

Why campaign structure is the killer competitive advantage

When pitching to new clients, business is rarely won based on the ability to tactically execute. It's usually talking about how we will use data, or be able to deliver better than our competitors with whatever the latest thing might be.

There is nothing wrong with that approach, as you would expect that any agency worth their salt would know best practices. However, all too often best practices are overlooked. The most effective change that can be made when taking over a new campaign—and even after managing for a while—is revisiting campaign structure. This might be the most basic detail of all, but it is critically important.

Google rewards relevancy

As you know, Google changed the game when it introduced Quality Score into the bidding equation, and this remains a huge factor today. If you consider that you can't control the number of advertisers in the auction, and you can't stop someone from having deeper pockets than you, then how can you beat them? Quality Score.

Quality Score is heavily tied to campaign structure. The way in which keywords in the same ad groups are related to one another and follow a common structure is paramount. This may

feel like a lot of extra work to create more ad groups when the differences do not seem substantial, but the pay-off is worth it. For example, if you are a retailer and you are putting all shirts in one ad group, you should consider breaking them down into specific types (sweatshirts, t-shirts, tank tops, etc.). Also, by sending keywords to their specific landing pages, you also increase relevancy, which is rewarded with higher quality scores.

Ad copy and ad extensions

Linked with relevancy is the ability to write ad copy that is clearly linked to the keywords in the ad groups. Again, this might seem obvious, but it is something that many don't take the time to appreciate. Ad copy that is more directly related to your keywords will increase relevancy and consumer response rates (i.e. CTR).

In addition, a number of ad extensions can be impacted by campaign structure. AdWords decides when these show based on 2 factors:

- When the extension is expected to improve your performance
- Your ad's position and Ad Rank is high enough for extensions to show.

Ad Rank has a big ad quality component that substantiates the value of a strong campaign structure.

Campaign structure determines how settings are used

As a result of the way in which AdWords is set-up, there are certain decisions that can be made at each of the three levels (campaign, ad group, keyword). For example, geo-targeting and budgets can only be controlled at the campaign level. Ad copy

is uniquely controlled at the ad group level. These levers are critical to success, and campaign structure is the way in which you ensure success can be capitalized on. For example, if you have a keyword that is high volume in an ad group with lower volume keywords, it is possible that high volume keywords are suffocating those smaller volume keywords and limiting their exposure within the campaign. A key campaign structure decision in this instance might be to break these out into their own campaigns so you can more easily control the budget.

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Campaign structure is something that should be revisited again and again over time. The people who are managing a campaign change, consumer behavior changes, websites change, and AdWords evolves their policies. All these factors and many others require that the structure is revisited. I recommend that you have a strategic campaign structure review annually and ensure that it aligns with your performance and strategy.

You will of course have the urge to not spend any time thinking about campaign structure, because it can be tedious and you will assume you did a good job at the outset. However, over the course of time you will add and delete keywords, and update and test ad copy/landing pages. These decisions erode the original intent behind your strategy. Revisiting the structure will ensure that best practices are followed and, even if you don't make any changes, reaffirm the decisions you have historically made. Campaign structure is the secret weapon that will help you beat your competition—without having

to increase bids or your total budget.

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