



Solicitors

Avoid These Common
PPC Mistakes



Paid marketing can be a tricky subject to tackle. A lot of people don't understand what it does, why they need it, and why it could be a game-changer for them.

With all the buzzwords and jargon, whether it's optimisation tactics, bidding strategies or just the broad topic of 'campaigns', it's easy to get lost in the noise.

There are a whole range of common mistakes that people working with PPC come across, which can result in failed campaigns. If you fail to do it right, you could spend a lot of money for not a lot of return, or worse, a total lack of engagement.

Luckily for you, this guide details a few of the most glaring errors that people make, as well as how you can easily avoid them to achieve the most out of your paid search marketing strategies.

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Not using keyword match types properly

Keywords are the base of your campaign strategy. There are four different match types in paid search marketing: Broad Match, Broad Match Modified, Phrase Match and Exact Match (5 if you include negative keywords). They all have their role to play, but if you choose the wrong one, you could find your campaign in trouble.

To make your task harder, Google has recently blurred the lines between match types with their new 'close variants' changes, which sees your ads trigger for similar keywords you're bidding on. Google says that it will prioritise exact-match keywords in its hierarchy, however, we're seeing a lot of examples of where this isn't proving to be the case.

The key principles of attaching the right match types to your keywords remain the same. These changes just mean that advertisers need more focus on keyword control.

If your business offers divorce lawyers, for example, bidding on *"divorce lawyers"* sounds like a reasonable thing to do, right? Wrong. Bidding on such a broad term would make your ads eligible to appear on a huge number of completely irrelevant terms, giving you little to no control over the searches your keywords trigger for.

What's more, the close variant changes may well have muddled with the match-type hierarchy you've spent months optimising, again, limiting your control. Under the new system, keywords such as *"divorce lawyer"* can be triggered for search terms Google deems a close variant

for example *"marriage separation"*. Whilst this system is going to throw up loads of examples where the substitute has little relevance, you're also going to be finding yourself in a position where you may well have *"marriage separation"* as an exact match keyword in another ad group. That control you were used to has had its wings clipped.

You are most likely used to using the tried and tested method of using broad-match modifier keywords on your 'low intent'/'research' campaigns and exact-match on your 'higher-intent' campaigns. To minimise any misrouting of keywords, be sure to negate all of your exact matches from your BMM campaigns, so that when a user searches one of your exact terms, it's those keywords that triggers.

Close variant developments make this harder. It may be the case that you look to collapse multiple different, slightly varying keywords into fewer campaigns and use ad customisers to insert keywords into your ad copy headlines. If Google is going to substitute your keywords anyway, there might not be such a need for you to be so 'exact' with your keywords.

Not using negative keyword lists efficiently

While it's important to use proper keyword match types, it's also important to be able to use your negative keyword list effectively.

Usually, you'll have a master list of keywords that apply to all of your campaigns with terms or phrases that you don't want your ads to trigger for. By keeping an eye on where your ads are being triggered you can retarget your ads by adding or taking keywords out of your negative list.

Still, it's worth keeping in mind that your master list might include phrases and terms that are relevant to certain campaigns, so think before you apply it.

Negative keywords don't stop at account level though. As previously mentioned, if you're running Broad and Exact campaigns, make sure that you're adding your Exact-match keywords as negatives to your Broad campaign. Misrouting keywords into the wrong campaign will misalign your data.

In addition, with Google's new close variant changes, it's worth looking at applying ad group negative keyword lists using keywords from your other campaigns. For example, if you have an ad group for *"divorce"* and an ad group for *"separation"*, consider negating one set of keywords from the other to take back some of that control you will have lost.



Not matching keywords to ad copy

One classic PPC mistake is to make one set of ads and then push them out to multiple ad groups. You might think you're cutting corners but it only makes life harder.

If someone searches for *"legal separation"* and your ad appears showing *"divorce lawyer"* in the headline, it's likely that the searcher won't register your ad as being relevant to their search and therefore will leave your ad alone. Google will also decrease your ad relevance if the exact keyword doesn't feature in the ad - meaning your ad might not show or might have an increased cost per click.

Ideally, you want to tailor the ads to the keyword triggering them as closely as you can. You should have separate groups for *"divorce"* and *"separation"*, each with their own relevant keywords and ad copy.

You should always try to include your keywords in the headline of the ad and then again in the description, just so it stands out more and appears to be more relevant.

Fortunately, there are a couple of helpful tools that can be deployed here to help make your ads as relevant as possible.

The first is using ad customisers to deploy dynamic keyword insertion. This sees you insert a custom field into your ad copy, that will then take the search keyword used and place it in your ad copy, making for super-relevant ad copy.

In addition, look at using Responsive Search Ads, which have a huge 15 headlines and 4 descriptions. Submit as many different headlines and descriptions as possible, and Google will dynamically pick which ones to serve based on which is most likely to get a click from that searcher. This can also be useful if you have a number of different selling points you want to communicate in your ads, but don't know which are the most compelling.

These tools are proven to improve click-through rates, so if you're struggling in that area, give them a go.

Not bidding on your own brand keywords

Contrary to what many think, there is no 'one-size-fits-all' when it comes to bidding on brand. It depends on your specific situation as to whether it's worth doing or not.

If you have competitors bidding on your brand, it's absolutely worth having those keywords running to make sure you're minimising the amount of traffic lost to those competitors. The good news is that your competitors will have relatively low quality scores on your brand, because naturally, they aren't you so they're not going to be able to compete on a relevancy level.

If you haven't got competitors bidding on your brand, it's still worth testing to see if you get any value from it. Two results are very often better than one as you'll be taking up more space in the SERPs.

Another tactic is to use RLSA (Remarketing List for Search Ads) to only bid on new customers searching your brand. People that already know you are more likely to click through regardless of a competitor ad, so by excluding these people you are focusing your efforts on new and potentially earlier swayed prospects.



Not using audiences to their full potential

Once you've got your campaigns and ad groups all nicely separated, and all with relevant and enticing ad copy, you might think you're on your way to success. But nope, we're not quite there yet.

Google has two basic options when it comes to actually target your ads: **Observation** and **Targeting**. The people you target your ads to are your audience, and choosing the right audience is crucial in the success of your campaigns.

Best practice dictates that you should overlay key audiences onto your campaigns on an observation setting to gather data on their performance. That way, you'll know which audiences are worth targeting and which you should leave alone.

By gathering data on which audiences click through your ads most, it's easy to implement positive or negative bid adjustments that ensure that you're investing in the right audiences at the right times.

When you're starting out, a good audience to observe is users who have visited your website before, those who have similar interests to those who visit your site, all previous converters and people similar to converters. This is an area where Google does some of the work for you.

For every eligible audience you create, Google will automatically create a 'similar to' audience, saving you a step in setting up those audiences.

Once you have your base audience you can begin to build on it. As people visit different pages on a site, you can target different ads at them that are relevant to their recent activity in RLSAs (Remarketing Lists for Search Ads).

You can also target them using affinity and in-market audiences, which are lists that Google build based on searchers' interest signals garnered from their activity online. These can only be used to target users on display or video campaigns.

Top Tip: Build custom affinity lists of people who visit your competitor's websites. They're exactly the people who you'd want to switch to buying from you. Also, don't be shy in adding affinity and in-market audiences on observation to your campaigns on 0% bid adjustments; this is all about gathering as much customer insight as possible.

Not being original enough

It might seem easy at first glance to create an ad relevant to your brand and just send it out into the wild. Unfortunately, this doesn't work, and you need to be spending a bit more time on your campaign before you hit the submit button.

The first thing you should do when creating your ads is to look at your direct competition. What are they including in their ads and what makes them unique? The absolute worst thing you can do is write similar ad copy to your competitor. It doesn't make you stand out, and they're just as likely to click your ads as anyone else's.

Take the time to understand what is unique about your brand, your products or your services and create an ad that is original and relevant. It's a tough one but you have to identify what is unique about you and why people should buy from you. Just make sure that it's what your target market wants and cares about.

Be sure to use the various ad extensions that Google offers when building your adverts to make the most of all of the reasons to buy from you. Use callout extensions, structured snippets, and if you have key products or services, you can link straight to them using sitelink extensions.



Summary

You might have noticed throughout this guide that making effective use of your PPC comes down to data and the insight you extract from that data. You'll be making a lot of 'educated guesses' and making minor tweaks here and there until you're satisfied with the results. Regardless, you should never take your eyes off your ads.

PPC is unique in that it gives you the possibility of reaching people in the exact moment when they're actively searching for a service or product that you offer. By investing in paid search marketing wisely, we can capture the attention of those people exactly when they're most likely to convert, proving a highly effective strategy at achieving a maximum return.

By avoiding the mistakes we've listed in this guide, you're already making a big step towards better PPC marketing for your law firm.



Contact

If you have any questions, or would like to discuss anything in more detail, please get in touch.

📞 01522 716171
@ hello@distract.co.uk
🌐 distract.co.uk

📍 15 Witham Park House,
Waterside South,
Lincoln LN5 7JN