

# Understanding Search Theory

*The search process may seem simple: A searcher visits a search engine, enters a search query, and receives results. Every step of the search process, however, is accompanied by the searcher's thoughts and expectations. Understanding how your keywords and ads align themselves with the search process can help bring more visitors to your site and achieve more conversions from those visitors.*

*Pay-per-click (PPC) advertising is effective because it mirrors the search process, and the two work seamlessly with each other. Understanding the origins and evolution of PPC advertising will also give you a glimpse into its future, so you can continue to take advantage of this ever-expanding form of advertising.*

# 1

---

## Chapter Contents

The origins of Google AdWords

The psychology of search

Goal alignment: Google vs. you vs. the searcher

Best practices for applying search theory

## The Origins of Google AdWords

In 1996, a small company was formed that would forever change the world of Internet marketing. This company was called Idealab. It took two years of hard work and creative ideas before Bill Gross's company would launch GoTo.com with a simple business model: Advertisers could choose to display their ads based on what a searcher was trying to find. A searcher would type a query into the search box (Figure 1.1), and if advertisers chose to advertise on that word, their ad would show in the search results. Four simple concepts made this business model revolutionary.



**Figure 1.1** GoTo.com's search page, circa 1998

The first was relevance, a word later adopted by Google throughout their AdWords program. Showing ads based on what someone was actively seeking made these new search ads more relevant than anything previously displayed on the Internet.



**Note:** AdWords is Google's pay-per-click program where an advertiser chooses words that will trigger their ad. The advertiser is charged only if their ad is displayed and clicked by a searcher. This unique pricing model not only ensures that an advertiser's message is seen but that the advertiser pays only when someone arrives at their website.

Advertisers would only choose to display their ads on keyword searches that were related to their products or services. Since their ads would then only be shown when someone was searching for related information, these ads would help the searchers find what they were seeking.

Before the days of PPC, the ads alongside a search results page were often banner ads that had nothing to do with the search query. While these ads did gather many impressions (an “impression” is when an ad is shown on a page), they were not relevant to the user and thus were rarely clicked. Advertisers were paying for exposure but were not receiving much traffic for their ad dollars.

In the early days of Google, before AdWords launched, the founders of Google had been questioned many times by their investors about how they would eventually monetize their search engine. At that time, the founders did not have an answer; however, they held steadfast to the belief that at the moment someone was shown a page of search results, Google had their undivided attention. It would be in that moment of someone scanning a page of search results that Google would make its money. It turned out to be an accurate observation by the early Googlers.

By displaying ads based on what someone was actively seeking, GoTo.com formed a synergy between searchers and advertisers that helped both reach their goals on a single search page. Advertisers would receive visitors who were actively seeking their products, and searchers would find products that were related to what they were seeking. This was a win for both searchers and advertisers.

The second concept was the pricing model. Previously, almost all advertisements were based on paying for impressions. A company would decide how many impressions they would like to buy for their banner ads, and then they would pay on a cost per thousand impressions (CPM) basis. This created a scenario where you had to have a large advertising budget to even sign an initial contract. In addition, you had no idea how many visitors or sales those ads would bring to your site. The world of Internet advertising was mostly formed by larger companies or companies with venture capital backing.

By changing to a PPC pricing model, advertisers paid only when they received traffic. This shift to performance-based advertising allowed companies to try a fledgling business model with little monetary commitment. The minimum monthly spend was roughly \$1 per day, a big change from minimums that were often several thousand dollars a month.

Because search engines were paid only when a click occurred, it also forced search engines to show only relevant ads. If an ad did not get clicked, the search engine did not make money. The pricing model helped reinforce that only relevant ads should be shown on a search results page. This forced advertisers and search engines to work together to create a better search page for the consumer.

The third concept—and how Yahoo!, Bing, and Google have built a base of more than a million advertisers—was the sign-up process. GoTo.com removed the barrier of a salesperson between the advertiser and the inventory. Using a self-serve ad model, any advertiser could sign up for a PPC account and start selecting keywords and creating ad copy within minutes (Figure 1.2).

**Google Ads | AdWords** Already an AdWords customer? Sign in

**Overview** How it works Success stories Get started

Google

**Get your ad on Google today**

- Reach people searching for what you offer
- Pay only when someone clicks on your ad
- Advertise globally or locally

**Get started now** For free support call: **1-800-919-9922**

**Only pay for results**  
No matter what your budget, you can display your ads on Google and our advertising network. Pay only if people click on your ads and visit your website.  
[Learn more](#)

**We'll help you get started**  
We're here to answer all your questions and can even help you create your first campaign. Call us for free setup support at **1-800-919-9922**

**How it works**

1. People search on Google
2. They see your ad
3. You get more customers

[Learn more](#)

**Figure 1.2** The AdWords sign-up process is a simple wizard influenced by GoTo.com.

By choosing a self-serve model, a search engine did not have to pay commission to a salesperson. There were no contracts to sign, no insertion orders (IOs) to fax, and no phone calls to be made before you could start advertising on the Web. This straight-forward approach allowed anyone, from a small business to a Fortune 500 company, to quickly experiment with Internet advertising.

The Internet was still a new concept to most people, and both companies and consumers were unsure how widely adopted the Web would become. Thus, having the ability to commit a few dollars and experiment with the new medium was paramount to introducing thousands of new companies to the concept that they could make money on the Web.

It also enabled the search engines to scale their advertiser base quickly. People often slow down the advertising process, and allowing a self-serve model meant that the only barrier to advertising was a bit of time and a credit card.

The last concept is what has allowed Yahoo!, Bing, and Google to make billions of dollars from their advertisers—the auction process. GoTo.com did not have a set price for what you needed to pay when a keyword was clicked in a search result. Advertisers set a price of what they were willing to pay, and the company willing to pay the most showed up highest in the search results.

If you were willing to pay more than your competitors, then your ad would show higher in the search results, which would gather more clicks and bring more visitors to your website. It is easy to see how the top positions were highly coveted.

The process has become much more complex over the years as search engines, users, and advertisers have become savvier.

In October 2001, GoTo.com, Inc., renamed itself Overture Services. In 2003, Overture was acquired by Yahoo! for \$1.63 billion. In 2009, Microsoft and Yahoo! formed the Search Alliance. With this new deal, Yahoo! would now serve ads from Microsoft's adCenter platform, now known as Bing Ads, and the original PPC engine would no longer be used by anyone.

### **Yahoo! vs. Google**

In 2001, GoTo.com was awarded the patent titled "System and method for influencing a position on a search result list generated by a computer network search engine." This patent is the heart of PPC advertising technology. In April 2002, Overture sued Google over patent infringement. The lawsuit dragged on for two years, during which Yahoo! acquired Overture, until it was time for Google to transform into a public company. Not wanting to go public with a major lawsuit that threatened its revenue, Google finally settled with Yahoo! by issuing 2.7 million shares of stock in exchange for a perpetual license to the patent.

Today, GoTo.com is an unknown name to most people; in fact, GoTo.com is no longer owned or operated by Yahoo! and has changed hands a few times over the years.

As described earlier, GoTo.com's four founding concepts were quite simple: relevance, pay-per-click pricing, self-service, and auction-based pricing. However, these principles were combined not only to quickly gain advertiser adoption, but also to reap the monetary benefits of advertiser competition for the top ad positions.

### **Google Enters the Arena**

In 1998, when GoTo.com was first launching, Google's search engine was just renamed from BackRub and was running on Stanford University servers. Creators Larry Page and Sergey Brin were more concerned with moving their operations into Susan Wojcicki's garage than making money.

**Note:** Susan Wojcicki's garage served as Google's first workspace away from Stanford's campus. Wojcicki was instrumental in Google's growth when she became one of their early employees and is often referred to as the "Mother of AdSense." (AdSense is Google's contextual advertising program.)



Over the next two years, Google moved to Mountain View, accepted \$25 million in funding, and hired key employees to help in their evolution. Their early hires revolved around scaling their search technology. Craig Silverstein was their very first employee and served as the director of technology. Much of his early work helped scale the IT operations that would allow Google to grow. The next step was finding a way to start making money.

Google's first offering was an uninspired CPM program. To advertise with Google, you had to talk to a sales rep and sign a contract for a fairly high minimum spend. Although advertisers could choose to show an ad based on a searcher's query, the four concepts that had made GoTo.com a success were not to be found.

The high barrier to advertising with Google was lowered in October 2000 when Google launched their first self-serve advertising program. The simply named Google AdWords started with 350 customers. However, AdWords was still bought on a CPM basis.

### **Google AdWords Select Revolutionizes PPC**

February 2002 will always be remembered as the time when Google forever changed pay-per-click advertising. Google launched AdWords Select, which incorporated all of GoTo.com's founding principles; however, in typical Google fashion, they added their own twist to the auction model.

On GoTo.com, the more you paid, the higher your ad appeared in search results. That essentially made it so the company willing to pay the most had the highest visibility. Google's main advertising word was *relevance*, and they changed the PPC auction model both to increase relevance for a searcher and to maximize how much money Google made on a search results page.

Their twist was to incorporate click-through rates (CTR) in determining where an ad showed up in the results. They used a simple formula to determine ad position: maximum CPC (cost per click) multiplied by CTR.

The logic was that if an ad was clicked more often, it was more relevant to the searcher, and the advertiser should be rewarded for showing an ad aligned with the searcher's query.

This simple formula also maximized the dollars Google made on every single search engine results page (SERP). In the PPC model, a search engine is paid only when a click occurs.

On GoTo.com, if advertisers were willing to bid more than everyone else for a click, their ads would show up at the top of the search pages. If those same ads did not receive clicks, the engines did not actually make money from displaying those ads.

Therefore, a search engine should not display the highest bid ads the most if they were not clicked. A search engine would make more money by displaying lower-bid ads that gathered clicks than by showing high-cost ads that received few clicks.

## The Rise and Fall of RPS

Search engines protect their most important metric, revenue per search (RPS), from public consumption. However, with some rough math the numbers can be approximated. In 2004, Google made around \$0.10 per search, which increased to \$0.19 in 2006, and finally surpassed \$0.25 in 2007. Conversely, Yahoo!’s revenue per visitor was roughly only \$0.16 in 2007. As the economy dipped in 2009, so did Google’s RPS, to approximately \$0.095, which was still higher than Yahoo!’s at that time.

However, it is difficult to blame the entire dip on the economy. As more information is integrated into the search results, there is less of a need for the consumer to always leave the search results page. For instance, a search for *Chicago weather* will show the five-day forecast within the search results, which results in fewer people clicking away from the page to find the weather forecast.

Google’s RPS continued to decline for a couple years, but in 2013 it has rebounded to an estimated \$0.20. However, RPS does not tell the whole story. If you can increase the total number of searches that are conducted, then even with a low RPS you can make a significant amount of money. This is where Google’s Android operating system and mobile advertising have been so important to search engines: capturing the next wave of queries. Among all these changes to consumer behavior, Google’s total revenues continue to increase year after year.

By incorporating a combination of bid prices and how many clicks those ads received, Google managed to maximize how much they made on any single search results page. This simple change also created an environment where a small company with a more compelling offer could have its ad displayed higher in a SERP than a large national company that did not take the time to create relevant ads. Price no longer trumped relevancy. Having the most money did not ensure the most clicks or visibility. Advertisers had to choose keywords that were relevant to their products and create ads to match.

This level playing field helped spur advertiser adoption to the point that Google eventually dropped their CPM program completely and renamed the AdWords Select program to the name used today: Google AdWords.

Over the years, Google has become much more sophisticated and has revamped their formulas for displaying ads on search pages. However, throughout the growing complexities of AdWords, Google has always kept their ad serving synergistic with the search process. To understand how to take advantage of aligning your advertising efforts with Google’s ad serving, it is important to understand the psychology of search.

## The Psychology of Search

One of the advantages of online advertising is transparency of data to the advertiser. It is easy to track click-through rates, conversion rates, cost per conversions, total

conversions, bounce rates, and more data points than anyone could ever analyze. The numbers can be overwhelming. Between the reports you can run in AdWords, some simple Excel formulas, and your analytics program, you can get buried in meaningless data.

It is essential to look beyond the numbers and consider the individuals sitting at their anonymous keyboards conducting the searches. While numbers tell the story of your marketing, it is the actual people who can make your advertising profitable.

Since search marketing—and Google AdWords in particular—is based on people using search engines, you must also think about how search engines are used in everyday life. Understanding not only how people use search engines but also how they decide to click on an ad from the search page will help align your marketing efforts with the searchers. Having someone arrive at your site is just one step in the equation. Your website must also be aligned with the searcher's interest so the searcher does not just browse your website but also becomes a new customer.

Search engines are not used to browse the Web. That is the domain of properties such as My Yahoo!, StumbleUpon, and Twitter. There is more information on the Web than anyone could read in dozens of lifetimes, and most of that information is of no interest to the searcher. Therefore, people do not just read search engines attempting to absorb all the information that has been discovered around the Web. Search engines are used when people want to find a specific piece of information. More importantly, people use search engines to find answers to questions.

We all think differently. We all ask questions differently. Delving into the various ways that people think and ask questions can assist you in choosing keywords that will make sure your ad appears in front of someone searching with questions your site can answer.

### **Turning Concepts into Words**

The majority of people do not think in words. Words are conventions to relay the thoughts that are present in our minds. Although words are how we communicate in daily life, they are just a vehicle to help us express the concept of our thoughts to others.

People are not mind readers. You cannot think at a person and have that person understand your thoughts. You have to take the concepts present in your brain and transform them into words so that another person can understand you. The translation that occurs from concept to word is different for each person. This is why you might readily understand one person and not understand another person who is trying to express the exact same idea.

This same process of putting our thoughts into words is also how we communicate with a search engine. Google has not yet developed the technology where you can telepathically receive your answer. Therefore, you need to express yourself in the typed word to receive a response.



**Note:** While Google can't read your mind, they can interpret more inputs than just text. In 2007, Google launched a call-in search named Goog-411 that was open for only a brief period of time. Then in 2009, Google incorporated speech to text on Android-powered phones. Then in 2011, Google's Chrome browser became capable of translating speech into search queries. Today, it is not uncommon to see people talking to their phones or computers to write emails, send text messages, find directions, and much more without ever typing a single word.



To further the process of examining how people translate their thoughts into words, we will use the following scenario and examine some of the ways in which this scenario can be typed into a search engine.

Chicago is brutally cold in the winter. Imagine sitting in your suburban house watching a movie on a Saturday evening. Suddenly, your spouse tells you that there is water flooding the basement. Upon examination, you discover that a pipe has frozen, causing it to break, and now you need a plumber to come out to your house to fix the problem.

This is a common winter scenario in Chicago. However, the ways in which people will attempt to solve this problem are different.

Some people are direct in their thinking. They will go to Google and type in the actual question they need to find an answer to, such as *Where do I find a Chicago plumber?* Many people, instead of typing out the entire question, will shorten the query to just *Chicago plumber* or maybe more precisely *Schaumburg plumber*, or *emergency plumbing services Schaumburg*.

Others will have a preconceived notion about what they want to find, and their query will be more aligned with the answer they want to receive. For example, the query might be *A site about Chicago plumbers*.

If you are the do-it-yourself type, you might first want to turn off the water to stop the initial problem before contacting a plumber. A search for *How to turn off the water in my basement* would be more appropriate.

What is the root cause of the problem? If you searched for the root cause, the site that held the answer could also help you fix the broken pipes. Queries such as *broken pipes* or *frozen pipes* could lead you to your answer. You could also search for the actual problem, such as *flooded basement*.

It can be a useful exercise to walk into the office tomorrow and describe this scenario to your coworkers. Then ask each of them what they would type in the search box. If you ask them one by one, instead of in a group, you are sure to receive a slightly different answer from almost everyone you ask. There will be some repetition, but concentrate on the different types of answers.

In fact, there are thousands of ways that someone could search for the answer to this scenario. In later chapters, we will dive more into keyword research. Most queries usually fall into one of a few categories:

For instance, if your computer is slow and is causing you not to be able to create large pivot tables in Excel, these would be search queries that match these categories:

- The actual question, or a shortened version of the question: How do I make my computer faster?
- The answer to the question: Computer memory
- A description of the problem: Computer won't run Excel
- A symptom of the problem: Slow computer
- A description of the cause: Out of memory error
- Product parts or brand names: 8GB, 204-pin SODIMM, DDR3

It is essential that you consider all the ways someone can search for your products. Search queries are thought processes. Understanding someone's query can give you insight into what question they want answered.

## Understanding Search Results

Once the thought has been translated into words, it is time to find the answer to the question. You go to Google, type in your words, and before you click the Search button, something psychological happens—expectation setting.

As a human, every time you conduct any action, you have an expectation of results. When you first looked at the spine or cover of this book, you had a notion of what it contained. Before you bought the book, you had an expectation of what you would learn by reading it. Every event also changes and refines those expectations. As you read this chapter, you have a different expectation of what you will find later in the book than when you first bought it.

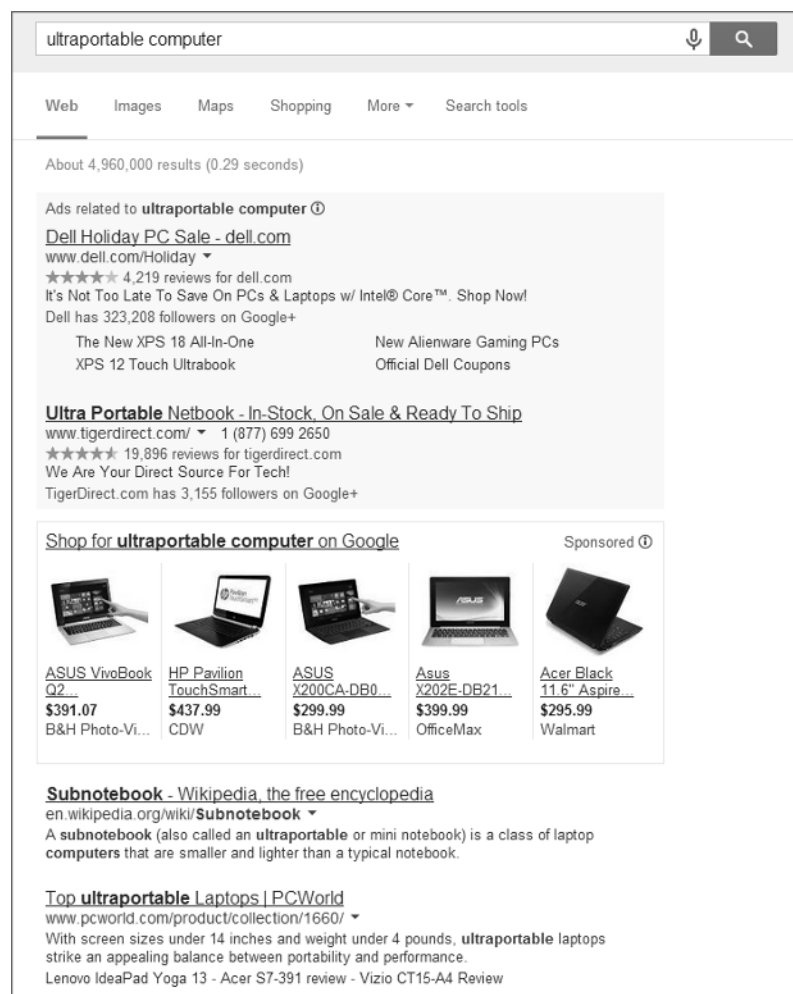
This series of ongoing expectation settings also affects how you view search engines. When a searcher inputs a query, they expect to see certain ads and websites displayed that will help them find the answer to your question.

This same expectation setting happens for every person using a search engine. Everyone expects to find websites that will help them answer their question. Therefore, before they ever click the Search button, they have already built an idea of what the act of typing their query into a search box will bring to their computer screen.

Within the search process, your ad has a specific role. Having your ad appear on that search page is not your endgame. Your ad must be relevant to the search result. You do not want everyone who sees your ad to come to your website. You want only those who are going to engage your company to click on your ads and visit your website. Every click costs money, so you don't want all the clicks possible—you just want the clicks that are more likely to turn into customers.

## The Purpose of Ad Copy

Once the Search button is clicked, Google displays a set of ads and websites (Figure 1.3). A quick scan of the page will tell the searcher if the results are in line with their expectations. If they are not, the searcher is likely to stop reading the results and change the search query.



**Figure 1.3** Google search result for *ultraportable computer*

As an advertiser, this brief moment is your chance to connect with the searcher. These few seconds can determine whether the searcher will visit your site, visit your competitor's site, or just search again for the answer and completely ignore your ad.

At this moment, your ad needs to stand up, jump around, wave its arms, grab the searcher's attention, and shout, "I have the answer to your question! Come click me and I'll show you the answer."

Attempting to create ads that both stand out from the crowd to gain initial attention and are compelling enough to entice someone to click is a difficult proposition. As a marketer, you need to write ads that meet the expectations of the searcher and yet can communicate to that same person that your website can deliver the answer to their question.

AdWords basic text ads are only 130 characters in length, and they have a tremendous amount to accomplish in just a few scant words.

An ad needs to have a headline that draws attention. It needs to stand out from other ads on a page that are clamoring for attention. The ad copy needs to tell a visitor why you have the answer to their question. And yet, the ad also needs to be faithful to your products or services. You can never lose sight of what makes your company money; otherwise, you will be paying for clicks that do not help you reach your goals.

Ads should not be written to please the advertiser. They should not be written to make the CEO smile. Ads should be written to convey to the searcher that you hold the key to their question, and they must first walk through your ad copy to your website before they can find out the answer. We will spend time in later chapters discussing how to create these ads and even how to test them against each other.

Ideally your ad has caught the searcher's eye. The searcher thinks your ad can lead them to information that will help them complete their quest. And just before the searcher clicks on your ad, something else happens—another expectation is being set.

When a person does a search on Google, they have a preconceived notion of what they will see on a search results page based on what words they choose to search. Your ad copy is the only thing a user knows about your website; therefore, those few characters are also setting the user's expectations about what they will find on the first page on your site they encounter, which is your "landing page." Your landing page needs to meet those expectations

### **Landing Pages Lead to New Customers**

When someone clicks your ad, they are taken to your website. Usually this is the first brand interaction someone has with your company. It's your first chance to showcase your offer to that searcher.

*Landing page* is industry jargon for the first page a searcher views after clicking on your ad. It should rarely be the home page of your site. It should be a page within your website that is most logically connected to the search query.

For instance, if someone conducted a search for *Sony digital cameras*, that person would not want to be taken to Amazon.com's home page. The home page does not have information about Sony digital cameras. At best, the searcher will search again at Amazon's site. At worst, they will go back to the search results. A much better search experience would have the searcher taken to a page about Sony digital cameras within Amazon's website.

Remember, most searchers do not know your website. The searcher does not have prior knowledge about your company. They arrived at your site after clicking a very short ad, and that small amount of text is all the information they have about your site before first visiting it. Therefore, that ad copy is crucial in setting the proper expectation for what the searcher will find after clicking your ad.

To continue meeting the searcher's expectations, your landing page must logically follow from your ad copy. Since your ad copy informed the searcher about what they would find, the landing page should continue the conversation by assisting them to find their answer (see Figure 1.4).



**Figure 1.4** This JustCloud landing page showcases a service and allows a searcher to either create an account or get more information.

If your landing page does not meet the searcher's expectation, they will use the most common navigational element on the entire Web—the dreaded Back button. You paid for the click; this is something you definitely want to avoid.

The landing page should show someone the answer to their question or instructions on how to get the answer to their question. For an e-commerce site, the answer is

contained in the product someone will receive once they've checked out through your shopping cart. When they're looking for a plumber, the answer comes after they make a phone call. At other sites, the answer will come after the searcher fills out a form for more information. For most businesses, when the consumer receives the answer to their question, the business has a new customer.

The landing page is critical to your AdWords success. A bad landing page leads to wasted advertising dollars due to the searcher leaving your site without conducting any business with your company. A good landing page will turn shoppers into buyers.

The process of someone searching and buying on the Web is much different from other forms of advertising. While many other types of advertising campaigns are structured to create emotional need within a consumer, the search advertising process is driven by giving someone the correct information at the correct time. This concept extends from choosing the correct keyword to creating your ad copy and ultimately answering the searcher's question on your website.

### **Advertising Is Not Advertising When It Is Information**

*Once upon a time I was riding on the top of a First Avenue bus, when I heard a mythical housewife say to another, "Molly, my dear, I would have bought that new brand of toilet soap if only they hadn't set the body copy in ten point Garamond." Don't you believe it. What really decides consumers to buy or not to buy is the content of your advertising, not its form.*

*David Ogilvy*

Often people are resistant to advertising. Ads are something you are bombarded with on a daily basis. You hear ads on the radio when you are driving to work. You see ads on TV when you are trying to relax in the evening. You see ads in the daily paper as you are trying to read the local weather forecast. You see ads in search results as you are trying to find information.

But ads do not have to be annoying or intrusive. Ads can be very helpful if they are created properly, because advertising is not actually advertising when it is information.

By aligning your ad copywriting, landing pages, and Google AdWords account with this concept, you are much more likely to see success in your search marketing efforts. This is a concept much better visualized than explained.

Imagine this weekend will be nice and sunny and you would like to spend it with your family at the beach. The drive will take several hours, but you manage to pack the kids and the spouse into the car and begin your journey.

You start driving down the interstate while the kids are glued to a DVD player in the backseat. Billboards whiz past on the side of the road, which you do not have to try to ignore; you have had the skill to tune out advertising for many years.

### Ads Should Lead Searchers to Answers

If you performed the search *LED TV features*, do you think clicking this ad would help you find the information you are looking for?

“LED TV. Massive new TV offerings. Visit us today to buy your new TV!”

Unfortunately, ads that are not directly related to the search query and that do not mirror the search process are quite common.

Now consider this ad for the same search of *LED TV features*:

“Compare LED TV features. Find a new LED TV that fits your lifestyle and budget.”

Someone searching for features is most likely looking to compare products and is not ready to buy yet. They are still in the comparison shopping stage of the buying cycle. An ad focused on buying does not fit into their decision-making process.

Ad copy needs to both reflect the search query and recognize where a searcher is within the buying cycle; we will examine both of these elements in future chapters.

After a few hours, you start to get hungry and the kids start to get restless. It is time to find a restaurant for lunch. You have made the decision that you do not want to eat in the car as it is too messy with the kids, and you would like to get out of the car to stretch your legs.

Where do you start looking? Those ignored billboards. They are no longer advertisements cluttering up the roadside; they are now valuable pieces of information that will show you available lunch options.

You stop ignoring them and start reading them.

Why?

Because the advertisements are your source of information for finding the answer to your question. Your question is along the lines of “What are my lunch options?” Your answer will be found in the billboards alongside the interstate.

When ads become part of the information-gathering process, they cease to be ads. At this point in time, they are pieces of information that consumers are seeking. Wouldn't you like your ads to be sought after, not ignored? By aligning yourself with the search process, the quest for answers, not only will your ads help consumers find the answer to their questions, but they will also help your business make sales.

Stop thinking of ads as advertisements.

Start thinking of ads as pieces of information.

### Goal Alignment: Google vs. You vs. the Searcher

Every search result has three different entities trying to reach their goals. Sometimes, these goals get in each other's way, leading to poor search results. Other times, they

work in conjunction, leading everyone toward success. It is important to examine Google's goal, the advertiser's goal, and the searcher's goal for each search result.

All search results start with the same element, a searcher looking for the answer to a question. The searcher inputs a query, and SERPs appear.

Google's goal is to have that same searcher use Google for their next query. The more search queries that occur on Google properties, the more chances Google has to make money by people clicking ads. Therefore, Google wants searchers to always find the answer to their question quickly, easily, and on a Google-owned property.

This is why Google also spends so much time and money on the natural results (also known as organic or free listings). Not all searches can be monetized, but if someone always finds their answer on Google, regardless of whether a particular search query is monetized or non-monetized, that person is more likely to use Google for their next search. In addition, if someone finds their information on Google more quickly and easily than on other properties, they will always return to Google to find information, which leads to more total queries per month for Google, which leads to more chances of Google making money.



**Note:** Several studies in 2005–2008 found that users spent only 10–12 seconds on a search results page. Studies performed in 2010 and 2011 found that that users were spending 12–17 seconds on search results. More studies are showing that the time spent with search results is still continuing to slowly increase. As more information is integrated into search pages, users are spending more time absorbing that information.

The advertiser's goal is to show an ad that is related to both their products and the searcher's query. The advertiser wants to control when their ad is shown, wants to choose which ad is shown, and then wants to take the searcher to the landing page of the advertiser's choice.

The advertiser wants to make money with their Google AdWords budget. That's the endgame—profitable advertising. Advertisers want control over how their money is being spent. They also want insight into the ad display process so they can expand their profitable advertising and stop their unprofitable ads.

Google's goal and the advertiser's goal are not the same. Since Google's goal is first and foremost to satisfy the searcher, not the advertiser, a conflict often arises between the two parties.

The advertiser will scream that it's their money and they should be able to display whatever they want in an ad and take someone to any page on their site they deem desirable. AdWords customer service reps will remind the advertiser about relevancy and attempt to help the advertiser make their keywords and ad copy more relevant. These relevancy rules are defined by Google.

Since AdWords is ruled internally by a search results quality control team—a team where relevancy trumps dollars—advertisers often feel like they are constantly



trying to play catch-up in learning all the rules. Having an internal team that is more concerned about relevance than making money is beneficial to all parties, if everyone can align their goals.

It is critical to remember that the only person who makes Google or the advertiser any money is the actual searcher. Google does not make you money. You do not make Google money. Google is an intermediary between you and the searcher. You make money on AdWords because a searcher decided to do business with your company. You define a budget that you are willing to give to Google; however, if the searcher does not click your ads, you do not owe Google a penny.

Both you and Google make money from each other only if a searcher is involved. If there is no searcher, there is no search query, your ad is not displayed, and Google is not paid. Therefore, the person to actually align your goals with is the searcher. If you align yourself with the searcher, you help the searcher find information on your site. If they are finding information on your site, they are conducting business with your company, which helps you reach your end goal—a profitable business.

**Note:** Google took in \$14 billion in revenues in the first quarter of 2013, which was a 31 percent increase over the same quarter in 2012. More than half of their revenues were from countries other than the United States. Approximately 93 percent of Google's revenue comes from showing ads.



Because Google's goal is to assist the searcher in finding information, you will end up aligning yourself with Google as well. You will find that if you think of the searcher first, AdWords is much easier and much more likely to be a successful advertising medium for your business.

After all, the searcher's only goal is to find the answer to their question.

## Best Practices for Applying Search Theory

The basics of search are not difficult to understand; the principles have been the same ever since people started looking for information. By referring to the fundamentals of search throughout your marketing, you keep your efforts aligned with the searcher, which can bring long-term success to your company.

- PPC marketing was created and revolutionized in less than a decade. Because the industry is ever-changing, those who can continuously evolve their marketing can find great success.
- Search engines have transformed how people find their information. As more consumers use search engines as their starting point for finding information, more advertisers will find success with search marketing.
- The search process starts with a question. That question is translated into words by the searcher. Therefore, keywords are individual thought processes.

- Every time someone does an action, there is an expectation of results. Meeting these expectations with both ad copy and landing pages helps increase your PPC marketing returns.
- Advertising is not advertising when it is information. When your ads help a searcher find the answer to their question, your CTR and conversion rates often increase.
- On any search page there are three goals: the search engine's goal, the searcher's goal, and the advertiser's goal. Align your goal with your potential customer—the searcher—and success usually follows.

In future chapters, we will examine keyword research, ad copy writing, and multiple ways to target consumers. At each step, we are trying to enhance these fundamentals. If you can help the searcher find what they are looking for, you will continue to gain new customers.