

11 best practice guidelines for transitioning paid search (PPC) accounts between SEM agencies

Thu, Jan 8, 2009 | Posted by [Tom Jones](#)

Have you just chosen a new PPC agency and are wondering what next? Are you a search agency who's just lost a PPC account to a competitor or a SEM paid search have just won a new paid search client following a pitch? Well, outlined below are our best practice guidelines for clients and agencies to ensure the seamless transition of PPC accounts between agencies.

To an incumbent agency:

1. Be professional and courteous

A client choosing to move search agencies is making a business decision so don't take the decision personally and don't make it personal by resorting to underhand tactics which seek to undermine the client's choice. There's nothing wrong with objectively offering your view on the decision but once a decision has been made very few people will backtrack so there's little to be gained from constantly stating and re-stating that you think the client is making a mistake

2. Assist the client in seamlessly transitioning their search activity

The client is still paying you up until the end of their contract date so don't down tools while you're still being paid to work. Continue to respond to all reasonable requests for information and assistance.

3. Make it easy for your client and respect their decision

If the client has served notice and is requesting that you transition the search account then the damage has already been done. Creating barriers to the successful transitioning of a search account will only serve to reduce your standing in the eyes of the client further and cultivate you a bad reputation within the industry.

4. Treat the transitioning process as an opportunity for damage limitation/redemption

If the client is leaving because of a fraught relationship, poor service or inadequate results then use this as one last opportunity to show the client the client your best side and look to part company on a positive note. Don't burn bridges that don't need burning ? what, really, is the point?

5. Grant ownership of the existing Google account and provide downloads of other accounts (MSN and Yahoo!) to the new agency if asked to do so

Do you really believe that what you're doing is so unique and cutting-edge that you're going to lose all your competitive advantage by transferring ownership of a search account to a competitor? If you do ? I'm a bit worried for you as you're basing your key point of differentiation on a 100% replicable method delivered via a freely available interface. Consider, if your techniques are so unique and effective why is your client switching agencies?

PPC has matured and paid search best practice is now widely known as such if you're an agency worth your salt, granting ownership of a search account to a competitor shouldn't be a threat to you.

There is very little long-term advantage conferred to the new agency in transitioning an account (remember how fast the market changes and so what works this month will likely have changed by next month) but a large potential short-term benefit to the client in from doing so. Don't make life hard for your client, take a deep breath and send the requisite email to Google.

To a new agency:

1. Request that ownership of the Google account is conferred to you and that you get downloads of Yahoo! and MSN accounts

The main thing at stake here is preserving Google's Quality Score and ensuring continuity for the client in the short-term. Whether you choose to keep running with the existing account in the long-term is your decision but in the short-term, taking ownership of an existing account allows you to work from an established base and ensure continuity for the client during the transition.

2. Don't bad-mouth the work of the previous agency to your new client

You've already won the client's business so resist the temptation to gloat about the bad work of the previous agency. No one likes a know-it-all and being magnanimous in victory is a much better quality than hubris. Quietly go about making your own improvements to the account and let your results speak for themselves.

To a client:

1. Share as much information as possible with your new agency

Your agency is your friend! Don't make their job harder by only giving them half the information they need - share everything. Of course if you're worried about confidentiality then get your agency to sign an NDA (although most contracts should cover this as standard).

2. Set realistic targets based on your business' needs

Your campaign targets should be based on objective business needs - not conjecture or 'rounding up' of figures. If you're not sure how PPC activity should fit into your wider business objectives then if you've got a decent agency they should be able to work with you to help answer this question. Setting the right targets is absolutely vital to getting the most out of your agency so spend time making sure that what you're asking of them will translate into business success.

3. Know the facts

Don't be fobbed off by an incumbent agency that says they can't transfer ownership of a Google account. They can. And, what's more, it should only take two very short emails to Google. Depending on the Ts & Cs of your contract, the agency may not necessarily be obligated to transfer the account, but don't let an agency hi

de behind a made-up excuse ? if they say they can't transfer a Google account it's because they've decided not to, not because of ?Google regulations?.

4. Listen to the advice you're paying for

A new agency is likely going to have a different approach and perspective from your old agency. Listen to what they have to say and be open to trialing new approaches. Every new idea that is suggested may not be a winner but change can be good and departing from the status quo probably necessary if what you're looking for is a step-change in performance.

Copyright (C) Connect ? Digital Marketing Expertise from iCrossing