Best Practices in Performance Marketing

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Spending is on the rise in search engine marketing, digital display advertising, social media and search engine optimization. It’s great news for marketers—provided you can prove the value of these programs and tie efforts to business outcomes and revenue.

This series of blogs from the Webtrends Performance Marketing team can help you do just that. We share our recommended best practices, all of which can help you:

- Measure effectively
- Test successfully
- Improve search engine rankings
- Optimize paid search funnels
- Enhance campaigns

We hope you find something helpful.

If you still need more, visit our blog at: http://blogs.webtrends.com/

— The Webtrends Performance Marketing Team
When I was in graduate school, I took a marketing class that, though I didn’t realize it at the time, has shaped the way I look at every marketing engagement that I encounter. We had to develop one marketing plan every week for 15 weeks. That’s 15 marketing plans. The steps were always the same. Develop objectives, create strategies and tactics to help achieve the objectives.

THE OBJECTIVES HAD TO BE SMART:

1. Specific
2. Measurable
3. Attainable
4. Relevant
5. Time-bound

Those words stuck with me.
After school, I started my career in the advertising agency business. My boss would always say to our clients, “what’s it going to take to get an A on this assignment?” When I first heard it, I thought it seemed pretty elementary. But as he repeated this over and over with every new client and engagement, I realized that what he was trying to do was identify a SMART objective, one we could use to measure success. If we hit our client’s goal, then we would have a happy long-term client. If we went into the engagement without an objective, how could we measure success?

A pretty website or an award-winning campaign that doesn’t drive to a business or marketing objective isn’t going to get you repeat business or make your client look like a hero. However, achieving defined and measurable objectives, like a 10% increase in website conversions within a year after launch, or a decrease in cost per conversion by 15% in three months.

This may seem like Marketing 101 to some. But all too often, when I ask a client or potential prospect “What are your marketing objectives for the year?” or, “What are your marketing objectives for this campaign?” they can’t give a correct answer. I get responses like, “Our budget is $xxx,xxx” or “We want to create more engagement” or “We want to increase our conversions and our cart size” without any specific number in mind. When I push for specifics, I get blank stares and a repeat of what they just told me.

WEBTRENDS SMART OBJECTIVES AND WE HOW WE MEASURE THEM.

OBJECTIVE: Increase click through-rate from .5% to 1.75% by April 1

MEASUREMENT: Webtrends leverages our Webtrends Ads platform to optimize to multiple KPIs, one being click-through rate. We have achieved our objective for the quarter and are now working toward a 3% click-through-rate for July 1.

CLICK-THROUGH-RATE
OBJECTIVE: Achieve 15% social share of voice by April 2013 surrounding a set of keywords

MEASUREMENT: Webtrends leverages our social listening platform to determine the clients’ share of voice around a set of keywords. Our client is in green. As you can see, by March we had almost reached our desired objective. We report progress to our client on a monthly basis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBJECTIVE: Search Engine Rankings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Achieve position 5 or better for keywords 1,2,3,4,5,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Achieve position 10 or better for keywords 7,8,9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MEASUREMENT: Webtrends leverages our search engine ranking solution to monitor and report our search engine optimization efforts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEYWORD</th>
<th>BEFORE OPTIMIZATION</th>
<th>CURRENT RANK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keyword 1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyword 2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyword 3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyword 4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyword 5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyword 6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyword 7</td>
<td>Not in Top 50</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyword 8</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyword 9</td>
<td>Not in Top 50</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keyword 10</td>
<td>Not in Top 50</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ad copy testing is one of the most basic and important aspects of PPC advertising. It allows advertisers to fine-tune their message and craft first impressions. It’s also a chance to learn, specifically, what messaging customers do and don’t respond to. Unfortunately, a surprising number of advertisers don’t take advantage of this incredibly valuable and readily available tool. And many of those that do test, do so without any sort of plan or methodology.

That’s a mistake.

I’ve found a troubleshooting methodology invaluable to ad testing. Here’s how it works.
ISOLATE A SINGLE COMPONENT OF YOUR AD FOR TESTING

In large accounts, this test would occur over a large number of ad groups. On the Webtrends Performance Marketing Team, we generally break out large accounts into categories using Marin Dimensions. This can also be done using Adwords Labels.

For example, one account that we work on has over 3,500 English Language Search Ad Groups. Running individual tests across that many groups on a monthly basis is simply not feasible. Instead, we divide those groups into 8 to 10 categories or themes using Dimensions in Marin, and run individual tests across these groups. Again, we would label those ads using the Dimensions feature in Marin. This does not necessarily mean that you run the same exact ad across all groups in a category. But when testing, you will isolate only one component.

SET YOUR AD ROTATION SETTINGS TO ROTATE EVENLY

This can be found in the advanced section of our campaigns settings.

Let’s look at two ads, and see how the troubleshooting method makes a difference.

**AD TEST 1: A SPLIT A/B TEST**

**Ad #1**

Ad #2

If we run a split test for 30 days and find that Ad #1 has a better CTR and a higher Profit per Impression, we can definitively say that Ad #1 is better than Ad #2.

But this test provides us with little else and gives no guidance as to what ad should replace Ad #2 in the next round. Did customers respond better to “Swim Trunks” over “Swim Shorts”? Or was it the display URL or the mention of “High Quality” or “Affordable Price”? There is no way for us to know. The only useful piece of information from this test is that Ad #1 is better than Ad #2.
AD TEST 2: THE TROUBLESHOOTING METHOD

Ad #1

Swim Trunks
OregonSwimTrunks.org
High Quality Swim Trunks at an Affordable Price. Free Shipping!

Ad #2

Swim Trunks
OregonSwimTrunks.org/SummerDeals
High Quality Swim Trunks at an Affordable Price. Free Shipping!

If we were to run this split test for 30 days and find that Ad #2 had a better CTR and a higher Profit per Impression, we would know, definitively, that it was the “Summer Deals” in the Display URL that the customers were responding to. All other components of the ads remain the same. We could then use this knowledge to inform subsequent rounds of testing, landing page experience, and more.

The number of Items that you can isolate and test in an ad are nearly limitless. A few of my favorites are below.

- Display URL
- Brand Name in ad vs. No mention of Brand
- Official Site
- Free Shipping vs. No Free Shipping
- Mentioning the Price
- DKI

Ad testing is an iterative process. It’s constant, on-going and, as we have seen, crucial to success in PPC advertising. In order to be successful you have to apply a controlled methodology. Doing so allows you to not only choose the winning ad in any individual test, but also to inform marketing strategy in subsequent tests and beyond.
Despite the hype, it’s clear that some businesses have yet to fully embrace social media in their digital marketing mix. It takes time, planning and resources to get started and to “do Social” well. I’ve compiled important guidelines for beginners, based on what we see works best for our customers, and best practices in social media in general. I hope these guidelines are helpful to you as you launch your company’s social presence and begin to dialogue with customers, potential customers, industry influencers, brand advocates, colleagues and friends.
1. **BE INTERACTIVE**

   So often, I see businesses treating social feeds as catalogs, whitepapers, or even instruction manuals. Companies often flood social channels with regurgitated information about their products and services, and wonder why no one is commenting. On your first day of school, which kids were more fun and engaging – the ones who talked endlessly about their own toys, or the ones who actually invited you to play a game with them?

2. **BE RESPECTFUL**

   Social is a great place for a business to show a fun side, and let its guard down a little. But in the process, don’t disrespect people or make a joke at someone else’s expense. Take care and think through anything that is shared with your audience. For example, many internet videos or memes can be offensive. Businesses need to show extra precaution not to offend fans.

3. **SAY YOU’RE SORRY**

   Suppose you do offend a fan. The nature of Social will most likely result in some public slip-ups. When this happens you should delete all of your posts and cancel your accounts...just kidding. What you should do is apologize and make it right. Depending on the situation, it could result in more trust and respect for your company than before the slip-up.

4. **BE A GOOD LISTENER**

   Nobody wants to listen to someone who doesn’t listen back. Social is not a one way conversation. You need to take an interest in what other people are saying and participate in the conversation. This includes your fans and your industry as a whole.

5. **BE YOURSELF**

   Your social feed should reflect the personality of your company. For older companies, the personality may already be well defined. Younger companies may need to start looking for one, but be sure to let your fans help shape who you are. Not every social personality needs to be a bubbly exclamation fest with smiley faces galore. Instead it should be a reflection of how your company might actually behave in a human suit.

6. **TIMING IS EVERYTHING**

   It’s a good practice to measure which weekdays and times of day get the greatest fan response from your posts. There is no need to constantly be posting things twenty-four hours a day. However, for the greatest effectiveness, you should try to be smart about when you do post. Posts are fleeting in their nature so make sure you are getting the most you can out of them.
7. LET YOUR FANS GET TO KNOW YOU, SOCIALLY

If you are running ads, make sure to drive people somewhere within the social site. Either to your business page, an app, or an iframe. Let them get to know you where they are comfortable first, and then invite them to your website.

8. LEAVE YOUR PERSONAL LIFE AT HOME

If you are representing your company, do not inject your personal life into the feed. This seems so obvious, yet worth a reminder.

9. KEEP THINGS SECURE

Like any aspect of your business, the security of your social accounts should be taken seriously. As employees come and go, make sure to have a process for updating social logins and passwords.

10. MEASURE RESULTS – AND SHARE THEM!

Most importantly, make sure you do everything to measure the impact of your social efforts. Set-up cross channel attribution. Align your reporting and social efforts with the goals of the company. Create stunning visual dashboards to share with the executive team. At the end of the day, social needs to deliver value to the company, just like any other aspect of the business, and it is up to social managers to prove their contributions.
Back in February 2013, Google announced Enhanced Campaigns for AdWords. You may have heard about some of the controversy that followed, possibly around the devastating news that device targeting at the campaign level would no longer be an option. But over the past few months, we’ve come to terms with losing that option in exchange for some great new features, such as upgraded sitelinks.

Upgraded sitelinks in enhanced campaigns display on the SERP page the same way normal sitelinks do, but offer advanced settings and reporting that marketers have been wanting for years. Here are three great tips I have for taking advantage of these new features.
1. **TARGET AT THE AD GROUP LEVEL**

With upgraded sitelinks in enhanced campaigns, you can target at the ad group level. Previously, sitelinks were only available at the campaign level, so each link had to be relevant to every keyword within your entire campaign. Now you can create links that are more specific to the keywords in a particular ad group.

Here’s how it looks in AdWords:

So let’s say you have an ecommerce site that sells athletic clothes and you are running a campaign for yoga clothes. With legacy sitelinks you probably had links for yoga tops, yoga pants, and other broad yoga categories, as seen in this example ad:

![Legacy Sitelink Example](image1)

But now with upgraded sitelinks, you can create sitelinks for your yoga pants ad group and link to each of your most popular yoga pants, such as this ad is doing:

![Upgraded Sitelink Example](image2)

The second use of sitelinks is more targeted to the searcher’s query of “yoga pants” and can help the searcher get the pages they’re looking for even faster.
2. **USE ADVANCED REPORTING TO OPTIMIZE SITELINKS**

Upgraded sitelinks offer a deeper level of reporting and maintain their performance history after being edited. With legacy sitelinks any edit you made to a sitelink created a new extension and started new metrics. Also, these metrics were not broken out by individual links, so you couldn’t easily see which link was clicked most or not at all. This made it difficult to optimize sitelinks.

But now we can easily see that information. All you need to do is view your upgraded sitelinks extensions and segment by “This Extension vs. Other.” This will break out individual link performance.

Here’s how it looks in AdWords:

With this information you can test special offers as links or try out different link text and easily see which perform best for your business.
3. SCHEDULE YOUR SITELINKS FOR PROMOTIONS

Schedule your sitelinks to show during times that you’re running promotions. For example, Google suggests scheduling your “15% off on Wednesdays” sitelink to run only on Wednesdays. This could be especially helpful if you’re running a promotion for a holiday. Instead of manually removing the sitelink after the holiday ends, you could schedule it to turn off automatically. Either option is available with Upgraded Sitelinks.

Here’s a screenshot of how to set it up in AdWords:

By default, your extension will run during the times your campaign is scheduled to run. These fields allow you to choose a Start and End date or schedule specific days and hours.

Upgrade your legacy campaigns today, and put these three tips to use for your business.
The paid search universe is one with complex questions and no clear answers. That’s what makes exploring and innovating within that universe so exciting. Every day there’s work to be done, and efforts to shine light where none existed before.

One especially challenging aspect of paid search is the user journey experience and the subsequent paid search funnel. Recently, Webtrends shed light on an enterprise-level client’s paid search funnel by tracking, segmenting and optimizing multi-touch attribution data. Here’s how.
Satisfy the Minimum Requirements

There are a few minimum requirements needed to get started in the multi-touch universe. The first: be a platform that's able to track and report assisted conversions at a keyword level. With Webtrends Ads, we can enable weighted, multi-touch attribution across an account of any size with a few mouse clicks. We can then track and attribute conversion and revenue data going back as far as 10 clicks for each unique visitor.

Apply a multitude of weighted attribution settings to optimize toward a business’s unique funnel.

For this particular client, we limited our conversion value sharing to the last 3 clicks with an attribution weight of 85% (last click), 15% (second), 5% (first click).

Here’s what it looks like within the platform:

As soon as these settings were activated, our client went from a flat attribution model based on last click to a weighted, multi-touch model. Our paid search universe just went multiverse.
EXTRACT ACTIONABLE DATA

In a single month of collecting data, we brought in over 13,000 assists on the keyword level. The multi-touch multiverse was truly at our fingertips. We began segmenting and pivoting-up this data on a keyword level to extract insightful, actionable data.

First, we defined keyword attribution types based on specific performance criteria. Specifically, we created three keyword segments – Introducers, Influencers and Closers – based on the following criteria:

- **INTRODUCER**
  keyword that drove one or more assists with less than or equal to one last click conversion.

- **INFLUENCER**
  keyword that drove one or more assists with two or more last click conversions.

- **CLOSER**
  keyword that drove a last click conversion without driving any assists.

MULTI-ATTRIBUTION FUNNEL

INTRODUCER

**CRITERIA**

Assists > 0, Last Click Conv. <=1

INFLUENCERS

Assists > 0, Last Click Conv. >=2

CLOSER

Assists > 0, Last Click Conv. >0
DEVELOP ACTIONABLE STRATEGIES BASED ON FINDINGS.

After we defined our criteria for the keywords, we pivoted our dataset and got to work culling insights and developing actionable strategies based on our findings.

Here is an example of our workflow for the client:

First, we wanted to take a look at performance per attribution type. Closers led the group in terms of revenue-per-click and conversion rate, followed by Influencers and, finally, Introducers.

**CONVERSION RATE BY ATTRIBUTION TYPE**

Date of Click, Single Conversion, US, Non-Brand, Non-SKUs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribution Type</th>
<th>Conversion Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introducers</td>
<td>1.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influencers</td>
<td>2.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closers</td>
<td>3.11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**REVENUE-PER-CLICK BY ATTRIBUTION TYPE**

Date of Click, Single Conversion, US, Non-Brand, Non-SKUs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribution Type</th>
<th>Revenue-Per-Click</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introducers</td>
<td>$21.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influencers</td>
<td>$23.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closers</td>
<td>$25.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Next, we looked at the share of keywords by attribution type.

**MULTI-TOUCH ATTRIBUTION: KW SHARE**

US, Non-Brand, Non-SKUs

From this, we learned that more than half of the account’s keywords were considered Closers. That’s interesting data in terms of keyword count, but what about share of clicks from these keywords?

**SHARE OF CLICKS BY MULTI-TOUCH SILO**

US, Non-Brand, Non-SKUs. August 2012 – October 2012

For 55% of keywords being Closers, they only drove 23% of the traffic. Influencers drove 70% of the traffic with only a 24% share of overall keywords. Discover new perspectives on paid search funnels.

**DISCOVER NEW PERSPECTIVES ON PAID SEARCH FUNNELS.**

So there’s a bit of light shining on our client’s funnel now. Even our bidding algorithm is more informed now that it’s working off the weighted attribution. This optimization model supports our Influencers and Closers, who, just a month ago, before the move to a weighted, multi-touch model, were attributed with nothing.

It’s important to note that all of these attribution types are important to our client’s overall account performance. However, tracking, segmenting and defining data within this multi-touch model gives us the ability to drill into our inventory to pinpoint wins or weaknesses in our account.

We can now ask deeper, more informed questions about the interplay between our client’s campaign inventory and the behavior and response of our client’s customers. And that brings us one step closer to understanding our client’s universe.
In a recent interview with Google’s Matt Cutts, Karon Thackston asked some important questions that SEO’s have been thinking about for some time.

It’s no secret that Google is constantly making updates that have an effect on the search engine results pages (SERPs). The latest releases have left some businesses scurrying to figure out how to get their website back up to the top. One of the biggest takeaways from Matt in regards to these algorithm updates links back to SEO Copywriting.
If you think back to the beginning of organic optimization, you might recall the importance of keyphrases. A keyword phrase would be used and manipulated in many forms throughout a page of a website. This would include meta titles, h1 tags, alt tags, copy, etc. For example, at Webtrends, we might be optimizing for “social media analytics.” This phrase would be used multiple times throughout the page discussing social media analytics.

Over the years, Google has become much more astute in regards to synonyms. According to Matt Cutts, now you don’t have to use the keyword phrase in its entirety when optimizing content on a page. At Webtrends, we can now use “social” and “media” and “analytics” in our content and Google will be able to pick up what our page is about.

With all of the changes happening across the Internet, the one thing that has never changed is the importance of making sure any optimization you do flows naturally on a site. Search Engines want to make sure that searchers are not getting spammy search results. Obviously, high-quality content was a huge push in the Panda update, but since the purpose of this update was for overall site quality, there are some other items that this algorithm update looks for in the search results.

That’s why Google recommends removing low-quality pages on your site. They can impact the whole site’s rankings. If removing the pages is not something you want to do, try merging or improving the content of individual shallow pages into more useful pages. You could also consider moving your low-quality pages to a completely separate domain. Doing this would help the rankings of your higher-quality content.

Here are some questions that Google thinks about when it comes to writing an algorithm that assess site quality:

• “Would you trust the information presented in this article?
• Is this article written by an expert or enthusiast who knows the topic well, or is it more shallow in nature?
• Does the site have duplicate, overlapping, or redundant articles on the same or similar topics with slightly different keyword variations?
• Would you be comfortable giving your credit card information to this site?
• Does this article have spelling, stylistic, or factual errors?
• Are the topics driven by genuine interests of readers of the site, or does the site generate content by attempting to guess what might rank well in search engines?
• Does the article provide original content or information, original reporting, original research, or original analysis?
• Does the page provide substantial value when compared to other pages in search results?
• How much quality control is done on content?
• Does the article describe both sides of a story?
• Is the site a recognized authority on its topic?”

Make sure you’re giving your users the best possible experience. It’s very important not to put focus on what you think Google wants to see. Just put yourself in the mind of a searcher, and your website will go far.
Best Practices in Performance Marketing

ABOUT WEBTRENDS INC.

INspiration drives us.
Digital Intelligence guides us.
Inovation remains our goal as we help brands re-imagine digital marketing.

Webtrends dramatically improves digital marketing results for many of the world’s most admired and innovative companies. Our solutions have set a gold standard for innovation, performance and value since we helped establish the web analytics industry in 1993.

Our diverse portfolio includes customer intelligence and behavioral segmentation, targeting + scoring, optimization + testing, mobile and social apps creation and Facebook Page management, professional consulting services, real-time web analytics, unified digital analytics across mobile, social and web and general digital marketing wizardry.

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