

The history of automation in paid search

POWERED BY THE KITE FACTORY

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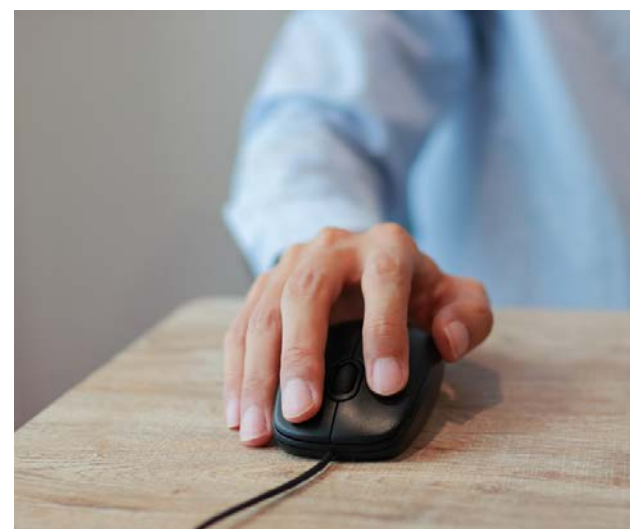


Automation is a powerful tool to supercharge your paid search campaigns and it is important to use these tools to your advantage rather than trying to do everything.

In the following article, we dissect the history of automation in Google ads since its launch in 2002 and how it has evolved to what we currently have.



2009



B I D S I M U L A T O R R E L E A S E D

Paid search specialists have to forecast clicks and expected outcomes for their clients. This can take a long time and isn't the most accurate, so the predictions were very "finger in the air". So Google released a bid simulator to help teams to understand what the optimal max CPC is to get more clicks.

The consensus back in 2009 was the suggested CPCs that this tool recommended were astronomical bid increases and not fit for purpose. However, Google has since improved the bid simulator, which exists in the platform today (2022).



O P P O R T U N I T I E S T A B B E T A

What we now know as the optimisation score and the recommendations tab started as an opportunities tab beta.

This was available to select advertisers & provided suggestions for keyword and budget ideas.

Specialists perceived both these tools as Google's attempt to make more money. Its usage was low as the tool suggested you increase your bids and/or budget to gain clicks rather than measurable performance metrics.



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BIDDING AUTOMATION

The first of bidding automation, Enhanced CPC. This automatically changes bids by up to 30% if the algorithm identifies a higher likelihood of conversion. Paid specialists still use eCPC today when they are running manual campaigns.

AUTOMATED RULES

Automated rules make changes in your account automatically. Using the settings and conditions that you choose, these can be ad status, budget, etc.

Paid specialists still use this to their advantage today, whether it's turning campaigns on and off at set times or pausing keywords that have a low conversion rate.

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D Y N A M I C S E A R C H A D S

Dynamic Search Ad campaigns launched. This enabled users to set up campaigns based on the landing page URL and content within the landing page. Google uses content from webpages to generate matches to users' queries. The only manual output is descriptions for ads, which allows teams to identify any overlooked keyword opportunities.

DSA campaigns are still part of best practice account setup today.

2012



S C R I P T S

Scripts limited beta was released, allowing specialists to automate actions in Google Ads accounts by entering JavaScript code. For example, automatically creating, editing or removing items. Saving you time and letting you manage your account effectively.

Scripts are still used in 2022. My personal favourite is the weather bid-altering script, which we once used for a 10,000-product retail client selling fans. The script automatically accelerated the budget when the weather was over 25C.

The word JavaScript makes this sound like you need to be a coding genius. But do not fear; some geniuses share the scripts they create online.

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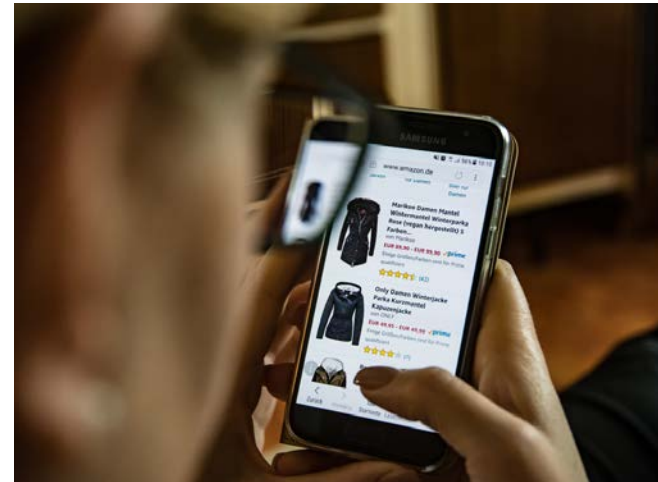
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THE HISTORY OF AUTOMATION IN PAID SEARCH



A D C U S T O M I S E R S

Ad customisers enable hyper-specific messaging to be added to ad text automatically. Specialists can set different parameters, such as location, offer end dates or products.

Salisbury deals on product 1
ProWhip Stand Mixer
[Ad] www.example.com
20% off mixers in our **Salisbury** shop.
Offer ends 5/15.
Blackburn deals on product 2
CookieKing Stand Mixer
[Ad] www.example.com
15% off mixers in our **Blackburn** shop.
Offer ends 6/1.

These help advertisers to increase the click-through rate on ads due to the high level of personalisation.

2016

Multiple bid strategies released



E N H A N C E D C P C

Enhanced CPC has improved over the years. Many paid search specialists opt for this method over manual CPC.

T A R G E T C P A A N D T A R G E T R O A S

Device-specific CPA targets use Google machine learning to spend budget on users who show signs of conversions at a desired cost or ROAS. In 2016 the conversion rates of mobile and desktop were substantial. This was the much-needed granularity paid search specialists had been waiting for.

At The Kite Factory, we work with many charities, such as Action for Children and Blue Cross. Most of our charities have strong CPA targets, meaning we are still utilising these bid strategies today to achieve their KPIs.

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MAXIMISE CONVERSION VALUE

At long last, advertisers who want to spend all their budget while maximising their revenue can do just that. Google added a new smart bidding strategy: Maximise conversion value.

This is especially useful for eCommerce businesses to grow profits.



RESPONSIVE SEARCH ADS

Responsive search ads (RSAs) are live for all advertisers in all languages. RSAs use machine learning to deliver relevant messages to users, giving advertisers the option to combine up to 15 headlines and four descriptions into one ad.

RSA's are now the only ad type that specialists can create. This ad type generally gets a high CTR as it dynamically selects all headlines and descriptions available using machine learning. Yet, due to automation, there is a loss in control and reporting for advertisers, leaving them frustrated and looking for workarounds to create control.

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P E R F O R M A N C E M A X

Performance Max campaigns are goal-driven campaigns. They can serve on Search, Display, YouTube, Gmail, and Discovery, showing ads to various audiences across different environments and user mindsets. This is a super automated campaign type designed to use a mixture of images, broad ad copy and videos. The ads are all optimised by Google's algorithm to dictate when, where and who to show ads to.

Unfortunately, Performance max is Google's latest black box as you cannot get any data that can help with optimisations such as performance by placement. Additionally, there are limitations to adding negative keywords, as a Google rep needs to add these (if you have one).

Paid search specialists are using performance max as an awareness tool. Spending time on standard campaigns, where you can make meaningful optimisations.

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In a nutshell, automation means we don't need to press all the buttons that we used to. Gone are the days when paid search teams needed to spend all day every day in accounts, making slight adjustments to a keyword's max CPC based on historical data signals. Instead, we can now automate bidding using Google's machine learning, which is much needed in a world where there are 8.5 billion searches per day.

Not only is that a huge number of opportunities to appear in the search engine results for brands, 90% of people only use the first page of Google, so it's never been more important to have a strong search strategy. Automation should be a tactic deployed, fueling the fire to achieve search excellence and business success.

Stay tuned for our next article, where we explore the pros and cons of search automation and some tips on how to use it effectively.

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