

Making a List, Checking It Twice: The Essential Paid Search Holiday Checklist



AdWords Best Practices Series

☐ 1 What is your communication process?

☐ Who are your stakeholders and how will you be working with them?

- ☐ Establish a communication process and update schedule with:
 - Core team of marketers using AdWords
 - Managers with final say on budgets and resources
 - Cross functional teammates for updates on product, sales, merchandising, operations, and other marketing channels
 - Your Google account team
 - Agency and vendor contacts (if applicable)
 - ☐ Provide regular performance updates considering:
 - Appropriate audience and timing of reports
 - KPI dashboard and analysis: actuals versus forecast, year-over-year comparisons
 - Major in-quarter wins and the projected performance impact
 - Example:** Key findings from completed copy tests and related holiday messaging updates
 - Identified risks to delivering forecast and mitigating optimizations
 - Example:** CTRs trending low leading into Black Friday and forthcoming ad copy tests
-

☐ 2 What are your key performance drivers?

☐ Are you running with the right keywords?

- ☐ Unpause seasonal keywords in time to fully capture consumer demand
 - Tip:** Use [Google Trends](#) and [account history](#) to forecast demand
- ☐ Keep a close eye on the average position of these seasonal keywords (along with your core keywords), which can quickly accelerate to become your head terms and drop in rank due to increased competition
 - Tip:** Schedule a daily report or even check the [AdWords Preview and Diagnosis Tool](#) every couple hours to closely monitor these keywords
- ☐ Pause and unpause keywords that rely on inventory turnover

☐ What is your bidding strategy?

- ☐ Time part bids indexed to seasonal history, trends, and special promotions
- ☐ Use location bid adjustments to get more traffic from high value areas or encourage visits to stores (if applicable)

☐ What are you going to say to all those holiday shoppers?

- ☐ Finalize ad testing and your [copy flight schedule](#)
 - Tip:** Emphasize key shopping days, promotional offers, and deadlines like [shipping cut offs](#) and [sale end dates](#)
- ☐ Use all relevant ad extensions especially with the recent [Ad Rank update](#)
 - Example:** Use location and call extensions to drive in store traffic, or sitelinks for any popular keywords to cross sell new products
- ☐ Promote your products with richer ads and on [Google Shopping](#) with [product listing ads](#)
 - Tip:** Consider [mobile PLAs](#)
- ☐ Opt into Google Search Partners so shoppers can find you when searching for stores like yours on [Google Maps](#)

☐ Are your best landing pages ready to welcome shoppers?

- ☐ End landing page tests and confirm your best designs with the website team
- ☐ Set [automated rules](#) for conversion rates to alert you of any potential site issues
- ☐ Test your mobile optimized landing pages if available, and update destination URLs where appropriate
- ☐ Schedule reminders to QA landing pages especially for time-sensitive offers

Cont.

- ☐ Do you have enough budget?
 - ☐ Project the monthly or quarterly spend using your run rate so that you have enough for all key shopping days
 - ☐ Set *automated* rules to check on your budget
 - ☐ Are you up to date on all the special deals for shoppers?
 - ☐ Stay updated on any potential in-quarter changes to the promotional calendar
 - ☐ Research any interesting offers from your competitors
-

☐ 3 What are your contingency plans if something doesn't go to plan?

- ☐ What is your crisis response plan?
 - ☐ Establish policies: what is considered a crisis, and how should the team be empowered to respond
 - ☐ Establish an escalation plan for times when team members will be remote
 - ☐ Circulate applicable contact information
 - ☐ What if you have more demand than expected?
 - ☐ Stay updated on inventory that could run out (*and pause those keywords*)
 - ☐ Set up notifications for potential website downtime (*too much traffic!*)
 - ☐ Make the case for more budget if there is opportunity
 - ☐ What if you have less demand than expected?
 - ☐ Test higher positions on your best converting keywords or highest margin product lines
 - ☐ Monitor average position to check if competitors have affected your ad rank
 - ☐ Test to find more profitable opportunities
 - Example:** *Mobile bid adjustments to get smartphone shoppers or match type expansion capture more queries*
 - ☐ Partner with your Google account team to diagnose any potential issues
 - ☐ Test a better offer with your promotions team
 - Tip:** *Balance value per order lost with total order*
-

☐ 4 Recognition and Thank You's

Last but not least, remember to thank and recognize all those who helped you along the way to make this a blockbuster season for your search campaigns.

Here's to a great Q4.