

# Paid Search Reporting Sucks

**But it doesn't have to!**



**Amy Hebdon**  
Founder, Paid Search Magic

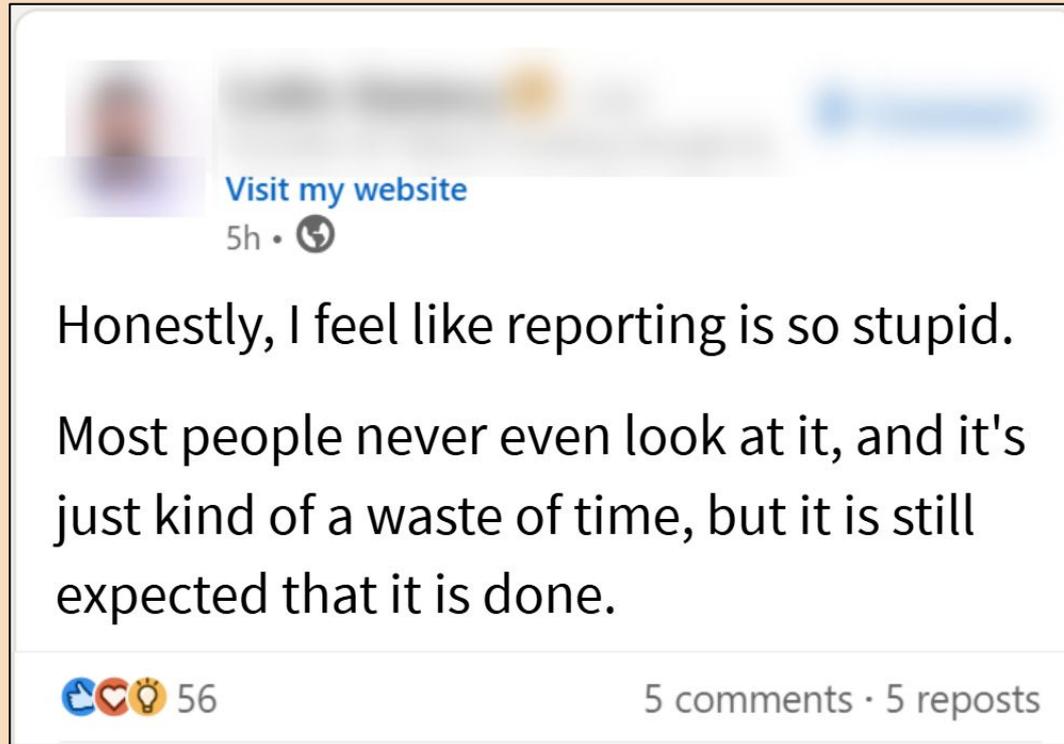


# “Not a single person likes reporting”



Source: [https://medium.com/@DanielMeixner\\_72773/why-reporting-sucks-9cc4dff54b2e](https://medium.com/@DanielMeixner_72773/why-reporting-sucks-9cc4dff54b2e)

# "It's just kind of a waste of time"



# "No one trusts the data"

• 3h ago

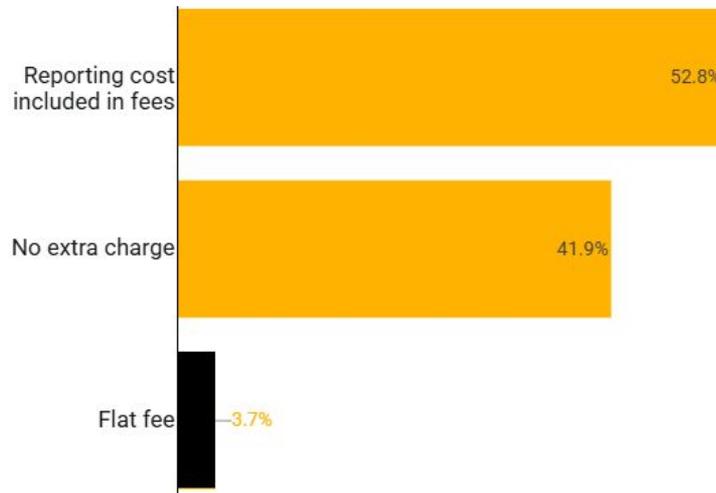
A lot of leaders claim they want insights and fancy dashboards, but the moment they get it, they do nothing with it. They make no time to learn it, and they come in hostile, assuming the data isn't trustworthy. They claim to be data-driven, but... they're the exact opposite.

⊖ ↑ 2.4K ↓ Reply Award Share ...

# We're not even getting paid

93%

of agencies don't charge separately for client reports



Source: Agency Analytics. 2024 Marketing Agency Benchmarks Report

~~Let's just do less reporting~~

Let's do better reporting

# **Better reporting earns you a seat at the table**

# Reporting Rules to Win Stakeholder Buy-In

1

**It's for  
Them,  
Not You**

2

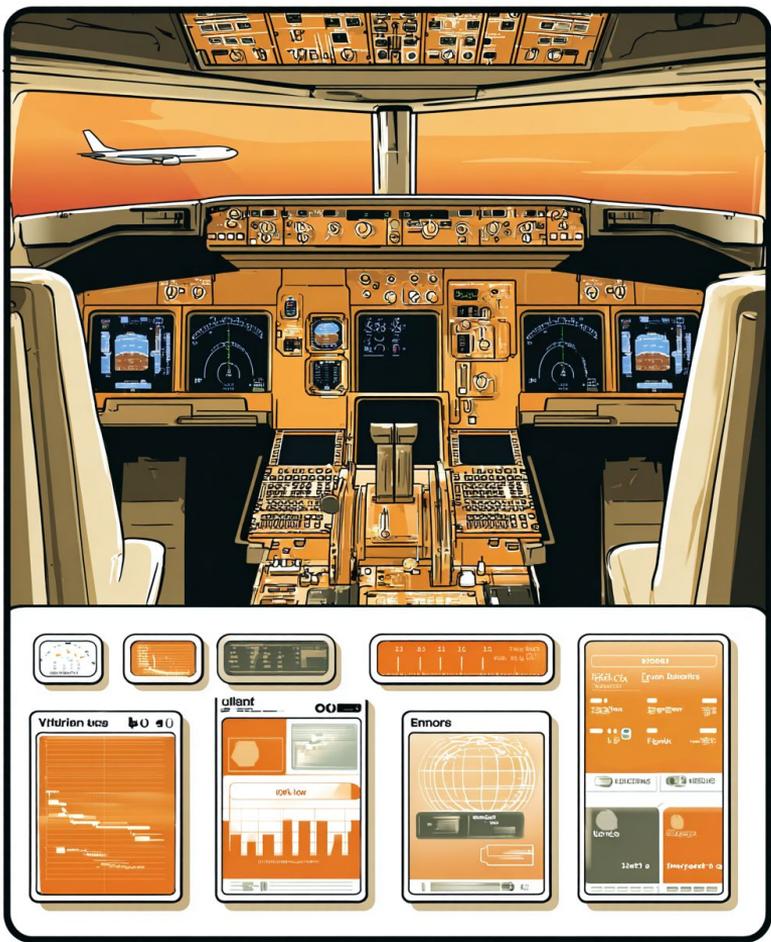
**No More  
Data  
Dumps**

3

**Design  
it Like  
I'm 5**

**What *you* need ≠**

**What *they* need**



← You  
need this

They →  
need this



# Data Story Framework

Earn stakeholder buy-in with these  
**3 questions**

1

How are we doing?



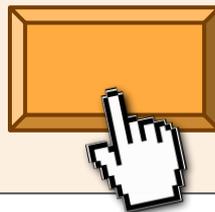
2

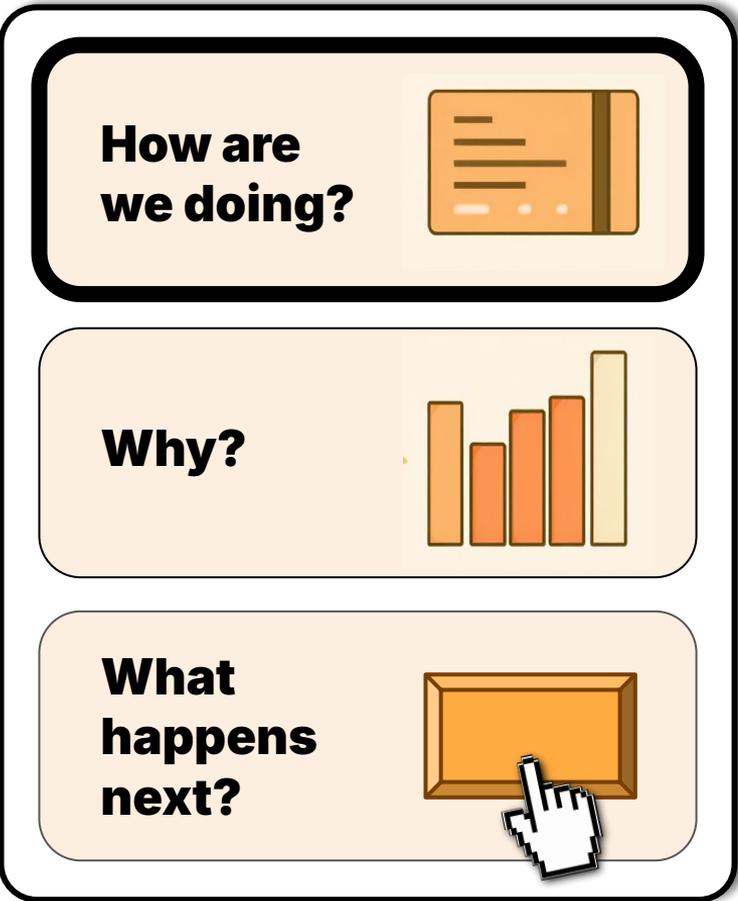
Why?



3

What happens next?



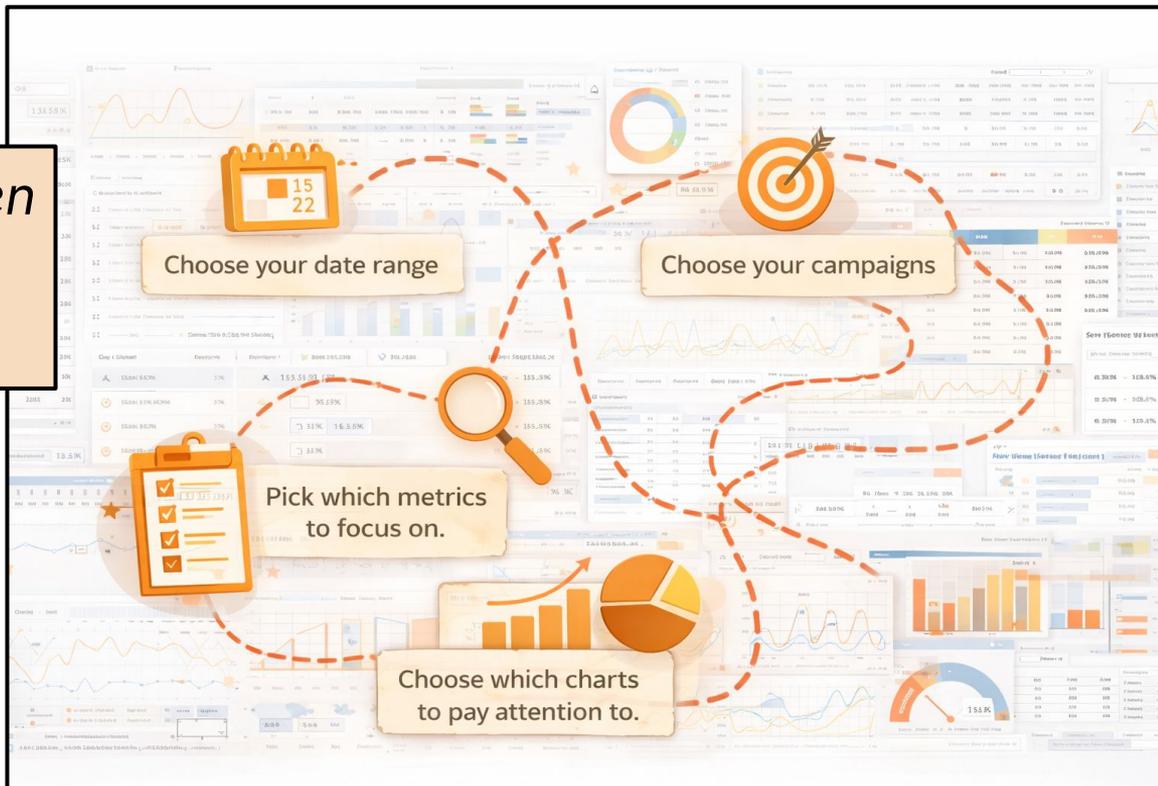
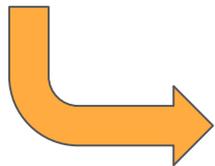


# 1. How are we doing?

Instantly know if the metrics that matter most are on track

# Your report shouldn't feel like a **riddle**

*Find the hidden insights!*



# Before you build **anything** , find out:

## Source of truth

Where does the data come from? Any system conflicts?

## Goals & targets

What are the business goals and targets?

## Metrics that matter

What are the primary KPIs they're accountable for?

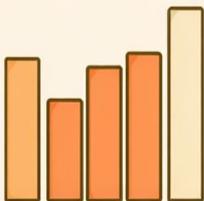
## Big picture

What will help them succeed / decide / act?

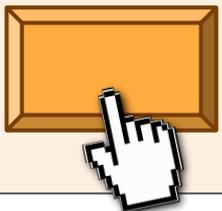
**How are we doing?**



**Why?**



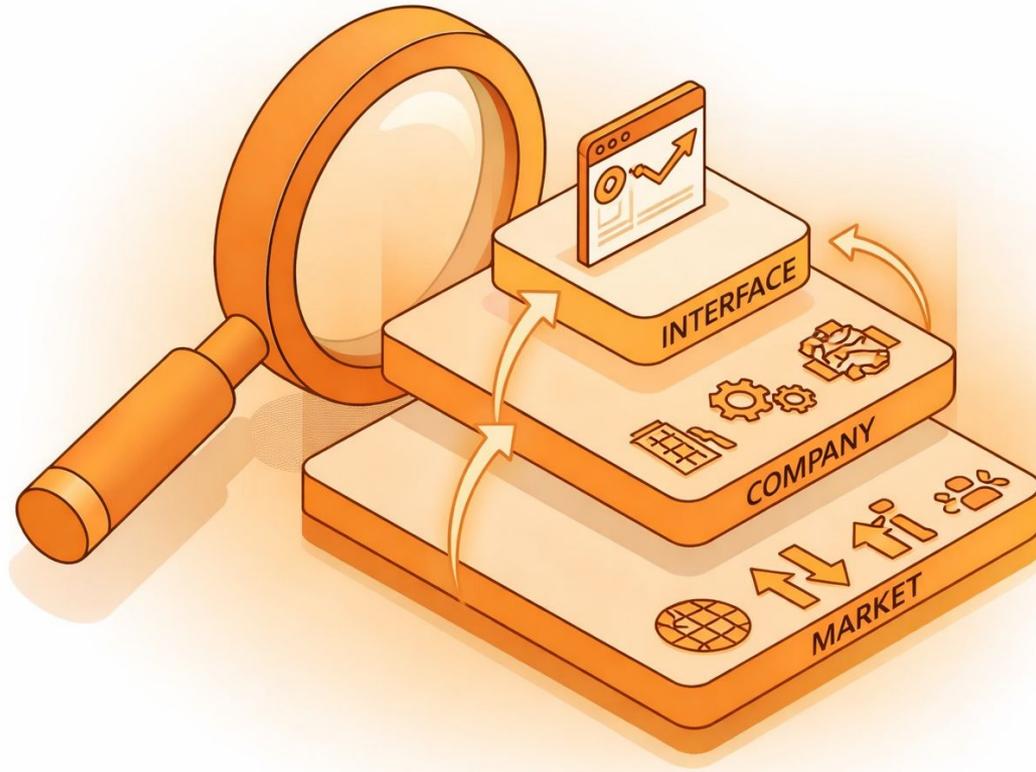
**What happens next?**



## 2. Why?

Was performance due to something we did, or something outside of our control?

# Zoom out to answer **why** it happened



# What changed...



## In the platform?

- Conversion actions
- Bidding & CPCs
- Algorithm updates
- Campaign changes
- Tracking config



## Inside the business ?

- Budget
- Offers
- Landing pages
- Sales capacity
- Mktg activity



## In the market?

- Seasonality
- Demand
- Competitors
- Regulation

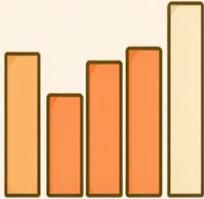
# 3. What happens next?

Confidently interpret and make decisions on the data

**How are we doing?**



**Why?**



**What happens next?**

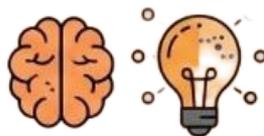


# Categories of Invisible CTAs



**Do**

The next step to take based on the data.



**Know**

The reason for what happened. No further action needed.



**Feel**

The emotional response to what happened.

# Invisible CTAs get buy-in



# The Data Story Framework aligns your report with their actual needs

1

How are we doing?



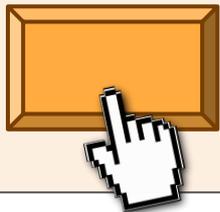
2

Why?



3

What happens next?



Take Action:

**Are your reports built  
for your stakeholders?**

# Reporting Rules to Win Stakeholder Buy-In

1

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Them,  
Not You**

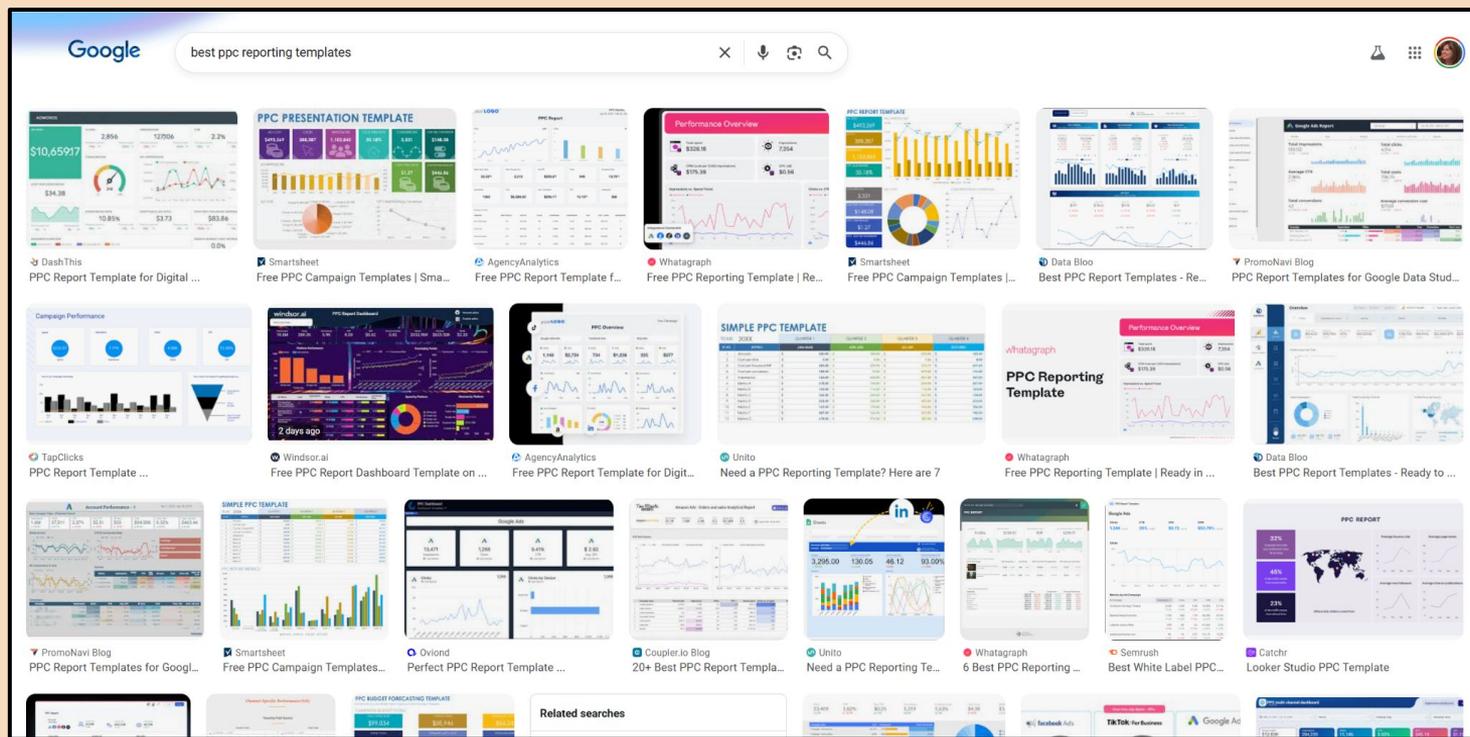
2

**No More  
Data  
Dumps**

3

**Design  
it Like  
I'm 5**

# Most PPC report templates are data dumps



**Don't dump the  
data. Curate it.**

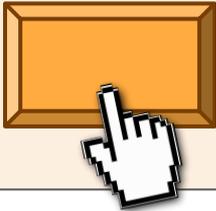
**How are we doing?**



**Why?**



**What happens next?**



Scorecards with targets and time comparisons

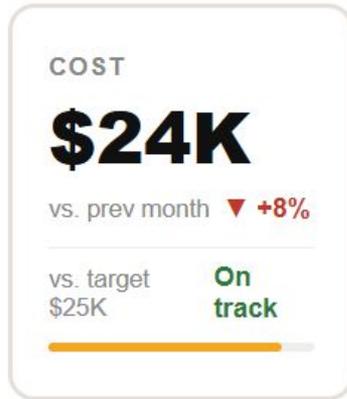
Time series, distributions, and category breakdowns

Invisible CTAs, preattentive attributes, intentional design

How are we doing?



# Scorecards



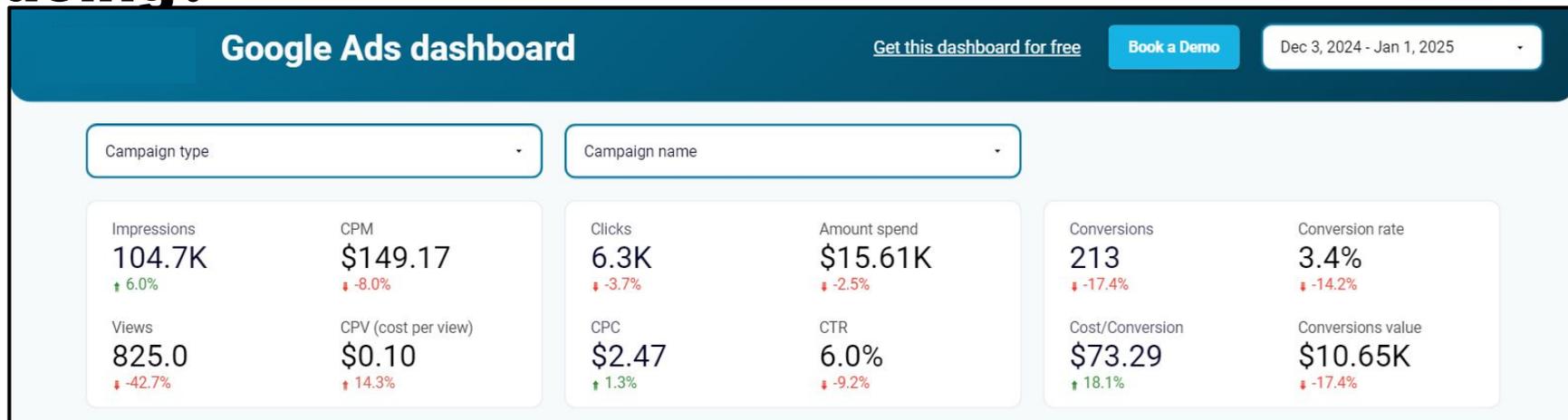
Every scorecard must **matter to business**

Use the **same metrics** each time

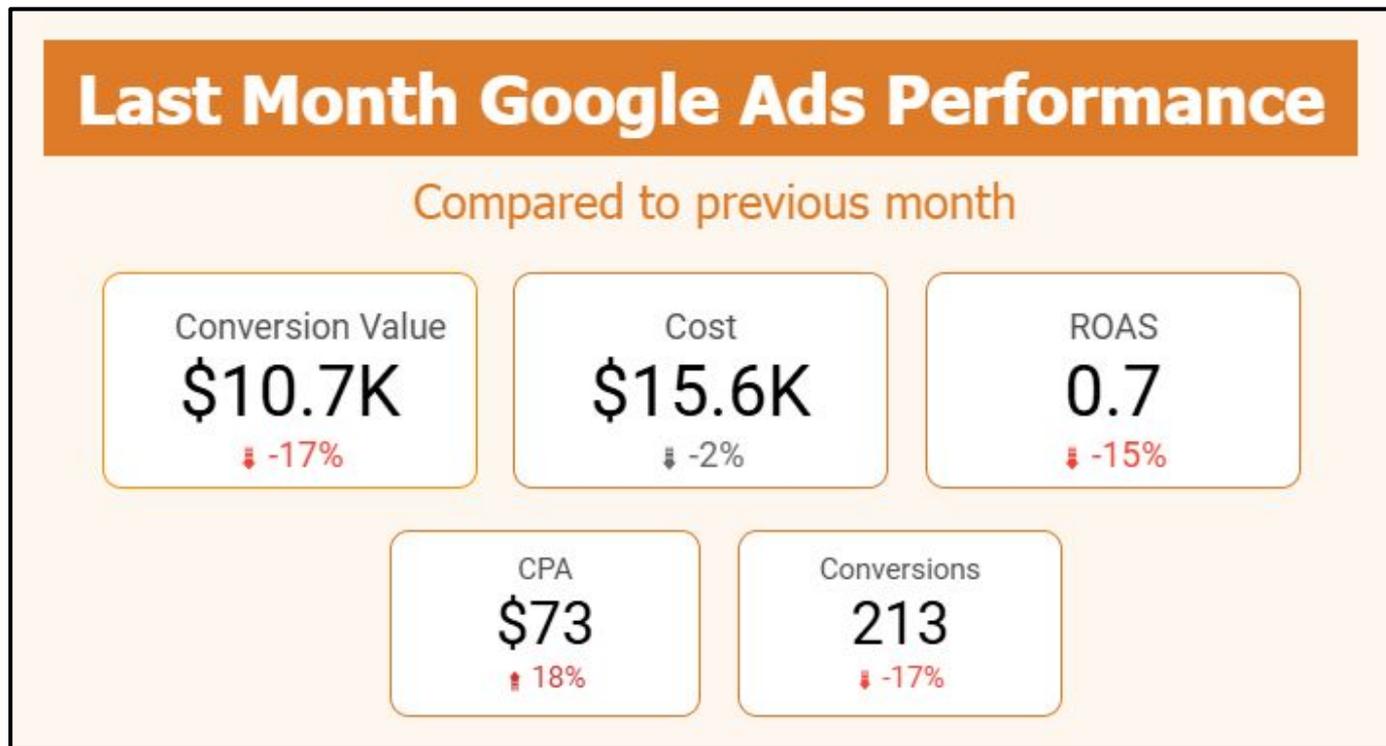
**3 - 7** metrics total

Include **time comparisons** and **targets**

# A data dump doesn't answer "How are we doing?"



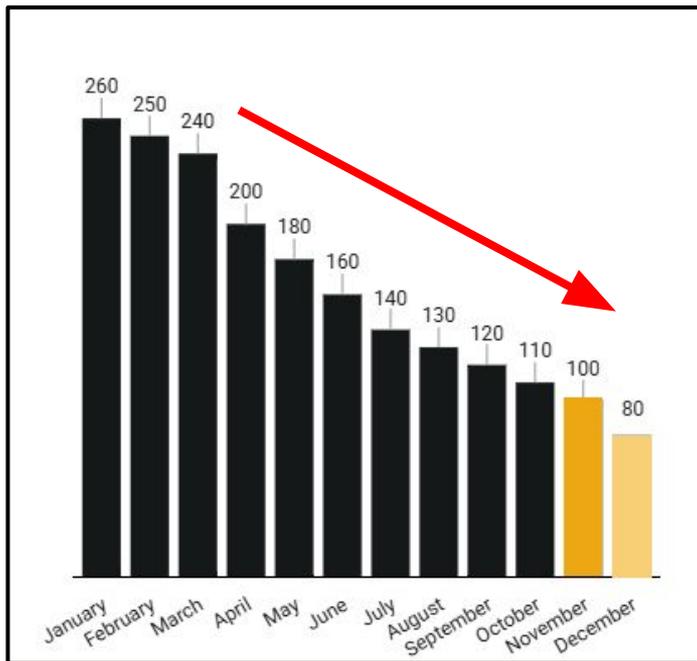
# Let's try that again:



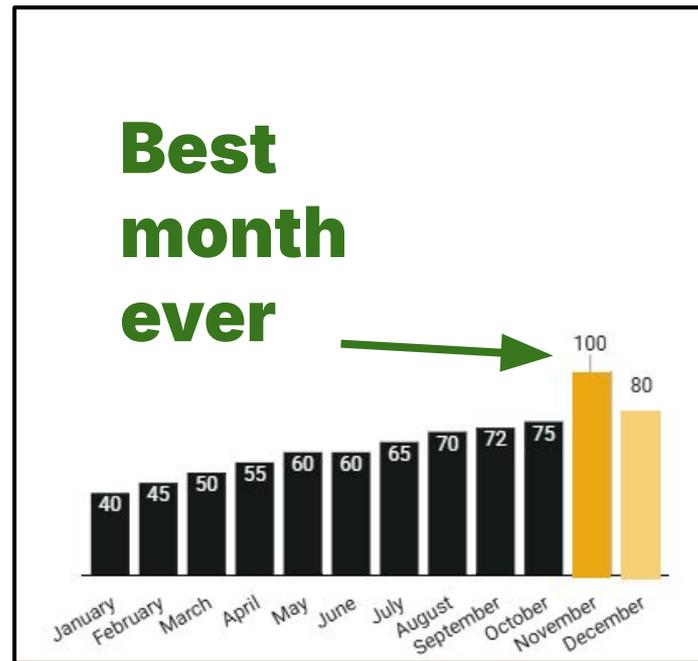
Why?



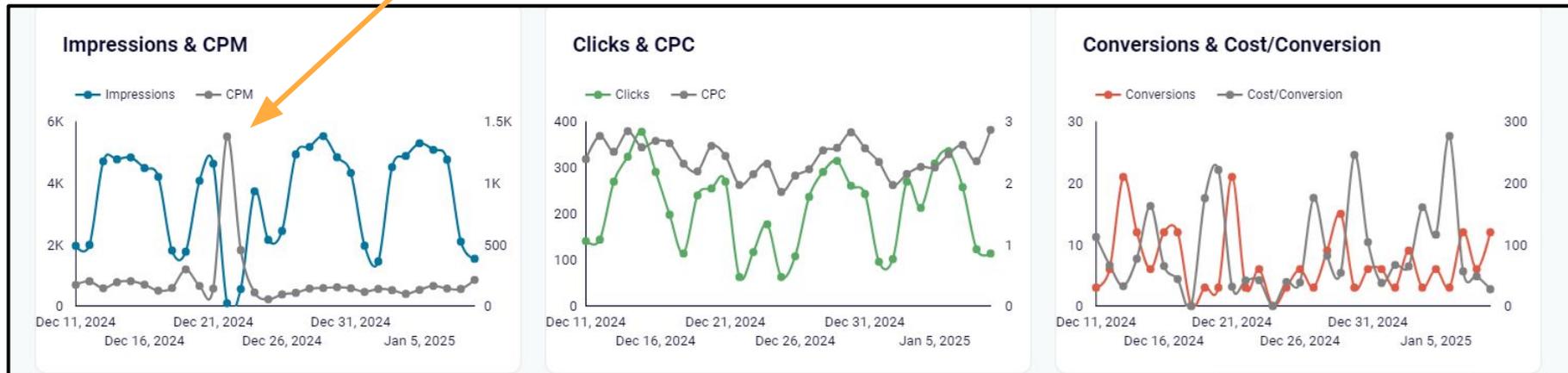
# Context, trends, insight



Sales  
**80**  
Down 20%  
month over  
month



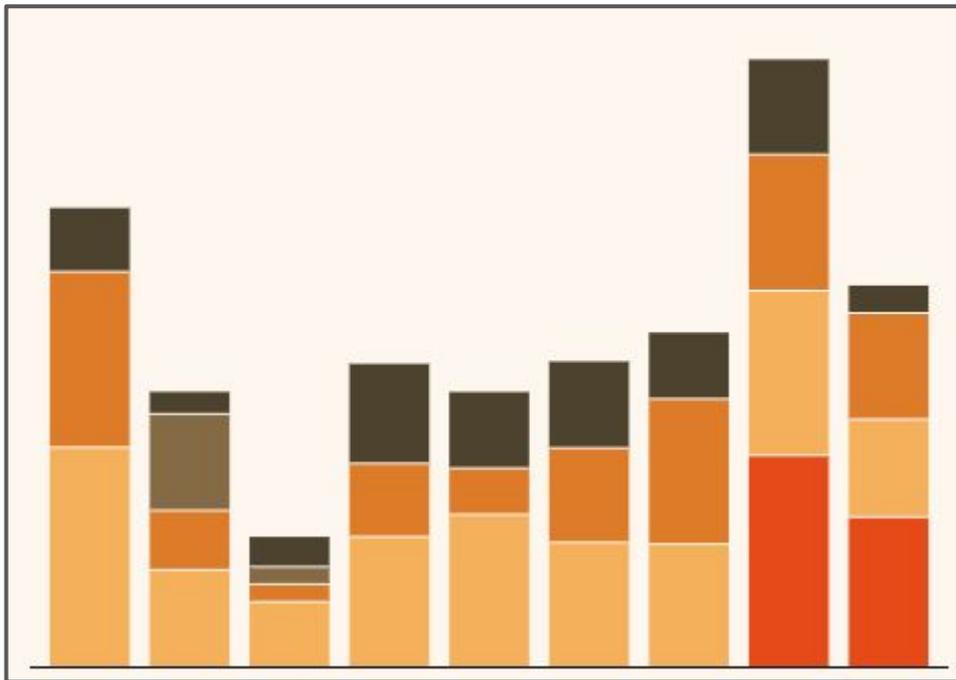
# A data dump doesn't answer "Why?"



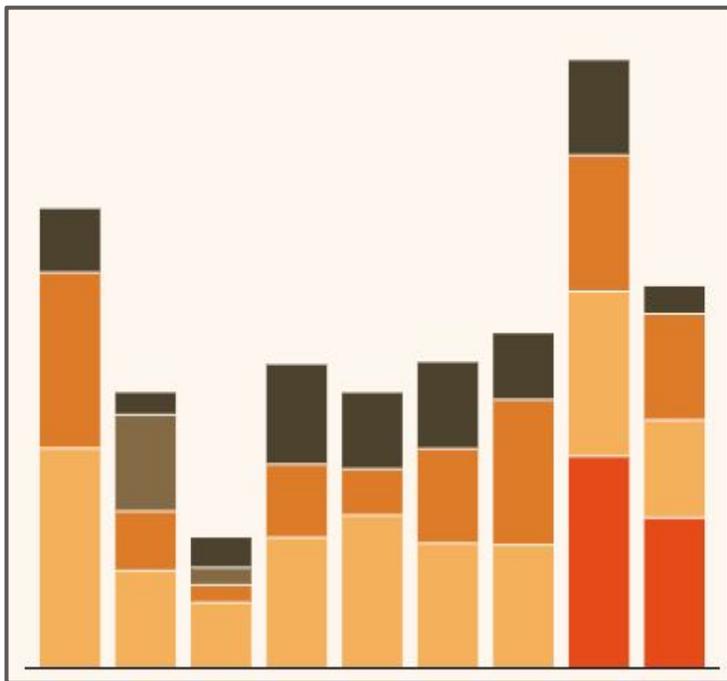
# Your go-to “why” chart : stacked bars over time

## Replaces pie chart + time series

- Trend + breakdown in one view
- De-aggregates totals
- Shows when the mix shifts



# How to create stacked bar charts in **Looker Studio**



**Data source:** (Google Ads, GA4, Google Sheet)

**Dimension (X-axis):** Time (ie last 13 months)

**Breakdown dimension:** (The segments you want to see)

**Metric (Y-axis):** What you're measuring

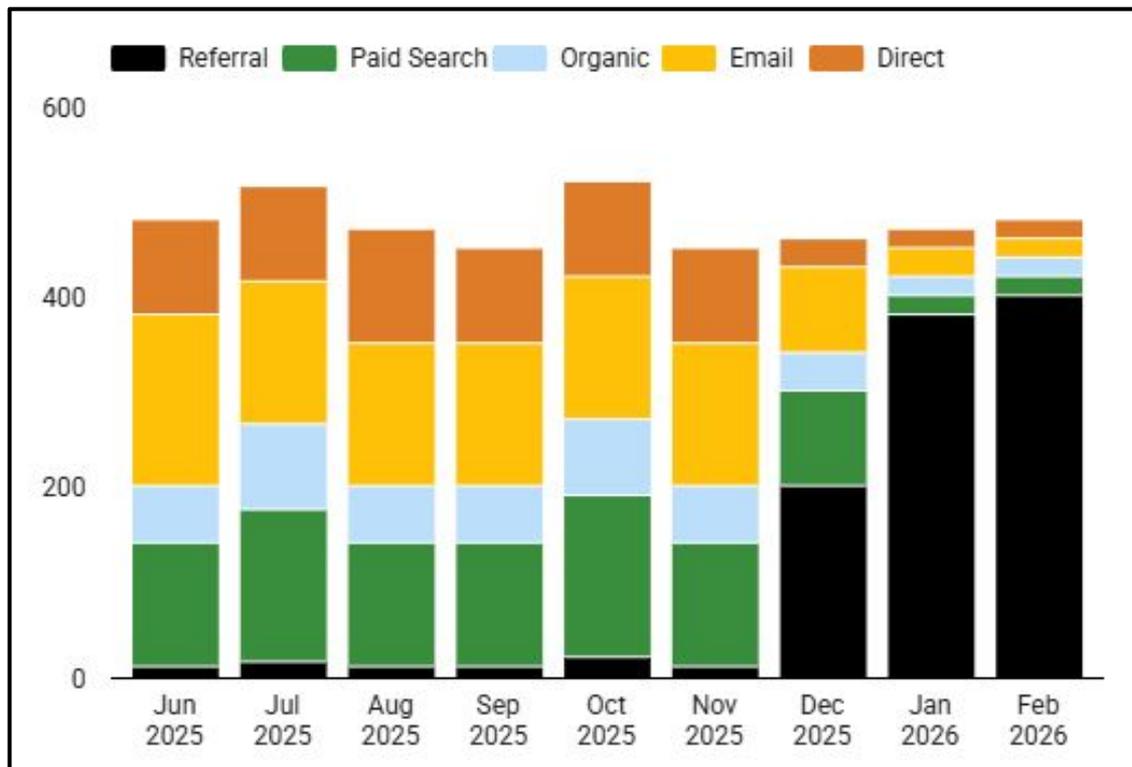
**Sort:** Time

# "Your leads dropped 80%. Explain."

**PPC  
Leads  
Down  
80%  
MoM**

**There's a tracking  
issue**

**GA4 data**

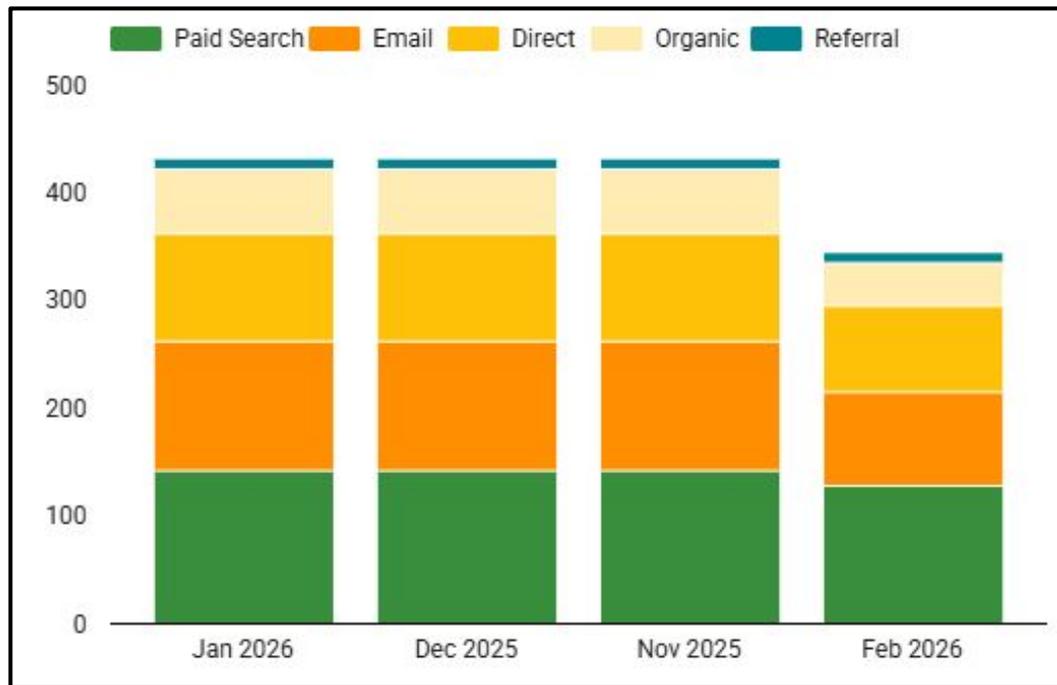


# “Why are paid search leads lower this month?”

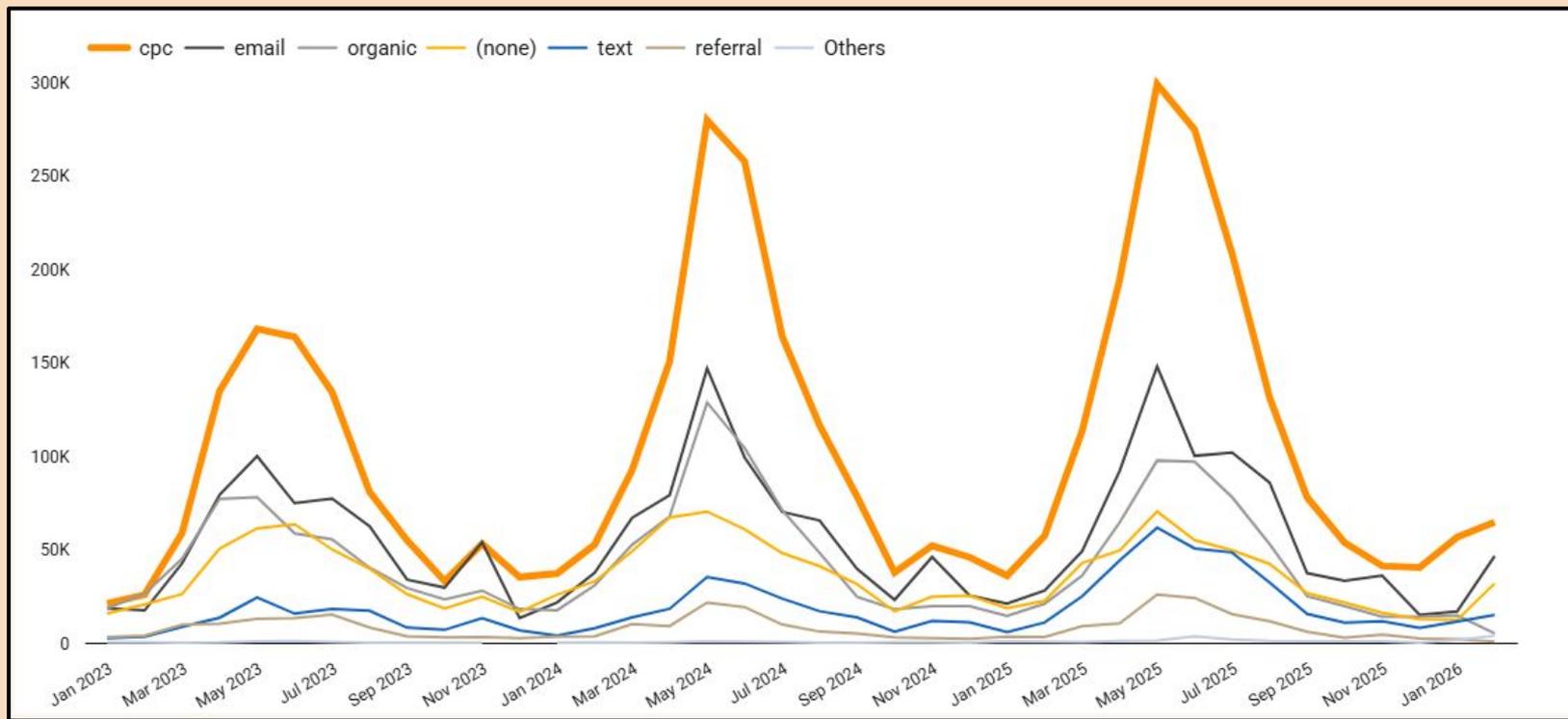
**PPC  
Leads  
Down  
10%  
MoM**

**All conversions are down 20%  
Paid search is down 10%**

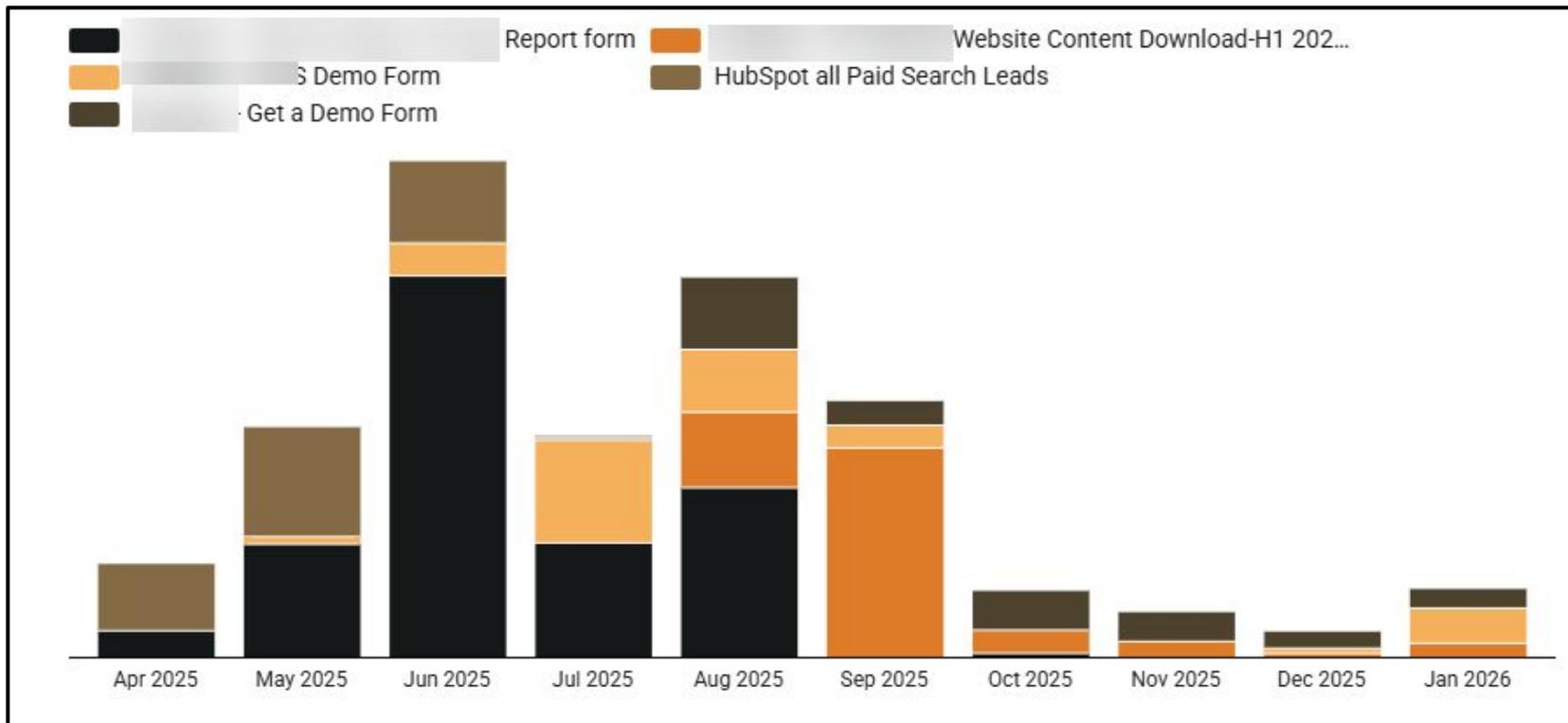
**GA4 data**



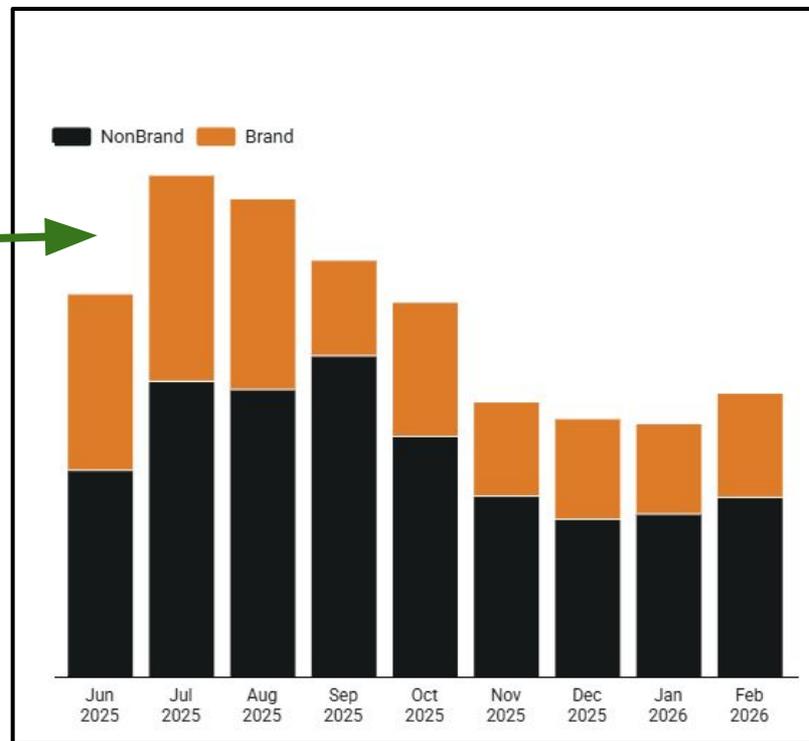
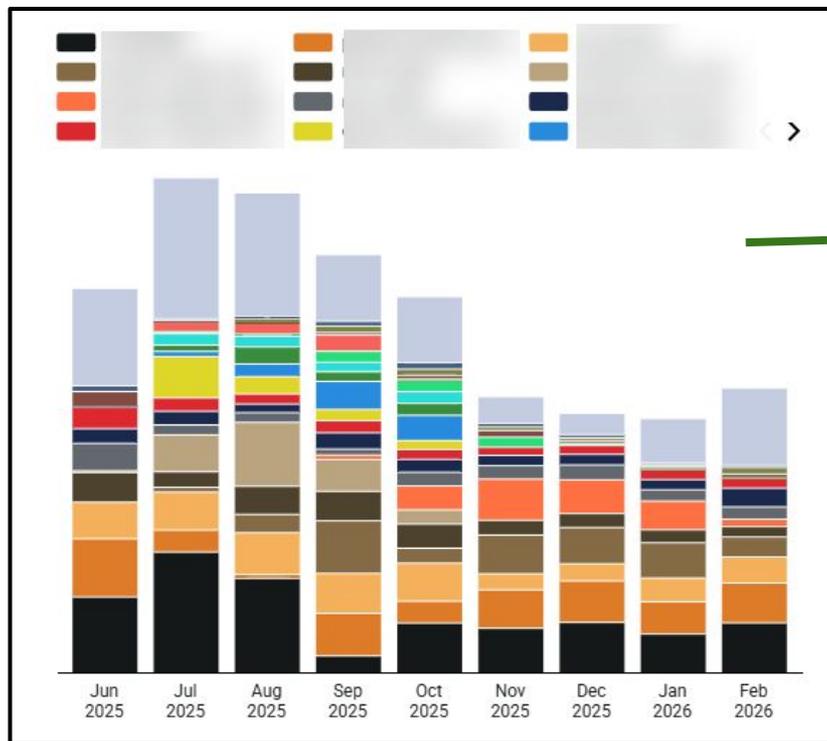
# The same formula works for line or area charts



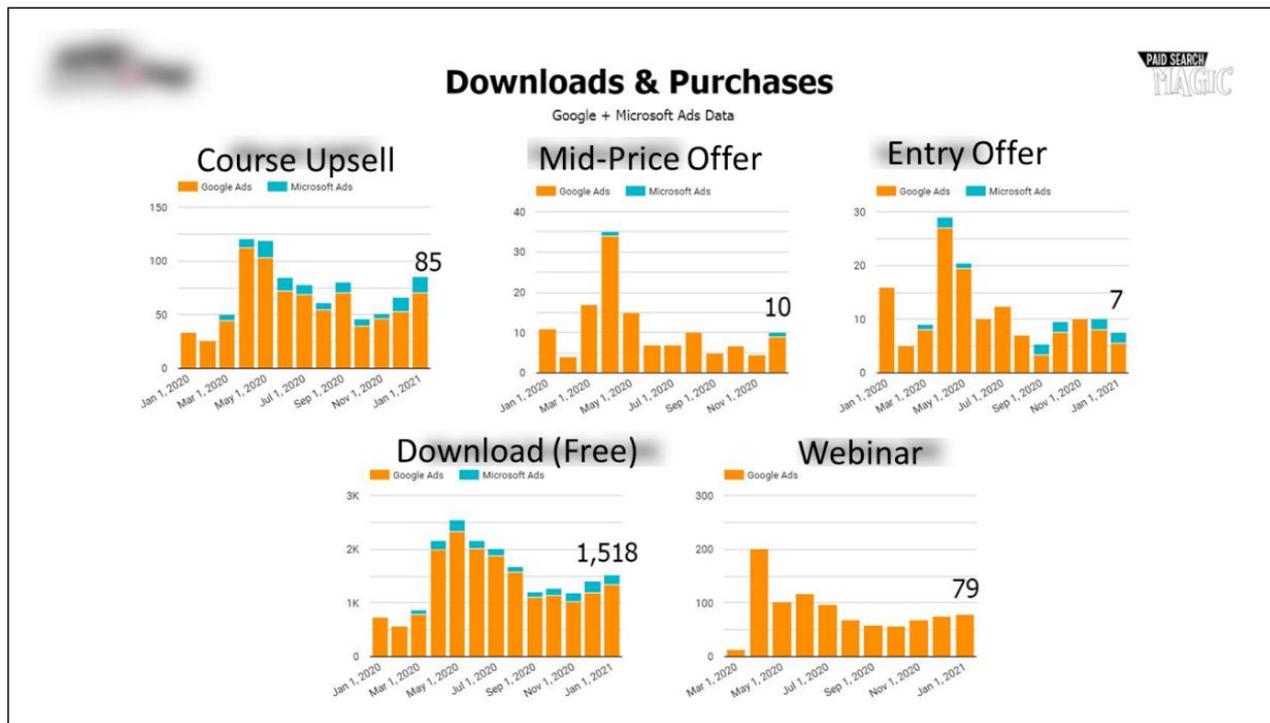
# Use **Segment Conversion Type Name** for convs.



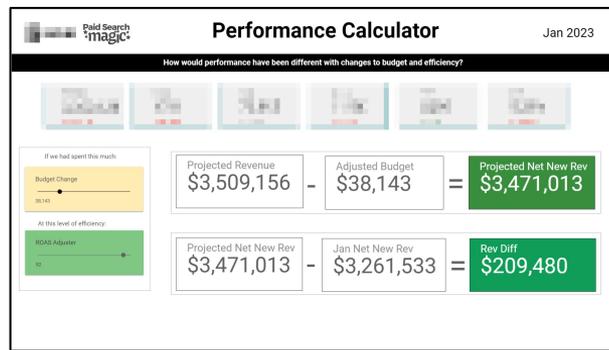
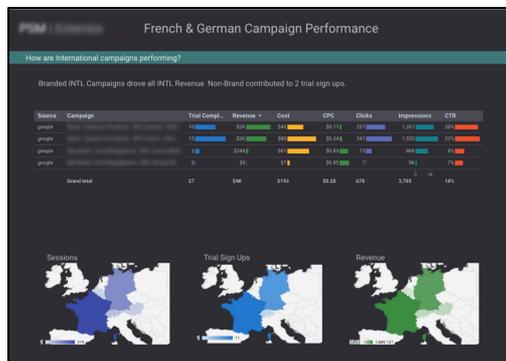
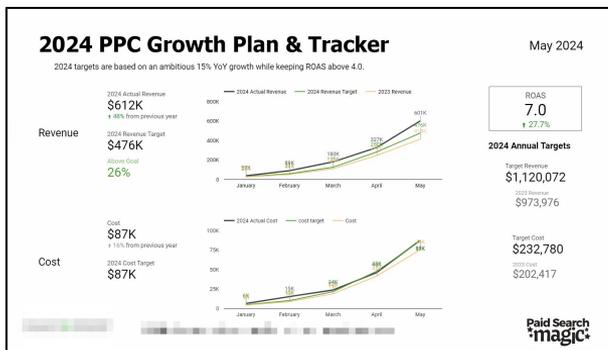
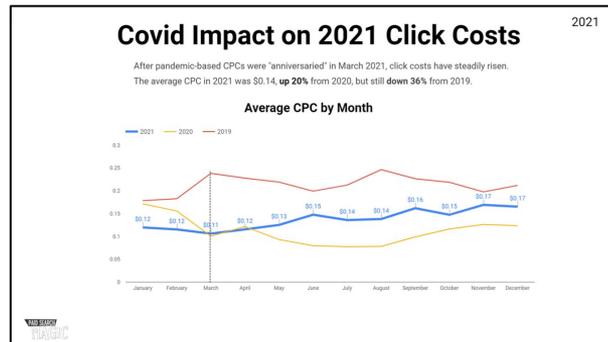
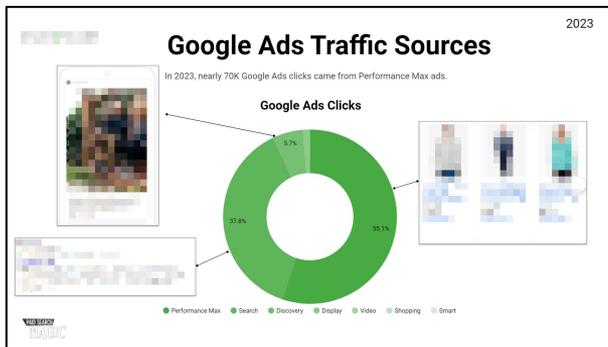
# Use **CASE statements** to group dimensions



# Use **filters** to isolate dimensions



# Different questions require different charts



**You don't have to  
brush all your teeth.**



**Just the ones you  
want to keep.**

# Putting it all together: [The story] + [the proof]



Take Action:

**Are your charts  
curated for  
stakeholders?**

# Reporting Rules to Win Stakeholder Buy-In

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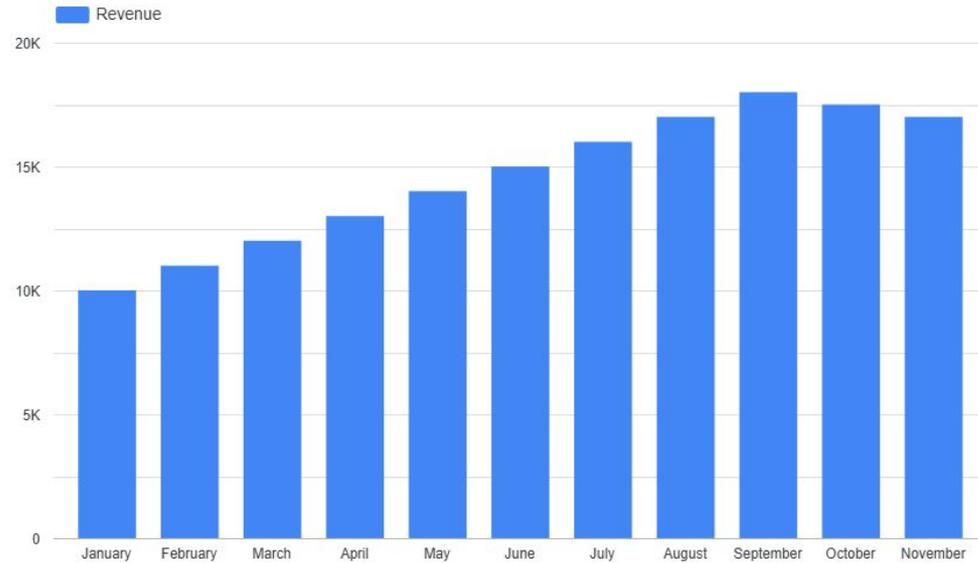
**No More  
Data  
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3

**Design  
it Like  
I'm 5**

# Account Performance

Revenue by Month



# Invisible CTAs get buy-in



# Invisible CTA:

I'm celebrating because we beat our targets!



## YTD Revenue is 35% Above Target



YTD Revenue  
Target Rev: \$120K  
Actual Rev: \$160K



Account revenue has exceeded aggressive monthly targets while staying above a **6 ROAS**

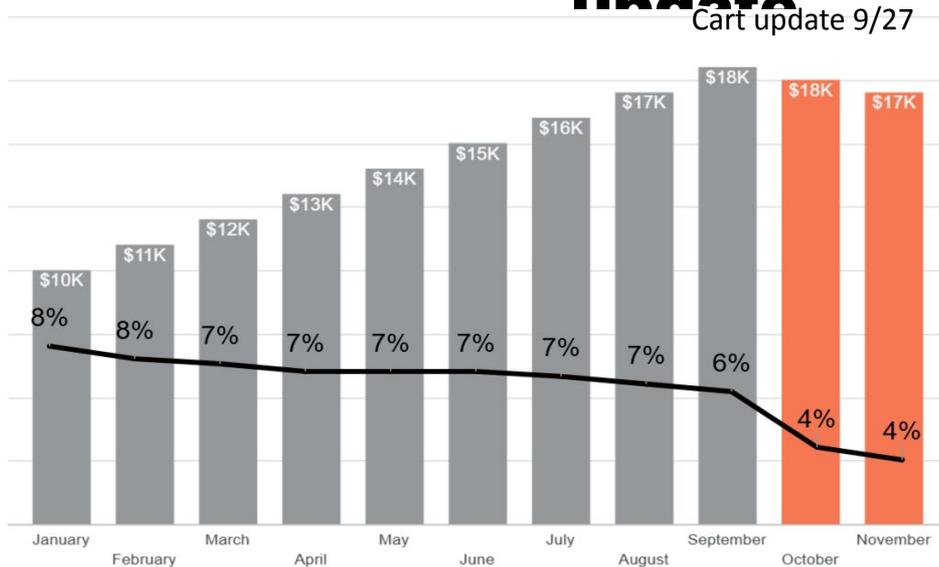
# Invisible CTA:

I need to **fix** the cart issue



## Fewer sales after checkout cart

Monthly Revenue vs Conversion Rate



**Action needed:**  
Fix or revert cart change  
**Conversion rate is down nearly 50% since Sept cart update.**

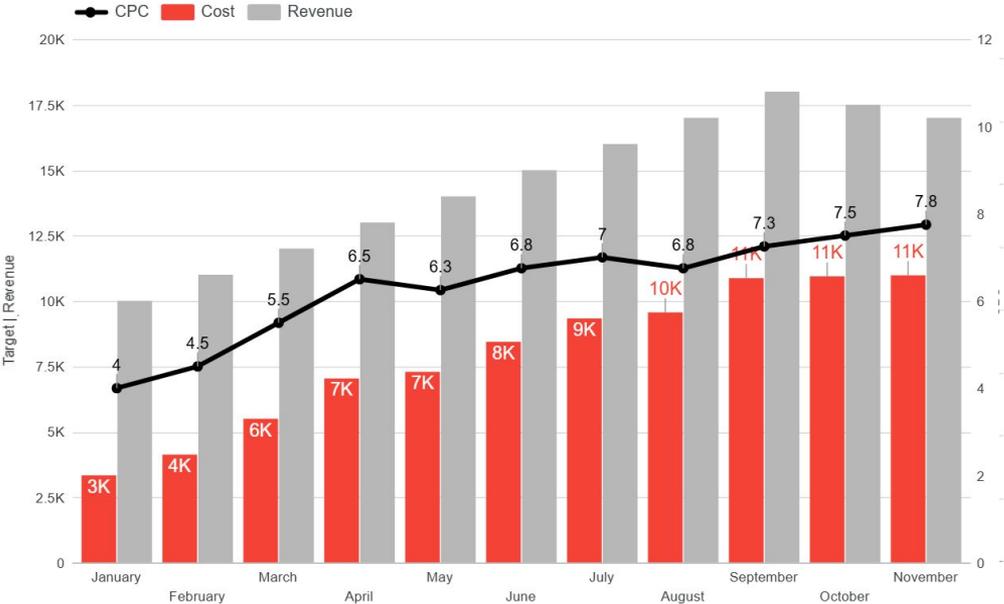
Before: 7.5% CVR  
After: 4% CVR

# Invisible CTA:

I need to **decide** whether to increase budgets



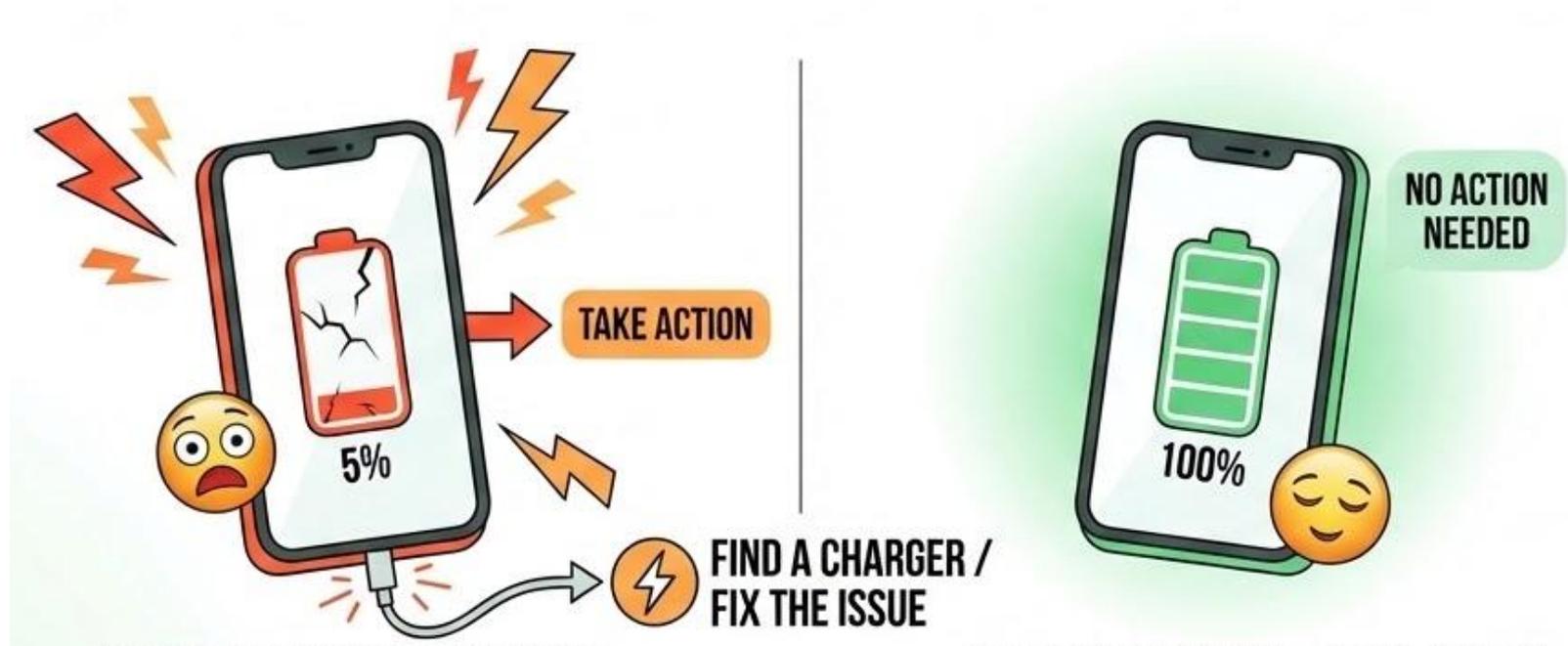
## Rising CPCs are Driving up Costs



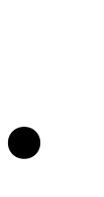
Higher CPCs are reducing click volume and revenue while exhausting current budgets.

Increasing budgets would generate more revenue but lower overall efficiency.

# Bad performance is scary. Show it anyway.



Use **color** for  
**communication.**

Not **d****e****c****o****r****a****t****i****o****n.**

# Use a **consistent** color theme

Upload a screenshot of your client's website to extract the color palette

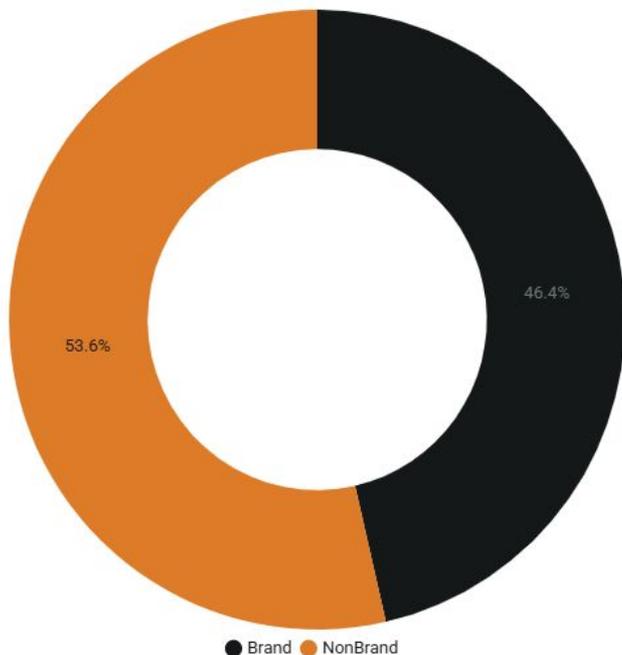
Themes created for you

These themes were generated from your image. Select the one you like, then click Apply.

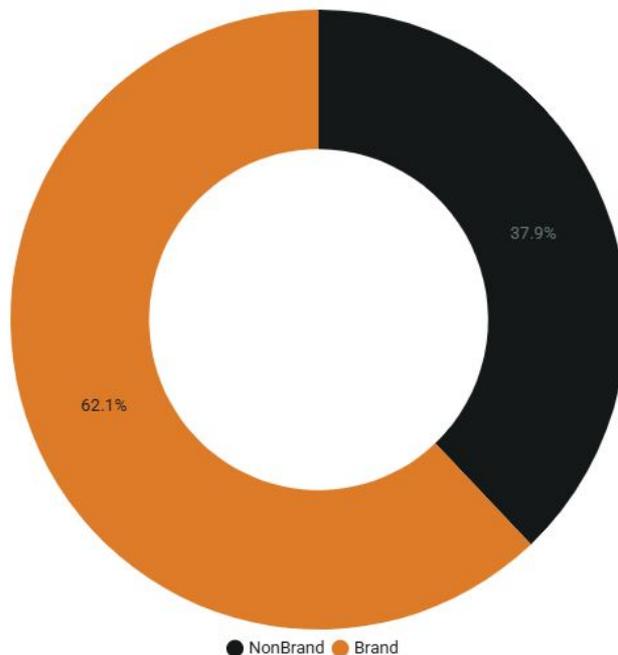


# Use a consistent " sort by " field in Setup panel

## Cost



## Conversions



# Use color to signal meaning

## Comparison metrics

Comparison Metric

↑ ↓

↓ ↑

Decimal precision

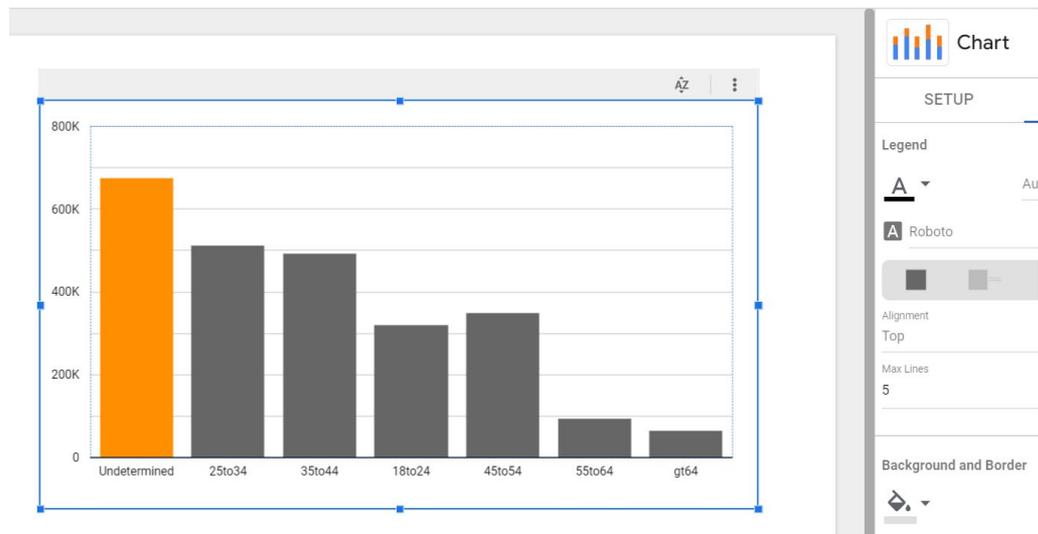
auto

Show Absolute Change

Hide Comparison Label

Revenue  
**\$45,659**  
↓ -34% ↑ 723%

## Contrast



**Let big numbers  
feel big**

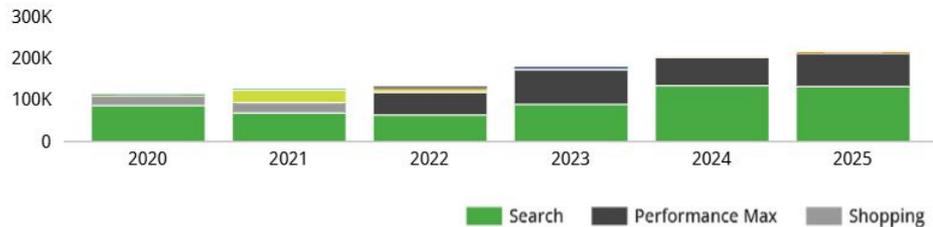
# Review **compact numbers** and decimals

Cost: **€79.4K**

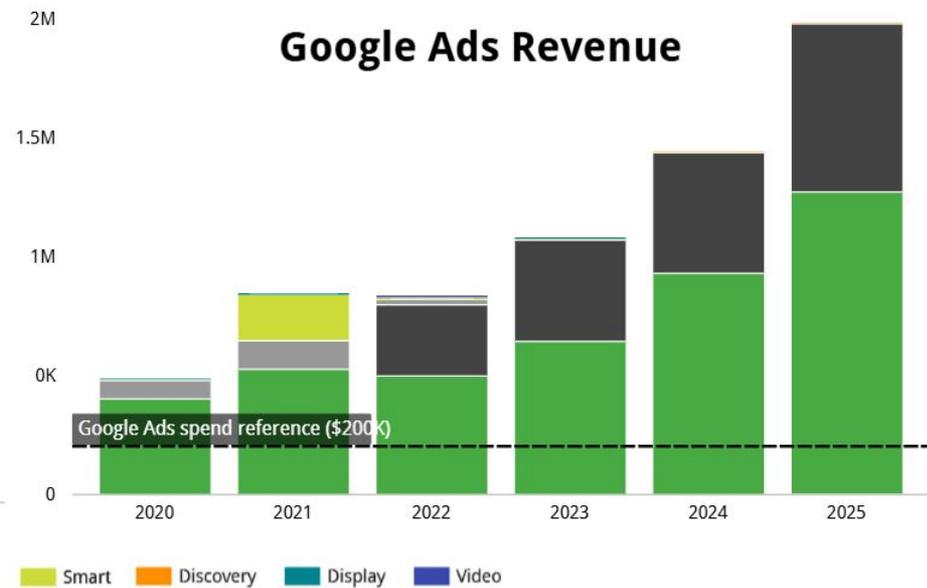
Revenue: **€2M**

# Be consistent across Y-axes

## Google Ads Spend



## Google Ads Revenue



*Don't be afraid*  
*of* **text.**

# Use **takeaway titles** to state the insight

Why are you showing them the chart?

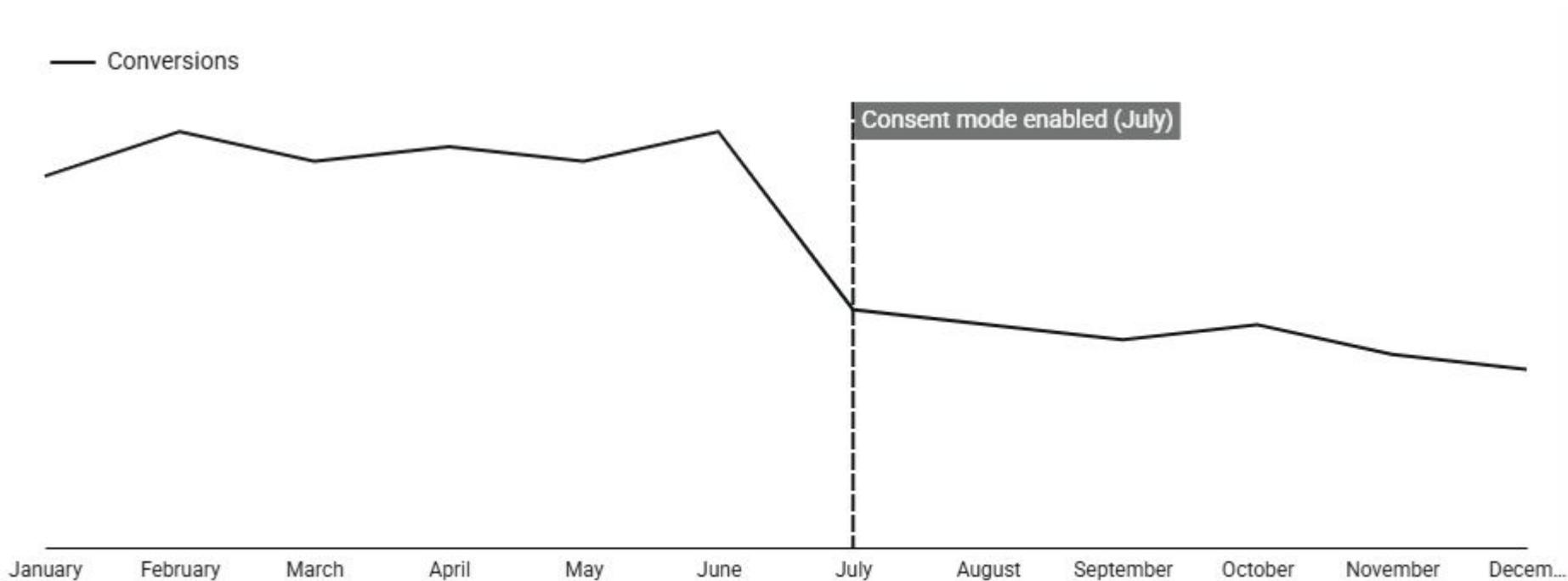


**Performance by Engine**

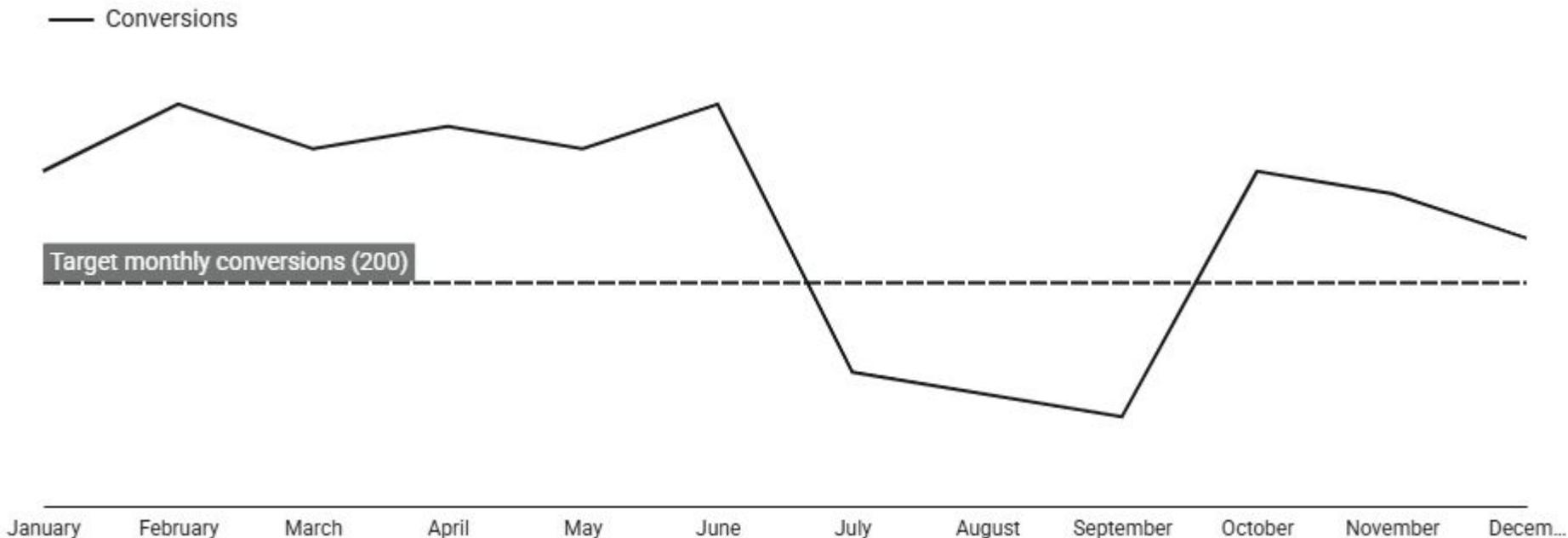


**Microsoft conversions are up 15%**

# Use X-axis reference lines for events



# Use **Y-axis reference lines** for targets or thresholds



**Never make the  
data “speak for  
itself.”**

# 2025 Paid Search Performance

had a new record for paid search revenue in 2025, driving more than \$1.5 million in sales with a high ROAS of 6.1

## 2025 Paid Search Performance



## 2024 Paid Search Performance



\*Based on GA4 data.



Take Action:

**Are you making your  
reports easy to  
understand?**

# Most reporting misses the mark



# Your Reporting ROI

You've earned stakeholder buy-in

Stakeholder-first

100%

Curated data

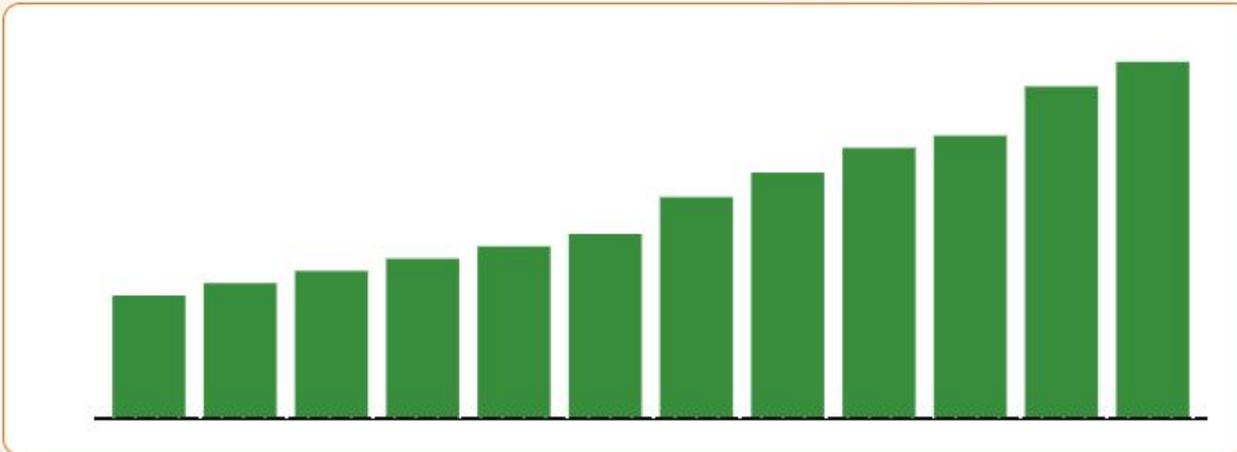
100%

Well-designed

100%



Retention and revenue keep going up





Thank you!  
Amy Hebdon

[paidsearchmagic.com](http://paidsearchmagic.com)

