

Search Automation 2020



This publication is the result of the collaboration between DDMA, IAB Netherlands, iProspect, SDIM, Google and Microsoft.



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Preface.

Search advertising has become more complex. In an ideal world, many of these activities are partly or even fully automated. This is also known as 'search automation'. Automating search advertising is not an easy task, and as a marketer you must have the necessary technical knowledge and tooling.

To support marketers in this process, industry associations DDMA and IAB Netherlands jointly published the [search automation whitepaper](#) 'Search Automation in the Netherlands and the impact on the role of the marketer' at the beginning of 2018. This whitepaper focused on all SEA activities that can be automated and their significance for the role of the marketer. A second edition of the whitepaper was published in April 2019: [Search Automation voor MKB](#). The purpose of this whitepaper was to help medium and small businesses in particular to start with search automation.

Because search advertising is developing so quickly, the industry associations have decided to publish a third whitepaper about search automation. The purpose of this whitepaper is to support search specialists and online marketers in automating search strategies.

This new edition contains:

- updated topics from previous editions;
- more concrete examples;
- more details about tooling. We do not limit ourselves to free tools, but consciously choose to depict a landscape of the tools with which we ourselves have the most experience;
- insights into the added value of a marketer when it comes to automated campaigns.

We thank the authors of the previous whitepapers for their work and for the honor of allowing us to build on this. We hope that every marketer can benefit from automating search with the help of this third edition.

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1. What does automation entail within search?

Automation within search advertising relates to the automation of certain activities. For example, setting up a search campaign as efficiently as possible via a feed or having the bids of the keywords automatically adjusted by means of bidding strategies. The use of automation within search is virtually a no-brainer because of the positive effect it can have in the form of time savings, efficiency and/or improved results. Search automation is not always a guarantee for better results or time savings, however. There is no one-size-fits-all answer, because the effectiveness of automation also depends on the type of organization, the volumes and the purpose of the campaign.

Activities that can be automated

For this whitepaper, the activities for a search campaign are divided into four activities that can all be automated to a certain level: campaign creation, bid management, data activation and account hygiene. The table below shows the various automation options for each search activity. A logical starting point is indicated for companies that do not or hardly automate their search advertising activities. In addition, automation solutions are described for companies that are more advanced in the field of automation. Each part of this table is explained in the following chapters.

Activity	Starting point	Next step
Campaign creation	Google Ads Editor + Microsoft Ads Editor + Importing campaigns + Smart campaigns + Spreadsheets	Dynamic Search Ads + Ad customizers + Feeds + Third-party tooling
Bid management	Automated bidding + External data + Scripts	Target CPA + Target ROAS + Third-party tooling
Data activation	In-app conversions + Customer match + Call tracking	Importing offline conversions + Store visits + Margin control + LTV
Account Hygiene & campaign optimization	Recommendations tab + Standard scripts + Automated rules	Custom scripts + Third-party tooling

2. Campaign creation.

In this whitepaper we define campaign creation as setting up a search campaign containing ads, ad groups, keywords, settings and extensions. Search campaigns can be set up in the interfaces of both Google Ads and Microsoft Ads or through associated offline editors. In this way, advertisers who only offer a few products or services, such as an energy supplier, can create a campaign relatively quickly. An advantage of this is that you have maximum control over the structure, ad and the corresponding keywords. By contrast,

advertisers or retailers offering hundreds or thousands of products and services require significantly more time to set up a search campaign. In this chapter, we describe five different options through which companies with a wide range of products or services can create their campaigns more efficiently.

In short:

	Best result	Advantages	Disadvantages
Manual: excel / spreadsheets	<100 landing pages	Full control	Time-consuming
Automated campaigns	As a supplement	Quick setup	Little control
Ad customizers	As a supplement	Unique features	No campaign and ad group creation
Dynamic Search Ads (DSA)	As a supplement	- Quick setup - No feed needed	Little control
External (API) Tool	>100 landing pages	Scalability	Costs

Tip

It is not always necessary to set up all the applications shown on the left in both Google Ads and Microsoft Ads. Microsoft Ads offers the possibility to automatically import Google Ads campaigns. Advertisers can have their entire Google Ads search campaigns periodically copied to Microsoft Ads within a few clicks

2.1 Manually creating campaigns with Excel/spreadsheets

First of all, there is the possibility to create a large number of search campaigns using spreadsheets. By working out the campaign structure, keywords and ads in a spreadsheet, campaigns can be imported in the Google Ads Editor or the Microsoft Ads Editor. This type of campaign creation can be useful for advertisers with many different products or services.

This method of campaign creation requires little technical knowledge, but can be time consuming for marketers without knowledge of spreadsheets. Experienced spreadsheet users, on the other hand, can more easily apply automation using formulas. For example, you can leverage data flow, vertical lookup or create values to create campaign names or ad copy at scale. You can also load an XML feed (i.e. a sitemap or shopping feed) to add new values in bulk. These values can then be used to structure the campaign or enrich ads.

Example

A furniture webshop wants to start advertising through search ads. There are many different products on the website for which ad groups, keywords and Ads need to be created. By creating bulk columns and rows in Excel containing all products and brands, the shop owner can efficiently create campaigns by copying and pasting the CSV into the Editor. Check out these sample CSV files for [Google](#) and [Microsoft](#).

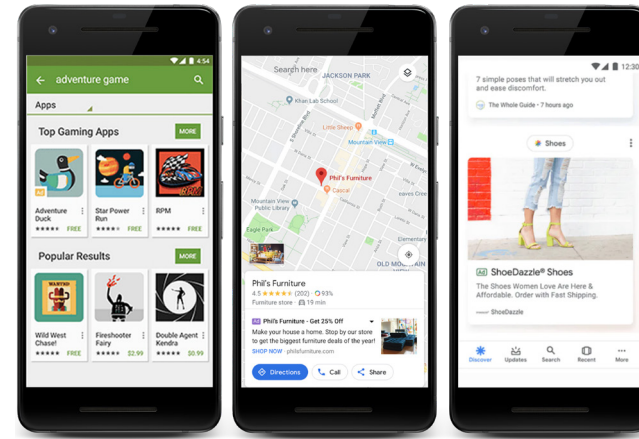
2.2 Setting up automated campaigns

Google has rolled out several campaign types in recent years that are easy to set up, after which Google automatically optimizes the campaigns. You will find an overview of this in the table below.

With all these campaign types, setting up this form of campaigns is guaranteed to save time. The advertiser can set an objective (for example, maximize conversions) and Google will do the rest. The disadvantage is, of course, that you have less control and insight into the campaign.

Furthermore, these campaign types often have combined targeting; the Ads are therefore shown across multiple platforms (Search, Display, YouTube). This can yield good results because Google has more signals to optimize on, but it does not always fit the advertiser's strategy. Many advertisers have different marketing objectives for search advertising and display, for example, and it is not possible to set different targets per platform. A number of these campaign types also have a unique inventory. For example, only with Discovery Ads, Universal App Campaigns and Local Campaigns is it possible to advertise in Google Discover, the Play Store and Google Maps respectively.

Whether these automated campaign types are suitable depends on the advertiser. The type must fit into the strategy and the disadvantages (lack of control) must be weighed against the advantages.



Automated campaign	Explanation
Smart Search Campaigns	Automated text ads in search network
Smart Display Campaigns	Automated display ads in Google Display Network (GDN)
Smart Shopping Campaigns	Automated Shopping Ads in Search Network, GDN, YouTube and Gmail
Discovery Ads	Automated display ads in Gmail, Google Discover and YouTube
Universal App Campaigns	Automated ads in Play Store, Search Network and GDN
Local Campaigns	Automated local ads in the search network, Google Maps and GDN

2.3 Dynamic Search Ads (DSA)

Dynamic Search Ads (DSA) are an automated solution that is available by default in Google and Microsoft. In a DSA campaign, Ads are automatically generated based on (parts of) the content on the advertiser's website. All an advertiser has to do is choose which parts of the website can be used and write a few lines of ad text. Ad headlines, keywords and landing pages are then automatically generated.

DSA campaigns can also be used to understand volumes and prices per click of keywords pulled from the advertiser's website. High-performing keywords can then be used in regular search campaigns. Please note that these keywords are excluded from DSA campaigns.

Tip

It is possible to use DSA in combination with a page feed. A DSA page feed consists of two columns: the URLs that may be used for DSA and a column with the label that may be linked to it. This gives advertisers the opportunity to gain more control over which pages can be used to land visitors. In addition, the labels can be used to structure campaigns and bidding strategies. This can be done, for example, by passing margin categories in the labels.

2.4 Ad customizers

By using ad customizers (ad modifiers) an ad text can be dynamically adjusted based on different signals, i.e. the device that is used, the location, the time of day or day of the week. In addition, elements such as price & discounts can also be added.

The unique advantage of ad customizers is that they provide scalable relevance, without the need for a large increase in ads and ad groups. Ad customizers are used by means of a syntax (a simple piece of code that Google can automatically read). The addition of this syntax can result in millions of unique ads depending on what the user is looking for, **who** the user is, **when** the user searches and **where** the user searches.

Note: Only elements in the ad text can be modified with ad customizers. Ad group and campaign creation are therefore not included. As a result, ad customizers are more of an addition to (manual or automatic) campaign creation.



Overview of signals that can be used:

Signal	Type of customizer	Syntax
Keyword	Dynamic Keyword Insertion	{KeyWord:Alternative}
Device	IF	{=IF(device=*device*, Device text:Alternative)}
Target group	IF	{=IF(audience=*audience*, Audience text:Alternative)}
Time - countdown	Countdown	{=COUNTDOWN("jjjj/mm/dd uu:mm:ss", "language code", days countdown)}
Time	Feed parameters	{FeedName.ColumnName:Alternative}
Customer Location	Feed parameters	{FeedName.ColumnName:Alternative}
Product	Feed parameters	{FeedName.ColumnName:Alternative}

Examples of the use of ad customizers:

What (Product Parameters)

Signal: Feed

price	discount	Target Adgroup	Target Campaign
€ 399,00	Now with 40% discount	LED TV	Electronics
€ 99,00		Wifi Speakers	Electronics
Etc.			

Syntax: {feedname.price} and {feedname.discount}

Example:

LED TV's from €399 | Now with 40% discount

[Adv.](#) www.example.com

Order quickly online!

Who (Audience)

Signal: Audience

Syntax: {=IF(audience IN (Members),20% Discount for Members)}

Example:

LED TV's | 20% Discount for Members

[Adv.](#) www.example.com

More than 300 stores in the Netherlands!

Where (Location)

Signal: Feed

locationtext	Target Location
Visit us in Amsterdam	Amsterdam
Visit us in Rotterdam	Rotterdam
Etc.	

Syntax: feedname.locationtext}

Example:

LED TV's | Visit us in Rotterdam

[Adv.](#) www.example.com

More than 300 stores in the Netherlands!

When (Countdown)

Signal: Time

Syntax: {=COUNTDOWN("2020/09/20 00:00:01","EN",5)}

Example:

Special LED TV's Promotion | Just 11 hours left

[Adv.](#) www.example.com

Order quickly online!

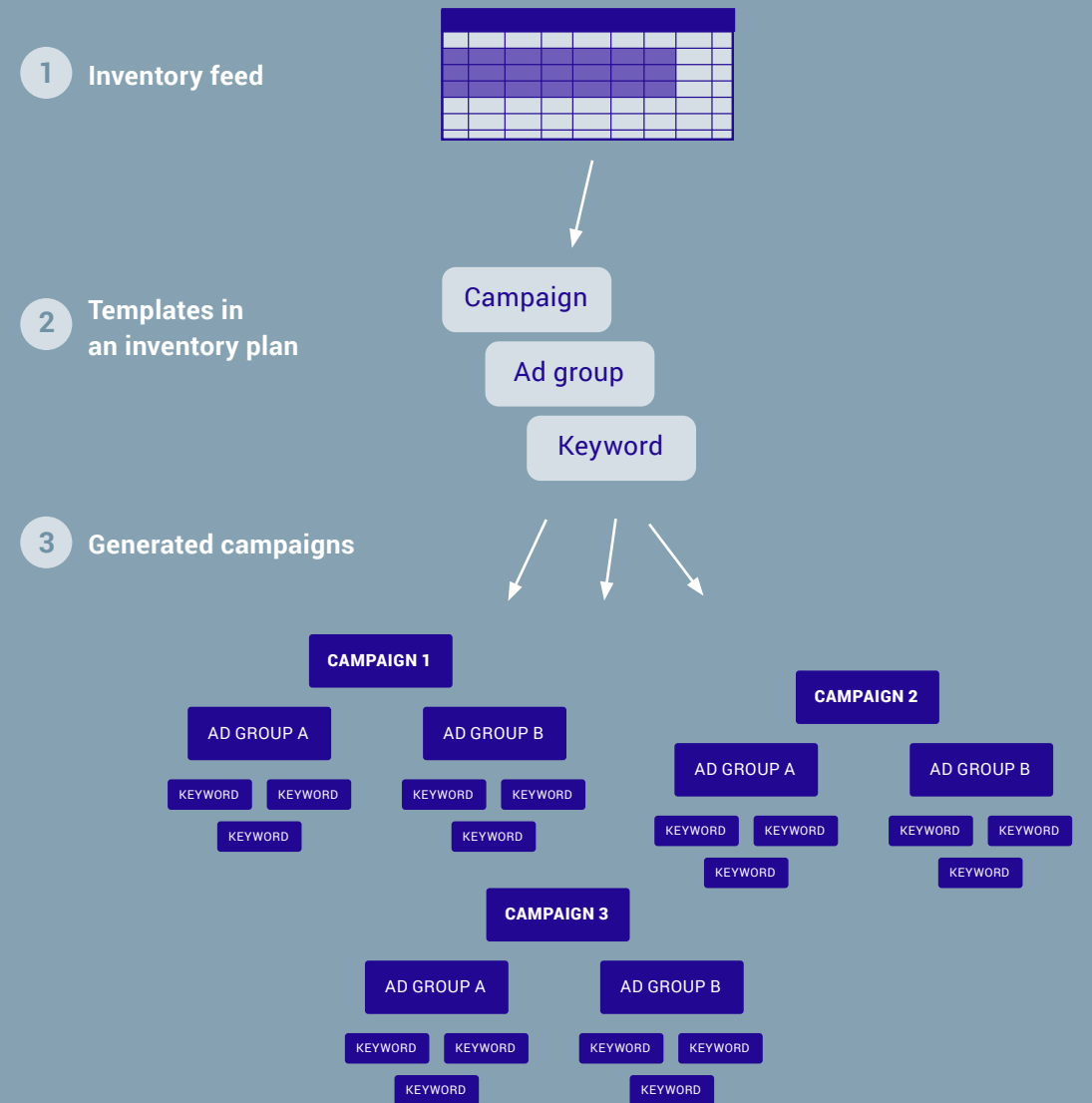
Tip

It is not always necessary to manually set up the ad customizers in both Google Ads and Microsoft Ads. By using the Automated Import, the ad customizers can be automatically imported from Google to Microsoft Ads.

2.5 External API Tool

External API tools give an advertiser more control and capabilities than DSA and ad customizers. Campaigns, ad groups, keywords, ads and extensions are automatically created and updated using API tools. Due to the extensive API connection of the search engines, almost all actions that are performed manually can be automated. With a large (> 100) and varying range of products or services, a third-party campaign building tool is often the most suitable.

There are several external tools, and each has different advantages. Which tool is most suitable therefore differs per advertiser. Take the following factors into consideration when deciding (next page):





Feed quality

The quality of the feed largely determines the success of the campaign. For example, when the categorization, titles and descriptions contain errors, they will reflect in your automated campaigns. Some third-party tools are prepared for this and have advanced options to edit a feed so that a less desirable feed can also be made workable. This is usually done through a feed management tool such as Channable or DataFeedWatch. The Producthero Optimizer is an interesting tool for those who want to further optimize the feed based on search behavior.



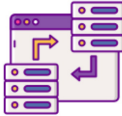












User-friendliness

Who will use the tool? Are these experienced specialists or should the tool also be accessible to less experienced employees? There is a difference in ease of use between the tools, and usually a tool that is easier to use, is also more limited in its features.

One-stop shop or specialist

Some specialist tools focus only on campaign creation, but there are tools where campaign creation is part of several features, such as feed management, bid management or a full marketing 'stack'. Specialist campaign creation tools often have more options, but are also a separate cost item. The tool must fit within the advertiser's tech stack. In a complex paid search design, a specialist tool can distinguish itself through customization.

CAMPAIGN CREATION

	Google Ads	Microsoft Advertising	Third-party tools
			
Manual / Excel	Google Ads Editor	Microsoft Advertising Editor Import campaigns from Google Ads	
Machine Learning	Dynamic Search Ads Smart campaigns Smart shopping campaigns Smart display campaigns App campaigns	Dynamic Search Ads (DSA)	
Feed-based	Ad modifiers	Ad customizers	         

3. Bid management.

Good cost-per-click (CPC) bids are the cornerstone of any successful search campaign. The bids that are set have a direct impact on performance and largely determine ad visibility. If bids are not adjusted regularly, too much budget might be spent on non-converting keywords and too little budget on well-converting keywords.

It is quite a challenge to set up bids in a smart and scalable way. Especially when many keywords and different dimensions are involved, such as day of the week, audience targeting, time of day, device and geographic location. As a result, bids require continuous monitoring and adjustment. This complexity means that it is often a logical choice to apply automation to bidmanagement.

3.1 Non-auction-time-bidding: rule-based, APIs, scripts and third-party tooling

Non-auction-time bidding only places a bid at the keyword/segment level. Setting rules is the most accessible way to automate bid management. In the interface of Microsoft Ads or Google Ads it is possible to set rules based on different data points in campaigns (i.e. historical conversion data of a keyword in the past 7 days) and connect an action (such as increasing or decreasing the CPC bid). If necessary, variables can also be combined with each other.

It is also possible to use external data points to automate different bids. Scripts, tooling or other API applications are often used to link sources. With JavaScript applications, it is possible to adjust bids or automatically update bid adjustments for devices and locations (based on historical performance differences). This makes it possible, for example, to do bid management based on available stock or weather forecast. The strength of these applications lies in the combination of human input and automation. There are also many tools available that create custom-made bidding algorithms through direct API links that allow for frequent bids to be modified, often with the option to use data input from various sources.

Tip

There are multiple options for third-party tools. When selecting a tool, consider the following:

- Which search engines should the tool be able to optimize?
- Which other online advertising channels do you want to optimize?
- What other functionalities besides bidding are important to you?
Do you want to add your own data?
- What is your budget for paid tooling?

3.2 Auction Time Bidding

Search platforms offer the possibility to make use of automated ROAS and CPA bidding strategies. Microsoft Ads doesn't support Target ROAS in all markets. You can find an overview of supported countries at page 19. Every

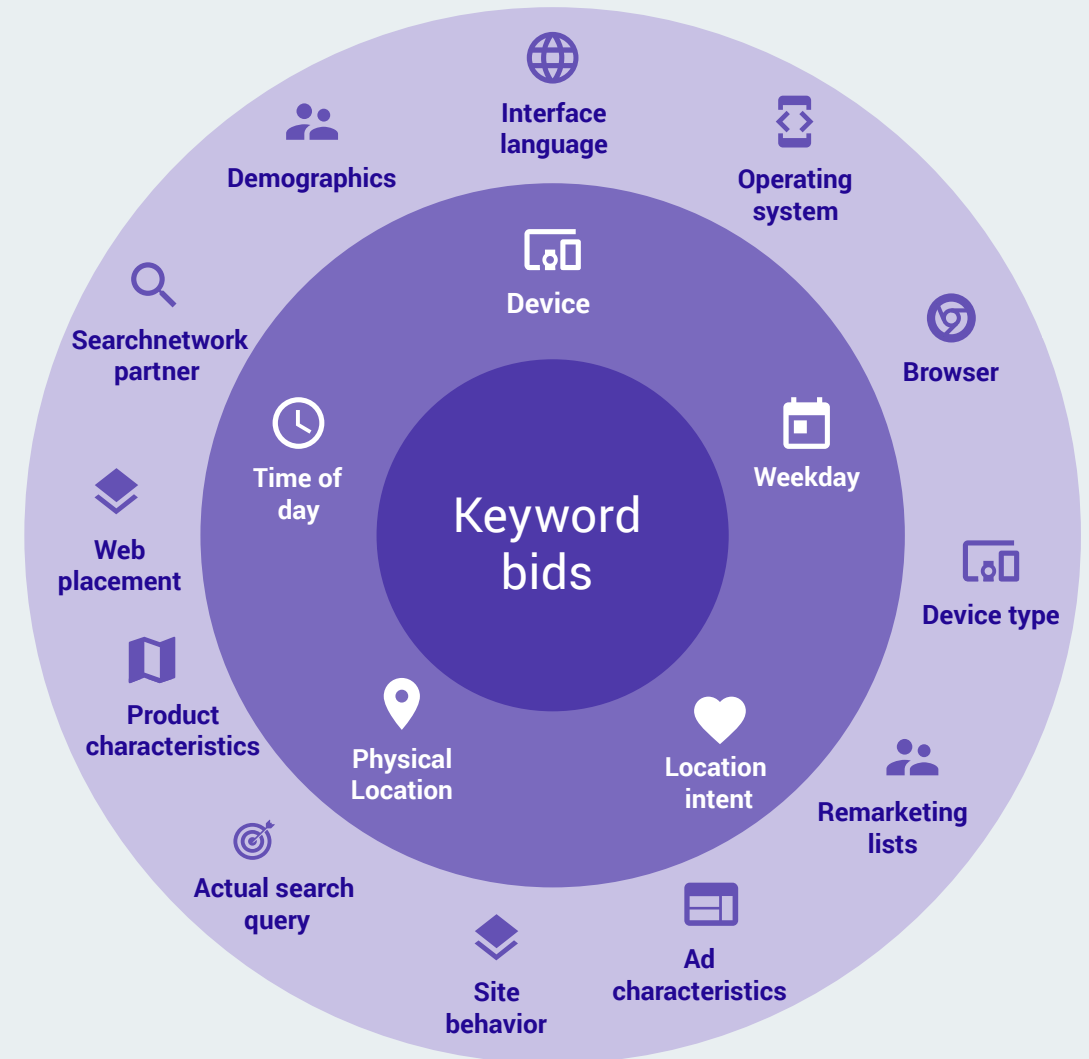
automated bidding strategy aims to achieve an objective (e.g. as achieving a certain visibility in the search engine or maximizing revenue). There is a clear distinction between automated bidding and smart bidding:

Bid strategy group	Bidding strategy	Objective
Automated bidding	Maximizing clicks	Generating as many clicks as possible within the chosen budget.
Automated bidding	Target Impression Share	Visibility: Showing ads at the top of the page or on the first page of search results.
Smart bidding	Enhanced CPC* (ECPC)	Driving more conversions through manual bidding.
Smart bidding	Maximize conversions	Generating as many conversions as possible within the chosen budget.
Smart bidding	Maximizing conversion value	Generating as much conversion value as possible within the chosen budget.
Smart bidding	Target CPA	Generating as many conversions as possible at the set cost-per-acquisition (CPA). Best practice: At least 30 conversions in the last 30 days.
Smart bidding	Target ROAS	Generate the highest possible conversion value for the chosen return (ROAS). Best practice: At least 50 conversions in the last 30 days.

Note: Unlike bid adjustments for Manual CPC, Target CPA bid adjustments adjust the value of the target CPA instead of the bids themselves.

Tip

When using a target ROAS bidding strategy in Google Ads, it is not necessary to make manual bid adjustments on target groups or device (unless you want -100% on device, but this will limit the algorithm).



Limitations and new developments for Automated Bid Strategies

Automated bidding strategies are frequently applied and seen as best practice, but not every marketer is aware of the associated limitations. This algorithmic way of working leaves little room for sudden strategy changes and nuance. For example, when 'Maximize conversions' is activated, all other elements, such as the number of clicks and CTR, are subordinate to this one goal. In addition, all these applications require a certain period of time to learn from the current settings and historical data in the account. This can take up to a week. With a temporary discount promotion, such as Black Friday, there are extreme differences in conversion rates from day to day. As a result, this strategy may not provide the optimal result at that time.








To prevent this, an advertiser can make use of 'seasonality adjustments'. Seasonality adjustments allow you as an advertiser to indicate how much the conversion rate may change during a temporary event, so that the system can immediately adjust the bids when the event starts and ends. At the end of the period, smart bidding will immediately revert to pre-period behavior, without going through a ramp down period.

Finally, the role of the marketer also remains important in determining the desired objectives, measuring the correct data points and efficiently managing the bid strategies. Marketers have to think more strategically about what the right targets are, and how all data points can be properly measured in order to feed the bid strategy with the right information. More on this in the next chapter.

Tip

Target CPA and Target ROAS work best in campaigns that have sufficient budget. It is not recommended to use these bidding strategies for campaigns that have a 'Limited by budget' status. When this status is displayed, you should increase the budget for your campaigns or set a lower CPA or higher ROAS target (until the campaigns no longer show a 'Limited by budget' status).

BID MANAGEMENT

	Google Ads	Microsoft Advertising	Third-party tools
			
Rule-based	Automated Rules Bid Adjustments	0 Bid adjustments	bgenius
Scripts	Multi-bidder Based on TV ads Based on the weather For bid adjustments	Microsoft Advertising scripts	
Machine Learning	<p>Smart bidding (conversion driven)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved CPC • Target CPA • Target ROAS • Maximizing conversions • Maximizing conversion value <p>Automated bidding for site visits or visibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximizing clicks • Target Impression Rate 	<p>Bid strategies (conversion-driven)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced CPC • Target CPA • Target ROAS (US, CA, UK, AU, FR and DE) • Maximizing conversions <p>Automated bidding for site visits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximize clicks 	<p>.Adchieve kenshoo</p> <p>ACQUISIO </p> <p> Marin SOFTWARE</p> <p> Adobe Advertising Cloud  Search Ads 360</p>

4. Data activation.

Even if you have a perfectly automated search campaign and bid strategy, if you do not measure and optimize on the correct data, you are not contributing to an organization's true business objectives. For example, are you contributing to profitability by steering on online revenue only? Data activation can solve the problem of a mismatch between business objectives and marketing optimization objectives. Furthermore, the increasing degree of automation means that good input and objectives are increasingly important.

Making (first party) data available that matches business objectives as closely as possible, and acting upon that data is what we define as 'data activation' in this whitepaper. This can be done via target groups or via conversion data. We will focus on conversion data in this chapter because we believe that it has the greatest impact on SEA.

4.1 Three steps

The data activation process consists of three parts:



First, you need to measure all conversion actions that add value. Some conversion actions are of course more important than others. That is why you have to 'transform' the conversion actions in the second step. Here you assign

a value to each conversion action that is in line with the business objectives. The last step is to activate the new conversion data. Here you use the new conversion data to feed the bid strategies and optimizations. These steps are explained in more detail below.

Step 1: Measure

The first step is to map out all conversion points that contribute to your business goals. You will need to go further than just measuring (online) transactions and value. For example, think about profit margins, or who made the purchase (new or returning customer). In addition, there are soft conversions that can indirectly lead to a purchase, such as the download of an app or a telephone call.

In the overview on page 22 you can see conversion actions that can be relevant for different verticals.

Tip

Measuring certain conversion data can be complicated (for example, LTV estimates). Therefore, start simple. Some conversion measurements are easy to implement and are a huge step forward. Make sure perfection doesn't get in the way of execution.

Conversion action		Retail	Travel	B-to-B	Method of measurement
Online purchase (web/app)	Profit margin	X	X		Conversion import
	New customer	X	X	X	Pixel / Conversion import
	Returning Customer	X	X	X	Pixel / Conversion import
	Life Time Value	X	X	X	Conversion import
	Yield management		X		Pixel / Conversion import
	Deduction of returns	X			Conversion import
In Store	Store visits	X			In-platform
	Store purchase	X			In-platform / Conversion import
Leads	Lead quality			X	Conversion import
	# Sales from leads			X	Conversion import
Other interactions	Create Account	X	X		Pixel
	App download/install	X	X		Pixel / In platform
	Phone calls			X	In-platform / Pixel
	Newsletter subscription	X	X		Pixel
	Email requests			X	Pixel
				X	Pixel

- **Pixel:** Conversion actions that can be measured via a tag on the website.
- **Conversion import:** Importing conversion data from an external data source into an ad platform.
- **In-platform:** Solutions that are measured within the interface of platforms such as Google, Play Store & Microsoft. For example, store visits or app downloads.

Step 2: Transform

In the second step, you need to assign value to the conversions in such a way that they represent the added value for the organization. As mentioned, we advise to assign value based on the business objectives & strategy of your client. Here are two examples:

Is profit maximization the ultimate goal?

There are often differences in the profit that is made on products/services. If the ultimate goal of the organization is to maximize profit, then data activation allows you to 'transform' the order value into profit. There are two ways to do this:

- Profit Margin: Link profit margin information to the transactions
 - Order Value * Profit Margin = Profit
- Cost price: Link the cost price to the transactions
 - Order value - Cost price = Profit

Do you want more people to use the app

If your organization has a strong app and wants to boost it, you must also give an app install or app download the correct value. Again, you can find out (or estimate) how much it is worth when a customer installs the app. For example, if it turns out that an app install yields an average of € 22, this is the value you can give to each app install.

Step 3: Activate

When the conversion value has been transformed, the bid strategy can be fed with the new turnover value. This has an impact on the bids at all levels, and this also means that the budget will be spent differently (and better) afterwards.

You can see how this is reflected in the example below:

Old situation (no data activation)		
	'white sneakers'	'black socks'
Costs	€ 6.000	€ 4.000
Transactions	200	1.000
Sales value	€ 24.000	€ 15.000
ROAS	4,0	3,8

New situation (data activation)		
	'white sneakers'	'black socks'
Costs	€ 6.000	€ 4.000
Returns	-50	-10
Transactions (incl. returns)	150	990
Sales value (incl. return)	€ 18.000	€ 14.850
Price	€ 15.000	€ 5.000
Profit	€ 3.000	€ 9.850
Shop visits	400	1100
Store visit value	€ 2.000	€ 5.500
App downloads	300	500
App download value	€ 1.500	€ 2.500
Data activation value	€ 6.500	€ 17.850
ROI	1,1	4,5

If returns, cost, store visits and app downloads are taken into account, the keyword 'black socks' has a much higher value. If this new value is used for the bidding strategies, the system will automatically bid higher for this keyword. The budget will shift to keywords that ultimately generate the most profit.

4.2 A deepdive into measurement methods

In order to make the above steps as concrete as possible, we will zoom in on the various measurement methods in this section. The aforementioned measuring methods can roughly be divided into two types of solutions:

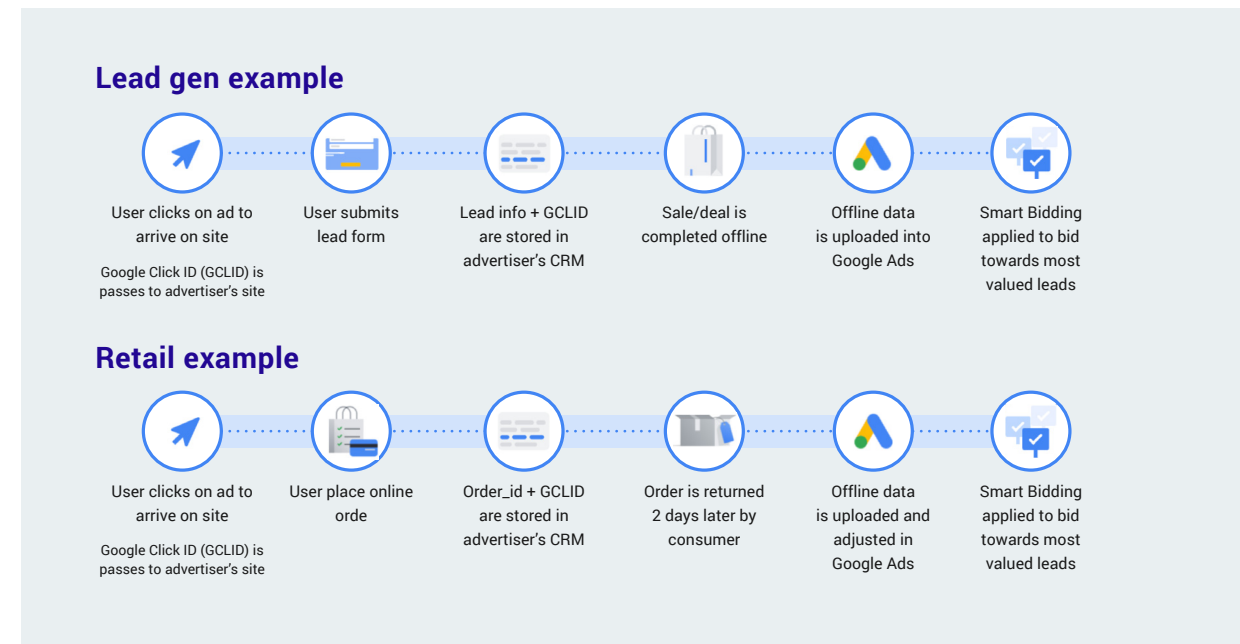
(1) Pixel-based / In-platform (interface)

Pixels or 'interface based' solutions are generally the easiest to implement. We therefore recommend identifying simple things with which you can already add value through this method. Making the value that you measure more complete is often the greatest opportunity. Think of measuring sales from the app, counting store visits in your KPIs, assigning value to a newsletter subscription, etc.

(2) Offline conversion tracking

Although a lot of valuable data is available via pixels and/or platforms, some data is simply not immediately available or suitable for sharing via a pixel, such as profit margins. To link data from Ads with data that is available 'elsewhere', for example in the CRM system, you can choose different methods that we group together for now under the name 'offline conversion tracking'.

Offline conversion tracking is available within both [Google Ads](#) and [Microsoft Ads](#). With this solution, click-ids, which search engines generate with every click, are stored and linked/matched to conversions and/or users. This data can then be manually or automatically uploaded in the search engines via API. Tools such as BigQuery can be used to link and properly organize data sources (click-id/order_id & CRM).





Tip

Familiarizing yourself with these solutions and associated skills now provides flexibility in the future, where first-party data will only become more important. Moreover, this principle transcends channels. Facebook, for example, also has click-ids and conversion APIs.

Attribution

The correct allocation of the above 'ultimate value' to the different touch-points within the customer journey naturally remains a very important topic. An extensive whitepaper has been written about this, which we would like to refer you to. This whitepaper can be downloaded [here](#).

5. Account hygiene & campaign optimization.

Setting up a search account is the first and relatively easy step. The real challenge is managing and ensuring the quality of the account. Search behavior can change, competition can increase, and historical performances can also influence 'account hygiene'. Especially when several people work in the same account, it is extra important that everyone uses the same quality criteria to prevent the errors below from creeping into campaigns unnoticed. It is also extremely important that extensions and remarketing lists are used. If these are not included, the hygiene of the search campaigns is not optimal.

- Excluding keywords
- Resolving keyword conflicts
- Customizing or adding ads
- Customizing or adding extensions
- Managing or applying target group lists
- Checking keyword matching
- Adjusting settings

5.1 Internal hygiene checks

Both Microsoft and Google provide recommendations for optimizations in the interface. At both Microsoft and Google Ads you can find these under the tab 'Recommendations'. Both tools can help to identify the necessary opportunities and areas for improvement. The suggestions presented in these tabs are based on usage of available features, account performance history, and market trends.

The recommendations aim to increase the overall performance and efficiency of the campaigns. With their concrete recommendations for bids, keywords and ads, the tools can help you get more out of your budget. For example, the system can indicate that the CPC bid for the most important keywords must be increased by 25 percent to get even more out of those keywords.

It is good to keep in mind that these scores are not used in determining the quality score. It is merely a mechanism to help you realize the full potential of the campaigns. If any of these automated recommendations for a campaign does not seem relevant, the recommendation may be rejected

Tip

Check the recommendations overviews regularly, but do not simply copy everything. Although the systems often detect opportunities and make good suggestions, they do not take into account the strategy, objectives and specific characteristics of the individual advertiser.

5.2 Automated Rules

Another way to keep the hygiene level as high as possible is to work with automated rules. Using these rules, you can continue to monitor performance, optimize bids, pause Ads and make other adjustments quickly in bulk. This is done by means of notifications and/or by linking optimizations to predefined conditions. With automated rules you can take the following actions:

- Enable item
- Interrupt item
- Change item
- Send e-mail

The biggest advantage of automated rules is that you can create them very easily. No technical knowledge is required. Below are some examples of commonly used automated rules. Unfortunately, the conditions and actions associated with the rules are relatively limited. This is the reason that more and more advertisers are working with custom scripts.

Change item - Bid for first page

Action: Increase bids to first page
CPC
Requirements: - Keyword selection
- Quality score > 5
- Max bid limit = € 2
Frequency: Daily with the data from the same day.

Notification - No impressions

Action: Send email
Requirements: - All enabled ad groups
- Impressions <2
Frequency: Daily with the data from the previous day.

Enable Item - Black Friday Sale

Action: Activate ads
Requirements: Bevat een of meer van de labels: Black Friday 2020
Frequency: Once on Friday, November 27, 2020 at 00:15 AM with the data from the same day.

Notificatie – Hoge kosten en geen conversies

Action: Send email
Requirements: - All enabled ad groups
- Costs > € 100
- Conversions = 0
Frequency: Daily with data from the last 30 days.

5.3 Custom scripts

These automated custom scripts are used for both campaign management and account hygiene. Consider, for example, checking all links for 404 errors or deviations in the campaign budgets. Search volume and/or budget is often part of determining when a script can be of use. It is often also the question of which activities you spend a relatively large amount of time on. You may be able to gain insights more quickly or tackle routine tasks faster and more efficiently with the help of a script.

Via a piece of JavaScript you give the order, as it were, to perform a specific task in the account. If you have knowledge of JavaScript, you could write the scripts yourself, but the internet is full of (free) ready-to-use scripts that you can easily copy and modify, including the ready-made variants from Google at developers.google.com. In most cases, these scripts can also be used directly in Microsoft Ads.

Examples scripts

1. [Link Checker](#): This script provides automated insights when links generate a 404 error in an account. The script is also available for an [Manager Account](#).
2. [Account Anomaly Detector](#): This script can check daily or hourly if there are deviations in the budgets. You will immediately receive an email as soon as the script detects an abnormality. There is also a script available that you can add to the [manager account](#).
3. [Corona Impact Report](#): This report allows you to analyze search behavior within your search campaigns in a relatively simple way. The report has been created to analyze search behavior during and after the corona crisis, but it could also be other periods. You can determine the date equation yourself in the script.













5.4 Third-party tooling

In addition to scripts, it is also possible to spot opportunities in the field of optimization and hygiene via other external tools. Most tools include this feature as a standard part of the package, but you can also work with third-party tools that have been specifically developed for optimization and hygiene. These types of external tools are especially helpful if you run into the limitations of built-in recommendations and scripts.

The goal of third-party tooling for hygiene and optimization is time savings and performance improvement. Think of the faster spotting and implementation of optimization options, error messages and other improvement options within the accounts, which may not already be automatically recommended by Google and Microsoft.

The use of third-party tooling is often a faster outcome when there is a relatively large amount of ad spend, search volume, accounts and/or campaigns. In practice, it pays to implement a test period to see how much time savings it will yield you compared to the options you previously used (for free). It will differ per advertiser and agency which functionality(s) within the tool can be a structural asset.

ACCOUNT HYGIENE & CAMPAIGN OPTIMIZATION

	Google Ads	Microsoft Advertising	Third-party tools
			
Built-in recommendations	Recommendations	Recommendations	
Scripts	Account auditor Account anomaly detector Link checker N-gram analysis ‘Screw up’ checks Quality Score tracker	Microsoft Advertising scripts Link checker Discover disapproved ads	
Account management auditing, monitoring & optimization			 TrueClicks  OPTMYZR  Adalysis  squared.io  adzooma  WordStream  Opteo

6. Vision for the future

Recently, the complexity within search advertising has increased. Mobile, multi-screen usage, voice, ITP, GDPR and new products from Google and Microsoft have changed the landscape. These developments have a similar impact on the landscape as machine learning. This form of artificial intelligence, where algorithms in search campaigns can be used to interpret information and learn from it, will disrupt the future of search advertising even further. It will make the automation of search campaigns at different levels even better, but also more complex.

Machine learning is not the only technological solution that will make the world of search advertising more challenging. There will be external tools that will make campaign creation more accessible and comprehensive. Automated quality checks will also become better and more important. Recommendations through the interface, for example, will become more sophisticated, as will automated rules, scripts and third-party tooling.

Developments such as machine learning create an interesting field of tension: the surrender of control, for time savings and better results. Google is introducing more campaign types that are 'black box', but that do yield good results. Just look at Smart Shopping and app campaigns, for example. Marketers sometimes rightly experience a lack of transparency and control in this, but

Google is working on releasing insights (for example, the bid strategy report). We expect people and technology to find a balance between 'black box' and 'transparency'.

Strategy, creativity and data

Due to automation, most manual routine tasks will soon no longer have to be performed. Time will no longer be invested in manual optimizations, but in how to ensure that the algorithm performs optimally. Furthermore, strategy determination will become even more important, because it forms the framework of everything that is automated. But data infrastructures are also playing a greater role in the organization. Even if you have a perfectly automated campaign, if you do not manage it based on the correct data, you will not contribute to the organization as much as you could.

In the past, the right result was achieved by the purest of specialists, who could fine-tune everything perfectly. In the future, the difference will be made by marketers who have aligned their strategy, creativity and data input as perfectly as possible with the true business objectives, after which automation will do the rest.

7. Authors

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About DDMA

DDMA is the largest industry association for data-driven marketing and service with over 330 members. We are a network of advertisers, non-profits, publishers, agencies and tech vendors that use data in an innovative and responsible way to interact with customers. Together we build an ecosystem in which both organizations and consumers benefit from the advantages of data. We do this by providing our members with knowledge, advice and a network in the field of marketing, data and privacy. We also give our members a voice in Brussels and The Hague and we professionalize the sector by developing self-regulation. More information: www.ddma.nl.

About IAB Netherlands

IAB Nederland is the independent industry association for digital advertising and marketing innovation. To the more than 200 advertisers, media agencies, publishers, technology providers and creative agencies that are affiliated with us, we offer insights, knowledge and a network. We do this by identifying developments and trends in the market and determining or influencing standardization, legislation and (self)regulation. For more information: www.iab.nl. www.iab.nl.

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