

# 21 QUESTIONS TO ASK ANY PAID SEARCH (PPC) AGENCY YOU'RE LOOKING TO HIRE





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Trying to find the proper paid agency can be challenging enough. One who truly understands how to build out the proper Google Adwords campaign and proactively manage it. But then you need to figure out all the right questions to ask them in order to ensure you're evaluating them properly.

Based on our experience, we've compiled a list of the top questions you should ask any Google Adwords management agency. Some of more advanced than others, but if you've ask your next provider of all these questions, you'll both know if they're the right fit and it will even get you thinking about what your current agency or your own company is doing while managing your existing paid search campaign.

## What is your general philosophy in creating paid search campaigns?



Many companies have their own process and approach to creating paid search campaigns, but this question will give you insights into their level of thinking and what level of prowess they have into understanding your business and creating a paid search campaign that achieved results at the proper speed. If they ask, 'what do you mean?' ....just say I want to understand your overarching vision and perspective when you build campaigns for clients.

## How do you go about measuring success within pay per click advertising campaigns?



You want to get some detail from the potential paid search provider on this one. It's not enough to jot down the fact that you want phone calls and you are going to measure those calls via call tracking software or simply create a call-only campaign. You should hear from them the core KPI's that matter, while also hearing them lay out a plan on how to measure multiple Key Performance Indicators (K-PI)'s such as sales, appointment bookings, form submissions, and chat box engagements. You should hear from them that they know how to technically measure these KPI's and they know how to set them up either directly via the website or through Google Tag Manager.



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## What is Google Tag Manager and how do you use it to set up goal tracking?

As a follow up to the previous question, google tag manager allows web developers to manage all of the proper tags needed to measure conversions, analytics, and other important integrations within your website. If an agency does not know how to leverage google tag manager, be wary of their capabilities as a paid search agency.

## When do you decide to use Call-Only campaigns versus Google Ad Extended Campaigns?



Call-only campaigns are just that. Campaigns in which you only pay for phone calls or clicks to your ads that can only lead to phone calls. While extended campaign ads are clicks to your website. One's philosophy on each can be telling as to how one-sided their perspective may be when developing paid search campaigns. For example, even though call-only campaigns reduce the steps to you getting a phone call, it may also lead to higher cost per conversions and even fewer phone calls compared to google extended campaigns which could in turn be less expensive on a cost per click basis and furnish lower cost per conversions. Hearing one's philosophy on each will give you a clear sign as to their strategic mindset when developing paid search campaigns.



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**Do you use any automated tools with your paid search campaigns? Elaborate.**



Many agencies love automated tools because they reduce their workload and create more efficiencies in managing paid media campaigns. But automated tools can also cause campaigns to be forgotten because they don't have daily eyes on them.



Most of the campaigns we run at are managed completely without tools because we typically achieve higher ROI without such tools and it ensures full accountability of our team to be proactive and know what's happening inside of our accounts.



Not to say automated tools are completely bad. They just need to be used with those key insights and when it's not appropriate to utilize them.

**What are your management and set up fees?**



This is a standard practice question that all companies should ask. Some agencies have a baseline of \$350 per month regardless of hour monthly media spend while other charge a monthly percentage of 7% all the way up to 30% of the monthly media. Industry average is 15% with baseline retainer for spends above \$10,000/month.

**Can you provide 2 - 3 references of your work?**

Sorta of a no brainer question to ask, but here's what you want to ask the references as most references you get will be generally positive feedback: Are you still working with them? How much has business grown from as a direct result of paid search? How often do you go over reporting with them?



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## How skilled are you in my industry?

Knowing their bonafides in your industry shouldn't always be a requirement if they are simply rockstars at paid search, but it should certainly be a plus because typically those paid search providers will have the recipe and best practices that work well for companies in your industry. Beware as a paid search provider may be great in your industry, but not think beyond the full conversion funnel of your business. For example, if you're a dentist, and they've done work with another dentist who have good conversion tactics such as chat boxes, form submissions, and well placed information on their website, and you lack all of those things, a great paid search game plan will still result in poor performance for your company. So you should also seek out that level of guidance from any paid search provider you speak with.

## Do you like to formulate 1,000's of keywords or start with less than 100?



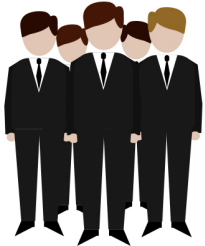
One of my favorite questions. And it's been formed after many years of testing both theories. There's never a perfect answer here, but anyone who tries to start with 1,000's of keywords while knowing your budget is limited will typically translate into low conversions.

This theory doesn't hold true if you have a large e-commerce website or if you have a large ad budget or provide many services and want to advertise many of them. But in most other cases, having way too many keywords to start with will typically lead to a lot of wasted ad budget, momentum, and likely disappointment in your paid search campaigns.



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## What reporting can you provide our team?



You should strive for a report in which you have 24/7 access to. Some agencies only furnish reports once a month, but we believe real time reporting provides more accountability and proactive measures to ensure the success of your paid search campaigns.

## Can we have access or receive “change history” reports from you weekly?

The change history report is a report that tells you all of the changes made to your campaigns throughout its history. They include keyword changes, ad changes, as group changes, and even various experiments that have been ran. This is the ultimate accountability report because it gives you insights into how proactive your paid search team is in managing your account. So if you view such a report and notice the account hasn't been touched or even slightly tweaked in 2 weeks, you know you have a problem.

## Here are 3 keywords relevant to my business. How would you extrapolate out to the terms relevant to our company?



In most cases, clients have a sense of the terms and psychographic nature of searches who need your product or service. But there are still other terms worth exploring (maybe not 100's, but certainly more than 3). This will give you a peak into the types of questions they should ask you when formulating a proper keyword strategy, how they develop their game plan, and why they believe it's the proper course of action for your paid search campaign. Please note that at this stage, some may require a fee once they're getting into conducting actual research, but it's still worth asking on the front end.



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## How do you ensure we can achieve the highest quality score for our keywords?

Quality score (measure of the relevancy of your keywords to your overall campaign) is a metric from Google Ads that effectively scores your keywords from 1 to 10, 10 being a perfect score and 1 being a bad score. And quality score is made of up 3 metrics: Ad Relevance, which is effectively how relevant your ad copy is to the keyword; Expected Click Through Rate, which is the clicks divided by impressions but moreso a scoring metric that Google tends to determine behind the scenes; and finally Landing Page Relevance, how relevant your landing page is to the keyword. The better you work on all three the higher the quality score and ultimately the lower your overall cost per clicks will be. Learning from your paid search team in how they'll help you achieve higher quality scores for your target keywords will give you even greater perspective into how they will improve your overall paid search campaigns.



## What ways do you go about tracking phone calls?

Many companies don't realize this, but even outside of call-only google ad campaigns, organizations can measure phone calls from those who visit your website and then call phone numbers that then forward to your main number. Call tracking is vital if you rely on phone calls as leads because then you can discern which actual keywords are translating into phone calls. Any agency who doesn't have a fluid process to implement call tracking is likely not the right fit for your enterprise.



## What's your philosophy on negative keywords?

Negative keywords are extremely powerful because they prevent you from bidding on keywords you either don't intend on targeting or terms you know for sure are not relevant to your business. For example, if you're a dentists, having the negative terms college or school in your campaign will prevent those who are searching for a job from clicking on your ads (unless you're running a recruitment campaign of course). Most agencies already have their list of favorite negative terms so knowing their perspective and examples of terms they list as negatives will provide you with some perspective in this area.



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## Take a look at our landing page/website...what 4 - 5 tips would you give us to improve it? And Why?



This is incredibly important. You've noticed many of the questions extend beyond paid search because there are other aspects that impact paid search such as landing page optimization. And remember, landing page relevance impacts Quality Score. And if they look at your landing page and have zero recommendations, that should raise your eyebrows because all landing pages can be constantly looked at and improved.

## Any other tactics/campaigns you try to incorporate with the main paid search campaigns?

Just a feeler question to see what out of the box strategies the agency tries to test from time to time. For example, they may decide to run experiments (a real feature within Google Ads that will tell you if your experiment is statically significant to implement or NOT implement across your campaigns.



## Do you have landing page split testing capabilities?

An agency that doesn't focus at all on landing page optimization, Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO) or split testing is vastly limiting the potential of your paid search campaigns. We would argue that CRO is even more important than the paid search campaign itself because a weak and ineffective landing page will lead to substantially less conversions and ultimately your advertising dollars across ALL your digital and offline channels working incredibly hard to drive conversions. Also, CRO improves conversion rates from your other forms of inbound traffic including branded traffic, organic traffic, social media traffic, and site retargeting traffic.





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## Do you provide any initial pay per click audit services?



Some agencies simply take on pay per click advertising accounts without performing audits or even offering an audit as an initial service. We believe paid search audits (even the paid ones) are a great way to evaluate your interaction with that agency and plus it doesn't require you to fully give up full control of your paid search campaign for 6 months to a year before evaluating them. You can simply get an initial audit done and see how they'd formulate the ideal game plan to improve your pay per click advertising campaign.

## How much in ad spend do you currently manage at your agency?

This will tell you if pay per click advertising is truly a core part of the agency's business or if they only manage a few clients. Ideally, spend levels above \$100,000 per month is a great benchmark.



## Are you on websites such as Clutch, Agency Spotter, and UpCity?

Not a requirement, but certainly helps with credibility and establishing more authority. All three are websites that rank companies in various digital advertising fields in their respective markets. For example, Propellant Media is ranked number 1 on Clutch in the category of PPC and Pay Per Click Advertising in Atlanta, while others will rank high in SEO, Social Media and other digital channels.

We hope this guide into how to evaluate paid search companies was helpful. If you want to ask us these very same questions, shoot us and email and we'll give you some great perspective.



## CONTACT PROPELLANT MEDIA



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