
7 Search Marketing Strategies for Retailers to Move the Needle

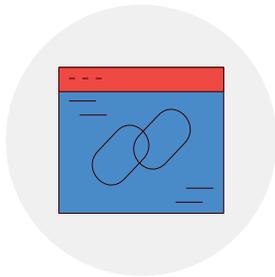


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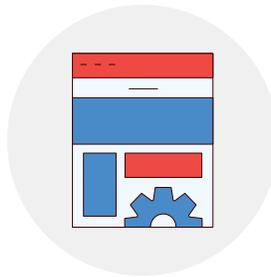
Search
Marketing
for eCommerce

Introduction

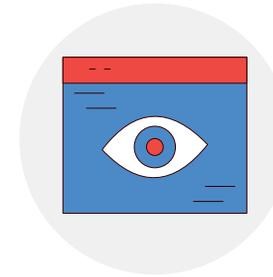
This guide from my speech details some of our best performing organic and paid search marketing strategies, which are becoming more blending. These strategies have come to me through data, case studies, and experiments used throughout the industry. Here are my top three key takeaways.



Learn new modern organic search strategies and changes in Google search.



Learn new paid search strategies and achieve higher ROAS.



Understand what strategies retailers are using for success with search marketing.

Organic Search

Optimizing your web pages to increase organic search engine relevance.

Human Behavior & RankBrain

In October 2015, Greg Corrado, a Senior Research Scientist with Google, said RankBrain is one of the top three factors in Google Search (source). Andrey Lipattsev, a search quality senior strategist at Google, then said links and content are the top two important factors. This means RankBrain is deciding where retailers are ranking in organic search much more than it has before and if you have not yet optimized for it, then you are behind in the game.

[Reference](#)

Gary Illyes, after a lot of questioning from Danny Sullivan, explained that you cannot optimize or do SEO for RankBrain. He added there are no "scores" for RankBrain — although he did say he will continue to say what Google has said in the past, that RankBrain is a ranking factor, even though it has no score like page speed, Panda, Penguin and other ranking signals may have.

[Reference](#)

As much as I cringe at the notion of challenging a Google engineer, I challenge the notion you cannot optimize for RankBrain. During this portion, I will center our focus on how to optimize for a post-RankBrain era and the user behavior Google is including in their algorithm.

For the longest time consumers never decided "search results" 100%. Companies could wield their monetary might, or advanced skills, and manipulate the search rankings through great on-page optimization & backlink building. Now Google is allowing the consumers decide individual search results more than ever using their new algorithm, RankBrain & Human Behavior, which we will associate together throughout this session.

For SEO's it is not just about having keywords anymore. It now has more factors in it, such as CTR on the organic listings or bounce rate of landing pages. SEOs will have to figure out how to get consumers to positively interact with the webpages.

I've talked about this at a 30,000 feet overview, but now I want to get really granular with this. I am going to show you two specific examples of human behavior/Rankbrain and how to optimize for it.

Human Behavior & RankBrain

First Example - Click Through Rates

One of the most popular user behaviors is how consumers interact with your organic listings. If no one clicks on your organic search listing, Google will push you down the organic search rankings.

In this example, Rand Fishkin performed a bit of an SEO experiment, in which he asked his Twitter followers to search a specific phrase, and then click on the organic ranking for his website, which was on page 1 for "IMEC Labs". It's estimated that about 250 people saw the tweet and followed his request, and, sure enough, afterwards he shot straight to the top three for that particular phrase hours later.

Reference

What this shows us is that Google decides search results based on what people click on. This idea then enables Google to understand what users really want when they search for a particular keyword phrase. This is very evident in popular searches, and it also shows that Google is much better at understanding similarities of keywords and phrases together than once thought.

CTR = Higher Positions

CTA + Meta Information = Higher CTR

What does this mean for search marketers & retailers? It means that we need to entice consumers to click on our organic search listings. The higher the CTR, the better we can rank in Google's organic search rankings. Including CTA (call to actions) to our meta information is ultra-important in a very competitive search landscape.

Here are some examples of great CTAs to include in your meta information.

#1 [Insert Title Here] **(if applicable)**

[Main Keyword Phrase Here] – Free Shipping

Get the Best [Main Keyword Phrase Here]

[Understand|Shop|See|Visit]] [Main Keyword Phrase Here]

[Main Keyword Phrase] [Insert Product/Brand Differentiators]

Human Behavior & RankBrain

Example 2 - Bounce Rates & Usability

After people click on your site, they need to stay there. Google can see how they interact with your website. We do not want our consumers treating our category & product pages like a pogo stick and bouncing away immediately or surely Google will drop us.

A really cool experiment that illustrates this very well is the Banklinko experiment Brian Dean ran, accidentally. He created a high quality piece called, "How to Get High Quality Backlinks (Without Guest Posting)." Ironically, with some great content promotion, he shot up to the top of the rankings for phrases such as "how to get high quality links" and even "how to get high".

If someone is searching for "how to get high," Brian Dean's article is extremely poor and would not give that user the right information they are looking for. What Google is able to do is understand this phrase "how to get high" is NOT a good page to rank for because everyone who clicks on it leaves immediately compared to other organic listings. However, Google does not punish the article for this. It sees that when someone searches for "how to get high quality links," they stay on the page and interact with it positively.

Reference

It is no surprise this article fell from the top three position, "how to get high," to page three in a matter of days. However, for the keyword "high quality backlinks," the article remains a staple in the top five positions.

What does this mean for retailers?

It means that Google can decide search results based on how users interact with your content in real time. If they click away quickly then you will drop for particular search phrases. On the flip side if they interact positively with your content, you will rise. Focusing on a great site design and having the right landing pages with the right products will help you gain more organic rankings because of the positive interaction the consumers have with your website after an organic search, such as time on page, bounce rate, and more.

Human Behavior & RankBrain

You also want to look at your bounce rate, mobile experience, and time on page throughout time. Generally, you can correlate decreases in usability factors to decreases in organic search. We see this a lot with arcaic site designs. Their organic search traffic drops throughout time and it correlates with their increase in bounce rate. In short, if your bounce rate increases, your search engine rankings will drop. If your usability factors are trending in the wrong direction, you want to revisit your UX to increase these factors.

I am not talking about looking at the website as a whole. I mean page by page examples in Google Analytics. A lot of times this can be fixed with a site design, innovation, adapting to the market, remerchandising, and more to make your site more user friendly.

Optimizing for a post-RankBrain or Human Behavior era is not impossible. Focusing on a great user experience to decrease bounce rates and focus on call to actions in meta information enables us to get more clicks, consumers to stay on page longer, and for us to increase our search rankings.

Keyword Assimilation & Topical Behavior

Another way Google uses user behavior to determine search results with Human Behavior is keyword assimilation. In short, if other websites and users from social media link to specific pages and use content to describe that web page, wouldn't Google want them to show up for the keyword phrases everyone is talking about?

In this example, we searched for "women's heels," and received a bunch of results with "pumps" as a keyword. Google has determined through data and behavior that what the searcher really wants is "heels" or "pumps". It assimilates the keyword phrases "heels" and "pumps" together because of the content being used together and people linking the words together through content and social media.

So how do they know this? Well, Google indexes content and social media data, then is able to tell that there is a high correlation between the keywords "heel" and "pumps". It also indexes links and social data pointing to the top pages which refer to each as "pumps" and "heels" Therefore, when someone searches for "womens heels" it also shows "womens pumps" web pages.

To break it down further, you can also find how Google uses topics and content to index search results. Using the Nordstorm example in the top 10 results, we looked through the meta information, URL, and body content. Astonishing, it doesn't even have the keyword "heels" in it anywhere minus one time in the meta description!

However, when you look at the backlink profile there are numerous links from content which is centered around "womens heels" and social media posts to that exact landing page that references "womens heels". Google crawls this content and social data and is able to see that people talk about this web page using the keywords "womens heels" and therefore will rank it high even though the web page does not have 1 "heels" keyword on it anywhere.

Google has two ways it indexes content using this SEO behavior: first is through assimilation of keyword phrases which is "Rank Brain" or computer learning and second is through users and websites using these keywords and topics in the content which points to the specific web pages.

How do you optimize for this?

Keyword Assimilation & Topical Behavior

You want to work with your content team and social media team to implement keyword rich content across all of the mediums that covers a wide variety of topics and phrases. Linking to category content is difficult, but can be very rewarding if done correctly. Having articles mentioning your categories with keyword rich content, centered around topics helps Google understand better what web pages are and if done right your category pages can take up more Google real estate than ever before.

A good tactic to use is to have a keyword matrix of top landing pages, categories, and products and focus your content, links, and social media efforts on those pages and keywords. It is also important to update your keyword matrix regularly because if you are not doing keyword research every quarter, you could be lost because search behavior is changing. Understanding what consumers search for on a regular basis is critical for advanced on page optimization.

Content Creation and Promotion Strategies

Per our previous discussions, we know that two of the three main factors in Google's algorithm are RankBrain and content. Of course, you need the right content and user behavior signals, but you also need backlinks, which is the third most popular ranking factor per Andrey Lipattsev, a search quality senior strategist at Google. You need good quality backlinks and social signals to send "quality signals" to Google. Getting them is easier said than done. Generally, popular businesses like Red Bull, Facebook, YouTube, and more obtain backlinks with ease because of the content they create (Red Bull) or content their user base creates for them (Facebook & YouTube).

If you do not have the luxury of being Amazon or having popular products/categories which gets linked to from popular publications automatically, you need to have a content creation and promotion strategy. Having great content which inner links to your products and categories is essential. It is very difficult to get links straight to your products/categories, but having great content mentioning your products/categories is much easier. For that reason, content creation & promotion is a fantastic strategy for merchants to undertake as it can provide good quality signals to key products & categories.

Everyone says the key to SEO is creating the best content, but there is a whole piece they are missing - promotion strategy. Great content is useless if no one sees it.

There are different ways to promote content. The main ones are:

- 1) Email marketing (newsletter)
- 2) Social Media
- 3) Email Outreach (cold emailing promoting the content)
- 4) Paid advertising
- 5) Eventually Search Engines (organic rankings)

Content Creation and Promotion Strategies

A good example of great content creation and promotion comes from a company called Inspiyr. First, they did their homework and found out that they wanted to rank for around 20 main keyword phrases. They then researched these main phrases and what was the best content ranking for these phrases.

They created even better content than what was ranking in Google and then promoted their content. One particular piece received over 137,000 Facebook shares, hundreds of high quality inbound links, and allowed them to be #1 for their main phrase "unhealthiest foods" and related phrases for 2+ years.

Using this content, they were able to have strategic inter links, which linked to key products/categories, giving them massive conversions. This was a big success for them and you can replicate this using the steps below.

- 1) Pick the main phrases that you want to target. These should be short-tailed phrases with a lot of monthly searches, such as "unhealthiest foods".
- 2) Find out what ranks high for those phrases currently. Using tools like Buzzsumo, figure out what is the most popular content centered around those phrases. Then take those pieces of content, study them, and identify ways to make even better content. Designing it through custom imagery, gifs, and videos is always a good idea.
- 3) Once you have your content created, published, optimized for those phrases, interlinks to key products/categories, and perfected, it is time to promote it. First, identify the key ways you will promote it through a combination of the five ways we discussed earlier to your own unique ways.
- 4) Once you have those promotion channels uncovered you can promote it through:
 - a) Email newsletter or solo email - emailing out to the audience letting them know about the content. You do not need to have a gimmick or strategy to "force links". Consumers will link to content naturally and just as important, share it on social media.

Content Creation and Promotion Strategies

b) Promote it through social media on your channels and also using the advertising tools such as Facebook, Twitter, & Instagram advertising tools.

c) Display advertising - you can use your retargeting audiences or you can target via interests/websites using Google Display Network to promote the content on a per click basis.

d) Email Matching advertising - you can also use your email newsletter list to promote the content out to Facebook, Google DN, and other networks allowing customer emails for segmented targeting advertising.

e) Email Outreach - finding editors who have written similar content are good to reach out to as well and promote the content. What made the example above so successful is a famous celebrity shared the content on Facebook and then it went viral. Promoting your content to the right audience at the right time is key. And when I say the right audience I mean people with lots of social followers who can provide a big impact sharing your content.

f) Lastly, with some good inbound links and social media signals, you can also achieve high rankings in Google, which will provide organic search traffic and continue to give you more inbound links and social media signals. Be sure to optimize your content correctly with sound on-page optimization principles and good interlinks to key categories/products to pass link authority.

Reverse Engineering

Another important factor is having a large number of referring domains. Backlinko & Ahrefs produced a study and analyzed over 1 & 2 million search results respectively. It showed that the web pages with more referring domains produced higher search engine rankings:

[Ahrefs Study](#)

[Backlinko Study](#)

Backlinks remain an extremely important Google ranking factor. We found the number of domains linking to a page correlated with rankings more than any other factor.

It makes sense. The more websites pointing to you gives you the "upvote" that Google will like and therefore, place you higher. Acquiring numerous good quality referring domains is difficult. One tactic, which is a fantastic starting place, is reverse engineering. This is very effective for focusing on high volume search phrases with an average position of 4-10. Basically, if your web page is ranked 4-10 in Google search for a large volume keyword phrase, reverse engineering is a great tactic to allocate resources for you organic search team.

This is because reverse engineering can produce a lot of high quality referring domains quickly. It is very targeted, and has a high success rate.

Reverse Engineering

Here is a normal process for reverse engineering:

- 1) Decide who and what you will be reverse engineering. We will use the example of "Garmin Watches". If you are in the fourth position, you want to export all of the links from websites in the first-third position using tools like Ahrefs, Searchmetrics, or Majestic SEO. Be sure to only export the links to those three web pages. Do not pull the links for the entire domain.
- 2) Once you have the list, you want to go through the list of links and identify the ones which can be easily replicable and ones which will be more difficult. Generally, the higher the quality, the harder it is to achieve.
- 3) Develop the game plan for how to acquire the same links. Here are the most common placements you will see and how to replicate them:
 - a. Editorial content – if there is a good article on a high level publication, you can try "one upping" that piece and acquire the same placement.
 - b. Sponsored content – same thing for editorial content except this is easier. Produce even better content and acquire the same placement.
 - c. Resource link – this can be inside an article or a resource page. You can reach out to the webmaster and try to acquire the same link. Generally, they want to be unbiased so including you will be a welcomed addition.
 - d. Product or category link – this could be an article mentioning a product or category. This is a case by case basis but reaching out to the author or the web master can be a unique way to acquire a really high quality link and try getting the same or better link to your individual page.
- 4) From there, you can rinse and repeat the process for every "high volume" keyword phrase you have. Reverse Engineering is one of the easiest and underutilized tactics organic search teams are not doing now. And as you can see, Google still values link frequency, so acquiring many high quality backlinks can do wonders on high volume keyword search landing pages, such as your category pages.

Using PPC Data for SEO

SEO has traditionally always been the tortoise while PPC has always been the hare.

Why is this?

Well for one, SEO uses SEO data to make decisions, which is almost always estimators. SEO data is usually through tools like Google Keyword Planner or tools which integrate with Google Keyword Planner. Of course, some might use Bright Edge or Searchmetrics but still the same - it all estimates search data. PPC will always be the hare because of their ability to see real hand data quickly and effectively. PPC must always adapt in real time based on what people search and can deploy new campaigns very quickly.

The same cannot be said of SEO, as to deploy a new campaign to reach new keyword phrases we have to make content, publish it, promote it, and then possibly 14 days later Google finally indexes us. However, it doesn't have to be this way. SEO teams, working with PPC teams, can deploy content quicker and more effectively through collaboration. Plus, you are already paying for this PPC data, you might as well use it.

Here are some ways organic search teams can work more effectively with the paid search teams:

- 1) Using high converting data to incorporate into topical content - You can pull off the high converting keyword phrases for key landing pages and incorporate agile topical content into blogs or editorial content.
- 2) Using seasons and specials to plan ahead - By using past data for time periods such as "Black Friday," SEO teams can deploy content well in advance and give them a better chance to rank for timely topics before the events happen. PPC teams can help SEO teams be more prepared for holidays or seasons by giving more clarity into what consumers are searching for from a time period standpoint.
- 3) Using high converting keywords for on page optimization.

Overall, using PPC data allows SEO teams to be more agile, nimble, and more effective in their efforts of acquiring more search volume and revenue.

Paid Search

Optimizing Adwords and Adcenter for better return on advertising spend.

Product Level Text Ads

81% of consumers research online before they buy. This means that a lot of ad spend is going towards consumers researching products and not towards customers in "buy" mode, which is where we get higher conversions and do not have an "up-hill" fight to get them to convert once they visit our page.

Reference

A great way to combat spending portions of the ad budget on research queries is with advertising using your products by using your feed, also called Inventory Driven Search. Using your product feed enables you to advertise your products, through traditional text ads, to consumers searching for specific products, similar to Google Shopping. Basically, you can take your product feed and with the right scripts or software, you can create automatic Adword groups for each of your products to target specific search queries. Or you can do it one by one, which I do not recommend unless you have less than 100 products.

So when people search for a product, your ad of YOUR exact product shows up for them. It can contain price and with the right software, you can control inventory, so if your inventory goes out the ad group will stop.

This means your ads are much more specific to the consumer and much more likely in the buy phase. I want to be unbiased and not advocate any software, so to find the software or scripts, a quick Google search for "Inventory Driven Search Software or Script" is a good starting point.

Product Level Text Ads campaigns produce higher ROAS, on average of 96% higher, (data provided by Visitore) compared to traditional search campaigns, and allow high customization/segmentation of campaigns.

This is because consumers in the buying decision phase use more specific, product-oriented searches with individual products in mind, so using your product feed for advertising enables you to capture consumers at a time in the buying cycle when purchase intent is highest, which enables you to achieve higher returns.

Product Level Text Ads

These consumers can be looking for exact models, colors, or parts for a product which PLTA is perfect for. Using PLTA, we can create specific ads using different attributes and create strong call to actions. For instance, if someone searches for a [product name] + [modifier] + [modifier], we can have an ad show up specifically for that search phrase and have the [product name] and as many [modifiers] in the ad to show up, which will give us a better chance for success with that particular search query.

PLTA is not a new science, but is a widely underutilized tactic because of the complications. The software or scripts are difficult to use and product data can be complicated. In the past few years, with the emergence of the Google Shopping channel and the correlating necessity for businesses to have an established high-quality product feed, PLTA campaigns have become easier to create and manage. Having a strong product feed and good product data enables an easier transition to PLTA and advancements with software enable less resources for PFA implementations and maintenance.

Using modifiers in the ads for the specific product and its important attributes such as price, model number, brand, color, and more provides very specific messaging, which qualifies shoppers pre-click and yields extremely high ROAS.

One thing to keep in mind is using "exact match" or "phrase match" can make your IDS keywords too specific to capture search queries. Using "modified broad match", and in some cases "straight broad match", enables us to have our IDS show up for more search queries and still maintain a higher ROAS than traditional search campaigns. For broad match types, you'll want to check search queries regularly and add negative keywords to prevent wasted spend on less relevant searches. Overall, using IDS can take a lot of resources but when done right can provide a very high ROAS.

Data Optimization Techniques in Google

Google Shopping is one of the more difficult segments of paid search marketing. It is a mix, in my opinion, of SEO & PPC together. Google crawls your product feed and determines which product listing ads to serve, based on attributes and other algorithm factors.

Basically, if you have the right keyword correlation, the right attributes, the right data, strong reviews, and more; you have a much better chance for your product(s) to show up for a relevant search query.

These are the primary attributes in order of importance to Google. Therefore, this is how you should prioritize optimization.

- Unique Product Identifiers (GTIN, UPC, EAN, ISBN, etc). Also Brand & MPN.
- Title
- Google Product Category
- Description

Data Optimization Techniques in Google

Title & Description Optimization

Optimizing titles and descriptions is very important for optimal Google Shopping performance. The first 45 characters in the titles and descriptions are most important, with descending weight applied to characters/words from left to right. This means that how your product titles are written in the feed is important in terms of query parsing.

Typically, an online retailer will send Google a feed containing all of their products with product titles reflecting the product titles on the website. Google looks at these product titles as it crawls the feed and decides whether or not to serve a Google Shopping ad for a given search query. If we can manipulate the product titles in the feed, we can make an impact on our Google Shopping exposure. Taking your products and adding modifiers to the title is one way to enhance Google & Bing shopping performance. You can add brand names, modifiers like colors, MPN's, or more to increase potential search phrases you can show up for. Adding identifying product numbers to the title can also be helpful if you are in specific industries where skus, model numbers, applicable part numbers, etc are known and searched online. You can add these product numbers at the beginning of the title.

The most important modifiers or the main phrases should always be at the beginning of the title, and work left to right with the most important phrases/keywords. So if you want a product number, such as a model number to be the most important KW phrase, then that should precede the main product tile, followed up with modifiers, such as color, make, model, etc... You can also add more general search phrases if you have product titles that aren't search friendly. For example, we commonly come across product titles that don't actually state what type of product the product actually is. Or the title might mostly contain uniquely descriptive terms that are very rarely searched for. In this instance, it would make sense to decide on a more generally descriptive phrase to include in the title. For example "New Damask Greystone 18in Pillow" could be edited to read "Outdoor Pillow - New Damask Greystone 18in Pillow". This will create a much higher probability for this product to serve a Shopping ad to a shopper searching for "outdoor pillows".

This type of optimization can be applied to descriptions in the same manner. Although Google applies less weight to descriptions, having modifiers in the description further enables us to show up for more searches because Google can match our products to more search queries. However, the farther down the description, the less these keywords will count with Google. Having them in the first 45 characters produces the best results.

Data Optimization Techniques in Google

Phantom SKUs

To take it a step further, one of the more advanced strategies we employ to increase Google Shopping traffic is something we call "Phantom SKUs". This is another form of feed data manipulation, but it involves creating additional SKUs within a shopping feed to boost exposure. Basically it is taking SKUs and making similar SKUs to capture more search volume. This strategy also focuses on product titles within the feed. The original feed remains, but additional SKUs are created within the feed containing product titles that consist of keywords and phrases that are different from the original title but still relevant to the product. These "phantom SKUs" will have a different product ID than the actual SKUs, and a different title, but all other information will be the same.

You can choose which terms to include in your title by looking at other data. If there are some more general searches that are proven to produce sales on the site you can use those phrases in the title of the phantom SKUs.

If a department or domain has a small product offering and rarely needs to update product information, this can be done rather easily using Google Sheets to manually create a product feed with phantom SKUs. But for retailers with thousands of SKUs who are constantly updating inventory, prices, or product offerings, it becomes more complicated. In this case, you creating phantom SKUs in a static environment won't do you any good. You need to be able to create these phantom SKUs and still have them react to product updates automatically, just like the original SKUs do.

To make phantom SKUs work dynamically, you need the right feed management software. If you have access to the right software, you can clone your Google feed and then write rules to duplicate products, but with altered ID's, titles & descriptions. This way the new SKUs you've created will automatically update with inventory and price changes.

There are many ways to use Phantom SKUs to your benefit. You can take 1 product and create 10 unique titles using different combinations of keywords. Really, you can create as many as can be properly managed within the Shopping engines. This strategy is one of the few ways you can force more control over the Shopping channel and garner significantly more search volume than you would've received otherwise. You can create higher click through rates with more relevant titles to the particular searcher (query parsing) or add call to actions to your titles to entice more clicks and have searchers choose you over the competitive shopping landscape.

Data Optimization Techniques in Google

Google (& Bing) Product Categories

Google has its own product category taxonomy consisting of thousands of specific product categories. It's mandatory that all products within a shopping feed are associated with a Google product category. However, many retailers fall short on the categorization by either leaving out categories, mis-categorizing products, or failing to apply the most specific categories to their products. Google looks at the Google product categories within shopping feeds very heavily, so you want your products to be categorized as best as possible. . . . By meticulously categorizing all products, you will maximize exposure and performance on Google Shopping by greatly increasing the probability of matching out to the most relevant searches.

Other feed attributes

There are several feed attributes outside of titles, descriptions, and categories that play a significant role in Shopping performance. As mentioned previously, GTIN/UPC is what Google applies the most weight to. Ensure that all of your GTINs are in the feed if your products have them.

Also, other attributes such as color, size, gender, age_group, and material can further increase your chances of matching out to the most relevant searches with the best chances of converting.

Data Optimization Techniques in Google

Negative Funneling

Google Shopping is not like traditional search where you can readily and easily choose exactly which keywords you want your products to show up for. With Google Shopping, we can only select which queries we do not want to show up for. This is why segmenting your products is important so we can use "negative funneling" and stop showing up for search phrases which are not specific to our products, not converting, or even in the "research" phase.

Using a script or manually inputting negative keywords is important to eliminate wasted ad spend and make your budget go farther. In each of your "product buckets" or "product categories" you want to be continuously negative keyword funneling and eliminating keywords that are wasting your ad spend or triggering searches better suited for other products in your offering

Attribution Modeling

The vast majority of Adwords clicks do not convert on the first click. It is usually multiple clicks from organic, direct, and more. Attribution modeling enables us to get a very clear view of how we are actually performing in Adwords & BingAds. There are few different attribution models. All are good to use depending on your situation and how you want/need to track conversions:

Major Attribution Models:

Last Click or Last Interaction: Full credit is given to the last click before the conversion.

First Click or First Interaction: Full credit is given to the first click of the conversion path leading to the conversion (within a 30-day window).

Linear: Equal credit is attributed to all clicks in the conversion path.

Time Decay: Credit is distributed among all clicks in the conversion path, giving progressively higher credit to clicks later in the path.

Position Based: 40% credit is given to both the first and last click, while distributing the remaining 20% evenly between any clicks that happen in between.

Data-Driven (Beta): Uses Google's algorithm to determine which keywords, ads, & campaigns have the most impact on sales. This is based off of conversion data. Google uses this data to calculate the actual contribution of keywords along the conversion path. By looking at all ad clicks and comparing click paths that convert to those that don't, patterns are identified among clicks that lead to conversions. These patterns inform the attribution calculation. It's too soon to know the accuracy of this new attribution model.

Attribution Modeling

Generally, there is no right or wrong answer when it comes to attribution modeling. The default model is last click attribution, which gives all conversion credit to the last ad click before a conversion. However, Google recently started allowing advertisers to choose from one of the attribution models above. You can choose this setting on the account level when setting up a conversion in Adwords.

This is an important change to Adwords because it's the first time advertisers have been able to deviate from last-click attribution since the inception of Adwords. It's also important because it will allow some advertisers to more readily see what campaigns are generating sales that they previously might've thought unprofitable. For example, if you have multiple campaigns with different levels of keyword granularity, the campaigns with the most specific keywords usually show the highest returns. This is because shoppers often search more general phrases and refine their searches on their way to making a purchase. They make multiple ad clicks and eventually, somebody gets the sale. So often times campaigns with more general keywords get a bad wrap because the data shows low ROAS. That's because the campaign with the more specific keywords received all the credit for the conversion, even though the more general keyword is what brought the shopper to the site originally.

This might cause advertisers to decrease bids, which can choke off traffic, and result in decreases sales overall. However, if an advertiser uses, say, the first-click attribution model instead, then that conversion gets tied back to the keyword that brought the shopper to the site in the first place. So now, the data is easily visible to the advertiser and they can know not to decrease those bids, therefore keeping traffic and sales flowing.

If you're currently on last click attributions and you're wondering what the effects of switching would be, you can do a couple things to gain insight.

Attribution Modeling

One thing you can do is add the columns "Click Assisted Conversion" & "Click Assisted Conversion Value". This will show which campaigns are getting clicks that ultimately turn into conversions, but not before another campaign receives an ad click from the same user.

Another way to observe conversion attribution within your Adwords account is by clicking on tools and then attribution modeling. Here, Adwords shows you conversion data based on various attribution models and how each compares to the other. So, if you look at this data and determine that it would make more sense to be using a different attribution model, now you can! With these insights a business can potentially maximize traffic and sales without compromising return on ad spend.

Customer Match

It is harder to acquire a new customer than it is to keep a customer. For merchants with a lot of repeat purchasers, using "customer match" email audiences is a great way to increase repeat customers and even increase frequency of purchase. You can target your best customers, repeat customers, and even not target customers who are not a good fit.

Customer Match is a very underutilized tactic because of:

Time to create - Time to create specific ad groups & campaigns based on email lists can be daunting.

Knowledge of best practices - Customer Match is a relatively unknown process and very underutilized.

Difficulty to Acquire - Search teams may not be able to acquire customer email lists or the lists could be outdated. Also, getting email lists from Omni-channel retailing could be difficult.

Difficulty to Segment and Use - the lists are extremely substantial and not specific to certain areas the PPC team is focusing on. A good example of this is email lists not broken down by departments or categories on the website. If able to overcome, segmenting based on the category can be very powerful. We can implement different customer match email groups per category/department and create individual segments targeting specific keyword phrases. An example would be targeting "outdoor & garden" consumers who purchased products from this department to get them to purchase again.

Customer Match

Customer Match Email lists can be extremely effective in these different ways

1) Omni-channel local retailing targeting - If your retail store also has local stores, we can target based on individual stores. We can segment our best customers or highest revenue per purchase customers based on this email data and serve them higher CPC associated ads in traditional search, Google Shopping, and even local ads to shop at the physical store. Since Google now has "find in the store" buttons, we can target our inventories to them locally and acquire more customers outside of our normal online purchase cycle but still get the necessary conversion as customers can buy the product online usually, and pick it up in the store.

2) Using data to segment customers into most frequent purchases & highest revenue purchases - We want to guard and protect these consumers as they are our best so we want to max out our CPCs to make sure we are targeting them constantly and protecting them from our competitors. We can also offer return monetary discounts and rewards for being such a great customer using our CPC ads to specific offer pages. It is truly, retargeting for the traditional CPC model.

Conclusion

This concludes our guide from my Shop.org 2016 speech. I hope you found this guide insightful and thorough. If you ever need help or have a question, please contact me at ron@visiture.com.