



How to Make Big Gains in PPC to Phone Campaigns

For a while now, PPC advertising has arguably been the most effective form of online marketing. Not only can it bring targeted and qualified traffic to your website, its method is consistent and scalable.

Achieving success through PPC advertising is just a matter of optimizing your campaigns efficiently and avoiding common PPC mistakes. There are many ways to make performance gains on your PPC marketing campaigns. On large accounts that we specialize in, even small gains are worthwhile, because a small percentage savings of \$200,000 is still a lot of money. This is what this article will focus on.

There are 4 major factors that go into improving your overall ROI from PPC campaigns. We will focus on each one in turn. In fact, all four factors are part of a formula we use for measuring a marketing campaign's success:

Cost/Click x Conversion Rate (Clicks to Calls) x Conversion Rate (Calls to Qualified Calls) x Close Rate (Qualified Calls to Completed Sales)

We've created a nifty calculator for playing with these factors and seeing the impact they make on the overall cost per client acquisition. It shows how small gains on a number of fronts can quickly add up to major overall improvements. You can check the calculator out [here](#).

Improve Cost-per-Click

- **Lower bids and never hit the daily budget.** Rather than relying on a set budget cap, savvy marketers working on large accounts should take a different approach. In this case, account managers should actually manage their spend rate by adjusting their bids. When bids are adjusted properly, the account can achieve more clicks at a lower cost and make your budget go further. As a result, you won't be overpaying for fewer clicks and losing opportunities for additional ad exposure later in the day.

Adjusting bids rather than using budget caps will also give you a consistent presence throughout the day. The key point here, is that if you're paying less per click, and that means that you'll be getting more clicks for the same given budget.

- **Find additional keyword variations, including long tail keywords.** Look through the search term report to find new keywords that may have lower competition. Keywords with lower competition also have lower prices and should be added to their own ad group with tailored ads. These require more work, but if you're willing to work at it, you'll be rewarded. Sometimes these long tail keywords will even convert at a higher rate than the obvious high-competition keywords.



- **Track and bid on match types separately.** The same keyword with a different match type can perform very differently. Start by looking at high volume keywords where there is enough data for statistically significant differences in performance. Many keywords won't have enough data for this, so you'll want to look at the ad group and campaign levels as well. For example, you might find that exact match performs 30% better overall than broad match, so you can adjust the bids of all exact match keywords to get more of these high-converting clicks.
- **Make sure your ad copy matches the targeted keywords.** This will improve both CTR and Quality Scores which will help reduce CPCs. This takes more work to customize ads according to the keywords, but when the exact search term is in the ad it will be bolded, and more people will click on your ad.
- **Make tightly themed ad groups with a handful of keywords in each one.** They should be tight enough that giving it a separate ad group gives a higher CTR because you can write a better ad that better matches the keywords. Also consider making them tight enough that they are about only one thing so that the ads can match the keywords – don't forget, having keywords show up in the ad gives you a higher CTR.
- **Make sure the landing page matches the keywords to improve the Quality Score.** One of the three quality score factors is landing page relevance; by delivering a topical landing page that matches the keywords and ads, you will not only improve user experience, but your quality score will also improve, which in turn reduces the CPC.
- **Use negative keywords and pay special attention to the search intent.** Every irrelevant click costs money, and negatives are a fundamental way of controlling costs. As far as search intent goes, for every search term getting more than one click, check the search term report to look into the search intent to determine if your business is a good match. Don't assume the keyword is relevant; check the actual SERPs to make sure your ad is a good match for what people are looking for with that keyword.
- **Use display network – but in a separate campaign and track it separately.**
 - Clicks cost much less but the quality is also lower, because there is no search intent, only targeting based on the content of the web page and a user's search history. Make sure you check each display network site to make sure it's relevant, and also monitor the quality of traffic each one sends.
 - In many industries there are so many poor-quality sites sending traffic that the only solution is to use whitelists, and only allow clicks from sites that you've checked and found to be relevant.
 - Be sure to watch spend levels closely, as there can be surges of traffic from individual sites that might not be high quality traffic.
 - Watch out for mobile app traffic - it's often low-quality with many accidental clicks. Make sure an app's users are actually relevant before paying for clicks from it. The problem is that excluding traffic from mobile apps isn't as easy as it used to be. Google



notes that “starting in September 2018, you’ll no longer be able to exclude all mobile apps using an “adsenseformobileapps” exclusion.

Improve Conversion Rate from Click to Call

1. Focus on Call-Centric Keywords

Ensure that the keywords you’re targeting appeal to the segment of your audience with the highest likelihood of calling. You should use location-based keywords for customers interested in visiting your business, or keywords that resonate with customers who are further down in the purchasing funnel.

2. Use Location Targeting Whenever It Makes Sense

Location targeting is key if you’re a local business. Use a local phone number and make sure that calls are routed to the store or branch that is nearest to the caller’s location. You may discover that there are more callers from specific geographic areas, or that calls in certain locations are of a higher quality than others, in which case it may be worth increasing your bids for people in those areas.

3. Make Use of the URL

Call-only campaigns don’t have the same amount of real estate to work with as traditional PPC ads; you don’t have a headline and you don’t have a landing page. This is why your URL matters even more. Consider adding a CTA or a keyword at the end of your display URL and use those 35 characters to reinforce your message.

4. Schedule Your Ads Strategically

The last thing you want is to drive phone calls to a voicemail or an unmanned call center. You can schedule your ads to ensure campaigns will run during business hours only. Look at peak call times and days and take advantage of trends in consumer behavior and preferences, adjusting your ads so they appear during those times.

5. Test Your Ad’s Copy

Whether you are running call-only or clicks to a landing page that is optimized for calls, your ad copy should be highly targeted and concise. Also include a CTA that encourages people to call you, and regardless of campaign type, it’s a good idea to include the keyword in the ad copy.

6. Always Measure Call Quality

When you’re trying to optimize bidding, measure performance, or calculate ROI, simply counting calls won’t do. You need to look at which calls are actually turning into customers and this can easily be done with a call intelligence solution that tracks the outcome of a phone number. If you’re using basic call tracking, you can look at call tracking metrics such as call duration to get at least some understanding of call quality.

7. Don't Forget to Calculate Your Call-Through Rate

While not all clicks lead to phone calls, you're still paying for every click. When someone clicks a call-only ad, a dialer will appear on their phone, which they must then click on to actually make the call. Learn how many clicks actually result in phone calls and optimize your bids based on calls instead of clicks.

8. Match the landing page with the keyword and ad copy.

This creates a seamless user experience and drives a higher CTR. The landing page should also match the user's expectations by being topical to the keywords used, thus increasing your campaign's performance.

Improve Conversion Rate from Call to Qualified Call

If you're using a call-only campaign, your main concern shouldn't be the volume of calls you receive, but the volume of *qualified* calls. In a nutshell, you need to watch out for keywords that generate a lot of unqualified calls and adjust or delete them as necessary, while also looking for keywords that generate a lot of clicks but no calls. In addition, remember to check search terms to make sure search intent is good and not pulling in unqualified leads.

Here are the 3 steps to tracking qualified calls and bidding more for the high-quality keywords that produce them.

1. First, establish the definition of a "qualified lead" and establish a process of creating a reporting circuit through which qualified leads are reported back to the marketing team. Many CRMs allow you to pull this data directly from inside them. Examples of a "qualified lead" would be: an insurance verification for an addiction treatment center, a loan application for a mortgage broker, or it could be a subjective evaluation by your staff. In many industries, you can simply use the length of the telephone call as a proxy for quality.
2. Next, analyze your sales records to determine the precise value of each qualified lead, e.g. how many qualified leads it will take, on average, to produce a sale.
3. Finally, you can connect your qualified lead data back to the keywords in your PPC account to find out which keywords are producing the qualified leads and set bids accordingly.

This allows you to do 4 things:

- Outbid the competition for keywords that produce high quality calls.
- Eliminate keywords that produce low quality calls.
- Free up staff to focus on closing qualified calls.
- Increase overall ROI by lowering the cost per acquisition.

At BetterPPC, we developed a system called *SPARC* to manage this process. SPARC is an acronym for Sales Pipeline Analysis Reporting Circuit and it uses your sales pipeline and call data to bid on the keywords that really matter. By identifying qualified calls, SPARC allows us to track not just which keywords generate calls, but which generate *quality* calls and sales.

Improve Closing Rate (Qualified Calls to Completed Sales)

There are a number of things we can do to improve the closing rate of your lead pipeline.

- **Focus on the quality of calls not the quantity** This not only improves performance by boosting close rates, it also improves call center morale, which has beneficial effects we discuss more below.
- **Use click-to-website campaigns** rather than call-only campaigns. In contrast to call-only campaigns, these users click and then hit a call-optimized landing page before they call. This means they have taken some time to look at the page and learn about your product/service before calling.
- **Don't burn out your call center with low quality calls.** A quantity focused strategy generates lots of low-quality calls, and the call center has to take a lot more calls to generate a completed sale. For even the best sales teams, this can be tiring; after all, they're not robots. The risk is that staff develop negative attitudes and lose interest in trying to convert callers, leading to a vicious cycle in which conversion rates are low because of low quality callers, further discouraging call center employees who aren't converting callers from making an effort on the next call.
- **Create a virtuous cycle.** Focus on higher quality calls to create a virtuous cycle. High-quality calls boost morale and make call center employees more enthusiastic and excited about getting calls, thus leading to more sales and higher close rates.
- **Answer the phone immediately.** The longer you take to answer the phone, the more likely you are to catch the caller before they hang up.
- **Test your phone system frequently to make sure there are no dead ends or dead lines.**
- **Always live answer calls.** Don't use an IVR if you can avoid it, especially when you are paying for callers via PPC. If callers get a recording rather than a live answer, many of them will simply hang up.
- **Warm up prospects before they even search** with brand-building advertising. For example, you can use affordable display network impressions to show your audience testimonials and brand-awareness material that will create trust and familiarity with your brand. This strategy works best when the target audience is well-defined and you can expect a high percentage of your PPC searchers to have seen your display ads.
- **Warm up prospects before the call** with a persuasive landing page. Use click-to-website campaigns rather than call-only campaigns.



- **Invest in regular call-center training sessions** This is a profession where there is always room for improvement. Schedule professional trainers to bring the sales' teams skills up to date. Also, allow staff time to review successful and unsuccessful calls by listening and critiquing them. The goal is to instill an "always improving" culture that is positive and rewarding to the best performers.

On a final note, always remember to track and monitor your PPC campaigns' data and results. If you want the best possible outcome, PPC requires constant monitoring, and the beauty of PPC advertising is that you can see exactly where every dollar of your marketing spend goes if you invest the time to look.