



How to level up your agency's search services



We spoke with digital agencies across the U.S. about how they're testing and extending their paid search businesses to find out what works best.¹

Across the board, we found that proactive client education and creative planning are key strategies for a winning approach.

Here's how your peer agencies are growing their paid search business.



Six ways to exceed paid search client expectations

Use short-term metrics

All paid search clients want to see revenue growth over the long haul, but the right interim goals can be very different. When you identify these objectives, and help clients meet them, you rack up more successes and help to lay a path for success.

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“If a client is in growth mode, they may be willing to accept a negative number for a while, in which case we track cost per new customer. That’s a very different short-term metric than what the client might be expecting, and we have to explain that.”

Small digital marketing agency based in North Carolina²

Base the buy on your clients' needs

Most paid search clients are focused on the needs and profile of target buyers. Leading search agencies say that encouraging clients to focus on their objectives, too, is at the heart of long-term client success. Clients often need to be reminded of the importance of this input to search decisions. When you're the one to do it, it builds on your relationship.

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"We need to be sure we're buying based on business model — e-commerce companies prioritize driving buys on first click, but longer sales-funnel clients need to connect with window shoppers."

Mid-sized full-service agency based in Denver and San Diego³

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Set the right metrics

Proper measurement is at the heart of paid search customer satisfaction. When you set the right program metrics — and succeed against them — you help your direct client appear successful to their boss. This experience supports a case for increased search investments.

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“Our contacts are strapped for time, so it’s up to me to show them the way. That might be by pointing out that lifetime customer value is the best measurement at a certain point, for instance. If there are layers of management above them, this support helps them succeed, so they can ask for more money.”

Large full-service agency based in Maryland⁴

Remind clients of your efforts

Reporting to clients may happen weekly or a few times each week, depending on the size of the account. Using a portal to give clients 24/7 access to their account performance helps you increase your level of service with no extra effort. This kind of service builds long-term relationships.

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“We lean heavily to automated bidding if it has enough conversions. We love MS Shopping [Campaigns]. There’s not a lot you have to do to maintain it, and it frees us to do what machines can’t: look at the accounts every day and send notes to clients.”

Large full-service agency based in Maryland⁴

Reinforce your search expertise

Clients that are confident in an agency's expertise stick around and have the potential to increase spending. Client confidence can be strengthened through independent verification of your agency's expert status, maintaining agency certifications from third-party platforms, publishing and presenting on search topics, and promoting expertise on social platforms. Two-thirds of agencies reported in a recent survey that they received certifications.

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"I think they like to know that we have good connections at the big places like Bing and Facebook."

Large full-service agency based in Maryland⁴

Be proactive with search recommendations

It's easy to highlight opportunities when a client first comes on board, but ongoing success necessitates keeping up a drumbeat of insight. Continually surface opportunities that your client otherwise would not know about by monitoring clients' competitive landscape and tracking changes in target audience behaviors and demographics.

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"Sometimes a client can't compete in the space they want to compete in. They need to spend \$10 to keep the campaign profitable, but it will cost them \$20 to get the keyword they've been targeting. So, we show them a different way to get results."

Small digital agency based in Texas²



How to re-energize stagnant paid search campaigns

When client performance plateaus, relationships are at risk. The good news is that account performance can be turned around.

Use these peer-informed tips to breathe new life into sluggish search accounts and keep them loyal to your agency.

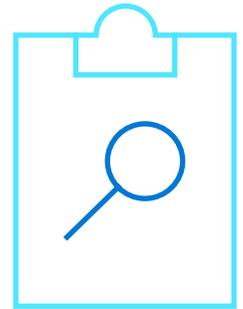
Add to search to win sales

Agencies succeed by offering a breadth of marketing services clients demand. In addition to search, agencies provide the following to win clients:⁸

- ✓ Paid social 86%
- ✓ Video 74%
- ✓ Display 68%
- ✓ Audio/radio 49%
- ✓ Native 26%

Surface untapped opportunities

Review slow-moving campaigns with your search service account representatives. They can be a great source for new strategies and approaches when they need a jumpstart. You can also do competitive research and run reports for additional insights. Try:



- ✓ Using search query performance reports to alert you to terms that belong on your keyword lists, as well as terms that deliver unrelated impressions, which should move to your negative keyword list.
- ✓ Use these reports to identify buyer pain points that you can use to create more effective ads and landing pages. For example, a query report might reveal a significant number of searches for “lightweight” or “100% cotton” versions of a client’s product.

Reoptimize

Because the search environment fluctuates, reoptimizing is key to maintain and boost performance. New competitors might increase the cost of top-performing keywords, or an unrelated product with a similar name might syphon clicks from your campaigns. The way people search for a product can also change over time, so:

- ✓ Stay up to date on how customers are talking about your clients' offerings to find fresh terms to target.

Revisit conversions

Test drive the user experience with your clients' landing pages and forms to confirm they're strong enough to seal the deal with would-be customers. Look for updates you can recommend to boost results, such as:

- ✓ Landing page load times that might be driving abandoned transactions.
- ✓ Poor copywriting that makes it difficult for site visitors to understand a company's unique value or to quickly ascertain how to make a purchase.



Bring in reinforcements

Managing an account day to day can make it difficult to step away for a 10,000-foot view of new or missed opportunities. Ask a team member who is not assigned to the account to review the campaigns and run scenarios that might improve results. Some agencies report building this strategy into their standard business processes by have accounts reviewed by outsiders once per quarter.

- ✓ Your search service account representatives can also help by adding outside perspective.



Microsoft Advertising. Intelligent connections.

1. 200 ad spend decision-makers at U.S. search agencies with 500 or fewer employees interviewed between August 27 and September 4, 2019, and one-on-one phone interviews with fast-growing search agencies between January - March 2020. 2. Small agencies are companies with 1-20 employees. 3. Midsized companies have 21-75 employees. 4. Large companies have 75 or more employees. 5. 200 ad spend decision-makers at U.S. search agencies with 500 or fewer employees interviewed between August 27 and September 4, 2019. 6. Large companies have 75 or more employees. 7. Small agencies are companies with 1-20 employees. 8. 200 ad spend decision-makers at U.S. search agencies with 500 or fewer employees interviewed between August 27 and September 4, 2019.

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