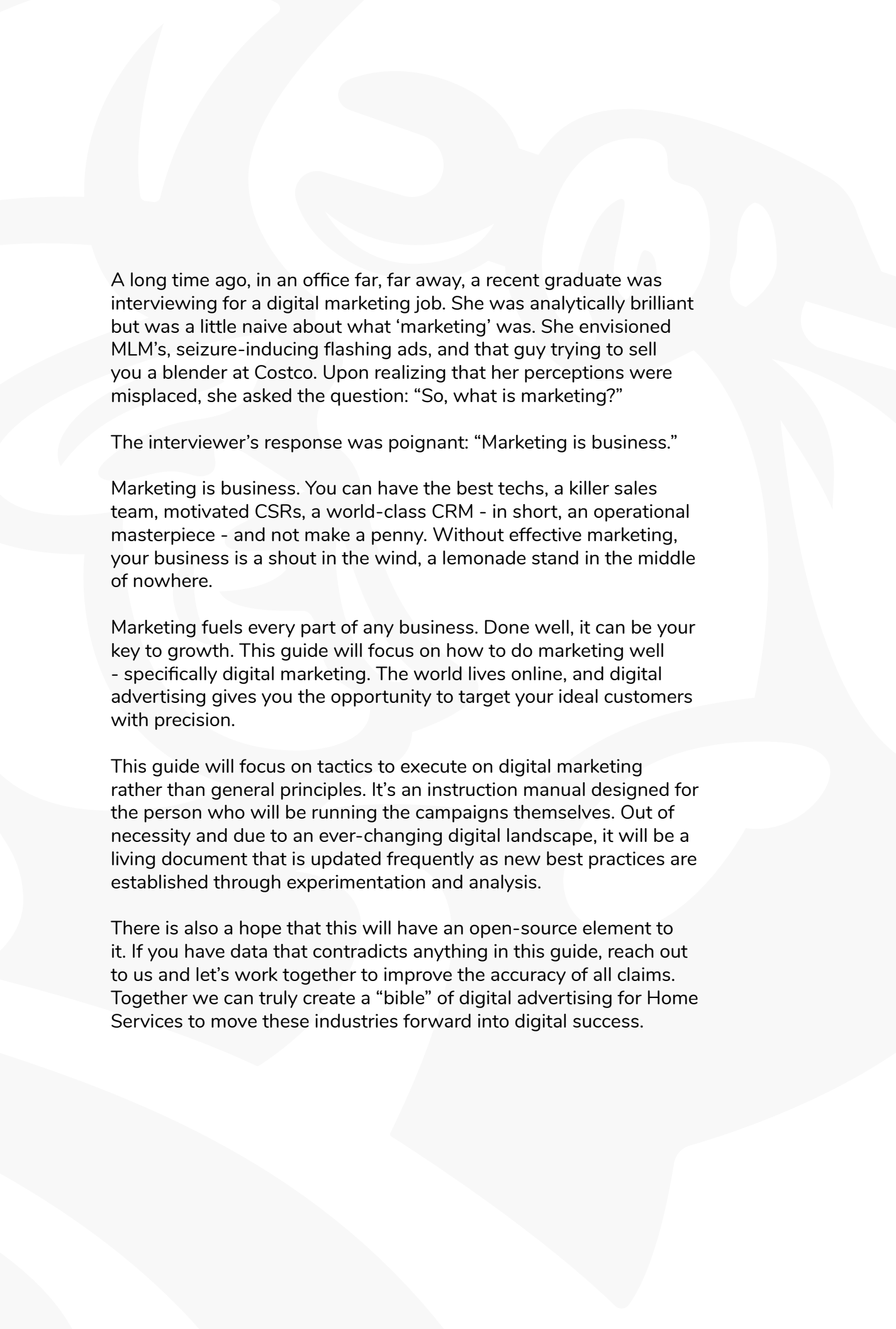# A Contractor's Definitive Guide to Digital Advertising

A long time ago, in an office far, far away, a recent graduate was interviewing for a digital marketing job. She was analytically brilliant but was a little naive about what 'marketing' was. She envisioned MLM's, seizure-inducing flashing ads, and that guy trying to sell you a blender at Costco. Upon realizing that her perceptions were misplaced, she asked the question: "So, what is marketing?"

The interviewer's response was poignant: "Marketing is business."

Marketing is business. You can have the best techs, a killer sales team, motivated CSRs, a world-class CRM - in short, an operational masterpiece - and not make a penny. Without effective marketing, your business is a shout in the wind, a lemonade stand in the middle of nowhere.

Marketing fuels every part of any business. Done well, it can be your key to growth. This guide will focus on how to do marketing well - specifically digital marketing. The world lives online, and digital advertising gives you the opportunity to target your ideal customers with precision.

This guide will focus on tactics to execute on digital marketing rather than general principles. It's an instruction manual designed for the person who will be running the campaigns themselves. Out of necessity and due to an ever-changing digital landscape, it will be a living document that is updated frequently as new best practices are established through experimentation and analysis.

There is also a hope that this will have an open-source element to it. If you have data that contradicts anything in this guide, reach out to us and let's work together to improve the accuracy of all claims. Together we can truly create a "bible" of digital advertising for Home Services to move these industries forward into digital success.

THE MARKETING FUNNEL

Before going on to tactics, it's important to establish a framework of the digital customer journey. A traditional marketing funnel looks like this:
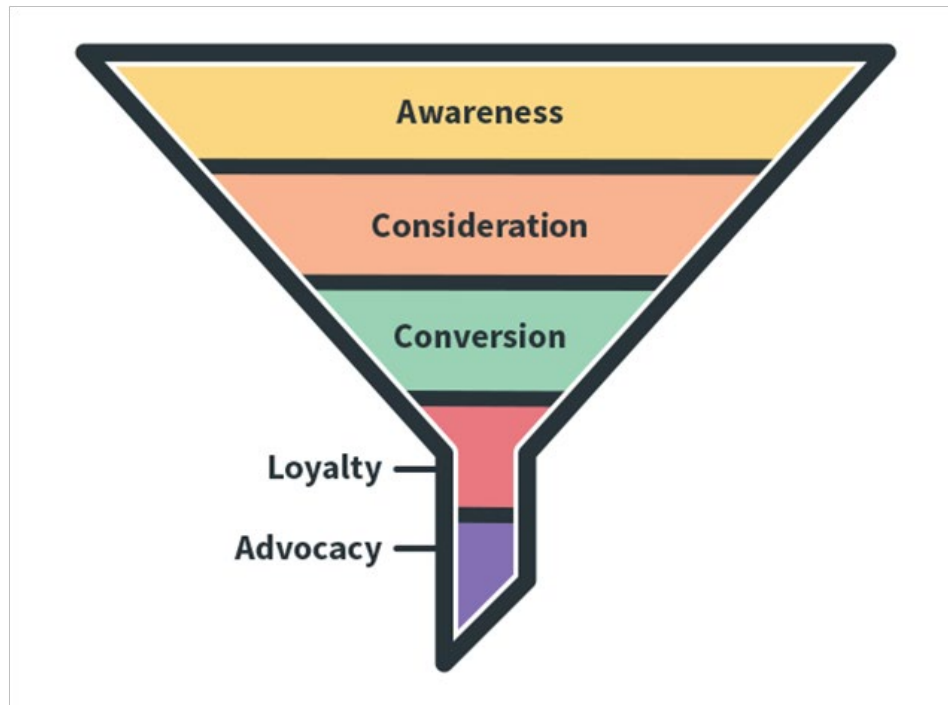
The idea is that a potential customer goes through these steps one at a time, and it's the advertisers job to move them from one stage to the next. While this is generally true, there are better frameworks to follow.

Google recently did a landmark study analyzing customer journeys in a digital world. They found a non-linear, messy mix of customer journeys that can't be simplified into a simple linear path.

Their model looks like this:
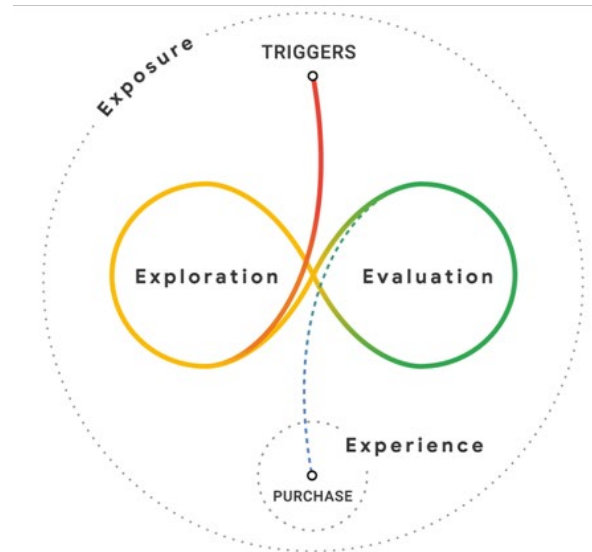
LET'S DEFINE THIS MODEL A LITTLE FURTHER:

Exposure represents all of the thoughts and feelings that the customer has about all of the brands or companies in the problem space. It's the attitude or brand value they have towards you compared to your competitors. A company that invests in branding has positive exposure which gives them a considerable advantage in the decision-making process. Exposure also includes the customer's attitude about the service in general, for example, they could believe that hot water tank installation is a commodity and they should look for the cheapest option, or have a belief that HVAC companies are unethical salespeople and won't have their best interests at heart, or they could be an ignorant first-time homeowner that has no concept of how HVAC or plumbing works.

Trigger is an event that causes the customer to enter the buying cycle. These are familiar events, like a furnace breaking down, a spouse complaining that "it's always hot!" one too many times, a friend talking about the benefits of Indoor Air Quality to another, a leaky faucet, etc. A well-positioned branding ad can act as a trigger itself, for example, a YouTube video talking about the benefits of a specific service.

Exploration is simply exploring all of the possible options. It's an expansive exercise where the customer is increasing the number of candidates for consideration. This is most commonly done on the Google Search page, but could also include asking friends or family for recommendations.

Evaluation is researching the candidates in consideration to determine the best choice. If Exploration is finding more options, Evaluation is narrowing in on an option. If, at the end of Evaluating, no decision can be made, the customer continues the cycle and goes back to exploring new options (or leaves the buying cycle altogether). This cycle can be very quick or quite lengthy, depending on the product and Exposure. For example, a person with a flooding toilet or a broken A/C during the hottest day of the year will need a fast solution and will rush their decision. A person looking for an electrician to help with a renovation project may be more patient.

Experience occurs during and after purchase. It feeds into the Exposure - if the customer has a poor experience, they will have a negative attitude towards the brand and won't use them in the future. Additionally, they may leave a bad review or badmouth the brand to others, which alters the overall Exposure for the market. A positive Experience has the opposite effect of increasing your brand's equity in the market.

Purchase is simply the point of initial success — the customer chose your business.

We all engage in this cycle with some sort of decision on a daily basis. Are you wanting to start a new series on Netflix? You likely have a certain level of exposure to the options already. Your friends won't stop talking about Stranger Things. You saw a preview for Living With Yourself and you're obsessed with Paul Rudd. You're feeling nostalgic because you saw a video of the best Jim pranks on The Office. All of these contribute to your Exposure. So, you either get right to Evaluating (checking out Rotten Tomatoes) or you get to Exploring (browsing on Netflix or looking at 'Top 10 Shows You Need To Be Watching Right Now' lists). Finally, you settle on something and prepare to procrastinate life with another binge-watching session. Your Experience with the show will affect your future watching behaviors, as well as the people you interact with.

WHAT IS ADVERTISING'S ROLE IN THIS CUSTOMER JOURNEY?

Branding campaigns can create positive Exposure for your company. That, in and of itself, is part of the Evaluation process since customers who see a brand that advertises effectively assumes a sense of trust and reliability (ie. this is a real company, not some sketchy one-man operation).

Direct Advertising like Google Pay-Per-Click (PPC) Ads, Facebook Lead Forms, or sponsored listings on HomeAdvisor allows your business to show up and get included in the Exploration process.

Your **Landing Page or Website** needs to have enough of the right information for the customer to evaluate your business favorably. This evaluation starts with whatever ad led them there, but it really culminated on the landing page. The quality of your website can also affect your brand perception (Exposure) for the customer.

This is a simple model, but one that should be considered throughout reading this guide. All advertising activities should be focused on:
- Increasing positive Exposure
- Getting found during Exploration
- Winning during Evaluation
- Making it easy to Purchase
- Creating a positive Experience

It would be a worthwhile exercise to map out examples of customer journeys for your services offered. This can be done by researching and answering the following questions:

- **What are the attitudes and opinions of people in our marketplace?**
    - Have they heard of my brand before?
    - How price-sensitive are they?
    - How high of a priority is home comfort to them?
    - What is the length of the decision making process for them?
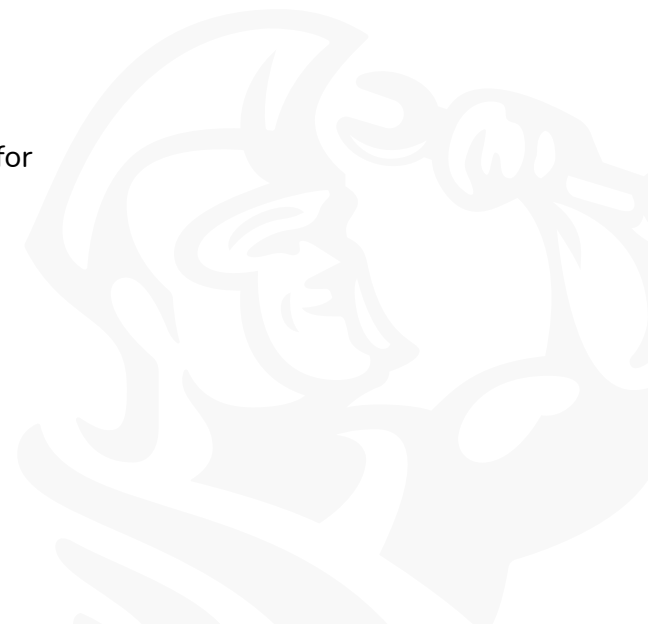
- **Am I showing up where people are looking?**
  - Are my ads at the top of Google/Bing?
  - What is my Lost Search Impression Share?
  - Have I tried multiple channels to reach people?

- **How do I stack up against my competition?**
  - How are my online reviews?
  - Are my customers happy?
  - Am I priced fairly for the value I offer?
  - Do I have a compelling offer?
  - Are my warranties and guarantees impressive?
  - Is my website a signal of quality to potential customers?

- **Is there any friction in the journey that makes it hard for the customer to choose us?**
  - Does my website load quickly? Is it mobile-friendly?
  - Is it easy to call, chat or fill out a form to reach my business?
  - How quick are they connected to the CSR? Do they have a good CSR experience?

THE "RIGHT" APPROACH TO ADVERTISING

With the customer journey framework in place, let's get into how the "right" way to advertise. Fortunately, it can be simplified into 4 things that need to be right in order for advertising to work.

Target the:
- Right Person at the
- Right Time in the
- Right Place with the
- Right Message

If any of these aren't right, advertising won't work and ad spend will be wasted.

If the wrong person is being targeted, nothing works. A person looking for cat food who clicks on a furnace ad is the wrong person. More realistically, a customer calling to ask about free call out fees may also be the wrong person.

If it's the right person - someone looking to install a new sink - but your ads aren't live on the weekend when they are searching, then advertising again doesn't work. Or maybe you have a furnace promotion running during the heat of summer. This can also refer to where someone is in the buying cycle. If they are searching for "what is central air conditioning", it may not be the worst thing to target them, but with limited budgets you would be better off spending on someone searching for "companies that install central air conditioning".

If the right person is searching for your service and are ready to buy, are you positioned for them to find you in the right place? Are your ads at the top of the search results page? Are you only on Google and not on Angie's List where they are searching?

But maybe everything has gone right so far and you are showing your ad to the right person in the right place at the right time. If your ad's messaging isn't compelling, they will likely browse right past you. Someone searching for "A/C tune-up prices" sees an ad with no pricing info and goes to a landing page that says nothing about price is very unlikely to convert (or worse, actually convert, waste your CSR's time, and never purchase).

However, if you are able to capitalize with relevant messaging, then chances are you just won your next customer!

When looking at results, if you are seeing a high cost per lead, low revenue per job, or anything else that looks like poor performance, the best way to diagnose it is the go through the 4 Rights and ask which are out of alignment. Therein lies success!

If everything seems right and results are still poor, that could mean a few things:
- The place is actually wrong and you need to try a new channel. Heck, try direct mail, radio, or blimp sponsorship if you need to. Your target market has something cost effective you can utilize if you search for it!
- The problem exists after the call in operations. Perhaps the solution lies with CSR training, sales training, etc.
- Tracking is broken and results are actually better than they look.

So who is the Right Person for a home services business to target?

At the most basic level, the Right Person is:
- A property owner
- Searching for the service you provide

Here are some keywords that represent this person:
"Electrician near me"
"Garage door repair companies"
"Best plumbers"
"Emergency a/c repair"

Digging a bit deeper, we can see characteristics of the best customers:
- Willing to pay a premium for quality
- Respectful
- Potential membership customer
- Loyal

Unfortunately, people don't search with "I'm a polite, loyal person with lots of disposable income looking for an HVAC company to stick with". However, this guide will go into tactics to define common characteristics of your high value customers that you can use in your ad targeting.

When is the right time to run ads? The simple answer is whenever you have someone there to answer the phone. To be more detailed, any Direct Advertising efforts targeting good keywords tend to capture people in a good spot of the buying cycle.

Also, use some business sense. Are you in the middle of a heat wave? Be more aggressive with your air conditioning campaigns. Did a hailstorm just hit? Run a "hail damage" campaign for your roofing business. Did the plague make its way through your town? Talk about how your pest control business can help in your PPC messaging.

Where are the best places for contractors to advertise? It actually varies widely from city to city; there is no silver bullet for home services advertising. This guide will give recommendations but it's up to you to discover what works best in your market. For a quick spoiler:
- Max out your Google Local Service Ads budget
- Fill in the gaps with Google Search (AdWords)
- Invest in branding through Google Display and Facebook - YouTube if you have video content.
- Try out HomeAdvisor and see what return you get there

What messaging works best for the trades? Going back to our Google Customer Journey study, they identified 6 things that can help persuade a customer to move out of the explore/evaluate cycle and purchase. They are:
1. Category heuristics: Short descriptions of key product specifications can simplify purchase decisions. These are quick numbers that let customers compare offerings, like the number of megapixels on a camera or the number of inches for a TV.
2. Power of now: The longer you have to wait for a product, the weaker the proposition becomes.
3. Social proof: Recommendations and reviews from others can be very persuasive.
4. Scarcity bias: As stock or availability of a product decreases, the more desirable it becomes.
5. Authority bias: Being swayed by an expert or trusted source.
6. Power of free: A free gift with a purchase, even if unrelated, can be a powerful motivator.

Rewriting these for the trades:

1. **Category heuristics:** this is less relevant, but the brands you carry or your guarantees and warranties are important here.
2. **Power of now:** if you have openings today or tomorrow, talk about it in your ads! 24/7 service is a great offering here. A web scheduler that let's them pick an appointment without having to call removes a ton of friction for the customer. Also, if your schedule is booked up, shut off your ads and save money on calls that wouldn't convert anyways!
3. **Social proof:** Add a Google Reviews widget to your landing page. Also, once you hit 100 Google reviews, your star rating is eligible to show up in your Search Ads. If you aren't leveraging a review generation tool, do so immediately!
4. **Scarcity bias:** Include a time-sensitive promotion in your messaging. If you're really on top of things, include a tagline like "3 openings left this week" or something along those lines.
5. **Authority bias:** A+ BBB rating, awards you've won, # of years in business, and similar authoritative claims accomplish a lot to sway potential customers
6. **Power of free:** Are things slow? Offer free inspections, free callouts, free filters, or $0 down financing options if possible.

The real secret of messaging is to try a few different approaches and see what works best! Again, every market is different and what works in Boston, MA won't work in Bend, OR.

Targeting the right person at the right time in the right place with the right message is your recipe for advertising success. But how can you tell whether or not you are accomplishing this? The answers lie in the metrics; poor KPIs means that the 1 of the 4 rights is wrong. This is only possible to do if you have proper tracking and measurement in place, which will be covered in the next section.

MEASUREMENT & ANALYTICS

If you aren't properly tracking your digital marketing metrics, nothing else matters. It's worth repeating: if you aren't tracking correctly, nothing else matters! You can only improve upon what you measure. It's hypothesized that over 30% of advertising spend is wasted. The only way to identify that waste is to set up tracking systems that are reliable and accurate.

Possibly the greatest failing of advertisers in this industry is the focus on the wrong metrics. If you are focused solely on conversions/leads, you are missing the boat. If you are only looking at clicks and impressions, you're going to battle with slingshots against armored tanks.

There is really only one metric that matters: Revenue Minus Ad Spend (RMAS).

It's a bit of an oversimplification, but it's important enough to give it singular focus.

Revenue Minus Ad Spend is the total revenue generated less what you spend on ads. You can take it a step further and calculate it as the gross margin minus ad spend, which is ideal, but to keep it simple we will only talk about revenue here. It is calculated as Revenue - Ad Spend. If you spend $100 in advertising and book a job that generates $500 in revenue, your RMAS is $500 - $100 = $400.

> **Now you might be asking: what about Return on Ad Spend, or ROAS? Isn't that the industry standard?**
>
> ROAS, ROI, or ROMI are all misleading metrics. They are leading indicators of success but neglect the most important piece of the puzzle. For example, what sounds better: spending $10 to get a $100 job (10x ROAS) or $200 to get a $1,500 job (7.5x ROI)? A company may lose money on a $200 job after all is said and done. Total profit matters more than ROAS.

All of this being said, we can't ignore all other metrics. While RMAS is the primary metric for evaluating performance, there are plenty of metrics that are useful in showing what optimizations can be made to improve RMAS. Those metrics include:

- **Impressions:** the number of times an ad was seen (note that for Display, there are Impressions and Viewable Impressions - you should be focused on Viewable Impressions since those are ones that appeared on the screen for at least 1 second - all other impressions were likely ignored completely.)
- **Clicks:** the number of times an ad was clicked, taking a searcher to a landing page.
- **Click-Through-Rate (CTR):** The number of clicks your ad receives divided by the number of times your ad is shown. This gives you your Click-Through-Rate percentage.`
- **Cost:** how much is being spent on advertising.
- **Avg. Cost per Click (CPC):** The amount it costs each time an ad is clicked, on average. This varies depending on keyword, region, ad position, and your set willingness to pay. Changes in this metric are a good indicator that the market is changing
- **Top of Page %:** In search advertising, this is how often your ads show up on the top of the page above organic and map listings. It's rare that you wouldn't want this as close to 100% as possible.
- **Click Share:** In search advertising, it's the number of clicks your ad is receiving compared to other ads showing up. Calculated as the total number of people that clicked an ad / the number of times they clicked your ad. If this is less than 0.5 (50%), you need to either try and show up higher or rewrite your ads.
- **Lost Search Impression Share:** One of the most important metrics in search advertising. LSIS due to budget is the percentage of searches you didn't show up for because you didn't have enough budget to support it. It's the key to answering "how much more money can I spend on this campaign?". LSIS due to rank gives the percentage of searches you missed because you didn't show up at the top of page, and is a signal that you should be more aggressive in your bidding.
- **Conversions:** The number of people who took a predesignated action on your webpage. This typically includes Phone Calls, Form Submissions, Appointments Booked, and Live Chats.
- **Conversion Rate:** Conversions / Website Visitors, the percentage of people who visit your website and convert. This is an indicator that you are either targeting the wrong audience or that your website/landing page needs improvement. Your direct advertising should convert above 10% with the best in the industry reaching 20% and higher.
- **Cost/Conversion:** The average cost to generate a conversion. This is the most important leading indicator of profitability (but again, useless compared to RMAS).
- **Bounce Rate:** the percentage of website visitors who visit a website and don't convert or visit another page on the site. This is also an indicator that you are either targeting the wrong audience or that your website/landing page needs improvement.

- **Lead Rate:** The percentage of calls that can be qualified as a lead. Calculated by Total Leads / Total Inbound Calls. This is a great metric to determine the quality of caller that a campaign is generating. If a high percentage of calls are non-leads, you should probably adjust your targeting settings since you're hitting the wrong person.
- **Inbound Booking Rate:** The percentage of calls/forms/chats that get booked into jobs. While this number is mostly influenced by operations and not marketing, a low close rate could be because of poor audience targeting. Pro Tip: sometimes this number is low because the schedule is booked out a few days and the customer isn't willing to wait. Create a line of communication between marketing and the CSR manager so that ads can be paused as soon as the job board is getting full.
- **Jobs:** The total number of jobs booked. Nothing worse than techs sitting around with no jobs to go to. Also called "Completed Jobs"
- **Sales Opportunity Rate:** The total number of opportunity jobs divided by the number of jobs in general. If this is high, that means you are targeting the right person because there is high upsell potential. An example of this could be targeting neighborhoods with older homes where a replacement opportunity exists. WOuldn't it be better to spend marketing dollars there instead of a brand new condo?
- **Close Rate:** The total number of sales divided by the number of opportunities.
- **Cancellation Rate:** How often a booked job is cancelled. Important to note because you should aim to overbook by the amount that typically gets cancelled. Also, important for operations to track to see if this is a bottleneck for revenue being generated from ads.
- **Total Revenue/Gross Profit:** The total revenue or profit generated.
- **Average Revenue/Gross Profit:** Total revenue or profit / number of jobs. This metric is a watered down version of RMAS but can be useful to know what tactics are contributing most to the top line.
- ROAS: Defined above.
- RMAS: The king of metrics, defined above.

HOW TO TRACK BLUE METRICS

These metrics are best tracked in the platform itself. So if you're running Facebook ads, pull this from Facebook. If you are running LSA, pull from the LSA dashboard.

These are easy - no special setup is required for the platforms to report these. Note that Google Ads metrics can be viewed within Google Analytics if the Ads and Analytics accounts are linked. Instructions on how to link those accounts here.

Pro Tip: ServiceTitan Marketing Pro offers an easy way track and monitor digital campaign performance all tied to revenue. Request a demo to learn more.

HOW TO TRACK GREEN METRICS

These metrics are tracked on the website through Google Analytics. At a basic level, what's required is for you to tell Google Analytics which actions you want to track as a conversion, or "Goal" as it's called in Analytics. It's not in the scope of this document to teach you how to do this, but here are the basics of which goals you should be tracking.

1. **Phone Calls** - in order to get this data into Google Analytics, you'll need to use some sort of call tracking software that offers DNI (dynamic number insertion). Here is a list of providers for that, all of which have Google Analytics integrations. The short summary is that these companies swap out website numbers for fake forwarding numbers that are able to track the source of each call and push that data into Google Analytics. Make sure you map the fake numbers to a ServiceTitan number so that you can track the data there as well.

2. **Form Submissions** - chances are that your website provider has an integration with Google Analytics. Make sure it's configured correctly and every form fill will register.

3. **Appointment Bookings** - similar to Form Submissions, although there is a chance that an appointment booker is in something called an iframe, which means it can't capture website data. If that's the case, reach out to your scheduling company and have them help you set up cross-domain tracking.

4. **Chats** - again, most have an integration with Analytics, if they don't reach out to your provider about getting data to flow.

Google Analytics automatically tracks the source of some visits, but there are some sources that you'll need to specify. For example, if a person visits the website from a Google Organic search, this is known automatically. Google PPC is also known. However, if you send traffic to a page from a Facebook Ad, it will only show up as 'referred by Facebook' and without any specific details. The method to be able to track everything properly in Analytics is by using UTM parameters.

This is done in the URL. There are a few components to a URL, but all that matters for now is the question mark. If you see a "?" in a URL, that means everything after the "?" isn't actually part of the website URL but is instead being used for tracking. You could put anything you want after the question mark and it will go to the right page.

Here's an example:

www.abcplumbing.com/plumbing-repairs?you-can-write-whatever-you-want-here

If you configure your URL a certain way, Google Analytics can read the info after the question mark and classify the information about the visitor. To keep it simple, fill in the information you want at the link below and it will spit out the proper URL to use.

https://ga-dev-tools.appspot.com/campaign-url-builder/

There are a few fields you'll need to fill out. Pick what makes sens from the options below:

Campaign Source: Use either google, facebook, bing, yelp, angies-list, homeadvisor, nextdoor, instagram, or anything else (but use lower case and dashes for spaces)

Campaign Medium: cpc (for anything paid), email, print (organic, social, and direct are automatically tracked)

Campaign Name: use the name of the campaign here, but be specific

Leave all other fields blank.

Here is a sample setup for a Spring Duct Cleaning promotion being ran on Facebook Ads:

* Website URL	https://abcplumbing.com
	The full website URL (e.g. `https://www.example.com`)
* Campaign Source	facebook
	The referrer: (e.g. `google`, `newsletter`)
* Campaign Medium	cpc
	Marketing medium: (e.g. `cpc`, `banner`, `email`)
* Campaign Name	spring-duct-cleaning-promo-2020
	Product, promo code, or slogan (e.g. `spring_sale`)
Campaign Term	
	Identify the paid keywords
Campaign Content	
	Use to differentiate ads

Share the generated campaign URL

Use this URL in any promotional channels you want to be associated with this custom campaign

https://abcplumbing.com/?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=spring-duct-cleaning-promo-2020

Being able to correctly identify the source, medium, and campaign of all traffic is vital to measurement success on Google Analytics. Note that Bing Ads can automatically pull in if you configure it properly in the account.

HOW TO TRACK RED METRICS

Great news! These all exist in ServiceTitan without any special setup. If you don't use ServiceTitan, work with your CRM provider to be able to track all of these metrics because without them, you're flying blind.

HOW TO PIECE IT ALL TOGETHER

Once your tracking is all set up, you need to know what to look for and how to look at the full picture of your marketing.

To view any one color, or class of metrics without considering the others is a recipe for wasted ad spend.

The methodology of consolidating everything together will vary greatly depending on which tactics and technology you utilize. Let's start by looking at what an ideal marketing dashboard should look like:

Ideal Marketing Dashboard

Doesn't this dashboard paint a lovely picture? At glance, you can see which campaigns are your winners and losers, and which step of the marketing journey your customers are getting lost.

Is the lead rate low for a particular campaign? Listen to those calls and find out why. You may discover that your ads are targeting a geo you don't serve, or that your keywords are triggering commercial callers when you only offer residential.

Is your conversion rate low? Dive into your website and uncover the hurdles to conversion.

Low Inbound Booking Rate? You may need to dive into CSR performance and find out why they aren't closing.

While this dashboard doesn't go into enough details to tell you how to fix problems, it is a perfect tool for identifying where the issues are. Once you've identified the issue, you can drill down deeper to see if it's fixable. The individual sections in this guide for each platform will give instructions on how to do this.

It would also be a good idea to establish benchmarks to compare to. Do some research of how an industry is performing for others to see how you stack up.

NOW FOR THE BIG QUESTION: HOW DO I MAKE THIS IDEAL DASHBOARD A REALITY?

There is a good chance that you'll need to manually input a lot of this by pulling from different data sources. Some of it can be automated using tools like Supermetrics, Tapclicks, etc., but your CRM data will be more difficult to merge.

Is it really worth the hours of effort it could take to put all of this together?

YES!

It's the only way to properly diagnose your marketing. It would be like trying to fix that weird sound in your car without even looking under the hood. It would be like a doctor writing a prescription based off of someone saying "I don't know, it just hurts somewhere." Precision is key, and once precision is achieved, growth is possible.

Here a few tips about some potential hurdles you can avoid:

- Make sure every lead is properly given a Campaign

  - Don't trust your CSRs to enter this since the customers themselves often don't know which campaign worked on them. The explanation could be a billboard, bus bench, or maybe they saw your trucks, but even then they had to find your business somehow and call a number that should be associated with a specific campaign.

- Make sure you have systems in place for your CSRs to be able to classify leads (including pre-set reasons why leads weren't booked) and thtat your techs and advisors have ways to classify something as a sales opportunity.

- If you can use a gross profit metric instead of revenue, do it!

- Re-test your tracking systems constantly to ensure accuracy. There's nothing worse than making budgetary decisions off of faulty data.

Pro Tip: ServiceTitan Marketing Pro offers an easy way track and monitor digital campaign performance all tied to revenue. Request a demo to learn more.

Okay, we have our tracking set up and ready to go. Now let's go execute some marketing campaigns!

BRANDING

As mentioned earlier, Branding is a crucial part of your overall digital marketing health. It creates that positive Exposure which will give you a competitive edge during the buying process.

Take 10 minutes sometime and read this great article on the power of branding.

Digital marketing is particularly exciting compared to more traditional methods. While traditional relies on estimates (ex. estimated 10K people drive by your sign every day), digital branding ads give you a precise number of how many people viewed your ad and then clicked on it. Branding ads can be viewed as a part of the online customer journey, so you can see if a person who clicked on a Facebook Ad a month ago ended up converting on your website a month later. The trackability of digital branding gives it an edge over traditional.

More important, the targeting capabilities of digital are insane. Who knows who is actually listening to the radio station, but you can know that your banner ad is targeting females ages 45-54 in a certain zip code who are homeowners and visit home & garden blogs. The amount of data that Google and Facebook has on all of us is scary. Use that to build value.

Not to mention that the world lives online right now, and you should advertise where people are.

This guide will walk through the most popular digital branding tactics for home service providers.

Reminder: a good rule of thumb is to spend 15% of your total digital budget on digital branding.

GOOGLE DISPLAY & YOUTUBE

We're grouping YouTube and Display together because both are run through Google Ads and both follow the same targeting mechanisms. The primary difference is that YouTube offers more effective branding whereas Display has higher conversion potential.

Display offers a cost per click model, where you only pay when a person clicks on the ad. This is great because you can generate lots of impressions and brand awareness without having to pay for it - you only pay for the high quality interactions. YouTube is best done with its cost per view model, where you pay every time your video is viewed. The beauty of this one is that you are only charged if someone watches your entire video (unless your video is longer than 30 seconds, in which case you're charged as soon as 30 seconds are watched). This means that anyone who watches 29 seconds or less of your video then clicks skip are free, but still consumes your branding content.

If you only have a couple thousand dollars to invest in branding, a majority of that should go towards Google Display and/or YouTube. It is effective, simple, and robust. There are a few ad options that make a lot of sense for contractors:

1. **Responsive Display:** The latest and greatest. Instead of having to hire designers and make a dozen different ad sizes, you can leverage Google's responsive ad type. This format has you upload a logo, up to 10 images, a video (optional), headlines, and descriptions, then automatically generates good looking motion banners out of it. Google then goes a step further and uses its algorithms to mix and match the asset combinations it thinks is going to perform the best. It is adaptable in size so instead of creating 12 different size ads, it can generate an ad to fit any possible size for any website. This is especially important for mobile devices. 9 out of 10 contractors would be best served by using this format. A simple best practices guide can be found here.

2. **Image/GIF Ads:** The OG ad style. Have some banners designed and let them appear across the internet. This style is only recommended if you are trying to maintain consistent imagery across all channels (ie. the same banner style that you are running in print, billboard, etc.). However, even if you run this format, it doesn't hurt to test this alongside responsive. Follow these guidelines when creating ads.

3. **Display Text Ads:** This is essentially the same as Responsive Display, but without any imagery. It may be worth running text ads alongside your Image Ads to get more reach (but never alongside Responsive Display)

4. **YouTube Skippable In-Stream Ads:** These show before or during a YouTube video and offers the option for the viewer to skip the ad after a few seconds of watching

5. **YouTube Bumper Ads:** These are non-skippable, 6 second ads that give the viewer a short burst of brand exposure. They are great for getting your name out there without annoying viewers.

DISPLAY SETUP

Follow these steps to create a killer Google Display campaign:

CAMPAIGN SETTINGS

1. When creating a new campaign in Google Ads, pick a goal of "Leads". Yes, this is a branding/awareness campaign but you'll be best served by going for leads. Who knows, you may get some profitable conversions out of it.

2. Pick type of "Display" / "Standard Display Campaign"

3. Enter the website URL (if the ad is for a specific business unit, it should go to a dedicated landing page; otherwise, if it's general branding then it should go to your homepage)

4. Pick location targeting. Make sure you select "People in or regularly in your targeted locations" under Location options. Pro Tip: Don't blanket target your whole service area. Instead, focus your branding efforts on zip codes that have your most profitable customers. It's also a great idea to align your display advertising with any direct mail, or outdoor advertising you have in certain neighborhoods.

5. Bidding. This one is tricky. If you have an account that has historical conversion data, it might be worth your while to choose a "Maximize Conversions" bid strategy. However, it's a safe bet to pick either Enhanced CPC or Maximize Clicks. If you choose Enhanced CPC, a good starting bid is $1.00 for big markets and $0.50 for smaller.

6. Enter your budget.

7. Click the "Additional Settings" dropdown and click "Content Exclusions". Exclude the following:

   a. All sensitive content (you DON'T want your brand right in the middle of an article about a school shooting, for example)

   b. Any video content types

   c. Parked domains

AD GROUP SETTINGS

8. You may want a few different ad groups in your campaign. You want to use multiple ad groups ONLY for the reason of using different messaging to different audiences, or have them go to different landing pages. There is no benefit to multiple ad groups other than this. Some cases where this could make sense:

   i. **Remarketing** - you may want to offer a discount if someone has already interacted with your brand, or use a unique value proposition for someone who seems to be lower in the funnel

   j. **Existing customers** - you can upload a customer list and target the list with membership ads or referral programs

   k. **Competitors** - unique messaging talking about price match guarantees or quality difference (without naming the competitor directly as that gives them free branding)

   l. **Specific audience messaging** - you may notice a specific gender behaves a certain way, or that parents have different concerns than single people - you can customize messaging to these different groups with separate ad groups

   - Whether you have 5 ad groups or 1, here are some audiences you should target:

   - Homeowners

   - Recently moved

   - Remarketing List

   - Customer List

   - Similar-To List

   - Custom Intent Audiences (you'll have to build these - suggestions below)

     - In-Market

       - People with any of these interests or purchase intentions -> Enter your business unit (ex. Furnace repair or plumber)

- Competitors

    - People who browse websites similar to -> enter your own URL and all of your competitors' URLs (you may also want to add local industry-specific listing sites like HomeAdvisor or Neighborly)

    - People who searched for any of these terms on Google -> enter the names of your competitors

For those not counting, that's 7 different audiences that make a lot of sense for any Display Campaign. If the estimated number of impressions seems out of control, you should cut "similar-to" first

9. Under demographic targeting, uncheck 18-24 year olds for sure and consider unchecking 25-34 or 65+. Are there valuable homeowners in these segments? Absolutely. Is there a higher percentage of valuable homeowners in the 35-64 age range? Definitely, so you should start with your best demographic. If you are having trouble spending your full budget later on, you can expand your age targeting.

10. Turn Targeting Expansion off

AD CREATION (DISPLAY)

11. Upload your chosen images/logos/videos

12. Write your headlines and descriptions, following these rules:

    a. No "!"s or irregular punctuation

    b. Use all 5 headlines and descriptions - don't cut corners!

    c. Don't put your brand name as a headline - that's taken care of separately

    d. Watch the previews generated and sincerely ask yourself: "If this was on some random website, would it be appealing to my target audience?"

ICING ON THE CAKE

13. Once the campaign is finished, navigate into it and select "Placements" from the left hand navigation, then "Exclusions". Choose "App Categories" and select every one (this is a long process here, but can be done quickly if you know how to build in Google Ads Editor).

   - This is an important step because it prevents your ads from showing in mobile apps. Often app users are playing a game and aren't in a good mindset to receive brand messaging. Again, if you are struggling to spend your display budget, you can change this setting later.

14. Navigate to "Audiences" now. Change it from "Add to Ad Group" to "Add to Campaign".

   - Add pretty much every predefined audience you can, BUT MAKE SURE THE TOP HAS IT SET TO OBSERVATION, NOT TARGETING. This will allow you to see how the different audience segments are performing for your campaign without actually targeting them. For example, you might discover that the "Movie Buffs" audience is converting really well for whatever reason. Then, you can choose to bid more aggressively for that segment, or spin it off into its own ad group altogether.

DISPLAY OPTIMIZATION

You've set your Display Campaign up beautifully and it's been running for a while now. Let's go through some different things you can look at to evaluate performance and the corresponding tactics to improve performance.

1. Do a basic sweep

- Is the full budget being spent? If not, the first thing you should do is make sure the ads are approved. Once that's checked, look at the underrated Display Lost IS metrics.

    - If the Display Lost IS due to Rank is > 90%, then you either need to raise your Max CPC bid or change your bidding strategy to something more aggressive.

    - If Lost IS is < 10%, you have a targeting issue. Try adding new audiences, expanding age ranges, enabling mobile apps, or adding new geos.

- Full experience walkthrough. You'd be surprised how often something is broken in the process. The ads go to the wrong page. The page is showing the wrong phone number. There are typos. The phone number isn't connecting. Walk through the customer journey from impression to conversion and make sure nothing is broken.

- Conversion tracking check. While the purpose of these ads is branding, it may be suspicious if there are 0 conversions after running for a long period of time.

2. Performance metrics

- Assisted Conversions

    - This is a favorite of ours. Find this in Google Analytics by navigating to Conversions -> Multi-Channel Funnels -> Assisted Conversions. You will be able to see which channels are good at assisting other conversions. If we look at the Display row, we can see the number of times someone visited your website from a Display Ad, then converted through a different channel.

This isn't a perfect measure because it only tracks people who actually clicked on your Display Ad, so it doesn't capture the full picture branding, but it gives a good picture. A fun way to view this is in the context of Goals and Assists in sports like soccer or hockey. There are typically 2 or 3 points earned when a goal is score - 1 for the goal scorer, and 1 for each of the assisters.

- Many athletes had successful careers as excellent assisters. We can look at digital marketing in a similar way. While being able to finish the play and get the conversion is very important (last-click attributed conversions), some credit should be given to the channels that contributed along the way (Assisted Conversions).

    1. If Display does not have many assisted conversions, it could be a signal of poor overall display health and a strategy rethink may be required

- RMAS (and every other metric found in the Search section of this guide)

    - Yes, the goal of Display is branding. However, it's worth checking to see if any direct revenue is coming from your Display campaigns. In a crowded PPC market, Display has been known to be a secret lead generating weapon for contractors before.

        1. Reallocate budget into Display campaigns with a high RMAS. This may mean taking away from Search campaigns, but that's an easy decision if the data is accurate and shows better returns from Display.

        2. If RMAS is good, treat Display as a Direct Marketing channel in your optimizations.

- Click-Through-Rate

    - This is your main measurement metric for Display within the Google Ads platform. A high CTR means that your ad struck a chord with the targeted audience enough for them to engage with it. If this is low, you should look to fix 1 of 2 things:

        1. Your ad imagery and messaging isn't doing it for your audience (missing the 'Right Message'), so switch it up. Note that this happens naturally with time as your market can grow fatigued with the creative if they've already seen it before.

2. Your targeting is off (missing the 'Right Person'). Find out which audiences have low CTRs and pause them. Consider changing some of your high CTR "Observation" audiences to "Targeting". Raise the bids for the demographics and devices that have a better CTR.

3. Note: If conversions are coming out of this campaign, prioritize optimizing towards conversions instead of CTR and throw this entire section out the window.

- Display Lost Impression Share

  - Focus on Display Lost Impression Share due to Budget on this one. If it's > 90%, that means that your targeted audience is so large that you are only reaching less than 10% of the entire audience. Think about it. With that broad of targeting, you'll be getting a lot of clicks from people who aren't "right" for your business. For example, using the targeting settings above, we are hitting all homeowners in your selected region. Just because someone owns a home does not make them right for you. Would you rather show an ad to some random homeowner or to a person who just searched for your competitor on Google? If this metric is high, optimize by narrowing your targeting by:

    1. Cutting out geos

    2. Removing audiences

    3. Excluding demographics

    4. Dayparting (only show ads at times and days where performance is best)

    5. Any other exclusions you can find that make sense!

- Bounce Rate

  - Also found in Google Analytics, expect this number to be high for all Display campaigns. That being said, make sure it's not too high. If you see a bounce rate over 85% for Display, you likely need to change your targeting and maybe should improve your landing page.

3. Experiment Ideas

- If salespeople should Always Be Closing, marketers should Always Be Testing! Here are the top things you should run experiments on in your Display campaigns:

  i. Bid strategy

    - Max Conversions vs Enhanced CPC

    - Max Clicks vs Enhanced CPC

    - Target CPA vs Max Conversions

    - Target CPA at $X vs Target CPA at $Y

  ii. Geographies

  iii. Audiences

    - This is done intrinsically by having Observation audiences but it may be worth doing to try out a new audience

  iv. Ad Creative

    - Images vs Videos

    - Promotion A vs Promotion B

    - General Branding vs. Specific Service

  v. Landing Page

    - Landing Page vs Website

    - CTA on Landing Page

    - Hero Image on Landing Page

    - Main Value Proposition on Landing Page

VIDEO SETUP

Follow these steps to create an effective YouTube campaign:

CAMPAIGN SETTINGS

1. When creating a new campaign in Google Ads, pick a goal of "Create a campaign without a goal's guidance".

2. Pick type of "Video"

3. Now you have to select the Ad Type you will be running. There are 2 recommended options depending on what you hope to accomplish with your campaign. If you are strictly focused on brand impact, you should select "Custom video campaign". If you want to test your luck at generating action out of your videos, click "Drive Conversions", which will build out a campaign structure for you designed at trying to get people to convert off of your videos. While these typically aren't effective for contractors, it may be worth experimenting with - the worst case scenario is that customers don't convert but you still get branding impact.

4. Select bidding strategy. Select "Maximize Conversions" for conversion-centric campaigns, otherwise select Max CPV (Cost per view). If you are planning on running a 6-second bumper ad, you'll have to select Target CPM - set it at around $3 or $4.

5. Enter your budget

6. Pick location targeting. Make sure you select "People in or regularly in your targeted locations" under Location options. Pro Tip: Don't blanket target your whole service area. Instead, focus your branding efforts on zip codes that have your most profitable customers. It's also a great idea to align your display advertising with any direct mail, or outdoor advertising you have in certain neighborhoods.

7. Click the "Additional Settings" dropdown and click "Frequency Capping". This prevents your ad from being shown to the same person 50 times in a row. Select a cadence that makes sense for your video. We like to limit it to no more than 4 per day and 10 per week.

AD GROUP SETTINGS

8. You may want a few different ad groups in your campaign. You want to use multiple ad groups ONLY for the reason of using different messaging to different audiences, or have them go to different landing pages. There is no benefit to multiple ad groups other than this. Some cases where this could make sense:

   a. Remarketing - you may want to offer a discount if someone has already interacted with your brand, or use a unique value proposition for someone who seems to be lower in the funnel

   b. Existing customers - you can upload a customer list and target the list with membership ads or referral programs

   c. Competitors - unique messaging talking about price match guarantees or quality difference (without naming the competitor directly as that gives them free branding)

   d. Specific audience messaging - you may notice a specific gender behaves a certain way, or that parents have different concerns than single people - you can customize messaging to these different groups with separate ad groups

      Whether you have 5 ad groups or 1, here are some audiences you should target:

      • Homeowners

      • Recently moved

      • Remarketing List

      • Customer List

      • Similar-To List

      • Custom Intent Audiences (you'll have to build these - suggestions below)

         In-Market

         > People with any of these interests or purchase intentions -> Enter your business unit (ex. Furnace repair or plumber)

Competitors

> People who browse websites similar to -> enter your own URL and all of your competitors' URLs (you may also want to add local industry-specific listing sites like HomeAdvisor or Neighborly)

> People who searched for any of these terms on Google -> enter the names of your competitors

For those not counting, that's 7 different audiences that make a lot of sense for any Display Campaign. If the estimated number of impressions seems out of control, you should cut "similar-to" first

9. Under demographic targeting, uncheck 18-24 year olds for sure and consider unchecking 25-34 or 65+. Are there valuable homeowners in these segments? Absolutely. Is there a higher percentage of valuable homeowners in the 35-64 age range? Definitely, so you should start with your best demographic. If you are having trouble spending your full budget later on, you can expand your age targeting.

10. Turn Targeting Expansion off

AD CREATION

11. Paste in the link to your chosen YouTube Video

    If you don't have the video on YouTube, follow these instructions to create a YouTube channel for your business (if you don't already have on) and these instructions for uploading a video to YouTube.

12. Follow the standard steps, but make sure you add a CTA banner.

    BONUS TIP: Some advertisers employ a cost-saving trick where they put a static frame at the end of their videos with only their logo. They will have a 20 second video and then their logo on the screen for 10 seconds. This encourages the viewer to skip the last 10 seconds, which makes the video view free for you.

PRO TIP: Start your video with your logo in the first few seconds. People often skip after 5 seconds so if you have your logo early, at least there will be some branding impact for free.

ICING ON THE CAKE

13. Once the campaign is finished, navigate into it and select "Placements" from the left hand navigation, then "Exclusions". Choose "App Categories" and select every one (this is a long process here, but can be done quickly if you know how to build in Google Ads Editor).

    This is an important step because it prevents your ads from showing in mobile apps. Often app users are playing a game and aren't in a good mindset to receive brand messaging. Again, if you are struggling to spend your display budget, you can change this setting later.

14. Navigate to "Audiences" now. Change it from "Add to Ad Group" to "Add to Campaign".

> Add pretty much every predefined audience you can, BUT MAKE SURE THE TOP HAS IT SET TO OBSERVATION, NOT TARGETING. This will allow you to see how the different audience segments are performing for your campaign without actually targeting them. For example, you might discover that the "Movie Buffs" audience is converting really well for whatever reason. Then, you can choose to bid more aggressively for that segment, or spin it off into its own ad group altogether.

YOUTUBE OPTIMIZATION

You've set your YouTube Campaign up beautifully and it's been running for a while now. Let's go through some different things you can look at to evaluate performance and the corresponding tactics to improve results.

1. **Do a basic sweep**

   - Is the full budget being spent? If not, the first thing you should do is make sure the ads are approved. Once that's checked, look at the underrated Display Lost IS metrics.

     I. If the Display Lost IS due to Rank is > 90%, then you either need to raise your Max CPC bid or change your bidding strategy to something more aggressive.

     II. If Lost IS is < 10%, you have a targeting issue. Try adding new audiences, expanding age ranges, enabling mobile apps, or adding new geos.

   - Full experience walkthrough. You'd be surprised how often something is broken in the process. The ads go to the wrong page. The page is showing the wrong phone number. There are typos. The phone number isn't connecting. Walk through the customer journey from impression to conversion and make sure nothing is broken.

   - Conversion tracking check. While the purpose of these ads is branding, it may be suspicious if there are 0 conversions after running for a long period of time.

2. **Performance metrics**

   - View Rate

     - This is your main measurement metric for YouTube within the Google Ads platform. A high view rate means that your video struck a chord with the targeted audience enough for them to watch until completion. If this is low, you should look to fix 1 of 2 things:

1. Your video may suck. It may be time to retry the content. Alternatively, it could just be too long and you should consider a quick-hitting skippable video or even try bumper ads. Note that this happens naturally with time as your market can grow fatigued with the creative if they've already seen it before. ALso note that if you are employing a static screen at the end of this video, this metric becomes irrelevant.

2. Your targeting is poor (missing the 'Right Person'). Find out which audiences have low view rates and pause them. Consider changing some of your high view rate "Observation" audiences to "Targeting". Raise the bids for the demographics and devices that have a better view rate.

3. Note: If conversions are coming out of this campaign, prioritize optimizing towards conversions instead of view rate and throw this entire section out the window. You can also view your audiences within the Google Analytics platform and see which convert best there, then optimize accordingly within Google Ads.

- Display Lost Impression Share

    - Focus on Display Lost Impression Share due to Budget on this one. Since this metric doesn't exist, you'll have to do some math: 100 - Display Impr. Share - Lost Display IS (Rank). If your Display impression share is 20%, and your Lost IS (rank) is 10%, then 100% - 20% - 10% = 70% Lost Display IS (budget).

      If this metric is > 90%, that means that your targeted audience is so large that you are only reaching less than 10% of the entire audience. Think about it. With that broad of targeting, you'll be getting a lot of clicks from people who aren't "right" for your business. For example, using the targeting settings above, we are hitting all homeowners in your selected region. Just because someone owns a home does not make them right for you. Would you rather show an ad to some random homeowner or to a person who just searched for your competitor on Google? If this metric is high, optimize by narrowing your targeting by:

        1. Cutting out geos

        2. Removing audiences

        3. Excluding demographics

        4. Dayparting (only show ads at times and days where performance is

best)

     5. Any other exclusions you can find that make sense!

- % Viewed Metrics

  - You can see how many people watch 25%, 50%, or 75% of your video. If a high percentage of viewers make it to 50% and 75% of your video, you're laughing because they are getting great brand exposure and it costs you nothing. If most don't make it past 25%, you may need to rethink your video content, video length, or targeting settings

3. **Experiment Ideas**

- Always Be Testing! Here are the top things you should run experiments on in your YouTube campaigns:

  - **Bid strategy**

    1. Target CPM vs Max CPV

    2. Conversion-focused vs Branding-focused

  - **Geographies**

  - **Audiences**

    1. This is done intrinsically by having Observation audiences but it may be worth doing to try out a new audience

  - **Ad Creative**

    1. 15 second vs 30 second videos

    2. Video A vs Video B

    3. Bumper vs Skippable vs Non-Skippable vs Tru-View for Action

  - **Landing Page**

    1. Landing Page vs Website

    2. CTA on Landing Page

    3. Hero Image on Landing Page

    4. Main Value Proposition on Landing Page

FACEBOOK

Disclaimer: A lot of what's in this section is overlapping with Google Display.

If you have the budget to justify it, Facebook is a great secondary branding platform. It offers precise targeting options and unique lead capture functionality. It's also a power move to hit people with branding on multiple platforms (ie. they see your brand across the web and then on Facebook too).

Setup

Follow these steps to create an ideal home services Facebook campaign:

CAMPAIGN SETTINGS

1. There are 3 potential options for Campaign Type you can use, depending on what you think you need.

   b. **Conversions**

      - Use this type if you have a system to upload offline conversions into Facebook Ads. This will use your conversion data to automatically target Facebook users that share characteristics common to your converters. This is done by uploading customer lists into Facebook. A guide to do so can be found here. IMPORTANT NOTE: you should probably only use this campaign type if you have a high budget. Facebook recommends 50 conversions/week for this type to work, so unless you're dropping $7K+/month, go with another type.

   c. **Lead generation**

      - This is a commonly used ad type that pops open a form within Facebook itself that allows users to enter information to claim an offer, or book a quote, etc. This performs well when you have a compelling offer/promotion - something that would cause a person to pause their Facebook scrolling and say "Hey! I need to give them my contact info because I want that."

d. **Reach**

- This is a true branding setup. If you do not have conversion import setup and you want more general branding accomplished, use this campaign type

2. Turn on Campaign Budget Optimization and set your budget

3. Run this ad all days all times to start

AD SET SETTINGS

4. There are 4 possible ad sets you could run on Facebook Ads, all of which are similar to Google Display's. Again, these should be broken out into separate ad sets if you intend on using different messaging with them; otherwise, you can throw all targets into a single ad set.

a. **Custom Intent (Detailed Targeting)**

- Under "Detailed Targeting", add some of the following

  Recently Moved

  Household Income - top %s

  Home Appliances

  Home Improvement

  Look for local homeowner association groups

b. **Similar-To**

- Upload a customer list into Facebook Ads and create a similar-to audience out of it that matches the top 1% of the population in large markets and 2-5% for small markets. This targets people on Facebook who share similar characteristics to your customers, but keeps it within the geos and demographics you've specified.

    c. Remarketing

- If you have a tracking pixel set up (and you should), you'll be able to create a remarketing list. Make the list target people who have visited the website in the last 14 days since the buying cycle typically doesn't extend past that.

    d. Customers

- Target the actual customer list you uploaded to increase Brand Exposure with your existing customers and potentially upsell them on memberships or complimentary services.

5. Link the proper Facebook page - if you don't have one, create one before proceeding any further.

6. Add location targeting - at least zip codes but try to segment into neighborhoods if possible.

7. Set Age to 30-65.

8. NOTE: the section to the right on this page will give you audience size numbers, as well as estimated daily reach. Use this to determine how many targets to add. For example, you know you should change your branding campaigns monthly to keep the creative fresh, so it will run for 30 days. Your target audience is currently 250,000 people, but your daily reach is 5,000. That means you'll reach a total of 150,000 (5,000 * 30 days), so you should narrow your audience to be closer to that number. You can also narrow using location and age ranges, just make sure you've selected your most "right" audience and make it the size that your budget can support.

9. Stick with Automatic Placements unless you are specifically targeting Instagram.

10. Optimization & Delivery

    a. For Conversion campaign type, use defaults

    b. For Lead generation campaign type, use defaults

    3. For Reach campaign type, use the default cost control but drill down into frequency settings and pick one of the following:

- 2-3 impressions every 7 days for big markets

- 2-5 impressions every 2 days for small markets

AD CREATION

11. Here are the options you can choose from:

   l. Dynamic (equivalent to Google Display's Responsive Ads)

   - Select this option in the Ad Set Settings section. Upload all assets and let it fly! Make sure you use all options for Images (10), Primary Text (5), and Headlines (5), plus have 2-3 Call-To-Action variations. Other best practices can be read [here](#).

   m. Single Image

   - If your goal is general branding, or you are pushing a single service/offer, this format might be your best bet. It's a single image that has a sole purpose of getting a Facebook scroller to stop scrolling and read the text of the ad. IMPORTANT: it's not the goal of the image to explain all of the details of a promotion - in fact, Facebook will disapprove any ad that has more than 20% of the image covered in text. Stay away from the text unless it's done tastefully.

   n. Carousel

   - All the rage, but more bark than bite. This is a slideshow of ads that the user can scroll through to see up to 5 different smaller ads. If you want to showcase multiple services or meaningful promotions, then carousel is awesome. However, if you are just saying the same thing 5 times in a row, you would be better served with a different ad type.

   o. Video

   - Video is powerful. It can engage 2 senses (sight and sound, if turned on) which doubles the branding impact. If you don't have a video,

you can create a video slideshow using Facebook's builder. This is your best branding option, but probably stay away if you are looking for direct response.

    p. Instant Experience

       - This is your glamour option. Combine videos, carousels, single images, or slideshows to essentially create a mobile landing page that lives within Facebook. This is a lot of work to get right, but can really boost your brand by giving a world-class feel to your brand.

12. If you chose Lead Form campaign type, build your Instant Form Experience now:

    m. Use a single image or carousel to capture attention, then the user gets directed to a form within Facebook that pre-populates their information. Choose Higher Intent for Form Type. Have them go to your website upon form completion.

    n. You'll want to set up a connection so that your Lead Form submissions are automatically sent to you. We recommend using Zapier to connect Lead Forms to your CRM, or at least to your email or a spreadsheet. This works great with ServiceTitan's Zapier connection to populate these leads into the CRM.

13. When entering URL, make sure to use UTM parameters as specified in the Tracking portion of this guide. For a quick reference, use this: YOURURL.COM?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=YOUR-CAMPAIGN-NAME

14. Make sure pixel and offline events are enabled

15. Publish!

Optimization

You've set your Facebook Ads Campaign up beautifully and it's been running for a while now. Let's go through some different things you can look at to evaluate performance and the corresponding tactics to improve performance.

1. **Do a basic sweep**

    - Is the full budget being spent? If not, the first thing you should do is make sure the ads are approved. Once that's checked, look at Relevance Score

        - If Relevance Score is 1 or 2, change up your targeting and messaging to ensure the whole advertising experience is smooth and related.

        - If Relevance Score is fine, try increasing your audience size, raising bids (instead of letting Facebook automatically manage, take it over and jack them up), and/or changing up your creative.

        - If all of this doesn't work, you should probably try a new campaign type.

    - Full experience walkthrough. You'd be surprised how often something is broken in the process. The ads go to the wrong page. The page is showing the wrong phone number. There are typos. The phone number isn't connecting. Walk through the customer journey from impression to conversion and make sure nothing is broken.

    - Conversion tracking check. While the purpose of these ads is branding, it may be suspicious if there are 0 conversions after running for a long period of time, especially if you are using Lead Forms.

2. **Performance metrics**

    - Assisted Conversions

        - This works for Facebook as well as Display as long as you have UTM parameters set up. Find this in Google Analytics by navigating to Conversions -> Multi-Channel Funnels -> Assisted Conversions. If we look at the Display row, we can see the number of times someone visited your website from a Display Ad, then converted through a different channel. This isn't a perfect

measure because it only tracks people who actually clicked on your Facebook Ad, so it doesn't capture the full picture branding, but it gives a good picture. A fun way to view this is in the context of Goals and Assists in sports like soccer or hockey. There are typically 2 or 3 points earned when a goal is score - 1 for the goal scorer, and 1 for each of the assisters. Many athletes had successful careers as excellent assisters. We can look at digital marketing in a similar way. While being able to finish the play and get the conversion is very important (last-click attributed conversions), some credit should be given to the channels that contributed along the way (Assisted Conversions).

- If Facebook does not have many assisted conversions, it could be a signal of poor overall display health and a strategy rethink may be required, especially if other branding channels are performing better in this area.

- RMAS (and every other metric found in the Search section of this guide)

  - Yes, the goal of Facebook is branding. However, it's worth checking to see if any direct revenue is coming from your Facebook campaigns. If that's the case:

    - Reallocate budget into Facebook campaigns with a high RMAS. This may mean taking away from Search campaigns, but that's an easy decision if the data is accurate and shows better returns from Display.

    - If RMAS is good, treat Facebook as a Direct Marketing channel in your optimizations.

- Click-Through-Rate

  - This is your main measurement metric for ads within the Facebook Ads platform. A high CTR means that your ad struck a chord with the targeted audience enough for them to engage with it. If this is low, you should look to fix 1 of 2 things:

    - Your ad imagery and messaging isn't doing it for your audience (missing the 'Right Message'), so switch it up. Note that this happens naturally with time as your market can grow fatigued with the creative if they've already seen it before.

    - Your targeting is off (missing the 'Right Person'). Find out which audiences have low CTRs and pause them.

- Note: If conversions are coming out of this campaign, prioritize optimizing towards conversions instead of CTR and throw this entire section out the window.

- Bounce Rate

  - Also found in Google Analytics, expect this number to be high for all Display campaigns. That being said, make sure it's not too high. If you see a bounce rate over 85% for Display, you likely need to change your targeting and maybe should improve your landing page.

3. **Experiment Ideas**

- If salespeople should Always Be Closing, marketers should Always Be Testing! Here are the top things you should run experiments on in your Facebook campaigns:

  i. Campaign Type

     - Lead Forms vs Conversions vs Reach

  ii. Geographies

  iii. Audiences

     - This is more important in Facebook because it's a bit of a black box with its audiences.

  iv. Ad Creative

     - Single Image vs Video vs Carousel vs Instant Experience

     - Promotion A vs Promotion B

     - General Branding vs. Specific Service

     - Image 1 vs Image 2

  v. Landing Page

     - Landing Page vs Website

     - CTA on Landing Page

     - Hero Image on Landing Page

     - Main Value Proposition on Landing Page

DIRECT MARKETING

When we say Direct Marketing, we're talking about any marketing efforts that have the purpose of eliciting a direct response. For contractors, the desired response is a job booked via a phone call, form submission, live chat, or appointment scheduler. If branding is planting seeds for a later date, direct marketing is harvesting.

We break direct marketing into 2 main paid digital categories (email marketing and direct mail would fall under this category, but this a paid digital guide - search for ServiceTitan's other best practice guides on how to master those two platforms). The 2 categories are Leads and PPC.

Leads is made up of third party platforms that sell leads to contractors. This includes Google LSA, HomeAdvisor, NextDoor, Warehouse Programs (like Home Depot), and others. These are great because you pay per lead and have to do very little work to earn the lead. The platforms do the work to attract the leads and sell them to you. Clean and simple. The downside comes from the fact that you have very little control over the process; there aren't many levers you can pull to boost performance. Also, the quality of these leads tend to not be as good as those generated from PPC (not always the case, but often).

PPC (Pay-per-click) is made up of advertising platforms that you build campaigns on to drive traffic to your website with the intent that they contact your business to set up an appointment. As its name suggests, you pay each time someone clicks on your ad. The most common platforms for PPC are Google Ads, Bing Ads, Facebook Ads (which is often focused on branding but can be used for lead generation as well), and Google Display (same as Facebook). PPC offers you complete control of your lead generation experience but comes with no guarantees. For example, the clicks costs could rise unexpectedly and the amount you end up paying per lead can spike. Or, worst case scenario, you could spend hundreds of dollars and generate no leads if your targeting and tactics are poor.

A solid direct marketing strategy utilizes both Leads and PPC campaigns. You should always be trying out new channels to find that golden nugget in your market.

LEADS

Google Local Service Ads

(Pulled from the [Contractor Playbook](#))

Google Home Services ads which is now known as Google Local Services Ads started as a beta in San Francisco in 2015. Our businesses were required to go through a complete screening process to make sure relevant license, insurance and background check requirements were met. In 2017 the program expanded to markets outside of California and were rebranded Local Service Ads. The rigorous requirements allowed contractors to be Google Guaranteed. This meant that you were backed by Google, if the client was not satisfied with the work, Google covers claims up to the job invoice amount with a lifetime cap of $2K. These ads started appearing before Google PPC on the search landscape, why would Google do this as PPC has been a huge source of income? Google wanted to get local, and they wanted to enable local businesses who might not be able to afford the PPC game a chance to play. The best part about this Google space is you pay per lead and you can dispute any lead that might not fit your criteria. In 2020, ServiceTitan integrated with Google Local Services in order to bring your leads from GLSA right into your CRM. To learn more about Google Local Service Ads, how you rank, our integration and if they are in your area [check out this blog post](#) to jumpstart your advertising.

[**Google Local Services Webinar**](#)

HomeAdvisor

HomeAdvisor connects local homeowners with contractors. The service is free to the general public.

To sign up for HomeAdvisor, a contractor needs to do the following:

1. Must have a state-level trade license
2. Criminal background check
3. Business background check
4. Verified credit check looking for bankruptcy and defaults

HomeAdvisor charges $350 annually to get listed, plus an additional per lead charge of anywhere between $15 - $60.

HomeAdvisor's leads can cost anywhere between $15-20 per lead and in some cases $50+. Leads can be sent weekly or monthly to your account.

HomeAdvisor also issues credits for cancelations, bad leads, and duplicate leads.

It's also important to focus on reviews.

PPC

Google Search

Google Search PPC is the grandaddy of digital lead generation. It's those top 3 or 4 ads that show up on the Google Search Results page above the maps listings and organic results. While it currently can't compete with Google LSA in terms of profitability, it's your best option for generating jobs above and beyond what LSA generates.

There are thousands of guides that can teach you anything you could want to know about Google Ads, including Google's own training system available for free, so this guide will focus on the specifics that a home services Google Search Ads account should have.

If you're starting from scratch, make sure to read up on how to set up a new Google Ads account.

Account Structure

Before you even start building your PPC account, you should map out its structure. If you can do the hard work of structure mapping, the build will go smooth as butter.

Your Google Ads account is made up of Campaigns, Ad Groups, Ads, and Keywords. There are different parts of your business and marketing strategy that correlate with each of these structures, outlined here:

Campaign ~ Business Unit + Zone (a zone is a collection of zip codes that have similar characteristics, could also be an entire town or small city)
Ad Group ~ Customer persona
Ad ~ What that persona cares about (pain points, fears, hopes, expectations)
Keyword ~ What's searched on Google

Here is an example structure that shows what this could look like:

Campaign: A/C Repair - Zone 3

Ad Group: Emergency A/C Repair

Ad: "24/7 Availability", "Openings Today", "Sleep With A/C Tonight", "Guaranteed Fixed Or Money Back", "We'll Be There As Soon As We Can", "Emergency Service Available"

Keyword(s): "emergency air conditioning", "emergency a/c", "emergency ac repair"

Let's break this down a bit.

The Campaign level controls geography, budget, and bidding settings, which is why Business Unit and Zone belong here. Some advertisers throw multiple business units into a single campaign (for example, the Campaign will be called "Minneapolis" and the Ad Groups are "AC Repair, Furnace Repair, Plumbing". This isn't wise, because the only budget control you get for your business units is to turn them off completely or leave them running full steam.

To go further, let's say your maintenance schedule is very full, booking out 3 days, and your install schedule is wide open. If they are in the same campaign, you can't allocate more budget towards installs - in fact, because maintenance campaigns are easier to get conversions on than installs, Google will be more likely to favor your maintenance ads over installation. That's a key consideration you must always have with Google Ads - Google has no visibility or knowledge about your job board, profitability, close rates, or any operational data, so it's up to you to set up your account to match your operational needs. In this case, you would either have to leave maintenance running or turn off the ad group completely.

What makes much more sense is to have business units broken out into separate campaigns. Then you could allocate 80% of your budget to installs and 20% to maintenance, or whatever makes sense for your business.

Breaking out campaigns by business unit also lets you track more effectively in your CRM (if it supports campaign call tracking numbers).

The Zone portion of campaigns is very important. Zones are a collection of zip codes that share common characteristics. It could be a quadrant of the city. It could be the zip codes that have the highest average tickets (our preference). It could be sorted based on age of home, average income, or any characteristic of a particular zip code that makes sense to segment by.

If you currently have no zone configuration, here's a recommendation on where to start:

1. Generate a report of average ticket per zip code per business unit

2. Divide your report into two groupings of zip codes - 50% highest average (Zone 1), 50% lowest average (Zone 2). Now, for each Business Unit, you have 3 different Zones to break your campaigns out into. This is very valuable for budget throttling; when you need to cut back some of your spend, pause only Zone 2 ads. That way, you can ensure you are only advertising towards your most profitable customers when the schedule is mostly full.

Before we jump to Ad Groups, it's actually helpful to start with **Keywords**, as your ad groups most often are formed out of the groupings of keywords you create.

Start by writing out a list of all possible keywords that relate to a business unit, or better yet, use Google's Keyword Planning Tool which gives you suggestions and estimated search volume for similar keywords.

At this point, you'll want to group keywords that seem to be targeting a similar type of person, for example, "tankless water heater prices", "tankless water heater costs", "cheap tankless water heaters". These keywords will eventually guide you in determining what your ad groups should be.

With that, on to **Ad Groups**, or Customer Personas.

A customer persona is a representation of a portion of your market. For example, let's look at the search term "Tankless Water Heater". There are many different types of customers that could be typing this into Google and all for different reasons. You could have new homeowners doing research because their parents recommended it. You could have a mom who's tired of kids

complaining about limited hot water. You could have an environmentalist seeking to make their home as energy-efficient as possible. Home renovators looking to increase home value. A collector looking for more storage space. The combinations are almost endless.

While every searcher is unique, it doesn't make sense to craft an ad group for each and every one of them. Instead, you should identify 2-5 personae for each Keyword that represent the most important and identifiable segments. Let's try this with our tankless water heater example:

Campaign: Plumbing Installs - Zone X

Ad Group 1: Tankless Water Heater Reviews

Keywords: "tankless water heater reviews", "best tankless water heaters"

Ad Group 2: Tankless Water Heater Cost

Keywords: "tankless water heater cost", "tankless water heater price"

Ad Group 3: Tankless Water Heater

Keywords: "tankless water heater"

*Pro Tip: Add "cost", "price", and "reviews" as negative keywords to this ad group

Ad Group 4: {Name of Brand or Brands that you carry}

Keywords: "{brand name}"

Alright, time to break it down. We've split this campaign into the following personae:

People researching different brands of tanks, focused on quality (AG 1)

People who are likely price sensitive (AG 2)

General searches (AG 3, this one may reveal data that leads to new ad groups later)

People searching for a specific brand, likely close to buying (AG 4)

It's a good idea to include a general ad group that covers people with no identifiable characteristics from their search, ie. they put the keyword into Google with no qualifiers like "best" or "reviews". It acts as a catch-all to make sure you're capturing everyone who could be searching for your services. It also becomes a research tool for potential new ad groups to create in the future. For example, you may find in the Search Terms report that you're getting a ton of searches for "tankless water heater financing". If you offer financing, it would make sense to make this into its own ad group so you can customize messaging towards those searchers.

So how do you decide which persona to use? While it's usually as simple as using your similar keywords discovered in the previous section, there is a broader rule: If you have a lot of search volume for a group of people sharing identifiable characteristics, and that you want to use unique messaging with, make it a persona. Now, that sentence is a cluster of confusion, but study it until it makes sense. Let's dig a bit deeper into each part of it:

- "A lot of search volume": either based off historical data or using estimates from Google's Keyword Planning Tool

- "Sharing identifiable characteristics": you can identify price sensitivity based on them using certain keywords. You can identify gender or age because Google allows you to target those separately. Know what levers Google lets you pull then try and define your largest valuable segments from there.

- "Use unique messaging with": you could realistically have 2 different personae that care about the same thing and should see the same ad. For example, "emergency furnace repair" and just "furnace repair" could probably be one ad group, since even if you didn't enter the qualifier "emergency" to your search, it's probably an emergency and the searcher cares about 24/7 availability, fast response times, etc.

So we've covered how to choose your Campaigns and Ad Groups. Now, let's take a look at Ads, which should speak to your personas care about, including their fears, hopes, and motivations.

A formula that is helpful is to use a table with 2 columns. On the left, list out a motivating fear, hope, or pain point unique to your persona. Then, on the right, craft a message that speaks to that fear. Back to our Tankless Water Heaters:

Ad Group: Tankless Water Heater Cost

Motivator	Message
"I'm afraid of overpaying with you"	"Price match guarantee"
"I'm afraid of overpaying with you"	"Free inspection with purchase"
"Money is tight right now"	"Financing available"
"I hope I can get a bargain"	"10% off, this month only!"
"I want the best bang for my buck"	"Quality heaters at affordable prices"
"I don't want to be go through multiple phone calls just to get a price"	"Starting at $899, get your quote today"

You can (and probably should) have multiple messages for a single motivator. Use all of the crafted messages in your ads, then put your strongest ones on the landing page dedicated to this ad group. The more messages you can come up with, the better your results will be, so dig deep and channel your inner copywriter! (Or of course, hire someone to do it for you...)

That's it! You've unlocked the secrets to the perfect account structure for home services PPC!

Now it's time to clone the template, fill it out yourself, then build your account!

Bid Strategy

This section is written as though you have a prior understanding on how the Google Ads auction works. If you don't, do your homework first then keep reading.

Bid strategy is essentially telling Google if and how to use their own algorithms to automatically optimize your keywords for best possible performance. Let's list what these are in layman's terms and give use cases for each.

Maximize Clicks: Google looks at your budget. Then it looks at your keywords and analyzes the historical performance of those keywords (both in your account and across all advertisers). Using this data, it can predict which clicks are going to be the cheapest. It will push those keywords that will get you these inexpensive clicks but still with enough volume to fit your budget.

When to use:

- You don't have conversion tracking
- Your market is crowded and clicks are too expensive to be profitable with other bid types
- Use this type as a fallback if other types aren't performing well

Enhanced CPC: You set Max CPCs for each of your keywords. Google analyzes historical conversion performance for your account and across other advertisers to predict which searches are more likely to convert. When the auction happens, it uses your Max CPC bid as a baseline, then bids either up or down (sometimes doubling or tripling your bid!) depending on whether or not it thinks the searcher is likely to convert. If you use this type, you don't need to use bid adjustments for things like time, day, geography, etc. as it will ignore these signals. You will still need to bid adjust on device, however.

When to use:

- When first launching an account, before there is enough conversion data to run a fully automated bid strategy
- If you want to be ranked number 1, all the time, damn the cost
- If you fear machines taking over your job and you need to be in control of everything (not recommended)

Maximize Conversions: This is the exact same formula as Maximize Clicks, except instead of targeting the cheapest clicks, it targets the cheapest conversions. The key with these "Maximize" types is they work well within a budget constraint.

When to use:

- If you have 30+ conversions in the past 30 days

    AND

- Your campaign is limited by budget (Lost Search IS (Budget) is > 0)

Target CPA: You pick a CPA (Cost per Conversion) that you would be willing to pay for a certain campaign. Google predicts which auctions to get in on in order to hit this threshold. In theory, the more restrictive (low) your CPA is, the less conversions you will get, and vice versa.

When to use:

- If you have 30+ conversions in the past 30 days

    AND

- Your campaign is not limited by budget

- You absolutely refuse to pay a penny more than $X for a lead, even if things are slow

Maximize ROAS/Target ROAS: These are the same as Maximize Conversions and Target CPA and follow the same rules. The key difference is it optimizes towards Conversion Value, rather than Conversions. Use this only if you are importing offline conversions with revenue values into Google Ads and if you have 50+ conversions with a value in the past 30 days.

So, which one should you use?

The general recommendation is to launch with Enhanced CPC, then once you've hit that 30 conversions in 30 days threshold, test into Maximize Conversions (if your budget is limited, which it likely is).

How to pick your Max CPC bid:

To come to the right Max CPC, we'll have to do a little bit of math. Here is the equation (note that * means multiply and / means divide):

Max CPC = Target CPA * Website Conversion Rate

Target CPA is defined here as how much you would be willing to pay to have the phone ring, which is a whole equation of its own:

Target CPA = Average Revenue * Desired Marketing % * CSR Booking Rate

Wow, that's a lot. Let's put it all together.

Max CPC = Avg. Revenue * Marketing % * CSR Booking Rate * Website Conversion Rate

If these are your numbers for a business unit, let's say Furnace Installation:

Avg. Revenue = $5,000

Marketing % = 10%

CSR Booking Rate = 70%

Website Conversion Rate = 15%

Then your equation is:

Max CPC = $5,000 * 0.10 * 0.70 *0.15

Max CPC = $52.50, with your Target CPA as $350

Let's try with a less lucrative business unit, like Duct Cleaning:

Avg. Revenue = $119

Marketing % = 10%

CSR Booking Rate = 75%

Website Conversion Rate = 12%

Max CPC = $119 * 0.10 * 0.75 * 0.12

Max CPC = $1.07, with a target CPA of $8.93

What's crazy is we've seen Duct Cleaning clicks as high as $50 before - there's no way profit is being made in that competitive of a market.

SOAPBOX MOMENT!

We often hear arguments along the lines of "I don't want my marketing agency to work with my competitor because they get to choose who wins". The equations above partially prove that it's irrelevant. More than half of this whole equation is based on the operations of your business. Your willingness to invest in marketing, your CSR performance, and your sales ability to raise average ticket can give you room to be more aggressive with your bids. Look at the following example:

Metric	Client A	Client B
Avg. Revenue	$1000	$1000
Acceptable Marketing %	10%	10%
Booking Rate	60%	70%
Web Conv. Rate	15%	15%
Max CPC	$9	$10.50

Because Client B closes calls 10% better than Client A, they can afford to bid $1.50 extra and will therefore show up higher in the auction and claim a vastly larger share of the clicks.

Soapbox summary: Winning in your business helps you win in advertising more than being good at advertising helps you win in advertising!

The Contractor's Guide for Writing Perfect Ads

You should already be done half the battle with your ads if you filled out the Motivation and Message template in the "Account Structure" section. Each Ad Group represents a persona that has fears, hopes, pain points, and expectations that your ads should be speaking to. Once you have those identified, there are a few tips and tricks you should follow when actually writing your ads in Google Ads.

> Tip #1: Do one Responsive Ad and 2 Expanded Text Ads in each Ad Group.

Responsive Ads are very cool. You put in all of your possible headlines and descriptions and Google uses machine learning to mix and match and predict what the best combination is. Follow this guide when creating this ad type. Google also gave some additional advice on how to write content that pushes the customer along in the buying cycle - you should try to hit as many of these as possible in your ads (repeated from the Right Message section):

1. Category heuristics: Short descriptions of key product specifications can simplify purchase decisions. These are quick numbers that let customers compare offerings, like the number of megapixels on a camera or the number of inches for a TV.

2. Power of now: The longer you have to wait for a product, the weaker the proposition becomes.

3. Social proof: Recommendations and reviews from others can be very persuasive.

4. Scarcity bias: As stock or availability of a product decreases, the more desirable it becomes.

5. Authority bias: Being swayed by an expert or trusted source.

6. Power of free: A free gift with a purchase, even if unrelated, can be a powerful motivator.

Rewriting these for the trades:

1. Category heuristics: this is less relevant, but the brands you carry or your guarantees and warranties are important here.

2. Power of now: if you have openings today or tomorrow, talk about it in your ads! 24/7 service is a great offering here.

3. Social proof: Once you have 100 reviews on Google, your star rating will be eligible to appear in your ads, so get those reviews! You could also call out reviews in your ad copy with a line like "4.9 Star Rating" or "Read our reviews and see why your neighbors trust us with their HVAC needs".

4. Scarcity bias: Include a time-sensitive promotion in your messaging. If you're really on top of things, include a tagline like "3 openings left this week" or something along those lines.

5. Authority bias: A+ BBB rating, awards you've won, # of years in business, and similar authoritative claims accomplish a lot to sway potential customers

6. Power of free: Are things slow? Offer free inspections, free callouts, free filters, or $0 down financing options if possible.

Also be sure to include **the main keyword(s) in the ad group**, for example, "Boise Electricians", and include **a call to action**, like "Book Your Quote Today" or "Call Now".

Have some more ad ideas? Send them to ads@servicetitan.com and we may add them to this guide!

Landing Page Strategy

The full landing page strategy can be found under the Landing Page section later in this guide, but here are a few Google Ad specific tips.

#1. An absolute must have is a separate landing page for each business unit. Better yet is a landing page for each job type. Best is a landing page per each ad group, as you want to be able to customize your messaging towards the target persona.

This can be accomplished in 2 ways: building a fat stack of landing pages or using dynamic content.

Dynamic content works by automatically adjusting the content of the page according to the ad group the brough in the click. For example, traffic from a general plumbing repair ad group will see a heading of "Plumbing Repair" and have content more generalized, whereas traffic from a plumbing repair costs ad group could see "Quality Plumbing Repairs at Affordable Prices" and speak about how economical your company is.

Dynamic content is great if you don't want to manage/design 50 different landing pages for your account (although you will have to set up 50 'rules' and input the content for each variation anyways, so the time savings are minimal).

What makes sense for most advertisers is to simply create a separate landing page for each ad group based off of a template. In other words, build one really good landing page using a page builder like Unbounce, Clickfunnels, or Duda, then clone it and change the content.

Negative Keywords

The importance of good negative keywords cannot be overstated. You can waste over 50% of your ad budget without proper utilization of negatives. You should have an Account-level negative keyword list, as well as some Ad Group-level negative keywords.

Account-level

Here are some master lists that you can upload into your accounts for the following business units:

Master Negative Keyword List

You'll also want to add some other negative keywords that are specific to your business, such as:

- Locations close to you but out of service range
- Competitors (unless you are running a competitors campaign to try and steal their traffic
- Brands you do not carry
- Relevant services that you do not offer (ex. If you only service residential, make sure "Commercial" is a negative keyword, or if you don't offer duct cleaning, add that for sure)

Ad Group-level

Let's say you have a hot water tank ad group and a tankless water heater ad group. In an ideal world, someone searching for "hot water tankless" would be shown an ad from the latter ad group and not 'hot water tank'. Alas, Google Ads doesn't always work the way we want it to and can often have keywords trigger ad groups it wasn't supposed to. A creative solution to this is to use Ad Group-level negatives. In this case, the first ad group should have "tankless" as a negative keyword. The second should have "hot water tank" as a negative keyword. This way, you can make sure that you are funneling people in specific personas to the right ads and landing pages.

As a rule of thumb, add any uniquely identifying keyword as a negative to all other ad groups it doesn't apply to. If you have an ad group called "Plumbers Near Me" that focuses on the importance of locality, add "Near Me" as a negative keyword to your general "Plumbers" ad group.

Optimization Techniques

This is arguably the most important section of this whole guide. If you can course-correct your Google Ads account effectively, you're on the way to cutting waste and growing profits. For simplicity, this guide will give a checklist of everything you should do when optimizing an account and focus less on the theory behind it. Without further ado….

- ❑ Full experience walkthrough
  - ❑ For each campaign, pick an ad, make sure the messaging makes sense, click on it, make sure the landing page is correct and is showing the right number, spot check calling some on the numbers
- ❑ View Optimization Score
  - ❑ Google uses its own recommendation engine to give suggestions on how to improve your account. Ignore anything that has to do with targeting by impression share. Either approve the recommendation if you like it or dismiss it to bring your score to 100
- ❑ Review last optimization's changes
  - ❑ You made changes last time you were in the account and should've recorded those changes. Look at the metrics, compare to previous results, and decide whether you want to keep the change (positive results) or revert back to the original settings (negative results).
- ❑ Check budget pacing
  - ❑ Are you on track to spend your full amount? Look at your job board and booking metrics. Do you need to adjust the budget to respond to capacity?
- ❑ Reallocate budgets
  - ❑ Is one campaign consistently outperforming another in terms of profitability? If it works with your capacity, shift the budget over (as long as there is Lost Search IS (budget))
- ❑ Identify poor ad groups
  - ❑ Find the ad groups that have high spend but poor performance and go through the following exercise to diagnose the issue:
    - ❑ Am I targeting the Right Person?

      Check Search Terms and add any that aren't relevant to the persona as a negative. Check your demographic and geographic data to ensure that they fit the persona as well. Exclude the ones that show poor performance. If everything seems relevant, then ask:

- ❑ Am I targeting with the Right Message?

Does the ad messaging speak to the pain points, fears, hopes, and expectations of this persona? Does the landing page reinforce those motivators? If not, adjust your messaging and keep running. If so, check:

- ❑ Am I targeting at the Right Time?

Are the search terms more research based vs action based? Do you have real people answering the phones at the popular conversion times? If not, try changing your ad schedule or adding negative keywords for things that sound like research (ex. "What's the difference" or "how to"). If so, finally ask:

- ❑ Am I targeting the Right Place?

Is your persona targetable here on Google Ads or should you try a different platform to reach them?

- ❑ Utilize Performance Planner

  - ❑ Performance Planner is an incredible tool that gives you a sneak peek into how Google's Machine Learning is working. It gives you an interactive graph that shows you how many conversions you can expect based on your budget and CPA thresholds. You should absolutely be using this to maximize your profitability. Guide to do so is here.

- ❑ Create new ad groups

  - ❑ If the search terms/keyword performance from one of your ad groups show two different personas with significant search volume, break those out into separate ad groups.

- ❑ Run experiments

  - ❑ If there is enough conversion data, run an experiment trying maximize conversions or target CPA, or even testing out to different CPA thresholds for target CPA.

Most of these things are micro-adjustments that can improve your advertising's effectiveness. It's also important to go macro and look at how your operations data, like capacity, close rates, average revenue, etc. to make sure the whole customer journey is flowing smoothly.

Bing Ads

There isn't much point in rewriting what already abounds on the internet in this section. Here are the basics you need to be aware of:

Bing Ads should probably have a place in your marketing budget.

Optimization techniques are almost identical to what's been written in the Google Ads section.

You can literally copy and paste your Google Ads account into Bing Ads with a few clicks, saving you build time.

The short of it is that you should at least try Bing Ads. While its reach and capabilities are smaller than Google, you may strike gold with some cheap clicks and high converters.

THE LANDING PAGE

There is a longstanding debate on whether it is better to send ad traffic to landing pages or directly to the website. There are too many variables to declare one a unanimous victor over the other, but the best practice is to use landing pages that are conversion-focused for all ads. This allows you to throw SEO out the window and design a page with the singular aim of motivating the customer to call or fill out a form. If you do want to send traffic to your website, each destination page should be heavily focused on driving conversions.

Here are some tips and tricks you should follow when designing your PPC landing pages:

- Follow a similar template for all of your pages
- Change up imagery and headlines per business unit
- Change up content based on which campaign or ad group is bringing the traffic there
- Ensure your content is less than 500 words - less is more with these landing pages

- Ensure your phone number is on the top-right of the page, clearly visible, and clickable
- Have a prominent lead capture form either above the fold or close to the top of the page
- Have a chat box
- Make sure the content is focused on the persona you are targeting and highlights the main reason the customer should choose you instead of a competitor - think "am I effectively addressing the customer's concerns with what I'm saying?"
- Make sure the colors and branding are consistent with your actual website
- Have your logo at the top and have it link to your real website
- If you have good online reviews, incorporate that as a widget into the page
- Install a heatmap tracking tool onto the site so you can track what users are doing and what can be improved - we recommend LuckyOrange
- Put your website's Google Analytics pixel on the landing page as well, but create unique 'Views' for traffic to your landing page
- Have a unique tracking number on each landing page that corresponds to its campaign
- Put your landing page through [Google's Speed Test](#) to ensure it loads quickly
- Don't build and ignore - always be testing and refining your landing page until conversion rate is as high as possible

CHOOSING YOUR MARKETING MIX

How much should you spend on advertising? This is literally the million dollar question. For those who want to TL;DR, here it is:

- 3-5% of revenue to maintain that revenue
- 5-8% of revenue to grow
- 8-12% of revenue to grow aggressively

But here's the catch **(if you only read one part of this section, read this)**: you should only be spending money on marketing if it's profitable! With the exception of a portion of your budget dedicated to branding, you should only invest if the ROI is there. This is why accurate tracking is vital to the success of any marketing strategy.

Have you ever gone fishing for hours and caught

nothing? This can happen for two main reasons: 1) You're fishing in the wrong spot, or 2) You're using the wrong bait. Now imagine you're in the fishing business and you've hired someone to catch fish for you. You send them out for the day and they come back with a handful of fish. You ask: "What bait did you use to catch the fish," to which they respond "I don't remember". You ask: "Where did you catch these ones?" to be answered "I don't remember." The next day this happens, then the next, and on and on. Some days are fruitful, others yield no fish at all. However, if the forgetful fisherman would just remember that most fish can be found by the west pier and like grasshoppers for bait, the haul could be huge every day. You would probably hire a forgetful fisherman. If you aren't getting clear visibility into ROI from your marketing, you should fire your marketing.

Once tracking is in place, the math becomes easy. If you are spending $1,000 in marketing and it's generating $500 in revenue, you're just burning cash. $5,000 in revenue? You've found a good spot of pond to fish in. $15,000 in revenue? You should be increasing that budget and tell HR to find some more techs because you've struck gold.

That's really the key: spend as much as it takes to fill your capacity. If capacity is consistently full, even during off seasons, and the marketing is profitable, hire more techs and raise the budget.

Some businesses set annual budgets. That's fine to have as a baseline but can be limited for growth-minded companies. A good question to ask is: How much more can I profitably spend on this channel? With proper tracking you should be able to answer this question and scale your organization accordingly. You should revisit your budget at least monthly to adjust it according to new revenue, spend potential, seasonality, and profitability.

Some businesses also have pre-set budgets for certain channels. It may look like this:
- $5,000/mo. on Google LSA
- $5,000/mo. on Google PPC
- $1,000/mo. on HomeAdvisor
- $1,000/mo. on Facebook Ads

They run with this budget and keep it set in stone
for a quarter, or even year at a time.

To all who are using this approach, please, stop burning your money!

The best approach is to have an **omni-channel budget**. Set a Direct Advertising budget, set a Branding budget, then let them run on whichever channels are most profitable!

Using the example above. Let's pick some arbitrary profitability metrics for those channels:

Channel	ROI	Spend Potential
LSA	10x	$8,000
Google PPC	3x	$20,000
HomeAdvisor	4x	$10,000
Facebook Ads	0.5x	$20,000

We'll focus solely on Direct Advertising for right now. Based on the initial budget allocation, total ROI is **$69,50**0. Not a bad ROI overall.

However, if a channel-fluid approach was used, the allocations would be:
- $8,000/mo. on Google LSA
- $4,000/mo. on HomeAdvisor

This change btrings the total ROI to **$96,000 for the exact same ad spend.** What would you do with an additional $26,000/month?

You could even invest it in more advertising since the ROI is there. In fact, if you were to reinvest that amount back into advertising, it would generate $84,000 in revenue ($58,000 if you subtract the ad spend). This is how growth happens.

Branding Budget vs. Direct Advertising Budget

Remember our customer journey map? It can be tempting to ignore branding and throw all money into the Exploration/Evaluation portion of the customer journey, like LSA or PPC. But it's crucial to remember the Exposure element. Investing in brand exposure plants seeds to be harvested in the future, while also helping move current searchers along in their immediate journey. If Direct Advertising is the gas in your advertising engine, then Branding is the oil. Ignore it and the whole thing will break down eventually.

Still not sold? If you aren't investing in branding, a competitor is. They are becoming a local household name while you dwindle in obscurity. The worst part? People who care about brand tend to be willing to spend more! A good brand is a signal of quality for the consumer, so if they are inquiring based on their brand exposure, they are less likely to fuss over so-and-so who is charging less. Your ideal customer is looking for a brand to be loyal to. Invest in branding.

As a rule of thumb, 15% of your digital budget should be branding. That includes branded searches on PPC channels as well as any Display or Video channels. If you're not sure where to start, go with Responsive Ads on Google Display. All you need is a handful of images, your logo, a few headlines, and a few descriptions and Google automatically generates motion ads with solid aesthetics.

CONCLUSION

We hope this guide has given you the tools you need to be successful at PPC. Anyone can learn it, but it takes time, patience, and practice to truly master it. And true masters know that you can't just learn it once. The landscape changes constantly, and what you thought was the best method yesterday might not work tomorrow. As such, this guide will also be constantly updated to align with current best practices.

You CAN win at PPC. **Good luck!**

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