

Google AdWords: Structure For Success

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As I work with many companies to improve and refine their conversion rate from paid search efforts such as Google AdWords, I have noticed a general misunderstanding about how the structural elements of Campaigns vs. Ad Groups should be used.

Correctly structuring your Google account allows you to more easily monitor and refine your performance. Proper structure is critical to achieving an ROI from paid search campaigns.

Taking Google AdWords as being the most widely used (and even perhaps the “model” for Yahoo and MSN), let’s review the levels of organization available:

- **Account** — The log-in level. Used to designate a single payment method. Generally a company with a single website will only have one account. For multiple websites, it probably makes sense to have multiple accounts. These can be linked together with a Master Account for ease of administration and management.
- **Campaign** — The highest level of organization. Used primarily for regionalization and budgeting.
- **Ad Group** — The critical level of resolution. Used to specifically address a single idea or concept.
- **Keyword** — The actual search phrase itself. Can be defined in various levels of broad/specific focus.

CAMPAIGNS

Campaigns are perhaps best explained by looking at the main controls that Google provides at this level. Within Google, four key decisions are made at the Campaign level:

- **Region** — Select where your ads will display. Country, State, City level. (Determined by IP address.)
- **Networks** — Search matching for Google and partner network, and content (also called contextual) matching for the Google network.
- **Budget** — Set a daily budget for this campaign. Begins at midnight, ads will stop displaying when budget is spent.
- **Ad Scheduling** — Display ads, or alter bids based on time of day.

When you are planning your paid search strategy, begin with a single campaign, then create another if you need to alter any of the four options listed above.

If all of your keywords should be displayed to the same region, on the matching basis, under one budget, at the same time — then you need only one campaign. Sub-organization should be accomplished with Ad Groups.

If you have three different regional needs, then you’ll need three campaigns. If you also want to control the budget on a 70/30 basis within each region, then you’ll need six campaigns (two budget separations for each regional separation).

AD GROUPS

Ad Groups are the most important level of organization within Google. They are collections of keywords linked to a single ad. This is essentially the “idea’ level” — one idea per Ad Group.

The key to grouping keywords into appropriate and effective Ad Groups is to remember these keywords will be represented by a single ad. This will tend to mean that, in most cases, no more than 100 keywords should be represented in a single Ad Group because it’s very hard for a single ad to be compelling for a large number of keywords.

Because of Google’s use of Quality Score in the bid/position calculation, Ad Groups become even more important because they directly impact the amount you will pay per click. As a general rule, every Ad Group should be small enough that every keyword can appear in the ad. At the very least, part of the keyword phrase should appear in the ad.

Now, before you run off and begin to use squiggly brackets to include the keyword in every ad, consider that the site still needs to convert those visitors into action takers. In many cases, using the squiggly brackets just creates an ad that bears no resemblance to the web page that the visitor lands on. Spending the time to set up more Ad Groups, with fewer keywords in each one, will generally produce a much better ROI.