



THIS GUIDE HAS BEEN MADE FOR MARKETING MANAGERS WHO MANAGE AN EXTERNAL PPC AGENCY

To get the most out of the guide, I recommend using it as a reference point alongside the [accompanying checklist](#).

To get your copy of the checklist, just visit the above link and go to **File > Make A Copy**. This will allow you to have your copy you can view in Google Sheets.

Alternatively, go to **File > Download** if you wish to view it in Excel.

Although this guide will help you improve your Google Ads performance, it's not a comprehensive tutorial.

Instead, I want to empower you with the information you need to **judge whether your agency's Google Ads setup is reducing the quantity or quality of leads being generated via your website.**

It will also show you how your agency **can fix the issues** and give you **specific questions** to **ask your agency** so that you can uncover exactly what's going on under the hood even if you don't consider yourself a Google Ads expert.

This guide was created due to the volume of Marketing Managers getting in touch with [ClickBoost](#) with issues relating to lead volume or quality.

They were being fobbed off by their agency and told that their problems were seasonal, or that they had to spend more money to improve results.

Although some were still contracted with an agency, they reached the end of the line and had to reach out to us for help.

The problems driving down lead quality and volume were often the same, and relate to changes Google made that fundamentally transformed how the platform works.

However, their existing agency didn't have the experience needed to confidently figure out what was wrong and fix it.

Other times it just sounded like the agency just didn't care...

The information in this guide is the advice I shared with those Marketing Managers, and has been used to transform the fortunes of floundering accounts.

It will give you the information you need to confidently challenge your agency, highlight issues and get them to take action.

I know how demanding a Marketing Manager's job can be, so I've purposely made this guide as concise as possible.

I wore your shoes for many years and have the scars to prove it.

This guide has been broken into three sections.

Sections One and Two are short, and **share the most common issues impacting 80% of the companies who contact me with major lead-related problems.**

You may only need to read these sections to get everything you require from the guide...

But Section Three is a bonus if you run campaigns and want to dig a little deeper.

SECTION 1

THE TRUTH ABOUT PERFORMANCE MAX

The irony when it comes to Performance Max campaigns is that it was supposed to make people's lives easier.

You give Google your website address, add a bunch of assets and you are off to the races.

Unfortunately, if your agency has chosen Performance Max campaigns for lead generation, there is a good chance they have backed a lame horse.

On the surface, things might look amazing because you're getting loads more traffic at a lower cost per click.

However, there is a reason the traffic is cheaper: **much of it is coming from Google Display Network and YouTube.**

This is scraping the bottom-of-the-barrel traffic compared to the traffic you get from Search campaigns.

Why?

Not only does it convert at a far lower rate, but when you do get conversions from this network, people are far less likely to buy.

And that's not the worst of it...

Google Display Network is mostly comprised of independent website owners who allow Google to put adverts on their websites.

The revenue generated from the ads is split between Google and the website owner.

If you run Performance Max campaigns for lead generation, the next part is the most important thing you'll read in this guide.

Pay attention to it: I've witnessed the devastation the following issue has caused for people.

My Granda used to say:

"Son, where there's money, there's corruption."

Think about what motivates website owners who have ads on their site: they want as much traffic as possible so they can make money from it.

Some people will buy cheap traffic, direct it to their website, and get paid more by Google than they originally paid for the traffic.

This traffic may be from overseas, but they use techniques to make it appear that they are in your country of operation.

And as if that isn't bad enough, this fake, cheap traffic will click your ad and often submit a fake enquiry to make it appear that the traffic is legitimate.

And as you know, once they click, you'll be charged.

This means that you're not only wasting money, but your sales team is wasting their time getting back to leads that aren't real.

To reduce this problem you can try a few different actions:

- 1. Create forms that are harder to fill in and include strict captchas**

However, this does reduce the likelihood that real customers will convert.

2. Set up a CRM integration, feed that information into your Google Ads' campaigns so only high-quality leads are recorded as conversions.

Or, what I believe is the best option...

3. Get your agency to revert to running standard Search campaigns.

Generally, this is the best way to improve lead quality and the volume of legitimate leads you receive.

And if you are running Performance Max campaigns but poor quality traffic and leads don't appear to be a problem: I believe it's a ticking time bomb.

At some point, it will go off. Make sure you have a 'Plan B' course of action in place.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR:

Your sales team complaining about wrong numbers on enquiries or phoning people who don't remember getting in touch with you.

WHAT TO ASK YOUR AGENCY:

If you have recently launched Performance Max campaigns and the leads generated have dropped in quality, there is a high chance Performance Max is the reason.

However, if you are not 100% convinced, ask your agency to help you track the outcome of leads generated specifically from those campaigns.

Then, ask your agency about reverting to standard Google Search campaigns.

SECTION 2

GHASTLY GOOGLE SEARCH ADS THE SEARCH PARTNERS' PROBLEM THAT'S DESTROYING LEAD QUALITY

When you run Google Search campaigns, you may have opted into Google Search Partners without your knowledge.

Google Search Partners is a program that allows website owners to monetise their websites by placing Google's results on them. If the ads are clicked, the website owner gets a share of the revenue.

Sometimes, Search Partners can result in high-quality traffic that generates leads.

However, many people are taking advantage of it for their financial gain...to the detriment of advertisers.

For example, people will buy **cheap traffic**, send it to their website and then sell that traffic to Google for a premium.

This means people running Google Ads end up making a lot of money for traffic that should be cheap.

Not only that, it appears people are exploiting this by **sending fake traffic** - that then **generates fake leads** - to many websites so that they can game the system at your expense.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR:

If performance looks too good to be true – for example, if the conversion rate is far higher than your normal Google Search traffic – this could be contributing to your lead quality issues.

WHAT TO ASK YOUR AGENCY:

- How many campaigns have Google Search Partners enabled?
- How do the clicks, CTR, conversion rate and total conversions compare to standard search traffic?

If you believe Search Partner traffic is causing an increase in low-quality or fake leads, ask your agency to opt out of Search Partners to see if the situation improves.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

[This link](#) will take you to my LinkedIn video and you'll see how to diagnose and fix this issue yourself.

SECTION 3

A MOTLEY CRUE OF ISSUES THAT COULD **KILL YOUR SALES**

This section covers a collection of additional issues that, while not as prominent as those discussed earlier, can still significantly impact the performance of your Google Ads campaigns.

Addressing these can help you **fine-tune** your campaigns, **improve lead quality**, and **boost sales**.

Each issue is explained with the practical steps you can take to mitigate their impact.

THE TRIGGERED SEARCH TERMS DEBACLE

When Google Ads launched, it was simple and effective.

You would target people searching using specific keywords and show them your ad.

For example:

If you owned an SEO company based in Glasgow, you could target the phrase **“SEO Agency”** and be sure that your ad would only show to people when those keywords appear in their search.

For example, you may show for:

- **“SEO agency”**
- **“best SEO agency”**
- **“SEO agency near me”**

This is because **“SEO”** and **“agency”** appear together in the search term.

If you target that same keyword today, you can't predict what you'll show for –
because Google has broadened how targeting works.

Here's an example of what might happen if you target the keyword **“SEO Agency”**
today:

You could show when people search for:

- **“Ahrefs SEO”**
- **“Learn About SEO”**
- **“John Smith's PPC”**
- **“Wix SEO”**

...and whatever else helps Google hit its quarterly sales target.

You can see why an SEO agency may not want to pay for traffic from people
searching for **“Learn About SEO”** or **“Wix SEO”**.

These people aren't likely to buy from them.

And here's the worst part...

**People searching for products or services your business doesn't offer may still
generate leads – but the leads won't be any good.**

People have been trained over the past two decades to assume that the search
results they see are relevant.

Often, people click the first link they see, hurry through a website, and make an
enquiry.

This means you may think a specific campaign is performing well when you look at your Google Ads report – but the leads are awful because Google has ploughed cheap, irrelevant traffic to your website.

And if you run campaigns using a bidding strategy such as Max Conversions, the problem can get worse over time because Google's algorithm thinks it's doing a good job when, in fact, the traffic is wasting your time and money.

How do you fix this?

The person managing your Google Ads campaigns needs to have a good understanding of your business.

They need to be able to spot when a search term generates traffic and leads that aren't right for your business. They can do this by analysing the search term report.

This isn't a one-off job. They'll be locked into a constant battle with Google until the end of time – unless they reverse the change...

As this is such a time-consuming, tedious task, we have been forced to write and deploy scripts on several accounts to automate this process.

We advise you to get your agency to do the same if they are competent enough.

So, here are the three steps you need to take to combat the problem:

- 1) Get your agency to analyse your search term report.**
- 2) Discuss whether the traffic you are generating could be sending you horrendous leads.**
- 3) Put a process in place to combat the issue.**

You may notice that I used the word "combat" rather than "fix."

That's because only Google can fix this.

Until they do (and they probably won't), you'll need to take the steps above to stop them from rinsing your bank account.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR:

Analyse the data to ensure high-traffic search terms, especially those generating conversions, are relevant to your business.

If you see a lot of competitor search terms - especially ones that generate phone calls - ask your receptionists if they get a lot of wrong numbers, as this could indicate your agency is incorrectly wasting money targeting your competitors.

WHAT TO ASK YOUR AGENCY:

Ask to see a search term report.

Get your agency to monitor your search term report and add irrelevant keywords as negatives.

This means you will no longer show for those keywords and you can direct spending to areas more likely to generate high-quality leads.

NEGATIVE KEYWORDS GIVE YOU POSITIVE RESULTS

Using negative keywords effectively helps prevent your ads from showing for irrelevant searches, which reduces wasted spend and improves lead quality.

Not managing negative keywords can lead to irrelevant traffic and low-quality leads.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR:

- High spend on irrelevant search terms, which leads to wasted budget.
- Frequent additions to the negative keyword list, which may indicate ongoing issues.

WHAT TO ASK YOUR AGENCY:

- How often do you review the search term report and add negative keywords?
- Are there any search terms that generate leads but may not be relevant to my business, as they could be responsible for poor-quality leads?

THE BIDDING STRATEGY BLUES

The bidding strategy your agency employs can make or break your campaign's success.

So, which bidding strategy is being used?

More often than not, the bidding strategy used for lead generation should be **Max Conversions**.

One of the keys to a successful automated bidding strategy is to ensure that the conversion data being fed into Google is solid.

If you count low-quality leads as conversions, Google will send you more low-quality leads.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR:

- Running a Max Conversion bidding strategy without a set target can result in an inflated cost per lead. **Your target should be the maximum amount you are willing to pay for a lead.**
- A lot of the accounts I've audited recently have duplicate conversion data, so make sure your agency is not counting the same lead twice.
- If the bidding strategy used is Max Clicks or Manual, there needs to be a good reason.
- Around 90% of the time, this is an inefficient way to manage an account and can lead to poorer performance.

WHAT TO ASK YOUR AGENCY:

- What bidding strategies are currently being used across all campaigns?
- What type of conversions are being fed to Google?

And although Max Conversions is generally the best way to run lead-generation campaigns, ask your agency about experimenting with other bidding strategies.

LAGGING BECAUSE OF LIMITED BUDGET

High-performing campaigns shouldn't be limited by budget constraints.

If the cost per lead on a campaign is reasonable and you believe quality is good, increasing the budget could lead to more leads.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR:

- High-performing campaigns that are flagged as limited due to budget
- Missed opportunities for additional conversions due to these budget limitations.

WHAT TO ASK YOUR AGENCY:

- Are there any high-performing campaigns being limited by their current budget?
- What is the projected impact of increasing the budget for these campaigns?
- Can you reallocate any budget from underperforming campaigns to those with a better cost per lead?

AD COPY ALCHEMY

Effective ad copy is crucial for capturing attention and driving clicks. Poorly written or irrelevant ad copy can lead to **low click-through rates (CTR)** and **wasted ad spend**.

It's worth noting that sometimes creating ad copy that filters out people you **don't want to come to your website**, such as those who aren't a good fit for your product or service, can help improve lead quality.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR:

- If lead quality is poor, check if your copy is attracting people who are not right for your offering. For example, if a mortgage company only offers mortgages to first-time buyers, their ad copy should state that to cut down on wasted clicks.
- When comparing your ad to your competitor's, does your ad stand out?

WHAT TO ASK YOUR AGENCY:

- Ask for an export of active ads along with key metrics such as clicks, CTR and conversion rate and check for anything that doesn't look right.

AD EXTENSIONS ARE KEY

Ad extensions enhance your ads by adding additional information such as sitelinks, callouts and phone numbers.

When used correctly, they can decrease the cost per click.

When used incorrectly, they can result in people getting in touch with you by accident, which wastes your ad spend.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR:

- Ads running without extensions or with poorly optimised extensions.
- If you use call extensions, people often click these and mistake your company for your competitors. If you analyse search term performance and people searching using competitor names appear to be converting by calling, this is an indication that poor leads are being generated.

WHAT TO ASK YOUR AGENCY:

- Which ad extensions are currently being used for each campaign?
- Are there opportunities to add or improve ad extensions to enhance ad performance?

And if you are using call extensions, ask which search terms are generating leads.

LANDING PAGE PERFORMANCE

Your ads can drive traffic, but if your landing pages aren't effective, you will lose potential leads or attract poor-quality leads.

Ensuring that landing pages...

- Load quickly
- Capture leads efficiently
- Provide compelling content
- Contain the correct information about your product or service

...is essential for conversion.

As campaigns are driven by algorithms and the quality of your conversion impacts performance, it can be a huge benefit to stop people from converting if they are not the right type of customer. *There will be more on this in the following page.*

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR:

- Landing pages that don't clearly state what you offer, resulting in the wrong people getting in touch.
- Slow load times, which can increase cost per lead and reduce conversions.
- Lots of people completing forms but appear to be looking for a service other than what you offer.
- Do you have several methods to capture leads? Quiz funnels, for example, can be hugely effective in enhancing lead quality.

WHAT TO ASK YOUR AGENCY:

- Are you happy with the landing page load time? Should we be working to improve it?
- How does our landing page compare to our best competitors?
- What action can we take to enhance lead quality without negatively impacting high-quality lead volume?

LEAD ILLUSION

Your free guide is about to come to an end and I'm deliberately finishing on this point as it's about **enhancing lead quality**.

This is one of the most transformative improvements that you can make which will take your campaigns from mediocre to magnificent.

Imagine your leads as apples in an orchard.

Lead Illusion is like getting somebody to harvest apples by shaking an entire tree.

Sure, they might get some good ones, but you'll also end up with lots of bruised unripe fruit.

You would fix that by training the apple picker how to identify fruit that is **ready for picking** and send them on their way to hand-pick high-quality apples.

You can do the same when it comes to generating leads via Google Ads using a technique I like to call Precision Picking.

However, instead of training an apple picker to pick the best apples, you **train Google's algorithm** to deliver the best possible leads for you.

MORTGAGE COMPANY EXAMPLE

Here's an example of how it works...

Imagine a company that sells mortgages normally makes more money if the mortgage value is over £200,000.

10% of the leads they are getting are for loan values over £200,000 while 90% are for less than that amount.

To help increase the volume of applications for high-value loans, they just need to tell Google that they want more leads of that nature.

To do this, they should **stop feeding campaigns conversion data** when leads are under the value of £200,000 and only record a conversion when the value is higher than that amount.

Just like with the apple picker, this tells Google's algorithm the type of leads that you want, meaning that Google is **far more likely** to show your ads to people who meet the criteria that you set.

This won't totally eliminate poor-quality leads, but it will tip the odds in your favour that you'll attract more of the leads that you want.

You might go from getting 10% of your leads being of high quality to 60% of your leads being high quality.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR:

- A high volume of leads that don't meet your ideal customer profile.
- Every single conversion is recorded equally.
- Ironically, if it's **too easy** for the wrong type of lead to convert on your website, this will make Google Ads lead quality worse and result in wasted spend.

WHAT TO ASK YOUR AGENCY:

- Ask your agency to implement a method to focus on recording only high-quality leads.
 - A quick way to do this is to use multi-step forms (quiz funnels)
- You may want to ask them to keep reporting on lower-quality leads as long as they don't contribute to training Google's algorithm.

If you wish to see an example of a multi-step form, visit clickboost.co.uk as we normally have one at the bottom of our homepage.

FINAL THOUGHTS & NEXT STEPS

When I wrote this guide, I set out with the goal to give Marketing Managers insights into the issues that impact account performance.

If you pay an agency to look after Google Ads, you shouldn't have to go to them with ideas on how to improve performance - that's what you pay them for.

However, in the real world, sometimes you start working with an agency and everything is great until they run out of steam.

Other times they may be trying hard for you, but the person managing your account just doesn't have the knowledge required to help your ads stand out in a competitive environment, attract the best traffic and generate consistent high-quality leads.

If you believe your account is underperforming for any of the reasons mentioned in this guide, when you take it to your agency, you may be met with some resistance.

Perhaps this has happened in the past which puts you off speaking to them.

Maybe you're locked into a contract and it's not the right time to leave.

If any of that is a concern, [get in touch](#) and we can talk about how we can support you in your goal of improving account performance without having to switch agencies.

This is the first version of this guide, if you have any suggestions or feedback, please let me know by emailing gordonc@clickboost.co.uk.