



## **Competitive Research for AdWords: Know Your Enemy**

Your business perception of Google AdWords can be limited by the size of your investment. Depending on what proportion of your online marketing spend goes to AdWords, the size of your budget might influence your perception about the size of the opportunity.

Yet, AdWords is, for many web-based businesses, the largest and most effective traffic source for online conversions and ROI. More and more companies in a broader variety of industries recognize the inherent advertising value of being presented in the right place at the right time. This is especially true of the leaders.

### **The Strongest Competitors and AdWords – What Do They Have in Common?**



Four out of five companies on the Inc 5000® list of *America's fastest growing* private companies spend money on PPC advertising. That's 80% of the highest-achieving U.S. companies are using AdWords.

It's amazing how important Google AdWords is to these companies. The combined spend of about 4,000 companies in AdWords was over \$80M.

AVERAGE REVENUE  
SPENT ON PPC  
PER COMPANY:  
**\$20,404.61**

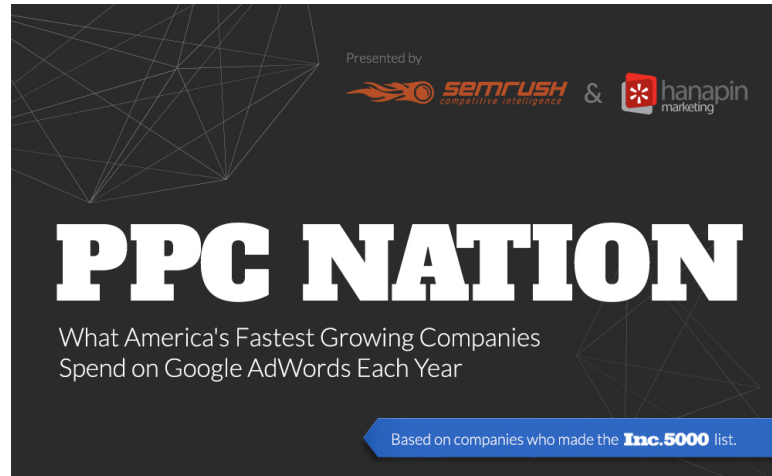
The average spend among these fastest-growing companies is over \$20,400.

This represents substantial investment, considering these fastest-growing private companies include small and medium businesses. These companies are paying for ads, often out of operations, not funded by stockholder investors. Only demonstrable ROI would keep them paying, otherwise, these agile, fast-growing companies would not be investing their advertising dollars in AdWords.

Some giants, in incredibly competitive industries like IT Services, Marketing & Advertising, Consumer Products spent in excess of \$5.2M dollars per year. Even B2B is



not immune, with fast-growing Business Products industry companies spending up to \$2.3M each, per year!



(see “What America’s Fastest Growing Companies Spend on Google AdWords”  
<http://www.semrush.com/blog/ppc-ppc-display/infographic-5000-companies-spend-adwords/> )

## Harder Every Day

*"If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle." – Sun Tzu, The Art of War*

We realize it's clichéd to shoehorn a Sun Tzu quote about war into a presentation about business practices, but the ancient General isn't wrong. He knew that to effectively compete, you must understand the competition as well as you understands yourself.

Every day, the competition grows for searchers' attention. AdWords is structured as an auction marketplace. More advertisers means more competition. The greater the competition, the higher the bids. This can make for madness, bidding wars. Of course, the profits to Google are grand. But, what can you do to stem the madness and win?

## Harness the Power of Competitive Intelligence for your PPC Campaign

Pay-Per-Click (PPC) advertising is a huge business. Google's 2013 revenue reached \$57.86 billion, with about [90% of that coming from ads](#).



The top-five e-retailers in the world (based on revenue) spent [more than \\$2 billion](#) on AdWords in 2012. Yes, that's billion. With a 'B.'

Wordstream's Larry Kim analyzed over \$1 billion in ad spend broken down by industry and the investment of dollars by e-retailers is only a drop in the bucket compared to the spends of [other industries](#) on AdWords in that same calendar year.

And those numbers are [growing](#). Overall search spend in the U.S. has grown 9 percent in the first two quarters of 2014 already and similar gains have taken place over that same span in the U.K. (10 percent) and in Germany (6 percent.)

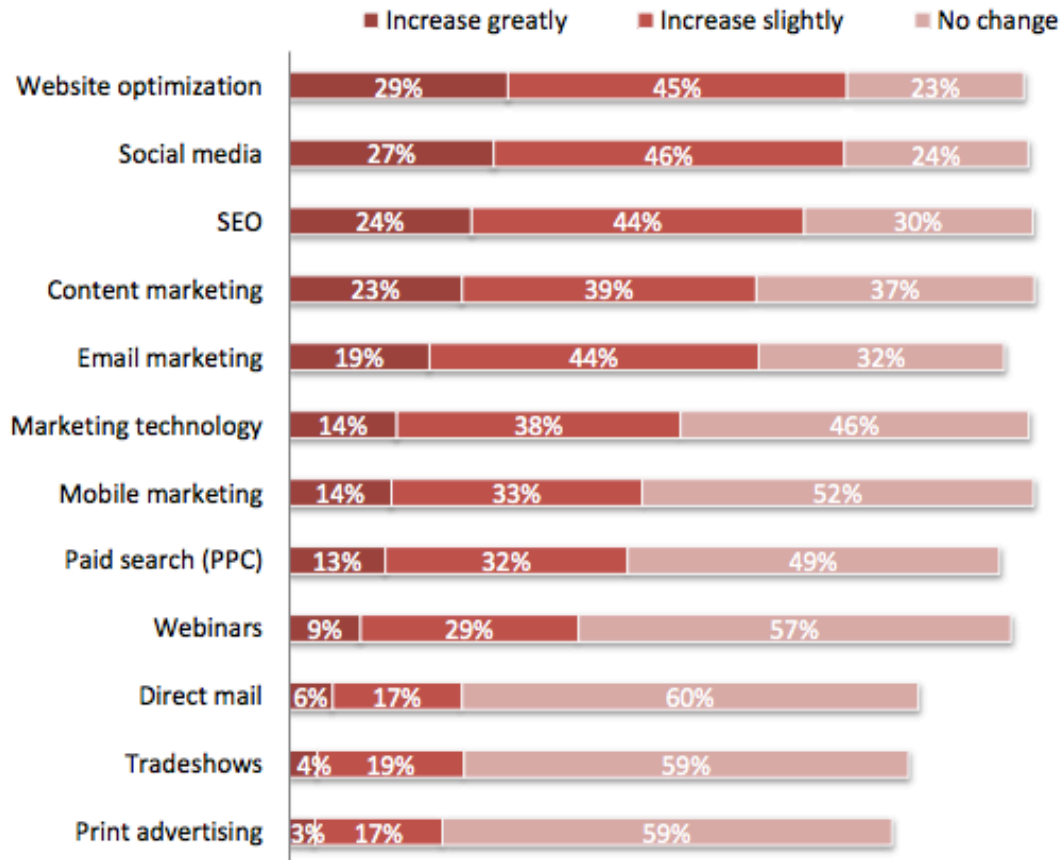
## **Dissatisfied Users**

Despite heavy investment in the paid component of digital marketing strategy, and expressed intent to spend even more, why are so many professional marketers underwhelmed by the performance of their AdWords campaigns?

A 2012 Marketing Sherpa [survey](#) of 1,915 marketers showed that 48 percent of them use PPC as a key component of overall integrated digital marketing strategies.

However, of those 919 marketers surveyed, only 32 percent labeled PPC as a "very effective" element of their campaigns.

More troubling is that a further 56 percent of those who used PPC classified it as only "somewhat effective," while 83 of the 1915 marketers felt that PPC was "not effective."



Source: ©2012 MarketingSherpa Lead Generation Benchmark Survey  
Methodology: Fielded January 2012, N=1,915

What's the discrepancy? Why are more than 66 percent of polled marketers using PPC and AdWords dissatisfied with their results?

I'm willing to bet that many of the users who are unhappy with the results they're getting from PPC can attribute their lack of success to breakdowns at one or more of the following stages in their AdWords campaigns.

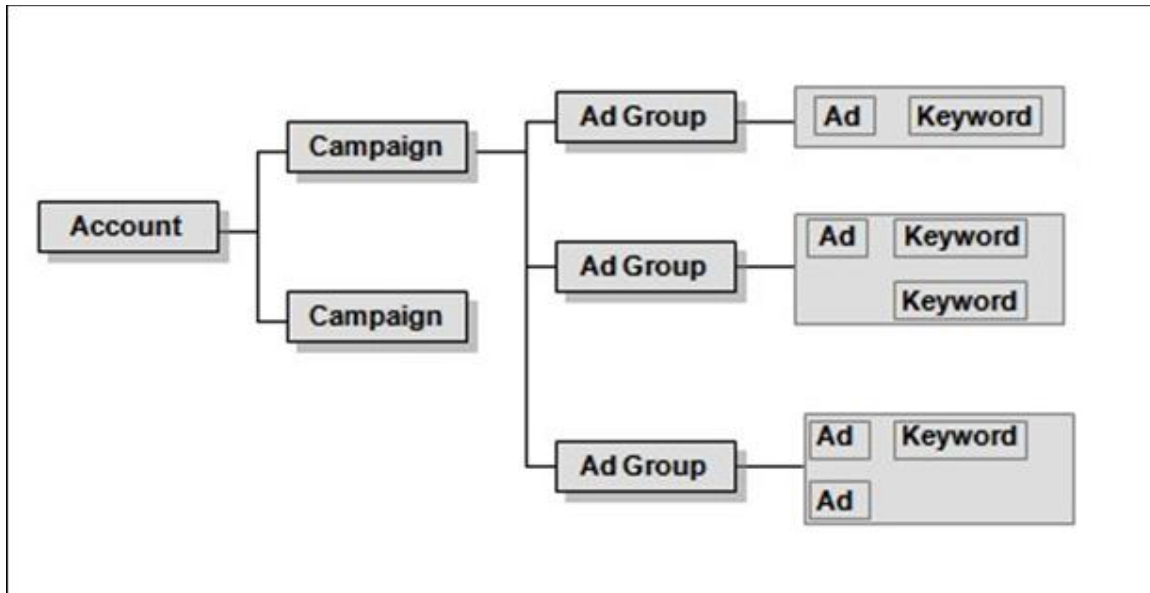
1. Setup issues
2. Off-target initial keyword research
3. Set it and forget it mentality
4. Failure to regularly revisit, evaluate, and, if necessary, update their PPC strategies over time

Tools and Services or software such as [SEMrush](http://www.semrush.com) can help digital marketers ensure they're getting the most bang for their buck when researching, implementing, and, yes, managing a PPC campaign.

## Setup - A Structure Is Only As Strong as its Foundation

If your campaign is not set up correctly, it doesn't matter how good or incisive your keyword research strategy is.

In this excellent [post](#) from the SEMrush blog, Diane Pease of Cisco Systems tells us the best way to structure a new AdWords account.



Diane then follows this chart with a checklist of essential tasks to ensure a smooth launch. If your campaign isn't set up correctly, you're already facing an uphill battle. Follow this list to get your campaign on solid footing from the get-go.

1. Create a standard checklist
2. Get sign-offs from stakeholders for your checklist
3. Recheck your settings
4. Ensure budgets are in place
5. Make sure you're not using duplicate keywords
6. Launch your account as "Paused"
7. Double-check your tagging
8. Verify your landing pages work as designed
9. Create a mobile bidding and location strategy



## 10. Don't launch on a Friday

Now that we have solid footing, and a good plan to follow, let's look at how we can use competitive intelligence to begin building our keyword strategy.

### Keyword Research

Every SEO has his or her preferred way of distilling their keyword research into a target list. But that final list of targeted terms is only as good as the quality and depth of the research data the SEO has at his disposal to work from initially.

Deciding what tool you use to gather that data is a big choice, with potentially far-reaching ramifications.

Any tool can simply deliver reams upon reams of keyword data. But data without context is useless.

What sets SEMrush apart from the other competitive analysis tools in the marketplace? SEMrush:

- Discovers competitors
- Monitors performance
- Estimates traffic at both the domain and keyword levels
- Compares performance across multiple competitor domains

SEMrush also organizes that data into reports that you can use to formulate actionable strategies based on what your competitors are doing.

### Start with Big Data

#### Gather, Warehouse, Refine, Present

Keyword tools compile millions of keywords so that the data is there when you need it. Keyword tools must present current data about what competitors are using which keywords, what their results look like, and provide avenues for deeper investigation of relevant content, ad copy, and more.

In SEMrush, our 9+ million most-popular keywords are tracked daily. Others are updated weekly or monthly.

Because SEMrush's data is based on real-world use of search, it tracks emerging terms and trends well.

[Twenty percent of total searches are new queries](#). That means that in addition to maintaining an ever-changing database of relevant keywords, the scope of your



research must expand consistently in order to keep up with newly emerging searches, trends, styles, and events.

This is especially challenging when your product or service is new to the marketplace, or you lack an established brand name.

SEMrush is always expanding the scope of its data to meet your growing needs.

However, big data must be refined in order to be useful. It must be presented in a way that offers actionable insights. SEMrush pits results from multiple competitors, one against the other. This philosophy gives you ready access to actionable comparisons.

## **Identify Your Competitors**

Business owners, marketing managers, and agency executives all have a natural sense for who their business competitors are. These companies have similar business models that sell similar products or services through similar channels to a similar market or audience. But, good keyword research provides business intelligence that can expand on that set of competitors.

Search is implicated in [over 70 percent of purchases](#), especially of big-ticket items. Mobile / local search has been shown to result in conversion nearly [80 percent](#) of the time. Google shopping ads, for example, (formerly PLAs) have enormously high conversion stats. Thus, competitors in Search have powerful means by which to directly impact your leads and sales.

## **Keywords! Keywords, Everywhere!**

Besides head-to-head business competitors, your ad search "competitors" may also include ambiguous keywords that overlap those of your competitors. Find those overlaps and either seek to eliminate them or bring them into your own strategy to achieve dominance.

Keyword search data is heady stuff. But it is meaningless without being associated with the domains of competitors. Knowing that a competing business is investing in particular terms makes those terms worthy of consideration.

Real-world evidence of a competitor's most invested and productive keywords carries your planning from the theory stage directly into practice.

Further, evidence of *ongoing* investment by a competitor in specific keywords helps you leverage their investment, and learn from their lessons, saving you the equivalent of time and effort. Viewing the Ad History over months or even years may identify keywords that opponents have consistently found to bring targeted, motivated



searchers. When such clicks result in conversion, then you can bet that the advertiser will go on spending on that term, over time.

## **Big Data for Historical Results**

Analyzing small volumes of searches for ads can be a tricky business. Rather than focusing on 'blips' you should be factoring in trends. That is one feature of competitive research that is so critical to early success.

Find a tool that enables monitoring setup of specific keywords to watch for ads, geo-local and mobile devices so you can make better historical sense of limited data by recognizing trends. Small sample sizes can show exciting data, but longer-term trends are far more trustworthy as the basis for your actions. By reviewing market leaders for their productive keywords, you can quickly bring your keyword selection in logical alignment with the currently popular terms that searchers are using.

With its expansive database of over 106 million keywords, SEMrush can help you make certain you're working from the best list of potential targets for your campaign by helping you to identify:

- Which keywords your competitors are targeting,
- Which keywords they have had the most success with, and even
- Which keywords may not have performed well for them at all.

That last part is a key to risk management. Knowledge of low-volume keywords based on their performance for competitors can help prevent over-spending, or "parking" budget on keywords that simply do not attract enough searches to use the allotted spend.

Finally, by concentrating on the first two pages of search results, SEMrush's data is strongly weighted with the ads of highest investment and highest level of competition because of factors like high monthly search volume, CTR, and visibility.

## **Seek Returns While Minimizing Risk**

Your keyword research must take into account keyword costs. The Cost Per Click should be a constant companion as you analyze. It is possible to see this data in Google AdWords. It is better to see this in relation to what is actually working. CPC rises with click popularity. An extensive database is extremely helpful in picking target keywords, allowing you to avoid keyterms that fail to resonate with searchers, saving you both time and money.

Of course, there's a lot more to it than just attractive keywords. High CPC correlates to "buy" words, "money" keywords that foster high clicks and conversions. This leads to highly competitive bidding wars for those ad keywords, driving up costs for all involved.





Going 'head-to-head' and trying to out-bid competitors for those high-traffic keywords can be a ticket to frustration and worse, budget exhaustion. The high prices can severely limit your ROI.

A better strategy may be to see the "big data" picture and thus isolate unique, hidden gems or a series of untapped longer-tail phrases that appear closer to the end of the conversion funnel.

These "diamonds in the rough" can help maximize the efficiency of your campaign and help keep you under budget.

SEMrush has a number of features that you can use to ensure that you have the best possible keywords from which to choose when formulating the keyword strategy to anchor your PPC campaign.

### How to get a "Quick Overview"

Use the Keyword Summary report and its secondary results, (such as Competition) to do research on a specific keyword, and to study historical data from competing domains and URLs.

LIVE UPDATE		Keyword summary	
Keyword		e-commerce	
CPC		\$18.05	
Com.		0.98	
Volume		33,100	
Number of results		33,700,000	

### Keyword Sources

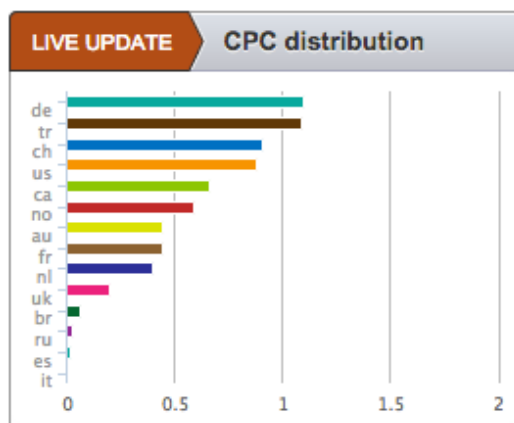
Your competitors' sites are a highly qualitative source for relevant keywords. Content on their websites, whether in headlines, meta-tags, page content or even calls-to-action, will give you additional ideas to discover even more potentially relevant keywords.

With SEMrush, once you start researching your own domain or keywords, you will have ready access to lists of advertising research and competitors, and queries providing the most value to those competitors. From those lists, it is easy to extract the terms to carry over into those other tools for further analysis.

Below are some other exploratory tools you can use to further refine the keyword list you've compiled from SEMrush:

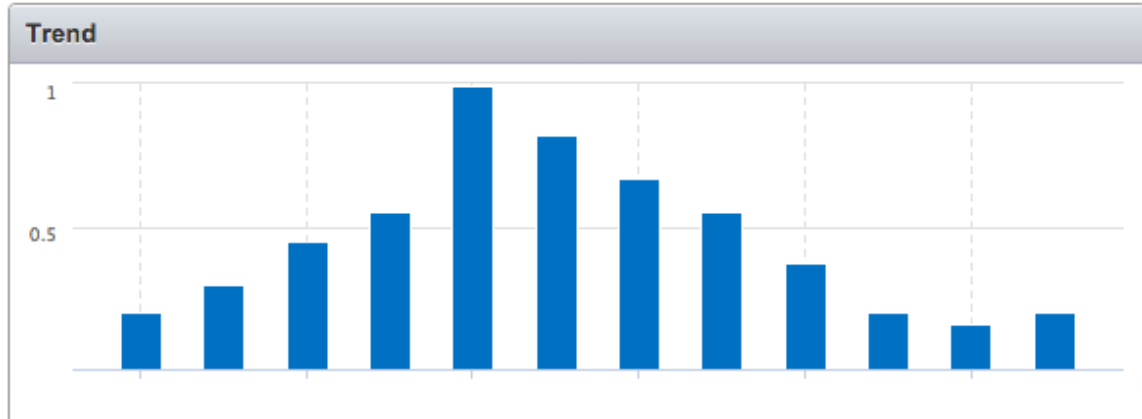
- [BuzzSumo](#): Find the most popular content for your competitors' keywords, to discover what content is resonating with their audience. Add longer phrases around those keywords to your list.
- [Moz](#): Review social interactions on your competitors' websites to see which content resonates best with their readers and adjust your content strategy accordingly to usurp that traffic.
- [SocialCrawlytics](#): Identify influencers based on the most popular content in your vertical and lift keywords from their best-performing content.
- [UberSuggest](#): Locate the most popular results returned by Google's Auto-Suggest tool when paired with your compiled keywords.
- [KeywordTool.io](#): Uses Google's autocomplete feature to produce keywords and more for queries, with concatenated prefix and suffix letters and numbers.
- The Excel® Spreadsheet provided with this Competitive Toolkit by Sergio Aicardi helps rapidly build out AdWords Groups using concatenation.

Using a tool that allows you dive deep into competitive intelligence such as SEMrush, you will then be able to analyze the results by many different criteria and in a host of different contexts.



• **CPC Distribution Report:** This shows you the varying Google CPCs for a given keyword. This data is available from different countries. An early understanding of terms that may fit into your budget can be very helpful during planning for international or global advertising.





















• **Keyword Trends Graph:** This graph shows the fluctuation in search volume over the past twelve months for a given keyword. This can be used to identify seasonal changes in search volumes and user behavior. For instance, for the keyword, "boots," we see that popularity peaks in a particular season.



The keyword trend graph may also warn you of terms to avoid or abandon, such as a serious downtrend from a vocabulary change over time, or a keyphrase to pursue, such as a nice uptrend for terms that are becoming part of the public’s everyday conversations.

- **Phrase Match Report:** Find every key phrase in SEMrush's database containing the queried keyword arranged in order of popularity. This is a great way of getting keyword ideas and understanding how people search. Grouping is one use for this data.

Another key use for this data is to extract transactional intent. The use of "buy" words, seeking discounts, shipping questions and other such messaging is a signal that searchers are closer to the bottom of the funnel than the top. You may discover phrases that others have not, simply because you invested a few minutes to dig deeper into an exported Excel spreadsheet.





















Keyword	Volume	CPC	Com.	Results	Trend	SERP source
<a href="#">bass pro</a>	1,000,000	0.94	0.01	37,000,000		
<a href="#">saul bass</a>	673,000	0.02	0.00	865,000		
<a href="#">bass pro shop</a>	550,000	0.64	0.03	16,700,000		
<a href="#">bass pro shops</a>	301,000	0.94	0.02	12,700,000		
<a href="#">bass</a>	90,500	1.28	0.03	128,000,000		
<a href="#">chuck bass</a>	74,000	0.17	0.01	4,330,000		
<a href="#">bass boat central</a>	60,500	2.02	0.03	1,790,000		
<a href="#">bass shoes</a>	49,500	0.83	0.55	17,200,000		
<a href="#">lance bass</a>	49,500	0.05	0.00	3,140,000		
<a href="#">bass guitar</a>	33,100	0.69	0.69	24,800,000		

Even a modest understanding of how the intentions of searchers are manifest in their search phrases can help you find gold here. Look for “money” phrases, “buy” words, questions about quantities, prices, shipping locations – these can all denote searchers who are nearer to the bottom of your conversion funnel.

<a href="#">fender precision deluxe bass</a>	20	0.01	0.56	476,000		
<a href="#">how to play bass guitar chords for beginners</a>	20	0.57	0.42	681,000		
<a href="#">stadium arcadium bass tab</a>	20	0.00	0.01	10,000		
<a href="#">black fender p bass</a>	20	1.04	0.92	1,760,000		
<a href="#">snake bass lure</a>	20	0.00	0.72	446,000		
<a href="#">what are the best in ear headphones for bass</a>	20	1.84	0.70	3,500,000		
<a href="#">bass speaker system</a>	20	0.99	0.94	5,640,000		

These terms can be added to the appropriate AdWords Groups, and sprinkled liberally into close-to-conversion content both on-site and off, and that includes your ad copy and landing pages. Bringing Landing Page content in alignment with the keywords is a sure way to improve your Quality Scores and possibly improve impressions and reduce bid costs.

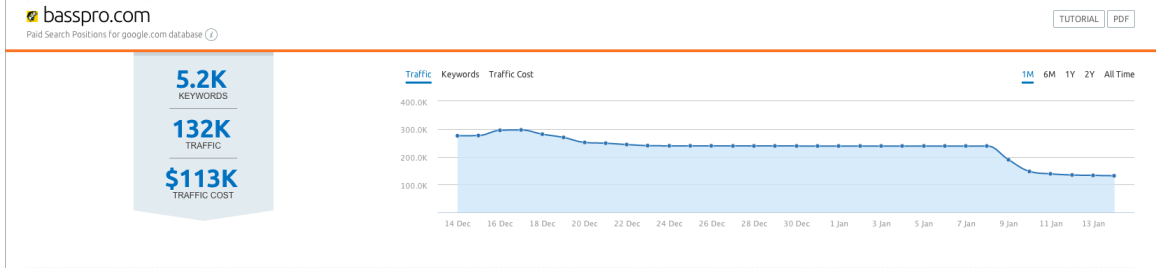
- Related Keywords Report:** Keywords found in this report are keywords that SEMrush's algorithm has determined are related to the queried phrase. Keywords are said to be related when multiple competing advertisers also bid on those keywords as well as the present one. Related keywords in this context are great not only for understanding intent, but also predicting user behavior.

Keyword	Volume	CPC	Com.	Results	Trend	SERP source
<a href="#">bass boats for sale</a>	8,100	0.36	0.90	1,920,000		
<a href="#">upright bass for sale</a>	1,300	0.54	1.00	843,000		
<a href="#">bass cat boats for sale</a>	1,300	0.94	0.21	617,000		
<a href="#">used bass boats for sale</a>	1,300	0.28	0.71	1,830,000		
<a href="#">bass boat for sale</a>	1,000	0.51	0.97	5,030,000		
<a href="#">ranger bass boats for sale</a>	1,000	0.50	0.55	274,000		
<a href="#">bass tracker for sale</a>	1,000	0.21	0.77	1,110,000		
<a href="#">bass tracker boats for sale</a>	880	0.28	0.79	340,000		
<a href="#">bass guitars for sale</a>	880	0.97	1.00	2,500,000		
<a href="#">bass guitar for sale</a>	880	0.84	1.00	8,930,000		

When viewed through the lens of e-commerce, related searches can look like a path to purchase. As users focus increasingly on details, location, trust and finally, price, they're likely at the bottom of your funnel. Rather than conducting multitudes of searches yourself to mine this data, it is easier to rely on a tool to present the data to you in a single report.

Frequently the deeper one delves into the report, the more long-tail and conversion-oriented keyphrases become visible.

- Overview:** How much is a competitor domain spending on AdWords? This is where an overview report can be quick and beneficial. SEMrush can show you how much it would cost for any domain to acquire a similar level of traffic if you had to rely solely upon AdWords spend.



- **Advertising Research / Positions Report:** Results reveal a competitive domain's top-ranking keywords based on organic search results.

What are the most expensive keywords for delivering search traffic to your competitor's domains?

- 

PAID SEARCH POSITIONS 1 - 100 (5,319)

Ad	Keyword	Pos	Block	Volume	CPC	URL	Traffic %	Costs %	Com.	Results	Trend	SERP source	Last update
1	bass pro shops	1 (1)		301,000	0.34	www.basspro.com/	10.75	4.26	0.02	11,800,000			18 Dec 2014
1	flashlight	1 (2)		90,500	0.69	www.basspro.com/	3.23	2.60	0.47	52,600,000			18 Dec 2014
1	crossbow	1 (1)		60,500	0.67	www.basspro.com/Archevy	2.16	1.68	1.00	17,300,000			18 Dec 2014
1	kayaks	1 (1)		40,500	0.56	www.basspro.com/ Kayaks	1.44	0.94	1.00	26,600,000			18 Dec 2014
3	oakley sunglasses	3 (4)		201,000	0.16	www.basspro.com/	1.37	0.25	0.63	17,900,000			18 Dec 2014
1	kayaks for sale	1 (1)		33,100	0.56	www.basspro.com/	1.18	0.77	1.00	9,270,000			18 Dec 2014
1	dehydrator	1 (2)		33,100	0.90	www.basspro.com/	1.18	1.24	1.00	849,000			18 Dec 2014
3	ray ban sunglasses	3 (3)		165,000	1.51	www.basspro.com/	1.12	1.98	1.00	22,000,000			5 days ago
1	fish hooks	1		27,100	1.44	www.basspro.com/ Tackle	0.96	1.62	0.06	3,710,000			18 Dec 2014
1	redhead	1 (1)		27,100	2.10	www.basspro.com/	0.96	2.36	0.09	76,100,000			3 days ago
1	spotlight	1 (1)		27,100	1.05	www.basspro.com/	0.96	1.18	0.43	475,000,000			18 Dec 2014
1	outdoor world	1 (1)		27,100	1.33	www.basspro.com/	0.96	1.50	0.03	229,000,000			18 Dec 2014
1	coleman tents	1		22,200	0.66	www.basspro.com/ gTents	0.79	0.61	1.00	798,000			5 days ago
1	mosquito repellent	1 (1)		22,200	2.10	www.basspro.com/	0.79	1.94	1.00	1,140,000			18 Dec 2014
1	vacuum sealer	1 (1)		22,200	2.27	www.basspro.com/	0.79	2.09	1.00	882,000			18 Dec 2014
1	fishing kayak	1 (1)		22,200	0.66	www.basspro.com/	0.79	0.61	1.00	59,000,000			18 Dec 2014
1	meat grinder	1 (1)		22,200	1.56	www.basspro.com/	0.79	1.44	1.00	1,730,000			18 Dec 2014

This kind of report provides useful details. You can see an apportionment of their ad costs across their keyword spectrum. Estimates are provided for what portion of the available ad traffic the domain has been able to attract. This gives an idea of the domain's Ad share for that particular keyword.

“Forewarned is fore-armed”. Before investing in a new product's AdWords, knowledge of the Competition level is essential. Some keywords are so competitive as to require bankrolling a big budget in order to gain impressions. Those with smaller budgets can take a high Competition level as a signal to change strategy and seek long-tail terms and phrases of synonymous meaning.

- **Ads Report:** The ads report displays top advertising search results. In the blue boxes below you can see the total number of ads detected that are being deployed by a given domain that also link to the same URL. This can indicate which groups the advertiser has chosen to make the most active. Through this

report, you can see how many keywords in that group resulted in that ad being served.

**Ads Copies 1 - 100 (487)** ⓘ

<b>Bass Pro Shops®</b> <b>Ad</b> www.basspro.com/ Free Shipping on Orders of \$75+ & Use Code Ship75. Offer Ends Soon! Keywords <b>1,310</b>	<b>Bass Pro® - Official Site</b> <b>Ad</b> www.basspro.com/ The Fall's Latest Outdoor Gear & Clothing is at Bass Pro! Shop Now. Keywords <b>831</b>	<b>Bass Pro® Official Site</b> <b>Ad</b> www.basspro.com/FreeShipping Enjoy Free Shipping with No Minimum Order Value! Hurry, Ends 9/27. Keywords <b>791</b>	<b>Bass Pro Shops® Hunting</b> <b>Ad</b> www.basspro.com/ Shop our Selection of Premiere Hunting Gear & Save at Bass Pro! Keywords <b>506</b>
<b>Bass Pro Shops® Official</b> <b>Ad</b> www.basspro.com/ America's Premier Outdoor Retailer. Shop Our Selection Online Now! Keywords <b>462</b>	<b>Bass Pro® Gear Up Sale</b> <b>Ad</b> www.basspro.com/Sale Hurry, Shop the Gear Up Sale & Save on This Season's Best Equipment! Keywords <b>391</b>	<b>Bass Pro® - Official Site - BassPro.com</b> <b>Ad</b> www.basspro.com/ The Fall's Latest Outdoor Gear & Clothing is at Bass Pro! Shop Now. Keywords <b>311</b>	<b>Bass Pro Shops® - BassPro.com</b> <b>Ad</b> www.basspro.com/ Free Shipping on Orders of \$75+ & Use Code Ship75. Offer Ends Soon! Keywords <b>254</b>
<b>Bass Pro® Official Site - BassPro.com</b> <b>Ad</b> www.basspro.com/FreeShipping Enjoy Free Shipping with No Minimum Order Value! Hurry, Ends 9/27. Keywords <b>249</b>	<b>Lures at Bass Pro</b> <b>Ad</b> www.basspro.com/ Shop Fresh Fishing Baits & Lures at Bass Pro Shops. Official Site. Keywords <b>246</b>	<b>Fishing Line</b> <b>Ad</b> www.basspro.com/ High quality fishing line. A must-have for every serious Angler. Keywords <b>200</b>	<b>Ariat Boot Store at Bass Pro</b> <b>Ad</b> www.basspro.com/ Shop a Huge Selection of Work Boots at Bass Pro Shops. Official Site. Keywords <b>190</b>

When ads that share large groups of keywords are being purchased frequently, it's a fair signal that the reporting domain is investing significant amounts of both time and resources to that ad group. Ads will ebb and flow in the ads report according to the domain's investment level over time. Thus, your competitors' marketing strategies with regard to particular product lines, seasonal sales, closeouts and other cyclical data can be easily inferred.

- **Ads History Report:** This report shows you lists of every queried keyword that a domain has bid on over the past year.

 basspro.com

Domain Ads History For google.com database ⓘ

**Domain Ads History 1 - 100 (114,724)** ⓘ

Keyword	Coverage % <span>⌵</span>	Aug 2014			2013				2014							
		Volume	CPC	Traffic %	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
<a href="#">fishing gear</a>	100.00	8,100	1.12	1.83	3	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	1	1	1
<a href="#">hunting stores</a>	100.00	4,400	1.14	0.27	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	3	3	2
<a href="#">fishing equipment</a>	100.00	3,600	1.32	0.22	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	2	3	1	1	2
<a href="#">hunting supplies</a>	100.00	2,900	0.88	0.18	7	2	2	2	1	2	4	2	4	6	4	2
<a href="#">fishing stores</a>	100.00	2,400	1.01	0.54	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	3	1
<a href="#">berkeley quilt</a>	100.00	1,900	0.97	0.08	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	4	4	7	3
<a href="#">sporting stores</a>	100.00	1,900	1.09	0.11	6	7	2	3	2	3	2	2	1	3	4	2
<a href="#">fishing apparel</a>	100.00	1,900	1.51	0.04	10	1	2	2	7	4	1	6	5	6	6	11

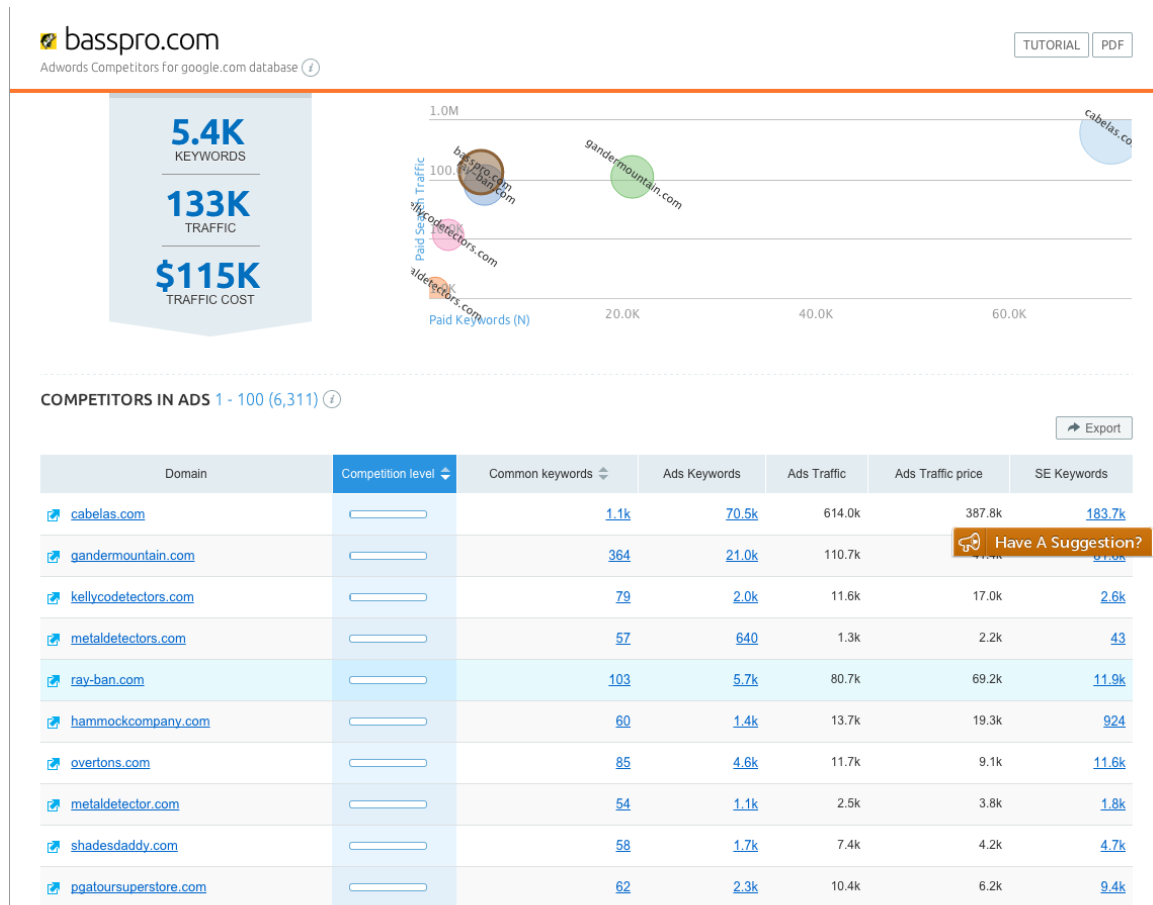


Volume pertains to queries, and acts as an indicator of potential search traffic for the ad. CPC provides immediate feedback on how competitive the bidding is for that keyword. Is this domain the biggest competitor? Find out with the Traffic percentage. It acts as a measure of campaign effectiveness by revealing how much of the available traffic is clicking through to this particular advertiser's domain.

The calendar array visualizes the number of detected impressions, for insight into a domain's strategy. During which months, for instance, did increased bidding drive up detection of a particular ad? Seasonal shifts in spend may be inferred. Are there gaps into which you can apply competitive pressure?

This information is presented alongside the text of the ads themselves. Just click on a particular month to see all detected ads for that month. The content can be checked for weaknesses that you may exploit, such as lack of promise or value proposition, uninspiring headline, or a weak call-to-action. All of this combined data tells you in a both a broad and granular way how well the domain's Ads and strategies worked with that keyword.

- **Advertising Research / Competitors Report:** if you only do one thing, learn who your search ad competitors are, before you begin to spend.



Eye up the competition to see how many keywords they rank for, how effective their ads are for click-through traffic to their landing pages. Know whether you plan to go toe-to-toe with the heaviest competitors, or whether your strategy may need to be more opportunistic, then spend your time finding gaps and missed opportunities to build on. This is an especially important call to strategize for new advertisers, or when introducing new products or services.

## The Cost of Success

Using the data gleaned from these reports, you can see what's working for your competitors, what isn't, and what keywords are within reach for your campaign.

In any campaign strategy, an invaluable intelligence-gathering tool would enable you to know what your competitors paid to gain their share of AdWords traffic.



\$ **Advertising Research**

**Positions** 371.2k

Position changes 0

---

**Competitors** 87.8k

---

**Ads copies**

---

**Ads history**

---


**URL**

SEMrush is just one trusted source of trends within ad spending. Some may prefer other programs such as [SpyFu](#) or [iSpionage](#). Each has its own merits.

Keyword-level investment can be observed in Paid Search Positions report.

Choose the keyword, take the “Costs %” number and apply that to the total Traffic Cost. This simple calculation will give you a fair idea how much it cost to gain that domain’s traffic from that particular keyword.

This is a great way to measure a competitor's budget at the keyword level.

 **basspro.com**
TUTORIAL PDF

Paid Search Positions for google.com database

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**5.4K**

KEYWORDS

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**133K**

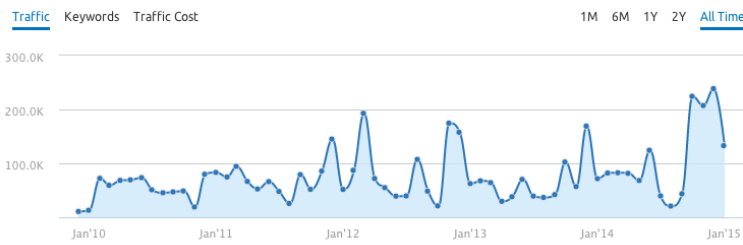
TRAFFIC

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**\$115K**

TRAFFIC COST









































Traffic Keywords Traffic Cost
1M 6M 1Y 2Y All Time



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**PAID SEARCH POSITIONS 1 - 100 (5,357)**

Filters
Export

Ad	Keyword	Pos	Block	Volume	CPC	URL	Traffic %	Costs %	Com.	Results	Trend	SERP source	Last update
	<a href="#">bass pro shops</a>	1 (1)		301,000	0.34	<a href="#">www.basspro.com/</a>	10.64	4.20	0.02	11,800,000		 Have A Suggestion?	
	<a href="#">flashlight</a>	1 (2)		90,500	0.69	<a href="#">www.basspro.com/</a>	3.20	2.56	0.47	52,600,000			18 Dec 2014
	<a href="#">crossbow</a>	1 (1)		60,500	0.67	<a href="#">www.basspro.com/Archery</a>	2.14	1.66	1.00	17,300,000			18 Dec 2014
	<a href="#">kayaks</a>	1 (1)		40,500	0.56	<a href="#">www.basspro.com/...Kayaks</a>	1.43	0.93	1.00	26,600,000			18 Dec 2014
	<a href="#">oakley sunglasses</a>	3 (4)		201,000	0.16	<a href="#">www.basspro.com/</a>	1.36	0.25	0.63	17,900,000			18 Dec 2014
	<a href="#">kayaks for sale</a>	1 (1)		33,100	0.56	<a href="#">www.basspro.com/</a>	1.17	0.76	1.00	9,270,000			18 Dec 2014
	<a href="#">dehydrator</a>	1 (2)		33,100	0.90	<a href="#">www.basspro.com/</a>	1.17	1.22	1.00	849,000			18 Dec 2014
	<a href="#">ray ban sunglasses</a>	3 (3)		165,000	1.51	<a href="#">www.basspro.com/</a>	1.11	1.95	1.00	22,000,000			4 days ago
	<a href="#">fish hooks</a>	1		27,100	1.44	<a href="#">www.basspro.com/...Tackle</a>	0.95	1.60	0.06	3,710,000			18 Dec 2014
	<a href="#">redhead</a>	1 (1)		27,100	2.10	<a href="#">www.basspro.com/</a>	0.95	2.33	0.09	76,100,000			2 days ago



Even if you ignore everything else, the Domain Overview includes a single number index of what it would have cost to obtain that traffic by paid means, called, "Traffic Cost".

With this extensive historical data at your fingertips, you can make serious, informed projections for months in advance.

## **Domain VS Domain – It's a Keyword Smackdown**

This "real-time" actionable data is displayed in SEMrush through reports like Related Terms and Phrases. SEMrush also allows you to identify unique keywords, overlapping keywords, and gap analysis for up to five domains concurrently.

That last part is key, given that the AdWords default now relies on a broad match keyword strategy. Since campaigns built from huge lists of long-tail and exact match terms are no longer the model, how is one to limit overspending on irrelevant, unrelated terms? It has become crucial that you have a thorough list of negative keywords to limit the inherent breadth of a broad match keyword.

SEMrush's Domain vs. Domain tool can be used to identify and analyze a domain's "phantom" competition whose keywords may be frequently confused with your own. Some product names could be burning up your budget, serving up your ads to searchers with an entirely different intent (i.e., bass guitars, bass fishing, Bass brand clothing). Some words are spelled the same and have multiple meanings (homographs). It is easy for Google to misinterpret the searcher's intent and serve up your ads inappropriately. Look at several of those keyword-confused sites at once and contrast their entire keyword overlap with yours.

Carry the results over into negative keywords in AdWords to preserve your budget for better, more relevant clicks. The resulting increase in conversions and decrease in bounces may save you even more money by increasing your overall Quality Score.

Brands, too, may need to be 'disambiguated,' that is, made more distinct, to limit excess ad spend for searches irrelevant to your domain. This is especially true of domains using initials or an acronym (e.g. ALA could be variously the American Library Association, the American Lung Association or the American Lighting Association). By entering the domains of sites that occupy the same Google SERP as your own brand search result, and examining their keyword overlap with yours, you should be able to easily extract keywords that should be placed into your negative keywords list.

Enter up to 5 domains to compare, select keywords and intersection types, and press the Go button.

[Simple Mode](#)

basspro.com	basspro.com gandermountain.com	basspro.com gandermountain.com cabelas.com	basspro.com gandermountain.com cabelas.com sportsmanwarehouse.com	basspro.com gandermountain.com cabelas.com sportsmanwarehouse.com fishusa.com
5,352	4,977	4,026	4,026	3,991

live update basspro.com (by adwords)  (by adwords)  (by adwords)  (by adwords)  (by organic) 1 - 100 (3,991) <sup>?</sup>
Show:

Sites position in organic or Ads results for keyword.

Keyword	Basspro.com	Gandermountain.com	Cabelas.com	Sportsmanwarehouse.com	Fishusa.com	Volume	CPC	Com.	Results	Trend
<a href="#">bass pro shops</a>	1	-	-	-	-	301,000	0.34	0.02	11,800,000	
<a href="#">oakley sunglasses</a>	3	-	-	-	-	201,000	0.16	0.63	17,900,000	
<a href="#">ray ban sunglasses</a>	3	-	-	-	-	165,000	1.51	1.00	22,000,000	
<a href="#">hammock</a>	4	-	-	-	-	90,500	1.59	1.00	33,400,000	
<a href="#">rain boots</a>	2	-	-	-	-	74,000	1.32	1.00	21,900,000	
<a href="#">crossbow</a>	1	-	-	-	-	60,500	0.67	1.00	17,300,000	
<a href="#">mens boots</a>	5	-	-	-	-	49,500	1.11	0.99	50,800,000	
<a href="#">generator</a>	7	-	-	-	-	49,500	1.65	1.00	388,000,000	
<a href="#">mens shoes</a>	5	-	-	-	-	49,500	1.35	0.90	86,400,000	
<a href="#">pepper spray</a>	3	-	-	-	-	40,500	0.84	1.00	14,000,000	

## Adaptive PPC – the Long and the Short of It

Duration of effort is an important concept in AdWords. Knowing how long to apply budget to a particular campaign or group may benefit the advertiser in two ways.

1. By applying sufficient budget for a necessary period, promising ads can bring sustainable ROI that merits continuance and produces cumulative gains
2. By limiting the term for which a group will be funded, budget can be preserved and re-assigned to groups including new experiments and old stand-bys that are producing CTR and Conversions.

Keywords and groups may need to be budgeted for one to three months to generate the necessary traction and provide a large enough sample size for meaningful data analysis.



A recent poll taken during a popular PPC webinar hosted by SEMrush revealed that the audience ran their campaigns with little or no additional optimization, for the following time spans:

60% more than six months *(are they all successful, or missing opportunity to tweak?)*

10% less than one month *(may benefit from fueling campaigns for a little longer)*

30% three to six months *(this may be a fair timeframe to judge results and refocus)*

AdWords rarely benefits from a strictly hands-off approach. Excessive tweaking and fussing may waste time unnecessarily, but looking the other way has vast potential for negative results.

Some domains are put into a defensive posture due to use of their brandnames and trademarks by others. Even in these instances, where a business bids for the use of their own branded terms, budget adjustments can be made as competitive pressures rise and fall over time.

A healthy and high-performing PPC campaign is an ongoing process. Success involves an investment of time that mirrors the financial investment. The best way to be sure that your campaign will withstand the test of time is to set it up with both flexibility and longevity in mind.

Most marketers take a reactive stance with their long-term strategy for PPC. With SEMrush, you can be far more proactive.

## **Campaign Maintenance**

So what is a good benchmark for revisiting AdWords? Smart advertisers should be using a tool (like SEMrush) to revisit their keyword strategy at least once per quarter at a minimum.

Why? Your competitors are adding and removing new products with astonishing regularity. Entire categories can be added practically overnight. As a result, competitors' AdWords content is revised, prices adjusted and offers modified. This high degree of flux increases with the level of competition. For E-Commerce and D2C the changes can occur several times each day on each product. If your company competes, it is probably seeking the same competitive information. When AdWords managers have access to competitive data, then they are prepared to be part of that crucial conversation.

And what about seasonal items and trends? How do events and holidays play into your planning? If you don't go back to alter your strategy, what are you doing to harness that potential shift in traffic?

## **What's Working? What Isn't?**



When you revisit your campaign, it is important to have a plan or you can rapidly fall down the rabbit hole. Eric Enge of [Stone Temple Consulting](#) created a useful checklist to utilize when reviewing your PPC campaign periodically. Use your time sparingly and get more effective results by sticking to a regime like this.

1. Find winners and losers in your keyword list
  - a. Review actual user queries to identify traffic sources and look for anomalies
2. Bid down or disable losers
  - a. Evaluate scope of problem
  - b. Pause if the problem is too big to fix
  - c. Bid down if you can
3. Scale winners
  - a. Shift additional resources to keywords that are performing well
  - b. Use SEMrush to identify related keywords to those keywords that are working and see how competitive they are
  - c. Add to your AdWords strategy.

Diane Pease, of Cisco, has contributed a spreadsheet to this Toolkit. It's primary purpose is simply to track budgets on a daily basis. This kind of discipline is absolutely necessary to ensure the most productive application of budget, especially if you have multiple clients, or maintain several campaigns for your brand's various products and services.

With these controls in place, you can regularly check in on your campaign to see what's working and what isn't and then adjust your strategies accordingly.

## **Know When You're in Over Your Head**

As you can see from the wealth of data that must be distilled into a useful strategy in order to succeed with an AdWords account, it becomes obvious that there are a lot of moving pieces and a lot of potential for problems. Without the right preparation, it can quickly become overwhelming to a business owner who is only devoting a small part of their time to managing the process.

This is why many business owners opt to use an agency or bring in outside help to run their PPC strategies. There's no shame in this. In fact, it can often be the best possible scenario for an entrepreneur. Let the experts do what they do best and you go back to what you do best... running your business.

So how do you know when you need a professional?



Hanapin Marketing, the minds behind PPC Hero, [sums it up](#) easily. You need a pro when:

- Your company offers in-demand products or services, with competitive pricing, but you're losing to the competition.
- You manage your own PPC accounts, but you feel like you're missing the latest tactics.
- You've been working with PPC, but it's taking up an increasingly large part of your schedule.

Hiring an agency such as Hanapin, or a consultant, is a tough decision, but if you find the correct one for you, the benefits can easily be quantified in both increased traffic and conversions.

### **Don't be a Statistic.**

Many of those who wind up dissatisfied with the performance of their PPC campaigns have gone into their AdWords efforts either without the proper preparation or without considering the necessary investment of time and ongoing effort to manage an effective campaign against better-qualified, higher-funded or established competitors.

Optimizing your campaigns, groups and keywords strategy regularly can cost you opportunity and drain your finances. You must adopt an adaptive keyword strategy if you want to succeed in the long-term.

Competitive research tools such as SEMrush can help you to maximize the return you get from your PPC campaign.

We have included several spreadsheets as part of this toolkit we've gathered from some of the best PPC pros out there to help you squeeze the most out of your AdWords account.

Find yourself a versatile, cost-effective competitive analysis tool like SEMrush. When combined with a great insights gained from content such as that from PPC Hero, the additional spreadsheets give you the foundation you need to go into PPC forewarned and forearmed.

Good fortune!

## Your Authors:



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Phillip Brooks

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Phillip Brooks is SEMrush's Director of Content Marketing. He is a prolific content creator who specializes in the creation and management of targeted content campaigns for both original and established intellectual properties. He has worked in new media for companies such as Electronic Arts and Turner Broadcasting.