

Revitalize a Struggling Paid Search Campaign in Three Easy Steps

Do you have a paid search campaign that is on its last legs? Perhaps your spending has spiraled out of control and your conversions haven't budged. Or, like many of us, maybe your performance is fine but your budgets have been slashed, forcing you to produce the same results with less spend. Before you scrap everything and start from scratch, take these three easy steps to save your paid search campaigns.

STEP ONE: ELIMINATE IRRELEVANT TRAFFIC

When you are paying per click, you only want relevant traffic. Many campaigns are mired down in irrelevant traffic. Step one on the road to recovery—cut it out of the picture.

Do this by identifying and blocking negative keywords. This will ensure that your ad doesn't come up in search results under irrelevant terms. Find irrelevant search terms in Google's Search Query report and use as negative keywords across all search engines. Since every campaign is different, the best way to find negative keywords is to look at a search query report and get rid of anything that doesn't belong.

"Free" is often a good negative keyword to start with. "Cheap" and "Discount" are tricky, but could be relevant if your products are high end. Also keep in mind that there is something "X-rated" out there for more keywords than you probably want to think about. If that is not your industry, add some negative keywords in that regard.

Testing different keyword match types is another way to trim down keywords that are inflating your impressions, dropping your click through rate and lowering your quality score. In Google, try testing multiple match types. In Yahoo!, adjust advanced match settings. If you are overwhelmed, you can try starting with just the keywords that have the most spend and those with the most impressions.

Also, see if your analytics program provides you with a query report. That will fill in the gaps that the Google report leaves with, "108 other unique queries." If you have general terms on broad match, it is an uphill battle to weed out



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irrelevant traffic with negatives. That might be a battle you want to fight, but if not, consider switching your more general, lower converting terms to phrase match. Best idea—test different match types, with the more specific types often warranting higher bids.

Some people rush to delete keywords when dealing with out of control spend, but in fact, most keywords are salvageable. If possible, see how they work with refined match types and negative keywords. In many cases, you can reduce irrelevant traffic by 50% or more with negative keywords and match type adjustments.

STEP TWO: OPTIMIZE AD COPY

Are your ads responsive and coherent? Do they truly represent your product or services? Are they specific and precise?

Sometimes we encounter ads that are too general to say anything about the company. The age-old advertising battle cry, “benefits, not features,” is a good rule of thumb. However, with limited characters, make sure you don’t forget to properly identify the product or service.

In order to keep out unqualified traffic, you have to be specific. If your target audience is companies with 50 employees or more, say so. For e-commerce, consider listing prices. Words like, “luxury” might weed out bargain shoppers.

“But shouldn’t I be trying to grab people’s attention?” you ask. Of course, in some cases you should, but if you are suffering from low ROI, your problem might be that you are trying to grab everyone’s attention. If the majority of your traffic is irrelevant, it doesn’t help you - it only costs you money.

Calls to action are an excellent tool, but only if they are specific. We have performed plenty of testing, and we rarely see success with general calls to action like, “download free white paper,” or, “buy now.” Create a specific, compelling call to action by preparing the searcher for the end conversion. For example, “Sale on widgets – 20% off,” can be changed to, “Buy widgets today and save 20%.” Similarly, “Free white paper on how to save your paid search campaign,” can be changed to, “Learn 3 easy steps to save your paid search campaign.”



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STEP THREE: IMPROVE YOUR LANDING PAGES

A good landing page can make all the difference in your campaign. After you clear out unnecessary spend with the prior two steps, take that budget and invest in proper landing page creation.

Look at your various keywords. Are there phrases that searchers would use while they are in the research stage versus when they are in buying mode? If so, create different landing pages for each group. It might be a good idea to interview salespeople, or customers if possible, to find out which key points to focus on in landing pages.

Most importantly, have consistency between your ad and the landing page. This is the simplest fix, and yet it is often overlooked. Make your shopping cart easy to use and goals easy to achieve. You will begin to lose people after one or two steps, max.

Of course, don't forget to test! That means everything—all offers, calls to action, forms, design, landing pages, new ideas—everything.

Yes, your campaign can recover, and in some cases even be brought back from the dead, if you follow the Road to Recovery: reduce irrelevant impressions; reduce unqualified clicks; increase conversion rate. In doing so, you are tackling all three levels of your paid search funnel.



ABOUT APOGEE RESULTS:

Apogee Results is a leading online marketing agency that develops and manages customized search engine optimization, paid search, and website effectiveness consulting programs for B2B and B2C clients. Apogee Results uses proven techniques, powerful web analytics tools, and a deep expertise in statistical evaluation to generate solid, measurable results at every stage of the search marketing process.

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