

TOP PPC TRENDS FOR 2019

*Experts Share Predictions and Tips
to Optimize Your PPC Efforts*

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In the ever-changing PPC world, you need to stay on top of the trends and adapt quickly to avoid falling behind.

2018 brought a series of [significant changes](#), most of which were aimed at increasing automation and machine learning. Highlights include Google AdWords' rebrand to Google Ads, Google's Responsive Search Ads (RSA), and Bing's release of LinkedIn profile targeting. Amazon also surprised some by becoming the [third-largest digital ad seller](#) in the US. While Amazon still lags far behind Google and Facebook, its rapid growth in the paid search space signals it will likely become an increasingly important force over time.

What can we expect in 2019?

We talked to six paid search experts and received a variety of answers as to what trends will play an important role in the year ahead. Yes, **automation**, **AI**, **audiences**, and **attribution** did top the list, but a number of experts also talked about video, keywords and intent, and taking control of branded keywords. Most importantly, the experts offered tips and advice on how to respond to these trends so that you can make the most out of your PPC efforts.

There was also consensus around the importance of **brand protection in paid search**. As more SERP real estate is dedicated to ad units and organic content gets pushed further below the fold, it becomes even more important to monitor branded terms and enforce search engine rules.

The following pages highlight the top PPC trends for 2019 and recommendations on how to successfully respond to these changes, according to the experts.

We reached out to some of the most knowledgeable PPC experts from agencies and brands.

BVACCEL



Brad Koch
Paid Media Manager

SendGrid



Dustin Hovey
Senior Strategist
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JumpFly



Nikki Kuhlman
Director of Paid Search

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Jim Nichols
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Joe Drury
Senior Manager,
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Pat Grady
Senior Director
of Paid Search



“As offerings and capabilities are rolled into Search, persona targeting will be an important complement to the already high-intent nature of the keyword.”

Brad Koch

Paid Media Manager

What do you see as the most important trends in the PPC space in 2019?

Audience Personalization

For years, audience-based advertising has been reserved for channels such as Display and Paid Social. However, as offerings and capabilities are rolled into Search, persona targeting will be an important complement to the already high-intent nature of the keyword. Utilizing both layers (audience and keyword) will be vital in order to drive success for Search advertisers.

Changing or updating account builds and structure can be a daunting task for marketers. And if campaigns are currently experiencing success, it's easy to be hesitant to make changes.

The good news is that Google makes wading into the audience-based waters very easy. If advertisers are reluctant to implement the additions across the board, choosing "Observation Only" when selecting targeting preferences, allows advertisers to monitor how segments are performing before making bid adjustments.

Learning to Let Go

From Google's Smart Shopping campaigns to Ads Added by AdWords, it's clear that automation is here to stay within the SEM landscape.

Monotonous and time-consuming tasks such as bid management, keyword variant additions,

and search query report reviews, are falling into the hands of AI and Machine Learning, and we can expect this trend to continue as we move throughout 2019. This will be the year that advertisers may finally have to learn to let go.

Although most PPC marketers would rather not give up control to automation offerings, it's possible to navigate the road without taking your hands completely off of the steering wheel.

"Utilizing automation can allow for time to be spent on the more creative-centric aspects of the PPC world, such as ad copy creation and overarching campaign and cross-channel strategy."

Utilizing automation can allow for time to be spent on the more creative-centric aspects of the PPC world, such as ad copy creation and overarching campaign and cross-channel strategy. That being said, monitoring any changes and recommendations made by "the machine" before implementation, will also be vital for success.

The Second "Pivot to Video"

With 2017 dubbed as the "pivot to video" for online publishers, we can expect 2019 to feature advertising dollars shifting towards video for PPC

marketers. Previously reserved as an awareness play for legacy brands, new(er) Direct Response initiatives have opened up the channel to smaller DTC challenger brands.

If advertisers are already leveraging content-based channels such as Facebook and Instagram, chances are great that they'll be able to repurpose video content for YouTube.

The good news for these marketers is that the barrier to entry for YouTube is very low. Possessing a few different video iterations on a YouTube channel and an audience list (either Customer Match or Pixel-Based) is all that's needed to get the ball rolling for proof of concept.

How important is brand protection to your overall digital marketing strategy in 2019?

With more SERP real estate being dedicated to ad units, brand protection is more important than ever. Although the juggernaut of Amazon [ceased Shopping Ads bidding](#) in 2018, they are still highly competitive within the text ad space, as are additional marketplaces such as Etsy and eBay. As organic content gets pushed further below the fold, it will be important to maintain visibility on all inventory available on branded terms.



“ In 2019, let’s ensure we are the ones to make the first impression (or second and third) when it comes to conveying our message of benefits and value to our customers. ”

Dustin Hovey

Senior Strategist & SEM Manager

What do you see as the most important trends in the PPC space in 2019?

Audience Targeting

Google has made it easier for marketers to target users beyond keywords, device type, and location. Marketers that harness audience data and optimize based on segmented audience types and lists will lead the market and have a huge advantage over the competition.

Marketers that haven't already should research and gain familiarity the various audience types in Google Ads, Bing Ads, DoubleClick, and other platforms that they can target (with positive and negative bid types). Marketers should test bidding up on audiences that are "Non-Customers", or target an "In-Market Audience" that is visiting sites that align with their vertical.

Attribution

Most businesses still rely on last-click data to attribute credit across their various marketing campaigns, but the most sophisticated ones create and optimize their marketing efforts with the whole marketing funnel in mind – knowing that most customers need multiple touchpoints before making a buying decision.

No single attribution model is the perfect solution for every business – the onus is on us to ascertain what makes sense for our individual businesses. Marketers can access KPIs like "View-Through" conversions or test using the new "Data-Driven" conversion option built into Google Ads to gain additional perspective on

conversion performance. Furthermore, taking advantage of "Multi-Channel Funnels" and the "Attribution" tool within Google Analytics is a great place to start. For the businesses that operate at large scale, they really need to be viewing their campaigns through the lens of a commercial attribution tool – both Adobe and Conversion Logic provide great solutions.

Video

Video is now consumed on mobile devices more than any other type of content. This is important since most social media traffic is made up of mobile devices and the most sophisticated marketing strategies utilize a paid social media facet. Video will dominate content marketing in 2019 and beyond.

"Video is now consumed on mobile devices more than any other type of content."

Businesses of all sizes need to be producing video content to maintain an engaged audience – especially those that are B2C. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and of course YouTube all empower advertisers to employ video content. Many businesses don't have the budget for large, professionally produced video content but that is okay. There are many low-cost, effective tools available (Lumen5 is one option) that enable non-video producers the ability quickly and easily create

engaging videos complete with overlays, music, and graphics that can easily be distributed online.

How important is brand protection to your overall digital marketing strategy in 2019?

Businesses have always needed to protect their brand online; however, with the rise of competitor bidding across the PPC landscape that need has never been greater. Businesses that closely monitor how their trademark is being used in the search engine result pages and take action when needed may enjoy lower CPCs, a more focused message to their customers, and a truer representation in the marketplace.

“Businesses that closely monitor how their trademark is being used....enjoy lower CPCs, a more focused message to their customers, and a truer representation in the marketplace.”

I’m a big believer that successful marketers protect their brand at all costs. When it comes to SEM, typically brand keywords enjoy the lowest CPC, the best quality scores, and the lowest CPA (or best performing ROI). Brand keywords represent the low-hanging fruit when it comes to digital acquisition – they represent customers who are actively searching for you in a crowd of many.

Hopefully, you are putting a lot of effort in building brand awareness and brand affinity; it is something you can’t afford to neglect. It’s common for competitors to bid on other brand’s branded keywords; however, when competitors infringe on your trademark and use it within the headline or ad copy of their ads it is paramount that you are aware and act, reporting violators to the search engines. Sometimes violators pose as being the company they are bidding on when in fact they are a bastion for search arbitrage, or they are a competitor misrepresenting the value of what you have to offer. In 2019, let’s ensure we are the ones to make the first impression (or second and third) when it comes to conveying our message of benefits and value to our customers.



“ Test, test, test automation with caution. Pick one campaign that might benefit from automated bidding and run an experiment to see how that campaign might perform... ”

Nikki Kuhlman

Director of Paid Search

What do you see as the most important trends in the PPC space in 2019?

Automation

Google is really pushing automated campaigns - Smart Display, Smart Shopping, Dynamic Search Ads - and automated bidding like Target CPA, Target ROAS, Maximize Conversions, and more. While some of them can be beneficial to an account, they are still in their infancy. And when it comes to the automated campaigns, there's a complete lack of control that's disconcerting to many of us at JumpFly.

The Blurring of Match Types

Google's changes to exact match have really been painful to watch and experience for many clients. Keywords that once were the rock stars of an account have become diluted. Only time will tell if these changes pay off.

Audience Targeting

Google and Bing both have made significant additions to their audience targeting, with Google adding custom intent and Bing adding the Microsoft Audience Network with In Market and LinkedIn targeting.

What advice would you give to others to prepare and respond to these changes?

For Automation: Test, test, test automation with caution. Pick one campaign that might benefit from automated bidding and run an experiment to see how that campaign might perform; be

diligent about checking progress and most importantly, don't assume that it will continue to work. We've seen multiple times where a campaign that's performed well with a Target ROAS bid strategy starts to decline in volume over time.

For Blurring of Match Types: Use the tools out there to keep a close eye on your accounts. There are some [great scripts](#) that can help you with this.

For Audience Targeting: Again test cautiously, but this one is easier. Add audiences as RLSA lists in observation mode where you can, or setup Display campaigns with a limited budget to see what kind of results you can get.

“Add audiences as RLSA lists in observation mode where you can, or setup Display campaigns with a limited budget to see what kind of results you can get.”

How important is brand protection to your overall digital marketing strategy in 2019?

Brand protection will continue to be important, especially as the market gets more competitive and Google and Bing add more to the ads (e.g. [responsive search ads take up more SERP real estate](#)), pushing organic traffic down further on the page. Amazon and other big box sites continue to push into brand names, coupon sites, and more direct competitors are all vying for attention. Don't relinquish that space.



“ Savvy brand stewards must understand that PPC requires at least as much strategic focus as other business channels. ”

Jim Nichols

CMO

What do you see as the most important trends in the PPC space in 2019?

First, I think more and more brands are recognizing the need to truly take control of their branded keywords. That means ensuring that they accurately measure ROI, set and enforce guidelines for partners and resellers, and protect customers and prospects from being misled through misuse of trademarks.

Second, companies are having to take more surgical approaches to their selection of category keywords to ensure that their programs deliver the needed performance. For many brands, that means foregoing the highest traffic terms and concepts because the costs have simply become too prohibitive. Instead, they will find niche terms where the cost-pers are more reasonable.

Finally, I think we are on the cusp of a real age of creativity in Search. As CPCs continue to climb, brands will need to try new approaches to finding their users, relying more on related concepts and keywords instead of simply focusing on the gimme category terms.

What advice would you give to others to prepare and respond to these changes?

Senior marketers need to dig into their Search and other PPC programs - richer understanding will be the key to winning in this important revenue and lead-generating channel. Sometimes marketing leaders focus their attention on “sexier” arenas because

PPC can seem to be either highly specialized or...a little dull. But savvy brand stewards must understand that PPC requires at least as much strategic focus as other business channels.

You need to empower your PPC experts to develop innovative plans and to test more approaches to finding good value in this effective but increasingly expensive world.

“You need to empower your PPC experts to develop innovative plans and to test more approaches...”

You need to listen to your team’s requests for increasingly sophisticated software and tools so they can find new avenues to profit. And you need to understand how other brands can suck the value out of your programs, so you can put the necessary safeguards into place.

How important is brand protection to your overall digital marketing strategy in 2019?

Our brand is a little different than that of many other companies. Fundamentally our brand name telegraphs the service we provide. We Partnerize leading brands. That see/say alignment might make some think that brand protection would be less important to us. Not true. As a company focused on the enterprise end of the market, brand protection is essential. Sales cycles can take 3, 6, 9 months and can quickly go off the rails if a prospect sees or hears something that is harmful to our brand equity. We work very hard to monitor what is said about our brand and our relationships with each of more than 300,000 partners.



“ We are at a point of rapid technological advancement in the industry and just like any time that happens, those that can master that technology and blend it with traditional skills make themselves even more valuable than before. ”

Joe Drury

Senior Manager, Search Marketing

What do you see as the most important trends in the PPC space in 2019?

Automation and scale at a pace we have not seen before

PPC marketers need to embrace our artificial intelligence overlords or risk being left behind in the next few years. We are at a point of rapid technological advancement in the industry and just like any time that happens, those that can master that technology and blend it with

“PPC marketers need to embrace our artificial intelligence overlords or risk being left behind in the next few years.”

traditional skills make themselves even more valuable than before. This would be my most important piece of advice.

Audience targeting competing with keyword targeting

I tend to be more of a keyword traditionalist on this one but the trend towards audiences is undeniable. I think the two can work together though. Everything we have learned about keyword targeting, segmentation, and all that jazz is still just as relevant. But now we can marry that with detailed audience targeting to eke even more out of our rigid organization.

Voice search will continue to not be relevant for the majority of brands

Don't follow the next flashy thing. There may

be a time when voice search is relevant for the majority of brands but it will not be in 2019. That is not to say it is irrelevant for all brands. If you happen to be in one of the niche industries where voice search dominates, by all means follow that trend.

Mobile web optimization will be more important than individual publisher strategies

I think we have largely solved for how to optimize for mobile across all of the major publishers as well as we can (assuming you are doing your job correctly). But mobile conversion rates are still a fraction of desktop for most brands. As PPC marketers, we need to be cognizant of this, understand the math behind lost revenue and reduced ROI, and be able to effectively articulate a plan for mobile web optimization to our clients and colleagues.

How important is brand protection to your overall digital marketing strategy in 2019?

Brand protection is extremely important to our digital strategy. We constantly monitor all of our digital touch points for brand mentions, reviews, and competitor usage. For us, that starts with SEO: has a competitor been able to wiggle on to the first page for a brand query we should own? We also serve thousands of guests daily so social media monitoring is a key aspect of our business. Finally, on the PPC side, it boils down to having a clear and consistent strategy. There are some areas where we want to bid on brand terms, and some areas where we do not. We have a clear structure in order to ensure we are executing against that effectively.



“ 2019 is a dynamic year, not a good time to avoid change, or bank on the status quo. Be ready to experiment widely and to take new risks... ”

Pat Grady

Senior Director of Paid Search

What do you see as the most important trends in the PPC space in 2019?

- Amazon Ads growing far faster than most expected, shopping focus earns share.
- Fraud in Apps PPC coming into view, impact on Apple and Android taint walled garden view of Appsphere.
- Battle between Remarketing and Attribution really heat up.
- Voice Search disappointment deepens, restocking not enough to excite.
- Effective email reach slowing, to the point where Gmail Ads finally gain traction.
- GDPR, and its US version to come, force today's Audiences to become permission based.

“GDPR, and its US version to come, force today's Audiences to become permission based.”

- Google's TV Screen device category jolts industry, historic upside growth.
- Netflix OTT earthquake, free subscriptions achieved by combining personalized ads and permission-based data mining.

What advice would you give to others to prepare and respond to these changes?

- Trends differ markedly from the past, new channels and new orgs win, change is afoot, nimble is vogue.
- TV and internet are finally actually merging; Search PPC will soon be swamped by the OTT TV Display tsunami.
- 2019 is a dynamic year, not a good time to avoid change, or bank on the status quo.
- Be ready to experiment widely and to take new risks, ad budget buckets multiply like rabbits.

How important is brand protection to your overall digital marketing strategy in 2019?

Doorbell alarm cams are to homes, as brand protection is to marketing. Only fools leave the henhouse unguarded.

CONCLUSION | TOP PPC TRENDS FOR 2019

While the experts we spoke with highlighted many important trends for 2019, the clear winner in terms of impact on SEM for the coming year was automation. Like it or not, automation is unavoidable and search engine marketers need to learn how to thrive in this automated paid search world. As Vacasa's Joe Drury colorfully put it, "PPC marketers need to embrace our artificial intelligence overlords or risk being left behind in the next few years."

With the search engines moving toward greater automation and ad units taking up more physical space on the SERP, brand protection in PPC is becoming increasingly important, and frankly more difficult than ever before. It is virtually impossible to manually monitor and protect your branded keywords across the globe 24 hours a day.

BrandVerity's Paid Search Monitoring tool automates your PPC brand protection process, allowing you to stay one step ahead of the competition. Our tool makes it easy for you to quickly take action to protect your branded traffic, remove competitive trademark infringers from the SERP, and safeguard your brand in PPC.

As you kick off 2019 and think about how automation will impact how you manage paid search, also think about automating your brand protection in PPC to stay relevant with trends on the SERP and maintain your competitive edge.

"With the search engines moving toward greater automation and ad units taking up more physical space on the SERP, brand protection in PPC is becoming increasingly important..."

**Ready to add brand protection to your
PPC strategy in 2019?**

Schedule a Demo

THANK YOU!

BrandVerity would like to thank the experts that contributed to this roundup. Your shared knowledge and thoughtful insights help drive meaningful discussions about the future of paid search.



Brad Koch is a Paid Media Manager at BVAccel, one of the largest and fastest growing Shopify Plus partner agencies worldwide. He oversees media strategy and execution for eCommerce clients on a variety of channels including Facebook/Instagram, Google Ads, YouTube, Pinterest, and Display.



Dustin Hovey oversees and manages strategy for all of SendGrid's SEM marketing campaigns, and governs SendGrid's brand recognition and brand protection efforts. Dustin has over 12 years of experience in direct response marketing and managing large brands online with six and seven figure monthly spends. Dustin specializes in managing large, complex PPC Search and Display campaigns to optimize brand recognition, revenue, and retention.



Nikki Kuhlman is the Director of Paid Search at JumpFly. Her clients range in size from local service companies to multi-million dollar ecommerce stores, and she manages their Google Ads, Bing Ads, Yahoo Gemini, Facebook and Amazon ads. She celebrated her 13th anniversary at JumpFly in May, and has been doing paid search for sixteen years.



Jim Nichols is CMO at Partnerize. Jim has 20+ years experience in over 80 different categories, including developing successful positioning and go-to-market plans for more than 40 adtech and martech companies. He joined Partnerize after several years as VP of Marketing for Apsalar, which merged with Singular in 2017.

THANK YOU!



Joe Drury has 12+ years of digital marketing experience and is now the Senior Manager of Search Marketing at Vacasa. His team focuses on SEO, SEM, Social, and Content Strategy. He is responsible for driving a cohesive online marketing strategy across all of search and social. Prior to Vacasa, Joe held various Digital Marketing roles at Webtrends and Yahoo.



Pat Grady was told he didn't know enough about affiliate marketing to start an in-house program, so he decided to learn more about it from the affiliate side. A few months later, his first affiliate website was making him more money than his job ever did, so he quit his job. For the last 20 years, Pat has worked in a variety of areas, including as: an affiliate, merchant, affiliate manager, PPC consultant, investor, network compliance cop, researcher, mentor, advisory board member, and business owner. His most recent company, RhinoFish Media, a performance-based PPC agency, was acquired by The Performance Company in May 2018.

About Us

BrandVerity provides automated brand protection for online content. Our Paid Search Monitoring and Web Compliance software efficiently monitors partners, affiliates, and third parties to make the Internet a more trustworthy place for your customers to interact with your brand. For more information, visit www.brandverity.com.

