



# hanapin marketing

*10 Key Traits Found In  
The Perfect PPC  
Account Manager*

Data Driven Reach. Human Driven Impact.



# 10 Key Traits Found In The Perfect PPC Account Manager



When paid search first hit the scene in the late 1990's and early 2000's, businesses had a very narrow view of what they expected from PPC professionals. They were considered 'back office', much in the same vane as programmers and only expected to be behind-the-scenes contributors.

Fast forward to 2015. Pay-per-click advertising has evolved into a multi billion-dollar industry where small and large businesses alike depend on it as a significant driver of revenue and profit. As a result of this explosive growth and the significant impact it's having on organizations, the need has grown for customer facing, business savvy account managers.

Let's identify and discuss in detail 10 key traits that make up the perfect account manager.

## KEY TRAIT #1: STRONG UNDERSTANDING OF PAID SEARCH

Successful account managers need to have an inside out understanding of PPC advertising. Account managers are relied upon to recommend strategy and supporting tactics in order to reach defined goals and objectives.

Account managers working for smaller agencies or businesses are expected to implement strategy in addition to developing it. Therefore, it's imperative account manager's keep up on the latest features, functions, and tools available so they can successfully perform their work.

Larger outfits usually have a team of production staff to support account managers by assisting with the day to day 'grunt work'. Production teams free up account managers to focus on analysis, providing performance insights, and creating action plans. Account managers must have a deep understanding of PPC so they can communicate to the production teams what projects and tasks need to be completed and how to do them. Having a deep understanding of paid search also allows account managers to communicate with authority and confidence to their clients about the current state and future direction of their pay-per-click program.



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## KEY TRAIT #2: EXPERT TRAINER AND OVERALL EDUCATOR

Great account managers are experts at training staff on how to perform basic and advanced PPC tasks, while possessing a unique ability to educate clients about the business of PPC.

Account managers understand paid search can be a very difficult trade to learn and therefore recognize investing time training those less experienced is critical to their success. Account managers who do not invest time training and mentoring, deny themselves valuable resources that can help them more easily reach client goals and objectives.

Training clients or an organization's management team on the business impact of PPC is critical to account success. The best account managers are able to educate clients about the intricacies of paid search in a simple format, while at the same time clearly communicate how PPC can specifically help the organizations they are servicing.

Great account managers understand the benefits of being a great trainer and educator. A well-educated client removes any uncertainty or confusion regarding how paid search works and how it can help drive business. A well-trained production staff allows the account manager to delegate the nitty-gritty every day work so they can focus on big picture strategies that drive clients to the next level of success.

## KEY TRAIT #3: AWESOME COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Great account managers **must** possess top-notch communication skills. They are expected to communicate regularly with business owners, marketing directors, and C-level executives. Often, account managers are called upon to present their findings and create buy-in for the initiatives or action plans they're advocating for.

Account Managers are constantly asked to update clients on the state of their PPC program, what they're working on, and provide all the necessary results, insights, and key learning's so organizations can make important decisions regarding future direction of their paid search programs.



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## KEY TRAIT #3: AWESOME COMMUNICATION SKILLS CONTINUED...

Quality of communication has a direct impact on the health of the account assigned to an account manager. Superior communicators usually have strong client relationships because they have gained the trust and confidence of those they are servicing. Earning trust and confidence is invaluable, as there will be times when performance takes a downturn or conditions change on the client side, such as a management change. During times of uncertainty, the best account managers fall back on their awesome communication skills to understand what client needs are, so they can adjust their plans accordingly.

On the other hand, account managers with poor communication skills have a hard time keeping their clients happy. They might have a great understanding of paid search and be able to perform the functions of account management, but are unable to gain their client's trust or confidence. It has been proven time and again that expertise helps land clients but it is clear and quality communication that helps retain clients. More often than not, clients who switch agencies list poor communication as the most important factor in their decision to leave and for a failed client relationship.

## KEY TRAIT # 4: AMAZING ANALYTICAL SKILLS

The elite account manager *must also* possess expert level analytical skills. The best account managers are very proficient with analysis tools such as Microsoft Excel and Google Analytics. They need strong proficiency with these tools to sift through the mountains of raw data generated from paid search campaigns. The ability to analyze data, draw conclusions, and create strategy based off of it, sets apart great account managers from the average ones. On the other hand, poor analytical skills can lead to drawing the wrong conclusions and knocking your strategy off track, which ultimately leads to not meeting client goals.

Great account managers create value by being great storytellers. They can interpret what the data means and weave it into a compelling story that communicates the bigger picture. If account managers can't bring their analysis to life, clients will not be able understand the bigger story of what's happening in their PPC program, and as a result they're liable to not see the value of it, which opens the possibility of discontinuing its use.

Finally, account managers with great analytical skills are natural born detectives. They love to dive into data and see where it leads them. Great account managers do not shortcut the analysis process, but instead keep digging until they uncover the answers they are looking for.



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## **KEY TRAIT #5: ADAPTABILITY AND RELIABILITY**

Elite account managers exhibit the traits of reliability and adaptability. Let's discuss further why these traits are paramount to an account manager's success.

Our organizations demand a lot of us. We are often working on multiple projects with tight deadlines. The best account managers consistently deliver high quality work on time. They understand reliability is not just an asset, but also a requirement of the job. Reliability builds trust, and in turn gains the confidence of clients that their key person can deliver. They also understand that reliability strengthens the overall client relationship.

Adaptability is another important trait of the PPC account manager. Business conditions are always changing, which means goals you have meticulously been working towards can suddenly change without warning. That wonderful client contact you've been working with for years can suddenly be replaced and a new person can take over, causing an immediate shift in relationship dynamics. The best account managers are able to roll with the punches. They adapt to their environment and succeed in these ever-changing circumstances because account managers understand they're not serving their own needs, but the needs of their client. By not being emotionally tied to their own outcomes but rather to the success of those they service, great account managers are able to adjust to changing conditions seamlessly. In more simple terms, elite account managers embrace change and look at it as a challenge instead of an obstacle.

## **KEY TRAIT #6: INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY**

Elite account managers separate themselves because of their intellectual curiosity. They want to know what makes PPC work for their clients and are always seeking new innovative ways to create value. Great account managers spend more time listening and asking questions and less time talking because they know they'll learn more about what is needed to make the accounts they manage more successful. They don't pretend to have every answer and aren't afraid to say 'I don't know but I'll find out for you'.

Another way account managers demonstrate their intellectual curiosity is by keeping up with the industry. The best account managers spend a ton of time reading blogs, whitepapers, and attending conferences. Great account managers want to take in as much knowledge as possible in order to keep up with the dynamic nature of paid search.



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## **KEY TRAIT #6: INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY CONTINUED...**

The best account managers are also very curious about new tools and features introduced into the marketplace. They are not afraid to test and experiment with new features or new combinations of features and tools to see if they can improve performance or gain efficiency. Account managers who are open to expanding their intellectual horizons are more apt to succeed because they don't allow themselves to fall behind in terms of knowledge and best practices.

## **KEY TRAIT #7: MASTERS OF CLIENT RELATIONS**

Although there's a perception that PPC is 'internet work' with no people interaction, paid search is really a people-oriented business just like any other. The account manager who can build strong personal relationships builds trust and confidence with their clients. It has long been said that expertise helps land business but it's the account manager's ability to handle client relations successfully that keeps it.

So what's the secret to great account management? First and foremost is strong communication (remember the key trait 'Awesome Communication Skills?'). Great account managers clearly articulate what they're doing, why they're doing it, and what the results are. The next thing great account managers do is exhibit competency by not making silly mistakes and being on top of the numerous details that comprise a PPC account. Finally, great account managers know how to provide value. They're able to provide high quality analysis and insights and turn them into actionable recommendations.

Account managers who are personable, honest, and provide solid recommendations are most apt to succeed. They succeed because of their understanding more than most, of the human side of paid search. They understand what drives clients, what their fears and concerns are, and plan their responses in ways that quell those fears and concerns.

## **KEY TRAIT #8: THE BEST ACCOUNT MANAGERS ARE THE MOST PREPPED**

Great account managers devote large amounts of time performing all the necessary prep and background work. Many account managers manage multiple accounts and may not be performing all the work in an account first hand. Since they are not performing the work first hand, great account managers take time to make sure they have checked account work for accuracy and that it's according to specification. Superstar account managers understand they're accountable for all work performed and always ensure it's being performed at the highest level.



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## **KEY TRAIT #8: THE BEST ACCOUNT MANAGERS ARE THE MOST PREPPED CONTINUED...**

Elite account managers are ultra connected to the work being performed. They're in constant communication with their production teams. They walk through the work with them and get a deep understanding of how and why things are being done the way they are and provide direction as needed.

The best account managers are also extremely prepped for their meetings. Ever wondered why the superstar account manager is so smooth during meetings? They're that way because they've set aside time to prepare. Those who prepare are more confident in the outcome of their performance. Superstar account managers understand the need to prepare and embrace it.

## **KEY TRAIT #9: SALESMANSHIP**

The very best account managers are actually great salespeople. While account managers are not responsible for landing clients, they're selling their point of view every day and use their power of persuasion to create buy-in to the strategies and initiatives they're recommending.

Account managers understand they cannot be effective unless they're able to consistently convince clients their way will lead to account success. Account management is about proactively anticipating client objections and overcoming them. Convincing clients to take risks and spend more money on paid search can be a very tricky thing to accomplish. Elite account managers are able to tap into the psyche of their client's personalities and have a keen sense of timing for knowing when to push aggressively for something and also when to back off. Using their powers of persuasion, account managers can create the buy-in and cooperation needed to get sign-off on initiatives despite initial objections.

## **KEY TRAIT #10: ABILITY TO ANTICIPATE**

Great account managers are not blind-sided. They have a unique ability to anticipate trouble and uncover opportunities even before their clients do. The very best account managers are able to take a step back and adjust to ever-changing conditions within the industry and within the accounts they manage.

Many account managers that struggle do so because they do not have a strong ability to anticipate problems. Whenever an account manager is reacting instead of being proactive, the chance at succeeding in keeping clients happy and retaining their business is minimized.



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## CONCLUSION

Great account managers are hard to come by. When recruiting and developing account managers, look for these traits. If a person on your team possesses most of these traits, the chances of them turning into a superstar account manager increases dramatically. Make sure these traits are developed and nurtured. Your business will be better off for it!





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