using it every month."*

Thakur oversees advertising across Google's search products. This includes Google.com, Discover, Image Search, Lens, and Maps. He noted that users are happy with the feature.

The expansion shows Google's confidence in both user adoption and commercial success. The company announced the desktop expansion that morning at the event, representing the latest phase of their rapid global rollout.

Thakur explained the growth impact:

> *"The consequence of us building AI overviews is that people are seeing growth. People are asking more of those questions… So we are seeing growth. So people are asking more questions. Many of those questions are even commercial. So we are seeing a growth even in commercial."*

Google's Broader Vision For Search Evolution

Google's approach to AI Overviews reflects a fundamental shift in how the company thinks about search capabilities. Thakur outlined this vision:

> *"At its core, we think about search as expanding the kinds of curiosities you can express. Humans have innumerable number of curiosities. There's only a fraction of those that gets expressed to search. The more we advance the technology, the more we advance the product, users can bring more of their curiosities to search."*

This philosophy drives Google's push toward AI-powered responses that can handle more complex and nuanced queries than traditional keyword-based searches.

How Google Measures AI Overview Monetization

Google’s revenue claims are based on controlled experiments. The company compares identical search queries with and without AI Overviews. They use standard A/B testing methods.

This means showing the AI feature to some users while holding it back from others. Then they measure the revenue difference.

Thakur explained to reporters:

> *“When we say AI overviews monetizes at the same rate, if you had taken the exact same set of queries and not shown AI overviews, it would have monetized at some rate. This continues to monetize at the same rate.”*

The testing focuses on overall business value and revenue. It doesn’t examine individual metrics, such as click-through rates. Google emphasized this represents performance across many queries, not individual searches.

For advertisers, this suggests AI Overviews don’t hurt existing search advertising effectiveness. However, the long-term effects of changing user behavior patterns remain unclear.

Shashi Thakur speaks to press at Google Marketing Live.
Photo: Matt G. Southern/Search Engine Journal.

Strategic Approach To AI Overview Advertising

Google states that ads within AI Overviews adhere to the same quality guidelines as traditional search ads. The company requires that ads be of high quality and fit well with the user experience. All ads must be marked as sponsored content.

Advertisers have three placement options for AI Overview ads: above the AI response, below the response, or integrated within the AI answer itself. This gives marketers flexibility in how they appear alongside AI-generated content.

The complexity of modern user behavior drives Google's advertising strategy. Thakur noted:

> *"I think the main thing to take away from those conversations is user journeys are complicated. And users get inspiration to get into their commercial journeys at innumerable points in their journeys."*

The integration focuses on identifying commercial intent within complex queries through what Google refers to as "faceted" searches. These are complex questions that contain multiple sub-questions, some of which have commercial intent.

Thakur gave an example of a user asking about airline rules for traveling with pets. That person might then need pet carriers or travel accessories, creating natural opportunities for advertising. The AI system can identify these layered commercial needs within a single complex query.

Google uses various classifiers to identify commercial intent, including shopping queries, travel queries, and insurance queries. This automated classification system helps match ads to relevant user needs.

Thakur stated:

> *"Ads need to be high quality, and they need to be cohesive with the experience. Ads of this nature extend how good the answer is for certain users."*

Google reports positive user feedback about ads shown with AI Overviews. This suggests the integration doesn't significantly hurt user satisfaction.

This user acceptance seems crucial to Google's strategy. The company plans to expand AI Overview advertising to more platforms and markets.

Shashi Thakur speaks to press at Google Marketing Live. Photo: Matt G. Southern/Search Engine Journal.

Implications For Digital Marketers

The revenue parity claim addresses advertiser concerns about AI's impact on search advertising effectiveness.

Thakur acknowledged the fundamental question marketers are asking:

> *"So now, the question we often get from our advertisers, and it's a natural question, which is, this is great. Search is evolving in lots of exciting directions. How do we participate? And how do we connect with our customers in the context of this evolving experience?"*

Thakur noted that over 80% of Google advertisers already use some form of AI-driven advertising technology. This suggests the industry is ready for more AI integration.

However, the shift toward AI-powered search responses may require advertisers to adapt their strategies. Users are asking increasingly complex, longer queries. Traditional keyword targeting may not be effective in addressing these.

Google's solution involves increased automation through tools like the newly announced "AI Max for search" feature. Early beta testing of AI Max has shown promising results, with advertisers experiencing an average 27% increase in conversions while maintaining similar return on investment (ROI) targets.

Thakur explained the motivation behind AI Max:

> *"So the motivation for this, essentially, was this changing user behavior. That's number one. As we heard from our advertisers, we got the feedback very clearly that transparency and control of the form, they were already used on search campaigns. That continues to be super important in addition to the automation."*

The tool maintains the transparency and control features that advertisers expect from traditional search campaigns, including keyword performance reporting and campaign controls. This addresses concerns about losing visibility when embracing automation.

The company's emphasis on automation reflects a challenge. It's hard to match ads to sophisticated, conversational queries that can contain multiple commercial intents.

Manual keyword strategies may become less effective over time. This is especially true as search behavior evolves toward natural language interactions.

AI Mode Expansion Creates New Opportunities

Beyond AI Overviews, Google is testing ads within its new AI Mode, which enables fully conversational search experiences. Early data indicates that users in AI mode ask questions that are up to twice as long as regular search queries.

These longer, more conversational queries create additional opportunities for identifying commercial intent within complex questions. The extended query length often means users are providing more context about their needs, potentially making ad targeting more precise.

Google is applying lessons learned from AI Overviews to ensure ads in AI mode maintain the same quality and user experience standards.

Looking Ahead

Thakur emphasized that Google's approach remains focused on delivering a high-quality user experience while providing business value to advertisers.

The actual test of Google's revenue claims will come as AI Overviews mature. User behavior patterns need time to solidify.

As Google continues expanding AI Overview advertising globally, digital marketers face a balancing act. They must embrace new automated tools while maintaining the control and transparency that drive successful campaign performance.

Featured Image: Mijansk786/Shutterstock

https://www.searchenginejournal.com/google-claims-ai-overviews

-monetize-at-same-rate-as-traditional-search/547838/

What’s Draining Your PPC Budget and How to Stop It [Webinar] via @sejournal, @hethr_campbell

You’ve crafted the perfect ad, fine-tuned the targeting, and even carved out a healthy budget. The clicks are rolling in, but the conversions just aren’t there. What’s going wrong?

For many businesses, the problem isn’t the ad. It’s what happens after the click.

Where PPC Performance Falls Apart

Missed calls. Slow follow-ups. Confusing handoffs between marketing and sales.

These are the quiet killers of campaign ROI, and they often go unnoticed until leads have already slipped through the cracks.

That’s why we’re bringing you a must-attend session that tackles this head-on.

How to Fix the Number One Reason PPC

Campaigns Fail

In this webinar, you'll learn how to identify and patch lead leaks at every stage of your funnel.

It's designed for marketing teams that want to stop wasting ad spend and start converting more of the traffic they've already paid for.

What you'll walk away with

 Actionable steps to improve PPC lead follow-up
 A framework to spot weak points in your funnel
 Tools and tips to drive better ROI from your existing campaigns

Meagan McLoughlin, Principal Marketing Manager at CallRail, will walk you through strategies that turn interest into action. You'll also get a behind-the-scenes look at VoiceAssist, CallRail's new AI-powered tool that qualifies calls around the clock.

And don't miss insights from Einstein Industries, a top-performing agency partner, who will share real-world PPC lessons you can apply right away.

If you can't attend live, no worries. Register now, and we'll send you the full recording so you can watch when it works best for you.

https://www.searchenginejournal.com/whats-draining-your-ppc-budget/546714/

Google AI Measurement Upgrades Announced At Google Marketing Live via @sejournal, @brookeosmundson

During its annual Google Marketing Live event for advertisers, Google announced upgrades to its AI measurement tools, making access easier for small brands.

These updates were shared ahead of time with Search Engine Journal during an exclusive preview event, which showcase Google's continued investment in providing advertisers of all sizes better visibility into performance, incrementality, and return on ad spend.

Here's what's coming for marketers, and why you should pay attention.

Incrementality Testing: Becoming More Accessible

Measurement has always been a pain point for marketers. We spend time and budget driving performance, but often struggle to prove what's truly moving the needle.

Historically, incrementality testing in Google Ads was only feasible for high-spending accounts, requiring at least $100K in budget to run.

That changed today, as Google is lowering the spend requirement to just $5,000 per incrementality test.

That lowered threshold opens the door for many mid-market (and even smaller) advertisers to start running controlled tests

that measure the true lift driven by their ads. Not just looking at conversions that likely would’ve happened anyway.

Credit: Google

In addition to the lower threshold, Google is rolling out a new Bayesian-based methodology that increases the chances of getting conclusive results.

Tests can now run as short as 7 days or up to 56, with 28 days considered the current best practice.

With this update, marketers no longer have to rely on directional data or last-click attribution.

They’ll be able to isolate the impact of their Google Ads campaigns and adjust budgets or creative with more confidence.

Cross-Channel Measurement Is Getting Smarter Inside Google Analytics

Another big enhancement is happening within Google Analytics.

Marketers will soon be able to see more comprehensive cross-channel performance (including impressions) across Google properties and other platforms.

The aim is to help teams better map the full customer journey and more accurately calculate ROI.

While not all of this is live just yet, Google says deeper insights are on the way in the coming months.

This should be particularly useful for brands running Performance Max or upper-funnel campaigns across multiple surfaces.

Visibility into pre-click data has historically been limited, so any lift in impression-level reporting across channels is a step forward.

Data Manager: A Central Tool For First-Party Data Activation

Google is also introducing Data Manager as a centralized tool to help marketers collect, store, and activate their first-party data . It’s got all the existing privacy protections baked in.

With the rise of privacy regulations and cookie deprecation looming, brands have been scrambling to figure out how to make better use of their owned data.

Data Manager acts as a one-stop shop, using confidential

computing to ensure sensitive data stays protected and is only used for authorized purposes.

Credit: Google

Marketers can expect upcoming features like data strength recommendations, which will help identify gaps in your data strategy and offer actionable ways to improve it.

To streamline things further, Google is also launching a new Data Manager API. This update consolidates multiple APIs into a single schema, helping developers connect audience and conversion data more easily across Google Ads, GA4, and GMP.

This might not be something every marketer will use directly, but it has major implications for teams that rely on agency or partner integrations to power their campaigns.

It reduces the technical lift required to activate more first-party data signals across platforms.

Why Marketers Should Pay Attention

One of the most notable parts of this update is who these tools are built for.

In the past, many of Google’s advanced measurement tools were only accessible to advertisers with deep pockets and large internal data teams.

That left small-to-mid-sized businesses at a disadvantage when it came to proving performance or scaling their investment.

These new AI measurement tools show a clear move toward making enterprise-grade measurement more attainable for all.

For marketers under pressure to drive measurable results without doubling spend, that’s welcome news.

We’re also seeing Google start to shift more clearly toward cross-channel, privacy-safe measurement with a bigger emphasis on first-party data.

Even with all the change in direction of third-party cookie deprecation (and reversal of that decision), these tools seem to be solid building blocks that marketers can use as privacy regulations continue to adapt across the world.

Looking Ahead

The latest updates from Google Ads mark a meaningful shift toward making AI-powered measurement smarter, faster, and more accessible.

From more affordable incrementality testing to a consolidated way to activate your first-party data, these tools promise better insights without the enterprise-level budget.

Marketers still need to approach these tools with a critical eye. AI-powered doesn’t mean hands-off.

You’ll want to validate the data assumptions being used, and stay involved in shaping your own measurement strategy.

Now, it feels like marketers with modest budgets aren’t stuck on the sidelines.

Which of these new measurement tools are you looking forward to trying within your accounts?

https://www.searchenginejournal.com/google-ai-measurement-upgrades-announced-at-google-marketing-live/547252/

Google Announces Largest Ads Bidding Update In Over A Decade via @sejournal, @brookeosmundson

PPC bidding just got a lot more interesting.

Just announced at Google Marketing Live, Google is launching Smart Bidding Exploration, a new opt-in feature designed to help advertisers capture more conversions from their existing campaigns.

This update marks one of the most significant changes to Google Ads bidding over a decade.

This isn’t a cosmetic update or a tweak to an existing bidding model.

It’s a fundamental shift in how Google allows advertisers to find value in queries they’ve likely been overlooking.

If you’re focused on maximizing ROAS or sticking tightly to past performance data, this is one update worth paying attention to.

How Does Smart Bidding Exploration Work?

Smart Bidding Exploration works within the bounds of your existing campaign structure.

It doesn’t expand your audience targeting or broaden your keyword strategy (no pun intended).

Instead, it allows the bidding algorithm to more aggressively pursue opportunities you were eligible for, particularly on Broad match and Dynamic Search Ads (DSA) campaigns.

But, there is a catch for using it: you’ll need to allow some flexibility in your ROAS targets to use it.

Advertisers can opt into Smart Bidding Exploration by giving Google permission to bid below their typical ROAS threshold, generally in the 10-30% range.

That means Google may raise your bids on certain queries if its AI systems determine those queries could convert at a healthy volume and cost.

Smart Bidding Exploration is a different approach to just adjusting ROAS targets across the board at the campaign level. In fact, constantly adjusting ROAS targets could cause more volatility in performance instead of improving it.

Instead, Smart Bidding Exploration fine-tunes bidding for queries that would otherwise be filtered out.

What You Can Expect From Reporting

While advertisers won't see a detailed breakout of every new search query due to privacy threshold, Google is giving visibility into the **impact** of Smart Bidding Exploration through the Bid Strategy report.

You'll be able to track:

- The number of unique search categories generating impressions and conversions
- How much traffic came from these categories
- The volume of new conversions compared to your baseline

While the reporting is currently aggregate, Google is looking for more granular visibility on the roadmap.

The feature is also compatible with Drafts & Experiments, so you can run clean A/B tests to isolate results.

Support for Portfolio Bid Strategies is included at launch, and SA360 support is expected soon.

Why Should Advertisers Test This?

For marketers managing Search campaigns that have stalled in growth or seem overly narrow in scope, this could be a solid way to unlock additional conversions.

The feature offers a way to capture more conversions without blowing up campaign structure or budget.

Additionally, this feature is **not** changing your audience targeting. That's an important distinction.

For example, Optimized Targeting on Display or Demand Gen

actively expands who sees your ads.

Smart Bidding Exploration doesn’t do that. It keeps your targeting exactly as is, but unlocks the potential to show up for queries you wouldn’t have previously been eligible to show for, all within your existing targeting.

If you’re running campaigns that are too tightly bound by a strict ROAS target, you may be unintentionally capping performance.

Smart Bidding Exploration is a way to loosen those constraints just enough to let Google’s AI find opportunities you didn’t realize were there.

What This Signals From Google

Smart Bidding Exploration is more than just a new feature toggle.

It’s a fundamental shift in how we think about conversion opportunity within Google Ads.

Marketers are often pushed to optimize for what they already know works, especially under pressure to hit ROAS or CPA goals. But that approach can keep you from capturing the full value of the market.

With Smart Bidding Exploration, Google seems to be nudging advertisers to stop optimizing for comfort and start optimizing for growth.

https://www.searchenginejournal.com/google-announces-largest-ads-bidding-update-in-over-a-decade/547249/

Ultimate PPC Campaign Optimization: 6 New Ways To Easily Run Dozens Of PPC Campaigns For Different Sectors via @sejournal, @CallRail

Tip #1. Boost Relevance: Use Industry-Specific Conversion Signals To Customize Google Ads Messaging

Increasing clicks is as easy as increasing how relevant your ads are to your potential customers.

Sounds easy, but when you're managing different brands, many industries, or multiple brick-and-mortar locations, it can quickly become difficult to understand exactly what each individual person needs.

What's New That You Should Change & Try

Google Ads Responsive Search Ads and Assets (Structured Snippets) now allow faster VOC-driven testing.

Voice-of-customer (VOC) insights from tools like CallRail reveal what customers *actually say* before converting.

Now, you can use this real language to supercharge your ad messaging.

Is This Change Worth It?

Yes.

When you align your ad messaging with what your customers actually say, you boost ad relevance, increase clickthrough rates, and lower your cost per lead by matching real search intent.

You'll see:

- **Higher relevance**: This is crucial in paid advertising is critical because it directly impacts three major outcomes: cost, performance, and customer experience.
- **Lower Costs**: Ad platforms like Google Ads reward high relevance with better quality scores, which can lower your cost per click (CPC) and help you win better ad placements without paying a premium.
- **Higher Engagement**: When your ads match exactly what users are searching for or thinking about, you naturally boost clickthrough rates (CTR) because the ad feels more useful and timely.
- **Better Conversion Rates**: Relevant ads lead to more qualified traffic, meaning users are more likely to take action once they land on your site, whether that's calling, booking, or buying.
- **Improved Brand Trust**: Ads that clearly resonate with real customer language and needs feel authentic, which strengthens brand credibility over time.

Which Industries Benefit Most From This PPC Engagement Boosting Technique?

- Legal Services: Top keywords we've identified for you are [free consult] & [local attorney]

- Home Services: [emergency repair] & [same-day service] are great seed keywords for this industry.
- Medical/Dental: [accepts insurance] & [licensed doctor] are good starting points for PPC keyword lists.

Your industry not listed? See other industry insights here.

How did we discover those seed keywords?

By analyzing customer responses, transcripts, and chats for true language keywords that your customers are likely typing into search or ChatGPT.

How To Find Your Best PPC Conversion Signals

Effort	Manual Method	CallRail
Time Required	High	Low
Accuracy	Depends on human analysis	Automated and precise
Insights Available	CTRs, keyword performance	CTRs, keyword-level call tracking, automated trends
Effort	Intensive	Minimal

Manual Method For Finding PPC Conversion Signals

- **Analyze Campaign Data:** Manually review metrics like click-through rates (CTR), conversion rates, and cost per conversion to evaluate performance.
- **Identify High-Performing Keywords:** Manually analyze calls to find and optimize keywords driving the best results while excluding irrelevant terms.
- **Track User Behavior:** Use tools like Google Analytics to observe user actions, such as pages visited or time on

site, before converting.

- **Tie Conversions to Campaign Factors:** Manually connect conversion data to specific ads, keywords, or timeframes for insights.
- **Challenges:** Time-intensive, prone to human error, and limited in precision without advanced tools.

CallRail Method for Finding PPC Conversion Signals

- **Call Tracking:** Easily and quickly track inbound calls back to specific ads, campaigns, or keywords to identify high-performing strategies.
- **Keyword-Level Attribution:** Automatically pinpoint which keywords drive calls or form submissions without manual effort.
- **Automated Insights:** Leverage AI-generated call transcripts, summaries, and data to detect patterns, trends, and high-performing campaigns effortlessly.
- **Integrations:** Connect with platforms like Google Ads or HubSpot to centralize and streamline conversion tracking.
- **Key Benefits:** Saves time, eliminates guesswork, provides precise and actionable insights to optimize PPC campaigns effectively.

The Manual Way:

1. Spend hours manually analyzing call transcripts for high-intent phrases.
2. Create tightly themed ad groups based on these phrases.
3. Constantly refine keyword match types to match real search behavior (favor phrase match for accuracy).
4. Use dynamic keyword insertion carefully to keep VOC language in ads.

Easy Way With CallRail:

1. Use CallRail’s free trial to extract VOC insights.
2. Insert VOC themes into responsive search ad headlines and structured snippets.

Tip #2. Save Time: Automate Campaign Creation With Pre-Built Google Ads Templates & CRM Signals

Launching campaigns faster without sacrificing quality can transform how efficiently your agency operates.

Is This Change Worth It?

Absolutely.

When you automate campaign creation, your team gets more time back to focus on strategy instead of setup.

It means:

- Faster launches.
- Fewer errors.
- Campaigns that are tailored more precisely to your clients’ real needs.

What’s New That You Should Change & Try

Google Ads Customer Match and Microsoft Ads Customer Match now enable direct CRM syncing to personalize campaigns automatically.

You can dynamically create or adjust campaigns based on real customer behavior without manual uploads.

Why Do This

Automating your campaign setup drastically reduces your manual workload, speeds up your time-to-market, and helps your team

personalize campaigns at scale across locations or services.

Which Industries Benefit Most From This Time-Saving PPC Technique?

- Franchise & Multi-Location Retail
- Home Services (HVAC, plumbing, roofing)
- B2B SaaS with structured sales pipelines

How To Set Up Automated PPC Campaign Launching

The Manual Way:

1. Build templated campaign structures with core keywords, ads, and extensions.
2. Pre-create negative keyword lists to prevent budget waste.
3. Use shared audiences and budgets across locations.

Easy Way With CallRail:

1. Connect CallRail and your CRM to automatically trigger ad group or campaign launches.

Tip #3. Maximize ROI: Make Budget Optimization Dynamic With Real-Time Call Quality Feedback

Prioritizing ad spend on only the highest quality leads gives you better results without raising your budget.

Is This Change Worth It?

Definitely.

Budget optimization with real-time PPC feedback ensures that

you’re spending on what actually drives value: qualified leads.

It’s one of the fastest ways to improve ROI and prove your worth to your clients.

What’s New That You Should Change & Try

Google Ads Offline Conversion Imports and Enhanced Conversions for Leads now allow you to sync call quality and CRM outcomes directly into Google Ads bidding models.

Why Do This

Prioritizing your budget based on high-quality leads maximizes your ROI, eliminates wasted ad spend, and delivers more valuable outcomes for your business or agency.

Which Industries Benefit Most From This Budget Optimization Technique

- Healthcare & Dental Clinics
- Legal & Financial Services
- Auto Services

How To Optimize Your Budget Based On Real-Time Call Quality

Manual Way:

- Score calls manually within your CRM for quality.
- Adjust campaign-level bid adjustments or device-level bidding based on quality trends.
- Create automated rules to pause poor-performing keywords or boost strong ones.

Easy Way With CallRail:

1. Use call scoring to automatically sync quality signals.

2. Set Google Ads offline conversion imports to trigger budget shifts based on call outcomes.

Tip #4: Boost Engagement: Use Enhanced Click-to-Call Campaigns With Visual SERP Signals

Visual and call-first strategies make it easier for customers to connect and convert faster.

Is This Change Worth It?

Yes, especially if your audience is mobile-first.

Adding call-focused enhancements and visuals doesn't just boost engagement—it shortens the path between search and conversion, making it easier for ready-to-buy users to reach you.

What's New That You Should Change & Try

Google Ads Call Ads, Image Extensions, and Microsoft Ads Multimedia Ads now create visually compelling, mobile-first experiences optimized for immediate customer action.

Why Do This

Upgrading your ads with richer visuals and call-driven formats helps you drive higher engagement on mobile, improve click-to-call rates, and accelerate customer connections.

Which Industries Benefit Most From This Engagement-Boosting Technique

- Restaurants & Local Retail
- Urgent Services (locksmiths, HVAC repair)
- Senior Services (assisted living, home care)

How To Enhance Your Click-to-Call Campaigns

Manual Way:

- Add call extensions and image extensions to mobile ads.
- Schedule call ads during business hours only.
- Use structured snippets highlighting key services.

Easy Way With CallRail:

1. Integrate CallRail click-to-call tracking.
2. Analyze peak call times and optimize ad schedules accordingly.

Tip #5: Smarter Targeting: Layer First-Party Lead Journey Data Into Performance Max Campaigns

Bringing offline lead intelligence into your campaigns boosts targeting precision and conversion rates.

Is This Change Worth It?

Absolutely.

Using your first-party data to influence Performance Max campaigns gives you more control, better targeting, and higher returns, especially in a world where third-party cookies are disappearing.

What’s New That You Should Change & Try

Google Ads Performance Max campaigns now support Customer Value Mode (2024 smart bidding innovation) to better optimize for high-value leads.

Why Do This

Feeding your first-party lead journey data into campaigns improves your targeting precision, nurtures your prospects at the right moment, and increases your conversion rates while lowering acquisition costs.

Which Industries Benefit Most From This Smart Targeting Strategy

- Real Estate
- Home Improvement & Contractors
- Higher Education & Vocational Schools

How To Layer Lead Journey Data Into Your Performance Max Campaigns

Manual Way:

1. Export CRM lead journey stages manually.
2. Create custom audience segments inside Google Ads.
3. Build distinct asset groups based on customer intent (“researching,” “ready to buy”).

Easy Way With CallRail:

1. Use CallRail to sync call outcomes and CRM data into Google Ads.
2. Automate audience signal feeding to Performance Max.

Tip #6: Lower CPCs: Run Campaigns By Location With Local Keyword + Phone Call Clustering

Geo-targeted strategies help you win more conversions while keeping your ad costs low.

Is This Change Worth It?

Definitely.

Location-based clustering lets you dominate profitable micro-markets without blowing your budget. It’s one of the smartest ways to lower CPCs and outmaneuver bigger competitors.

What’s New That You Should Change & Try

Google Ads Location Extensions, Dynamic Location Insertion, and Microsoft Ads Location Extensions now provide better local customization tools, enhanced by AI call tracking.

Why Do This

Using hyperlocal targeting based on real-world call and keyword data helps you increase your relevance, lower your CPCs, and dramatically improve your local conversion rates.

Which Industries Benefit Most From This Geo-Targeting Upgrade

- Multi-Location Healthcare
- Legal Services in competitive markets
- Home Services (regional licensing differences)

How To Run Localized Campaigns With Call Clustering

Manual Way:

1. Segment geo-targeted campaigns by ZIP code.
2. Analyze location performance reports weekly.
3. Use ad customizers to insert city/region names dynamically into ad copy.

Easy Way With CallRail:

1. Leverage CallRail’s AI keyword clustering to identify top-performing regions.
2. Automatically adjust geographic targeting based on call conversion trends.

Scale Smart, Not Wide

Scaling PPC for your SMB clients across different sectors is no longer about throwing more campaigns against the wall and hoping something sticks. It’s about smarter personalization, automation, and quality-driven optimizations.

Tangible PPC elements like keywords, ad groups, budget rules, and conversion actions remain critical to long-term success, especially when fueled by clean first-party data.

By implementing even 1–2 of these new methods per client vertical, you can reduce your manual work, improve your lead quality, and drive better outcomes for your agency and your clients.

Ready to future-proof your PPC strategy?

Start with data. Start with automation. And start by refining the tangible parts of your campaigns to dominate every sector you serve.

https://www.searchenginejournal.com/new-ppc-campaign-optimization-callrail-spcs/545769/

How To Write Better Ad Copy

When Google Ads Uses AI-Assisted Features via @sejournal, @LisaRocksSEM

Almost every major ad platform now offers some form of AI-generated copy.

While these tools can speed up the process of launching campaigns, they often create headlines and descriptions that lack the creativity or relevance needed to get results.

In this article, we will focus on how to get the most from Google Ads AI-assisted features without letting automation take over your messaging.

You'll learn how the system generates copy, why common AI-suggested assets miss the mark, and what you can do to guide the platform toward better results.

I will walk you through how to strategically use the AI-powered automatically created assets in Google Ads while ensuring your manual assets (the copy you enter yourself) are central to your message.

AI features can be valuable, but only when your inputs are structured and strategic. Without that, the result is often generic ads that underperform or confuse your audience.

Starting Out

Google's automation provides suggestions and can also generate ad copy for you.

When Automatically Created Assets (ACA) are enabled, Google uses your landing page, existing ads, ad group keywords and other available business information to generate new headlines

and descriptions for Responsive Search Ads and Performance Max campaigns.

These AI-generated assets are designed to work alongside your manual inputs to improve relevance and performance.

While this sounds like sci-fi magic, it raises a bigger question: How do you make sure your ads still reflect your strategy?

Before you even get started with ad copy, there’s another sign that underscores how imperfect automated ad creation can be: the opt-in disclaimer for automatically created assets.

When you enable this setting in Google Ads, Google asks you to confirm that your landing page is accurate and not misleading.

You accept legal responsibility for anything the AI produces based on your content.

The fact that this disclaimer exists highlights a critical truth: Google’s automation is helpful, but not foolproof. This reinforces why your ad copy still matters.

Screenshot from Google Ads, April 2025

View Ideas And Ad Strength Indicator

As you build your Responsive Search Ad (RSA), Google Ads gives real-time feedback using the “Ad Strength” indicator.

RSAs are designed to allow Google’s machine learning to automatically test various combinations of headlines and descriptions to determine the most effective combinations.

The Ad Strength indicator directly encourages a diverse pool of these assets for testing. This feature provides suggestions like:

- Add more headlines.
- Include popular keywords in your headlines.
- Make your headlines more unique.
- Make your descriptions more unique.

Screenshot from Google Ads, April 2025

These prompts are designed to help test different combinations, but they do not always help write a better ad.

In fact, when you click into “view ideas,” there are several suggestions and topics that are not customized and very inaccurate, such as “buy online” or “huge inventory” for non-ecommerce advertisers.

Ad Strength prompts are the very first feedback advertisers see when creating this type of ad. Because they appear so

early in the process, these suggestions can influence how advertisers write headlines and descriptions.

It is easy to fall into the trap of writing for the score. That’s why it’s important to remember you are writing for performance, not for a scorecard. A great ad does not always get an “Excellent” score.

Use Ad Strength as a guide, but make sure your copy decisions are based on the campaign’s goal.

Enter A Strong Final URL, A.k.a. Landing Page

Your final URL is the ad’s landing page, and it influences how Google scans your site to generate AI copy suggestions.

The AI suggestions are directly influenced by the content on your landing page. Keeping your page clear, relevant, and updated is key.

If your landing page is too general, vague, or lacking clear headlines, Google may pull weak suggestions into your ad setup.

Google has built several AI-powered features around landing page content to streamline ad creation.

Automatically Created Assets (ACA) are available in both Search and Performance Max campaigns, and they pull copy directly from your site to generate new headlines and descriptions.

In Performance Max, the Asset Generation tool goes a step further.

Once you enter a URL, Google’s AI builds out relevant text and even image assets.

The new Conversational Experience lets advertisers provide a URL and have the AI suggest full campaign elements, including keywords, headlines, and ad descriptions.

These tools all rely heavily on landing page content, which is why it’s crucial to control what Google sees and how it reflects your offer.

Review And Refine Prefilled Headlines

Google often preloads suggested headlines based on your landing page, ad group keywords, and other headlines. These suggestions can save time, but they are not strategic suggestions.

To build ads, you need a strong foundation. Each headline should serve a clear purpose to communicate value and stand out in a competitive search landscape. Here’s how I structure it:

- **Keywords:** These headlines should align with the user’s search terms. They reinforce ad relevance and signal to the searcher that your ad matches their intent.
- **Benefit or Feature:** These highlight what the user will gain. Benefits answer the “what’s in it for me?” question, while features describe core elements of your product or service. This type of headline is essential for differentiating your offer.
- **Product Name:** This tells users exactly what you’re promoting. It’s especially helpful when you offer multiple solutions, SKUs, or services. Helps filter clicks to the most relevant traffic.
- **Call to Action (CTA):** These guide the next step, like “Start Your Trial” or “Get a Free Demo.” Action-oriented copy gives users direction and adds urgency.
- **Brand Name:** Including your brand name can provide

clarity and drive trust even if it’s not served on branded search terms.

Your goal is to cover a range of message types without being repetitive. Each headline should serve a distinct role so searchers are enticed to click and Google can test a variety of combinations.

Avoid simply accepting all of Google’s suggestions or making small reworded variations of the same idea. Start with this framework, then refine.

More Ideas, More Problems

When writing headlines, you’ll see a “View Ideas” link next to Google’s suggestions. Clicking it opens the “More Ideas” panel that is positioned as a smart tool powered by AI.

In reviewing the interface across several client accounts, this was my direct experience.

The “Top Keywords” section may include terms related to your business, but they were often pulled from unrelated ad groups or even included competitor names, which could create trademark issues.

This creates confusion and risks serving ads with misleading or legally questionable content.

The “Other Ideas” and “Call to Action Phrases” sections typically feature a preprogrammed list of standard CTAs or promotional lines like “Book Now” or “Find Out More.”

In one recent example, the real client’s CTA was “Free Sample,” yet none of the suggestions matched that intent.

Not only were the options inaccurate, but they also lacked any customization for the business. These don’t appear to be AI-generated, but they feel like a generic list applied across

all advertisers.

Screenshot from Google Ads, April 2025

The danger here is that less experienced users may assume these suggestions are optimized or personalized because they are provided by Google. In reality, they can cause issues that mislead your audience.

Descriptions Should Add Value, Not Just Repeat Headlines

When viewing the “View Ideas” panel for descriptions, Google notes these suggestions are based on your final URL and other ads in your ad group.

In reviewing this across multiple client accounts, I've seen these suggestions really fall short.

Many are just reworded headlines or very short descriptions that don't take advantage of the full 90-character limit. This misses an opportunity to add meaningful context or differentiation.

Descriptions should use a similar framework to headlines, but with more room for details. Each one should:

- **Support a headline:** Add detail to the benefit, feature, or CTA introduced above.
- **Highlight a specific value prop:** Clarify what the product or service actually delivers.
- **Add urgency or emotional appeal:** Address the fear of missing out (FOMO), time savings, ease of use, or competitive edge.
- **Answer an unspoken question:** Like "What's in it for me?" or "How does this work?"

Your goal is to create descriptions that do the work of pushing a searcher one step closer to clicking by offering a richer understanding of the offer.

Bonus Feature: Conversational Experience In Google Ads

Google is currently testing a new feature called Conversational experience, available within the ad creation interface for some advertisers.

This AI-powered assistant is designed to provide contextual help based on where you are in your Google Ads workflow.

The chat tool can suggest ad copy ideas, recommend keywords, and answer support questions. It functions much like a chatbot with campaign context, offering real-time support during ad

creation.

While it sounds helpful, it’s important to note that the feature is still under development.

When I tested this tool in ad creation mode, the chat alerted me that my Ad Strength was “Poor” and offered to help improve it to “Excellent.”

After clicking the “Generate Suggestions” button, the AI provided headline and description ideas, but they were exactly the same as those found in the standard “View Ideas” panel.

This reinforces the importance of reviewing suggestions critically, even when they come from new tools within the platform.

Google clearly states that the AI may return inaccurate or outdated information, warning users to verify anything the chat suggests.

The feature also notes that your interactions may be used to improve the product, meaning your chat activity can contribute to training the model.

Screenshot from Google Ads, April 2025

Conclusion: How To Get The Best Out Of Automated AI Settings

If you are going to use Google’s automated AI settings, you need to guide them. Google’s AI is only as effective as the inputs and oversight you provide.

To get the best results:

- Start with a strong landing page and a clear final URL.
- Write your manual assets using a headline and description framework that includes keywords, product clarity, benefits, and brand identity.

- Use the Ad Strength prompts and suggested ideas as checkpoints, not directives.
- Review all automatically created assets for accuracy, relevance, and legal risk.

Automation can scale your efforts, but it’s your strategy that makes them convert. Think of AI as a content expander, not a content creator.

More Resources:

Featured Image: Stock-Asso/Shutterstock

https://www.searchenginejournal.com/how-to-write-better-ad-copy-google-ai-assisted-features/545006/

Breaking Into New Markets With PPC: Key Considerations

Google Ads dominates the global PPC market with advertising revenue surpassing $265 billion in 2024.

Paid search is self-serving and fast to deploy. But as simple as it appears, the reality is much more complex.

The perceived ease of activation paints a picture that this channel is a silver bullet when brands look to enter new markets.

It’s as easy as piecing together an automated campaign such as Performance Max, changing the target location, and letting Google do the hard work, isn’t it?

This couldn’t be further from the truth, and from managing Paid Search for over 15 years, I can vouch for this firsthand.

PPC can play a key role in market expansion, but it’s not a market entry strategy, which it can often get confused with.

This post explores how paid search fits into a go-to-market strategy and what brands need to consider when launching in a new market, from media modeling to localization, brand building, and more.

Full-Funnel Media Planning Is Essential

Roughly speaking, paid search can be deployed in a new market within a short time frame.

Brand can liaise with in-house teams/PPC agencies, start the ball rolling, and then activate campaigns in a new locale in a fraction of the time it would take to even begin planning a full-funnel strategy.

For example, say you’re a U.S.-based ecommerce brand that sells luxury skincare and wants to break into the UK, without any brand demand in this market.

You build out Google Ads search and shopping campaigns and enter auctions for a wealth of generic queries, such as:

Screenshot from search for [buy luxury skincare], Google, April 2025

You'll drive traffic to the site for relevant queries and might start to build momentum with sales. However, if the campaigns were to be paused, so would the entire presence of your brand in this market.

With full-funnel media buying, brands look at the full customer journey, of which different brands have a different mix of budgeting across each stage (lower, middle, and upper funnel, for example).

McKinsey defines full-funnel marketing as "an approach that combines the power of both brand building and performance marketing through linked teams, measurement systems, and key performance indicators (KPIs)."

Outside of the context of launching into a new market, this approach to media buying is essential, and PPC sits within the mix of lower, middle, and upper funnel advertising strategies.

The split of the budget across the funnel will vary by brand. Les Binet and Peter Field argue that the most effective strategies adopt a 60/40 split of long-term brand building and short-term activation.

When you're launching into a new market, the split could look a whole lot different as you'll need to build brand awareness from scratch. Over time, it will move the needle over to performance-based campaigns as part of a wider media mix.

Have A Robust Measurement Strategy In Place

Take the example of a U.S.-based luxury skincare brand expanding into the UK.

After the initial test period, simply looking at PPC performance through engagement or sales metrics isn't enough to determine whether the expansion succeeded.

PPC campaigns influence more than just immediate clicks and conversions.

Depending on the strategy, they can contribute to brand awareness, drive offline actions, and more.

For instance, a search ad might not result in an immediate online purchase but could lead a customer to visit a physical store or make a purchase at a later time. When the only presence in a new market is via paid search, conversion rates could be considerably lower than those in established markets.

Taking this into account, a brand can't expect to answer "how did the market expansion go?" based on a narrow sample of data

from one channel, especially when that channel isn’t part of a broader go-to-market media strategy.

It’s crucial to measure PPC’s impact beyond platform-specific metrics, and incorporating a holistic approach to measurement is essential.

One tactic to use is Media Mix Modelling (MMM). This allows marketers to capture these indirect effects, ensuring a more accurate assessment of PPC’s role in the overall marketing strategy.

MMM is used by 53% of U.S. marketers, and 30% believe it is the best model for identifying drivers of business value as it doesn’t rely on user-level data, making it effective at viewing the impact of paid media on the bottom line.

If it’s a simple PPC activation or a full-funnel go-to-market media strategy, the importance of having a framework for measuring performance holistically is key, as this lays the groundwork for understanding the successes and failures when expanding into a new market.

Research Market-Specific Nuances And Adapt

When entering a new market, it’s not just your media plan that needs to adapt; it’s also your understanding of the consumer.

Even in an increasingly connected world, buying behaviors remain deeply influenced by local culture, habits, and expectations.

Studies have shown that organizations with high cultural intelligence see a 30% increase in their market penetration compared to their competitors.

Brands must consider:

Cultural Differences

Nearly 75% of UK shoppers say their purchasing is influenced by local culture, yet 75% of consumers in India feel that global brands offer better quality products compared to the local market.

Understanding what problems users prioritize, what features matter, and how consumers approach purchases is essential when piecing together a PPC plan and the backbone for a full go-to-market strategy.

A one-size-fits-all approach won’t cut it, and even though there may be search demand for the products/services you sell, this doesn’t mean you can simply activate and watch the sales roll in (in most cases).

This is both a strategic and tactical consideration, from the first day of planning which markets you are going to target, to the types of phrases used within your ad copy.

Longer Consideration And Research

One-third of consumers globally spend more time researching purchase decisions online than ever before.

When you layer in the nuances of a brand entering a new market, the need for a robust go-to-market strategy vs. a simple activation on PPC is crucial.

With the consideration process being longer than ever, brands need to understand and adapt to market-specific purchasing behavior, and this should run through everything involved within digital.

From the messaging used in ads to forecasting out purchase paths, to then determine when an expected return on ad spend can be accurately reported.

Local Digital Ecosystems

Digital behavior differs massively between markets. Assuming that one country will respond the same to your PPC campaigns as another is short-sighted.

Take China, for example. Google and Meta are blocked, and brands will have to look for alternative routes for activating PPC, such as Baidu.

Running search ads follows a similar blueprint, but the research, planning, build, etc., will require a bespoke approach.

Another consideration is payment methods.

India, for example, favors wallets like PayTM, while 15% of the entire Klarna market resides in Germany.

Context aside, these factors play a key role in building a thorough digital expansion plan, which incorporates PPC, as without these, brands will be scratching their heads to uncover why PPC metrics look a certain way.

The Key To Making PPC Work In New Markets Isn’t PPC

Launching PPC in a new market might seem straightforward. From a resource perspective and context aside, it doesn’t demand a great deal of time to get up and running.

This is where Google Ads shines, as brands can enter a new market with just a few clicks and begin driving traffic.

However, driving the traffic is part of the bigger picture with digital market expansion, and there’s a wealth of factors that need to be considered to give brands the best chance at success.

Factors such as:

- Delivery fees, tariffs, shipping timelines.
- Localized assets, website, currency.
- Contact preferences, customer service, localized support.
- Pricing and returns policies.
- Trust signals, local reviews, social media presence.

These factors aren't as easy to measure as PPC, but they are arguably more important than PPC itself.

A recent survey found that trust emerges as the most critical factor in purchasing decisions when consumers consider buying from a new brand.

Consumers place significant importance on elements such as star ratings, the number of reviews, and the credibility of those reviews.

PPC can (and will) exist in isolation for many brands, and even the most well-built, researched, and curated campaigns can fall short when activating in a new market.

To stand the best chance of success, brands must consider the full digital ecosystem, from how they apportion budget across the funnel, how they display shipping fees on their site, and how best to go about building trust signals from launch.

PPC can drive visibility and traffic, but it's everything around it that matters most, and brands who consider and act on all of these factors are the ones who succeed.

More Resources:

Featured Image: insta_photos/Shutterstock

https://www.searchenginejournal.com/breaking-into-new-markets-

with-ppc/543918/

Channel Reporting Is Coming To Performance Max Campaigns via @sejournal, @brookeosmundson

Google just launched substantial upgrades to its Performance Max campaigns today.

In their announcement, they introduced long-anticipated reporting features that will provide advertisers with much-needed visibility into how their campaigns perform across different Google surfaces.

These updates include new channel-level reporting, full search terms data, and expanded asset performance metrics.

The goal?

It’s aimed at helping marketers better understand, evaluate, and optimize their Performance Max campaigns.

The rollout is expected to begin with an open beta for channel performance reporting in the coming weeks.

For advertisers managing budget and strategy across a mix of formats and inventory, these reporting enhancements mark a meaningful step forward in understanding where results are coming from and how to take informed action.

Advertiser Feedback is Directly Shaping PMax's Direction

According to Google, Performance Max is now used by over one million advertisers.

In 2024 alone, Google implemented more than 90 improvements to Performance Max, leading to measurable gains in both conversions and conversion value.

But alongside performance, advertisers have consistently asked for better transparency and reporting.

Google's latest announcements make clear that advertiser feedback has played a central role in shaping these enhancements.

The goal is to deliver clearer insights, support decision-making, and increase control—without sacrificing the benefits of automation.

Channel Performance Reporting Is Coming To Performance Max

Channel-level reporting is the most significant update in this release.

For the first time, advertisers will be able to view results by channel: Search, YouTube, Display, Discover, Gmail, Maps, and Search partners.

The new "Channel performance" page will show:

- Visual breakdowns of performance by surface
- Campaign-level metrics for each channel, including clicks, conversions, and spend
- A downloadable table with key performance data
- Diagnostics to surface missed opportunities or setup

issues.

You'll be able to find the Channel Performance reporting in the "Insights & reports" tab on the left-hand side of Google. See the example below on how the report will function.

For example, if Maps isn't generating traffic, diagnostics might suggest adding a location asset. Or if YouTube is outperforming, advertisers can shift their focus to high-impact video creatives.

The ability to view spend and conversion value by channel adds clarity that Performance Max has previously lacked.

Search Terms Reporting Reaches (Almost) Full Visibility

Another major enhancement is the addition of full search terms reporting.

Advertisers will now be able to see the actual queries driving performance – similar to what's available in standard Search and Shopping campaigns.

With this rollout, marketers can:

- Identify top-performing search terms
- Create tailored assets round those queries
- Apply negative keywords or brand exclusions when needed

For agencies managing multiple clients or accounts at scale, this change improves daily workflow efficiency.

Rather than relying solely on limited theme-level insights or making assumptions about what's driving performance, teams can now analyze exact queries.

This supports better keyword refinement, more accurate exclusions, and tighter alignment between campaign objectives

and user behavior, all within the familiar framework of Search best practices.

Privacy thresholds will still apply, but the reporting experience will be much more detailed than before.

At launch, this feature will be available in the Google Ads UI only, with API support expected later.

For marketers focused on search intent, this change makes Performance Max a more actionable channel.

More Granular Asset Metrics Across Campaign Types

Asset reporting is also expanding. In addition to conversion data, advertisers will now see:

- Impressions
- Clicks
- Cost
- Conversion Value

Image Credit: Google, April 2025

These new metrics will apply across Performance Max, Search, and Display. This allows advertisers to evaluate creative performance at a deeper level.

Want to know if your video is driving more conversions than your static image? Now you can. Want to see if your headline gets more clicks than your call-to-action? The data is there.

These insights support better creative testing and stronger Ad Strength scores, all based on performance—not assumptions.

Built-In Diagnostics Help Spot Gaps

and Missed Opportunities

Google is also adding diagnostics that flag potential performance issues. These insights will live within the Channel performance page and highlight areas for improvement.

For example:

- If you’re not showing on Maps, diagnostics might suggest adding a location feed or location asset
- If Search delivery is limited, landing page relevance could be the cause

Image credit: Google, April 2025

This feature won’t give full control over where ads appear, but it does provide better visibility into what’s working and

what’s not.

Channel exclusions are still not available in Performance Max, but Google confirmed it’s exploring future control options. For now, diagnostics serve as a step toward more informed decision-making.

Why These Updates Matter For Advertisers

This round of updates helps address a long-standing challenge with Performance Max: the lack of visibility.

Advertisers have embraced the campaign type for its scale and automation, but often struggled to understand the “how” behind performance.

With these new features, advertisers will gain:

- Channel-level transparency
- Deeper search intent insights
- Clearer creative performance metrics
- Actionable recommendations to fix delivery issues

These aren’t just incremental changes. They reshape how marketers can evaluate and optimize PMax.

The updates make it easier to align creative strategy, understand channel contribution, and refine search targeting.

It’s also clear that Google is listening. The inclusion of diagnostics, downloadable tables, and more detailed reporting shows a strong response to real-world feedback.

These updates also signal a broader industry shift toward hybrid automation models: where AI handles scale, but humans still guide strategy with the help of robust data.

As marketers continue to seek clarity on campaign performance,

updates like these help reinforce trust in automated systems by making them easier to measure and manage.

More details are expected at Google Marketing Live. But this release signals a new phase for Performance Max: one that balances automation with greater accountability and insight.

https://www.searchenginejournal.com/channel-reporting-is-coming-to-performance-max-campaigns/545709/

Navigating The Complexities Of International PPC Working With Agencies via @sejournal, @brookeosmundson

Running PPC campaigns in one country is challenging enough. Add multiple countries, languages, regulatory quirks, and agency partners into the mix, and things get complicated fast.

If you're overseeing paid media at large enterprises or multi-location brands, international PPC isn't just a scale problem. It's a coordination and consistency problem.

You're not just launching more campaigns; you're managing different market expectations, aligning with regional teams, and juggling multiple agencies – each with their own style, processes, and priorities.

So, how do you keep your campaigns on track across borders, without losing your mind (or your brand consistency)?

Let’s break it down.

The Realities Of International PPC Management

In a perfect world, every agency partner would follow your brand guidelines to a ‘T’, campaign messaging would be flawlessly localized, and all markets would operate under the same strategy.

The reality? Not so much.

Some of the most common challenges marketing managers face:

- **Lack of consistency:** Creative assets, bidding strategies, or keyword targeting often vary widely between markets. This leads to a disjointed user experience and diluted brand impact.
- **Overlapping or conflicting efforts:** Without clear global oversight, multiple agencies may compete in the same auctions or target the same audiences, driving up costs unnecessarily.
- **Limited visibility:** Reporting formats differ. Some agencies use custom dashboards; others send PDFs. Comparing performance becomes a spreadsheet nightmare.
- **Varying levels of expertise:** Not all agencies are created equal. Some have deep experience in a particular market; others learn as they go.
- **Regulatory hurdles:** Different countries have different rules around data collection, targeting, and ad content – and it’s easy to miss a compliance detail if you’re not on top of local policies.

The takeaway? International PPC isn’t just about more campaigns. It’s about more moving parts.

Aligning Global Strategy With Local Execution

It’s tempting to create a single strategy and roll it out globally, but that rarely works.

What resonates in the U.S. may fall flat in Germany or South Korea. Your job as a marketing manager is to set the strategic foundation while giving local teams enough flexibility to adapt.

Here’s how to strike that balance:

- **Create a global playbook:** Define your core objectives, brand voice, performance metrics, and non-negotiables. Make it clear which elements must be consistent across markets (e.g., logo usage, value propositions) and which can be localized (e.g., promotions, tone, CTAs).
- **Set up centralized tracking and reporting:** Use tools like Looker Studio, Funnel, or Tableau to consolidate data from different platforms and agencies. A unified reporting view helps you spot inconsistencies and optimize faster.
- **Define roles and responsibilities:** Who owns budget allocation? Who reviews creative? Who has the final say on the copy? Spell this out. Confusion around ownership slows campaigns down.
- **Use regular syncs to stay aligned:** Host monthly or bi-weekly meetings with all agency partners. Even if the agendas are light, the face time builds accountability.

For example, say you’re a global hotel chain that operates in multiple continents. A great place to start is to create a shared creative playbook, but allowing each region to tailor their offers:

- Ski packages in Switzerland.
- Beach getaways in Spain.

A shared creative playbook helps keep brand visuals consistent while making local campaigns relevant.

Bottom line: Your global strategy is the blueprint, but you still need local architects to tailor the build.

Choosing And Managing Agency Partners

If you’re working with multiple agencies across regions, things can quickly get siloed.

One agency might crush it in Canada while another underperforms in France. Your role is to manage these relationships without getting stuck in the weeds.

Some tips to keep things streamlined:

- **Standardize onboarding:** Whether you’re hiring a new agency in Mexico or expanding a partner’s remit into the UK, start with a structured onboarding checklist: tech stack access, brand guidelines, reporting templates, key contacts, etc.
- **Evaluate based on shared key performance indicators (KPIs):** Hold every agency accountable to the same high-level metrics (e.g., return on ad spend, cost per acquisition, conversion volume), even if market-specific tactics differ. This makes it easier to identify outliers.
- **Encourage cross-agency collaboration:** Set up a shared Slack channel or quarterly town halls where agency teams can exchange learnings. One partner’s success story could inspire a breakthrough elsewhere.
- **Avoid micromanagement, but stay involved:** Agencies need room to operate, but that doesn’t mean you go completely hands-off. Review ad copy regularly. Ask questions about performance drivers. Push for experimentation.

- **Consider a lead regional agency model:** Some brands appoint one agency as the lead for a particular continent or cluster. This partner acts as a point of coordination, helping to roll out strategies more efficiently.

Say you're running a consumer electronics brand's PPC efforts, and the company is looking to expand into Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. It may be easy to give all that work in-house, but that can essentially double your workload, which can make your existing campaigns' performance drop since your focus has shifted.

Instead, consider hiring an agency for the EMEA region, where your role may be overseeing their operations across Europe.

This frees up your time to still focus on the core markets, but is still visible in the expansion region to understand what's working and what's not.

This leads to reduced duplicated efforts, standardized reporting, and improved speed-to-market.

Your agencies aren't just vendors; they're extensions of your team. Treat them like it.

Dealing With Localization Without Losing Brand Consistency

One of the biggest risks in international PPC is watering down your brand, or creating an inconsistent brand. When you allow each market to fully customize messaging, things can veer off course quickly.

However, localization doesn't mean reinventing your brand. It means adapting the core message to fit cultural norms, search behavior, and language nuances.

Here are a few ways to do that well:

- **Provide flexible brand guidelines:** Instead of a rigid rulebook, create a toolkit. Include brand values, tone of voice examples, and dos/don’ts – but leave space for creativity.
- **Use transcreation, not translation:** Translating ads word-for-word often leads to awkward or irrelevant messaging. Invest in native-language copywriters who understand local search intent.
- **Vet creative with local experts:** Even if your agencies are global, ensure that someone close to the market signs off on copy and visuals. One poorly placed idiom or image can derail an entire campaign.
- **Test and learn by market:** What works in France might not work in Spain. Build in budget and time to A/B test creative and offers in each country before scaling.

For example, say you’re running back-to-school ads for an apparel brand across the United States and Japan. You think that everyone has a back-to-school need, right?

You’d be correct, but it’d be incorrect to run them at the same time due to Japan’s school year starting in the spring, whereas the United States typically starts in the fall.

Adjusting campaign timing based on regions can help lead to an uplift in engagement.

Consistency doesn’t mean sameness. It means every ad should feel like your brand, even if it says something slightly different.

Navigating Regulatory And Platform Differences

The compliance side of international PPC often gets overlooked – until it’s a problem. From GDPR in Europe to ad content

rules in China, regulatory pitfalls can stall or even shut down campaigns.

Keep these guardrails in place:

- **Work with legal early:** Involve your legal or compliance teams in the planning process. Get clarity on what's allowed in each region before campaigns launch.
- **Stay up to date with platform policies:** Google Ads, Meta, and Microsoft all have country-specific ad restrictions. Review them regularly. What flies in the U.S. might get disapproved in Germany.
- **Use regional ad accounts:** If you're running large-scale campaigns, separate ad accounts by region. This makes it easier to manage billing, user access, and compliance settings.
- **Document your approach:** Create a shared doc outlining how your team handles regulatory compliance, consent tracking, and ad policy enforcement. It helps new team members and agencies get up to speed quickly.

When in doubt, err on the side of caution. It's better to delay a campaign than clean up a PR or legal mess later.

When To Consolidate Vs. Decentralize

One of the biggest international strategic decisions you'll face: Should you centralize all campaigns under one global agency, or let each region work with its own partner?

There's no perfect answer, but here's a framework to help you decide:

- **Consolidate if:**
  - You need unified reporting and brand control.
  - You operate in fewer countries with similar languages or cultures.

        - Your internal team is small and needs a streamlined workflow.
    - **Decentralize if:**
        - You’re in highly diverse markets with unique buying behaviors.
        - Local teams have strong relationships with trusted regional agencies.
        - You want to test different approaches and compare outcomes.

Some brands use a hybrid approach — central strategy with local execution. The key is to revisit your setup as you grow. What worked at five markets may not work at 15.

What International PPC Success Looks Like

International PPC management isn’t about perfection. It’s about progress, alignment, and adaptability.

Success doesn’t always mean a flawless launch. It might mean catching a costly bidding overlap between two regions. Or, spotting a creative insight from Japan that you can scale to the UK.

At the end of the day, your job as a marketing manager is to keep the wheels turning, the messaging on-brand, and the teams aligned.

Global growth isn’t clean or linear, but with the right agency relationships, guardrails, and communication processes in place, it is manageable — and scalable.

Just don’t expect to do it alone.

More Resources:

Featured Image: Ground Picture/Shutterstock

https://www.searchenginejournal.com/navigating-complexities-international-ppc-working-with-agencies/543206/

The 8 Most Important PPC KPIs You Should Be Tracking via @sejournal, @brookeosmundson

If you're still measuring your PPC success based on click-through rate and impressions alone, you're about to be left behind.

The role of paid media has changed – and not just because Google Ads released another round of automation.

It's changing because people have changed. We live in a multi-device, privacy-first, AI-influenced world where attention spans are shorter, conversion paths are messier, and attribution is murkier than ever.

And yet, many advertisers still optimize like it's 2015 – staring at dashboards full of click-through-rate, cost-per-click, and average positions like they're the final word.

Here's the uncomfortable truth: PPC has never been just about getting someone to click. It's about driving real, measurable business outcomes – profitable, incremental, sustainable

outcomes – even when the platforms don't make it easy.

This article isn't another "PPC KPI listicle" telling you to improve your CTR or lower your CPC. We're going deeper.

The KPIs below are the ones that actually move the needle today, the ones you need in your toolbox if you want to keep your budget, secure executive buy-in, and prove paid media's value without hiding behind vanity metrics.

1. Profit (Not Just ROAS)

Return on ad spend (ROAS) has long been the default north star in PPC reporting, but frankly, it's overdue for a demotion.

On its own, ROAS offers a dangerously incomplete picture. It tells you how much revenue was generated for every dollar spent – but revenue isn't profit.

A campaign might boast a stellar 600% ROAS, but if fulfillment costs, discounts, or shipping fees gobble up 70% of that revenue, what are you really left with?

On the other hand, a modest-looking 300% ROAS campaign could quietly be generating double the profit if it's driving high-margin sales.

Today's best-in-class PPC teams know this and build profit measurement directly into their strategy.

They're calculating contribution margins at the product level and adjusting revenue numbers accordingly before feeding that data back into Google Ads or Microsoft Ads.

This lets algorithms optimize toward profit – not just revenue – giving teams a competitive edge over advertisers still stuck reporting on inflated ROAS figures.

When you can walk into a CMO's office and confidently show not just "here's what we sold," but "here's what we made," you

earn a different kind of respect.

2. Incrementality (The “Would You Have Gotten This Anyway?” Metric)

This is the key performance indicator (KPI) that separates marketers who report from those who understand.

Incrementality forces you to ask: Did this sale happen because of PPC, or would it have happened anyway?

In the old days, you might have taken every conversion at face value, especially if it showed up as the last click.

Today, with attribution becoming less precise and users bouncing between channels, platforms, and devices, you can’t afford to make that assumption.

Incrementality gets to the heart of what you’re actually contributing to the business. It’s about quantifying the lift your campaigns generate beyond what would have happened without paid media.

Whether through holdout tests, geo-based experiments, or platform-led lift studies, advertisers investing in incrementality measurement consistently find out that some campaigns — often brand and remarketing — are less impactful than they seem.

Sure, measuring incrementality is messy. It doesn’t fit neatly into Google’s default reporting.

However, CMOs don’t want to see PPC taking credit for revenue that would’ve closed regardless. They want to know what’s working because of paid media, not just what’s being tagged by it.

Advertisers who commit to measuring incrementality make better budgeting decisions and protect themselves from over-investing

in campaigns that are just skimming the top.

3. Customer Lifetime Value (CLV Or LTV)

There’s no excuse for ignoring Lifetime Value (LTV) today.

Rising acquisition costs and shorter attribution windows have made short-term metrics like first-purchase cost-per-acquisition (CPA) less useful. The most valuable PPC programs today optimize for the long game.

Customer Lifetime Value is about understanding the total value a customer brings to the business, not just their first purchase.

For SaaS, subscription commerce, and many DTC businesses, the initial conversion is merely the opening act. If you’re optimizing toward cheap CPAs but acquiring low-value, one-and-done customers, you’re actively hurting long-term profitability.

Advanced teams are feeding LTV data directly into Google Ads through offline conversion imports, enabling smart bidding strategies to optimize for customers likely to return and spend again.

Others are building LTV models internally and using them to guide targeting, creative, and bidding strategies manually.

This shift is more than tactical — it’s strategic. Businesses optimizing for LTV don’t just get more customers; they get better customers. Customers who stay, spend more, and fuel real growth.

4. Cost Per Incremental Acquisition (CPIA)

While CPA still has its place, the real game is CPIA – Cost Per Incremental Acquisition.

CPIA zooms out and asks: What did it cost to acquire net-new, incremental customers – the ones who wouldn't have converted without this campaign?

This is a much harder question than simply "What did we pay per conversion?", but it's the one that matters.

Many PPC accounts are bloated with campaigns that deliver conversions but offer little in the way of incremental lift.

Branded search, retargeting, and display remarketing can often cannibalize organic or direct traffic.

By layering incrementality testing into your cost analysis, you gain a KPI that tells you not just what you paid for a lead or sale, but what you paid for an actual new customer.

It's where the conversation shifts from "Are we hitting target CPA?" to "Are we paying reasonable amounts for meaningful growth?"

CPIA is where the best PPC teams earn their seat at the strategy table.

5. Conversion Rate (Context Is Everything)

Conversion rate is still important, but not in the way most PPC reports treat it.

Too many teams obsess over maximizing conversion rates without stopping to ask: Conversion rate for whom? Under what

circumstances?

A cold prospect clicking a YouTube ad will never convert at the same rate as someone clicking a branded search ad.

And yet, conversion rates are often presented in flat averages that tell you very little about what's really happening.

The best PPC practitioners contextualize conversion rates:

- By audience type (new vs. returning).
- By funnel stage.
- By device, geography, or time of day.

If your conversion rate drops because you've launched an upper-funnel prospecting campaign, it may actually be a sign that you're reaching new audiences who haven't been exposed to your brand before, which is a good thing.

Contextualizing conversion rates lets you tell the real story behind your data and prevents knee-jerk optimizations that hurt long-term growth.

6. Lead Quality (For Lead Gen Campaigns)

Lead generation marketers have been plagued for years by one mistake: optimizing for volume, not quality.

It's easy to pat yourself on the back for delivering leads under the target Cost-Per-Lead (CPL). It's harder to admit that half of those leads will never close – or worse, never even speak to sales.

True PPC leaders know that leads are just the starting point. What matters is how many of those leads become qualified opportunities and eventually customers.

This means integrating customer relationship management (CRM)

data into your PPC strategy and measuring down-funnel impact.

Savvy advertisers have ditched CPL as the sole north star and now track:

- Marketing qualified lead (MQL) to sales qualified lead (SQL) conversion rates.
- Pipeline contribution.
- Closed-won revenue sourced from PPC.

By feeding this data back into ad platforms, either through offline conversion imports or CRM integrations, PPC teams can train algorithms to find leads that not only fill out forms but actually generate revenue.

7. Time To Conversion

This KPI is criminally underutilized. In an age of increasingly complex buying journeys, knowing how long it takes a user to convert after clicking an ad is vital.

For many B2B or considered-purchase brands, conversions don’t happen within Google Ads’ default 7-day or 30-day attribution windows.

Some leads need 45, 60, even 90+ days to convert. Ignoring this means underreporting performance and undervaluing campaigns.

Understanding time to conversion helps you:

- Build realistic retargeting windows.
- Set proper expectations with stakeholders.
- Avoid shutting down high-performing campaigns too soon.

Especially with cookie windows shrinking and attribution getting tougher, knowing your actual conversion lag helps you defend your budget with confidence.

8. Contribution To Pipeline Or Revenue

At the end of the day, this is the KPI that makes or breaks your PPC program. If you can't tie your campaigns to pipeline or revenue, you're just spending money and hoping it works.

The best PPC leaders don't show CTRs and CPCs to the C-Suite. They show:

- How much qualified pipeline PPC is generated.
- What portion of closed revenue can be attributed to paid media.

Whether through CRM integration, manual reconciliation, or marketing automation platforms, you need to bridge the gap between ad clicks and actual business outcomes.

PPC lives and dies by its ability to drive revenue. Every other metric in this article ultimately feeds into this one.

Bonus: Campaign Health Metrics (CTR, CPC, CPM, And Friends)

Before we throw CTR, CPC, and Cost-Per-Mille (CPM) into the vanity metric graveyard, let's be clear: These metrics still matter, just not the way most people think. They are health metrics, not performance KPIs.

A strong CTR could signal relevant ad copy and healthy engagement. A reasonable CPC might indicate competitive efficiency. CPM can help diagnose shifts in inventory or competition.

However, these numbers are inputs, not outcomes. They provide valuable diagnostics that help you fine-tune campaigns, but they don't answer the big question: Are you driving

profitable, incremental, revenue-generating outcomes?

Good PPC teams know how to use these health metrics to identify friction points or optimization opportunities. Great teams know not to use them as the headline in the quarterly business review (QBR).

Making The Shift: Moving Towards Modern PPC KPIs

So, where do you start if you're stuck in legacy metrics and looking to level up?

First, realign your strategy. Understand that PPC is no longer just about clicks or even direct conversions. It's about business growth.

Next, start asking better questions inside your organization or with your clients:

- What is the average customer's lifetime value?
- What is the profit margin by product or service?
- How does a new lead flow through the sales process?
- What percentage of current conversions are truly incremental?

For agencies, this can be tricky. Clients might hesitate to share deeper business data, especially if past agencies didn't ask for it.

However, framing it as necessary for more effective optimization – not just reporting – can help bridge the gap.

Don't expect to overhaul everything overnight. Start with one or two KPIs, like profit and lead quality, and build from there. The goal isn't to make reporting harder – it's to make it matter.

Why This Shift Is Non-Negotiable

The PPC landscape is changing whether we like it or not.

Between privacy regulations, AI-fueled consumer behavior shifts, and increasingly automated ad platforms, surface-level metrics are becoming less trustworthy and less relevant.

Smart marketers are adapting by elevating the KPIs they report on. The teams that master profit, incrementality, LTV, and pipeline contribution will earn bigger budgets, stronger buy-in, and ultimately, better business outcomes.

PPC isn’t just about driving traffic anymore. It’s about driving the business.

More Resources:

Featured Image: Nichcha/Shutterstock

https://www.searchenginejournal.com/ppc-guide/most-important-ppc-kpis-should-be-tracking/