



7 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR PPC AGENCY



We Turn Browsers Into Buyers

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Choosing a PPC agency is similar to purchasing a home. It's an important choice, one which will affect you for a long time. Ensuring you choose the right paid search agency means the successful future for your AdWords campaigns, and profit for your online store.

If you don't check the house out you may end up with hidden mold, faulty wiring or a previous owner who didn't maintain the well. Similarly, it's important to understand your PPC agency history, experience and strategies- so your PPC performance is ensured.

Below are 7 key questions you should ask if you're looking for a PPC agency, or auditing your current search provider.



Value

“What separates this agency from other search agencies?”

If you are an online retailer, a Retail-focus for search is pivotal. PPC agencies that work with primarily dentists or services aren't going to be able to leverage the same tools and expertise as a PPC agency which specializes in retail search.

Retail focus ensures your PPC agency understands:

- **Retail search trends**- how people search for products and how to leverage those search behaviors
- **Retail inventory**- what other online retailers sell in your channel, and what the performance of those products are
- **Retail channels**- where consumers search for products online
- **Retail search trends**- how, when, and why online shoppers are looking for items to purchase on search
- **Retail Inventory levers**- Retail specific PPC agencies understand how to leverage your product information for more visibility on product specific searches
- **Retail PPC Optimization**- Retail keywords and ad copy differ from general PPC strategy. Similarly bidding for product visibility and account organization is going to be different for retail stores online

Experience

“How long has your PPC agency been around and been working with Google? Did they work with Google Shopping before it went paid?”



An experienced PPC agency is one which will understand your online store since it's seen many similar online stores. It will know data optimizations and campaign strategies which fit your needs based on extensive experiments, archived data, and industry familiarity.

Experience benefits:

An established PPC agency has systems and processes for your store, inventory changes, and every element of managing PPC accounts.

- Familiarity with PPC trends, and emerging search paradigms
- Knowledge of in-depth PPC levers to improve performance
- Understanding of online stores in your vertical, channel, and or who sell items just like yours
- Experience with testing every type of campaign structure, bidding optimization, and bidding change
- Team of capable analysts who have all of the above experience and knowledge to leverage for your account- this won't be their first rodeo

Generally, experienced PPC agencies have a built-in comprehensive technology (consider the technology variables discussed above) which benefits from experience, and veteran managers are familiar with leveraging.

“How experienced will my account management team be?”

A powerful PPC agency will leverage technology in conjunction with a PPC management team. If you don't have a management team you'll be stuck handling the brunt of your account optimizations. Automated solutions simply can't replicate the sophistication of a team of PPC experts. However, be sure your PPC management team is force to be reckoned with. Here are some questions you employ to determine the sophistication and experience of your PPC management team:

- How many people will be on the account?
- How often are my manager(s) in the account?
- How long have my manager(s) been working in PPC, ecommerce, search?
- What are the systems for auditing my account that the management team will use?
- How often do these happen?
- How do managers ensure my store is meeting its ROI goals for PPC campaigns?
- Who oversees my account manager and how are they augmented by other more experienced PPC experts?



Product Feed

“What ongoing customization or testing will be applied to my feed?”

Set it and forget it is fatal for PPC campaigns. A PPC agency which automates feed submission and doesn't integrate frequent manual audits will not get you the optimal conversions for your PPC campaigns. PPC feed optimizations should happen frequently, and at the least encompass the following elements:

- ✓ Search and Feed Specifications
- ✓ Proactive Feed Issue Monitoring
- ✓ Access to Feed File

Search and Feed Specifications

Google updates its feed specifications frequently- changes which impact your visibility and performance on search precipitously. Technology can't adapt to feed changes without consistent manual oversight.

Also consider that Google changed its algorithm 13 times in 2014, 3 times in October alone. Search performance is highly moderated by the visibility your products get online- changes which should be made in your inventory file frequently.



Proactive Feed Issue Monitoring

Even more important than ensuring you're getting optimal performance with frequent feed adjustments- is to avoid feed issues. An agency which isn't checking your feed frequently is likely to miss warnings and suspensions. Which means your products won't appear on Google.

To compound any issues with penalties that remove items from search, it's difficult to get products to re-appear quickly once they have been removed from search. A robust PPC agency will actively and proactively audit your inventory file for performance optimizations, formatting, and preventative issue maintenance.

'**Feed optimization**' is a term which you'll encounter in many proposals, and PPC agency material. Be sure you understand what elements fall under 'feed optimization', as it may only incorporate sending your feed and or making data changes.

The screenshot shows a notification from Google Merchant Center. At the top is the Google Merchant Center logo. Below it is a warning message: "⚠️ All your items have been suspended from the destinations and countries listed below. Please see the Data quality section for details. Go to Data Quality »". Below the warning is a table with five rows of suspension details.

Suspended from:	Product	in:	Reason:
Suspended from:	Product Ads	all countries	Your account is suspended due to a violation of our Terms of Service and Google Shopping Policies. (Learn more)
Suspended from:	Product Search	all countries	Your account is suspended due to a violation of our Terms of Service and Google Shopping Policies. (Learn more)
Suspended from:	Search API for Shopping	all countries	Your account is suspended due to a violation of our Terms of Service and Google Shopping Policies. (Learn more)
Suspended from:	Shopping	all countries	Your account is suspended due to a violation of our Terms of Service and Google Shopping Policies. (Learn more)
Suspended from:	Product Search	United States	Your account is suspended due to a violation of our Terms of Service and Google Shopping Policies. (Learn more)

Access to Feed file

An easily overlooked inventory element that is supremely important is access to your data. It's your product data- make sure you can get your hands on it. PPC agencies should be changing and optimizing your data, but you should be able to view that initial data file, access it and communicate changes (e.g. price) effectively.



A lack of access to your data file can result in:

- Products not appearing on search
- Price discrepancy on your site and Google
- Poor product performance
- Inability to add or remove products from your inventory
- Adjusting product inventory information

PPC agencies that are experts in online retail are so due to experience and methodology - nothing is a substitute for experience.



Performance

“How long until you expect to see your management have its full impact on performance?”

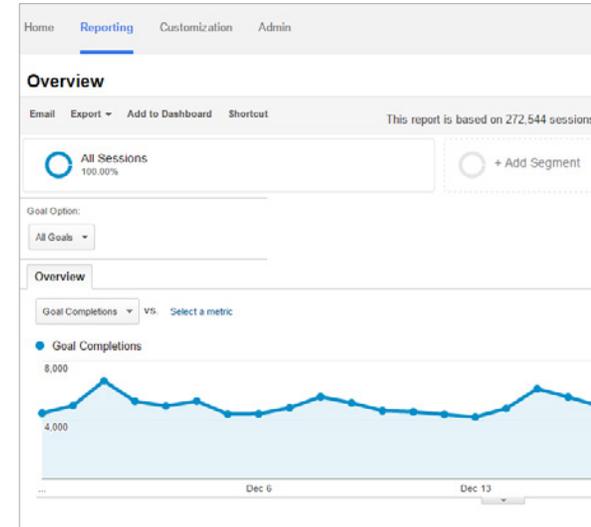
You're using a PPC Agency to drive PPC performance and conversions to your online store. It's not unrealistic to expect performance results. However, be wary of agencies which promise quick results, or which bend to your demands of quick performance.

Long lasting PPC results are going to take at least 90 days to get going. Any performance timeline that is less than that may not be realistic, and or may be using strategies which jeopardize your long term success for short term gains.

Fitness experts will tell you that it takes about 3 months to start seeing results from exercise. Diets, or workouts that promise weight loss in less than that time, particularly short periods- are generally not going to work, or will cut water weight, weight which you'll eventually gain back.

Fast isn't going to get you long term benefits, and may even hurt you in the long term. Remember to ensure you PPC agency is continuously auditing and optimizing your PPC campaigns. After 3 months of working out you don't sit back and expect your six pack to stay around- it takes work to maintain gains. Your PPC agency should be constantly enhancing relevancy and optimizing your PPC campaign.

***Note:** Be sure your PPC goals are clear to your PPC agency. If you change goals or have fluctuating budget, ROI metrics, or similar variables that's should temper how you gauge your agency performance.



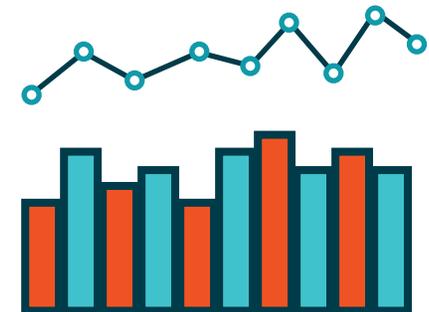
“Can you provide projections?”

Performance projections may be something you’ll want, particularly if you need to share performance metric with your CEO, or Marketing Director in the short and long term. If you’re choosing a PPC agency, or reporting on their metrics currently, its important that you have an idea of success and where the campaign is headed in relation to your goals.

Your agency should be able to share projections for your store based on campaign types and their optimization strategy, but direct numbers may be more difficult to project. Ask your PPC agency for an overall percent of growth or efficiency for your account over the next 6 months.

Projections are meaningless without tangible reasons behind them. If your agency is promising you a certain amount of growth- dig deeper to see how they are going to ensure performance. What is the strategy behind those projections and what specific campaign levers will be pulled in order to reach that percent of growth?

If you have clear goals, it can be easier to frame this question around how the PPC agency can meet those goals. If you are looking to grow conversions or impressions- how many do you want? How much are you willing to spend? What’s your ROI and margins? Be sure you have clear parameters for your agency, and communicate them effectively to ensure they are able to meet your goals alongside any campaign restrictions you may have.



“How do you deal with clients in similar spaces? Do you manage any of our competitors?”

Depending on the size of the PPC agency you’re looking to work with, or who you’re currently using, they may or may not be working with clients in a similar vertical. This will vary based on your online store, retail channel, budget and other variables.

Most PPC agencies won’t be able to share competitor information and although that may be initially frustrating- its a good thing! You wouldn’t want your agency sharing your store information, or specific strategy which was used to improve your performance to sell a competitor.

Respectful PPC agencies will not share data related to direct conflicts across brands, product lines, and head terms. If you have an agency which is a chatty cathy about a brand or store which is similar to yours, they may be talking about your store to other brands and competitors.

However, PPC agencies should use applied knowledge from stores and brands similar to yours to inform paid search strategy. That’s how PPC best practices become tactics- they’re vetted success stories from exiting online store AdWords campaigns.

No two sites or businesses are built the same, nor do they convert the same. Just as each business needs to differentiate themselves from their competitors, each account needs a custom strategy and optimization approach. Advantageous PPC agencies apply search best practices as a whole, coupled with knowledge of retailers in your vertical to tailor a PPC approach for your store- one which compiles existing experience with your goals and inventory.





What now? Think there is room for improvement?

Review your AdWords Strategy with a Retail Search Expert

CPC Strategy's Retail Search Audit is a complimentary **60-minute analysis and assessment** of a retail advertiser's existing AdWords account, product pages, product feed attributes, and business KPIs. The Audit is conducted by a professional Retail Search Strategist over a screenshare and conference call.

[Schedule My Meeting](#)

