ZERO TO ROI

THE 5-STEP FORMULA TO MAKE GOOGLE ADS WORK FOR YOU

ZAIN ISMAIL

Zero to ROI: The 5-Step Formula to Make Google Ads Work for You

By Zain Ismail

Disclaimer

This book is for informational and educational purposes only. The strategies, frameworks, and case studies inside reflect real campaigns I have personally built and managed; individual results vary widely based on industry, budget, market conditions, execution, and factors outside anyone's control. Nothing in this book guarantees any specific level of sales, return on ad spend, or business outcome, and past results are not a promise of future performance.

This book is not affiliated with, endorsed by, or sponsored by Google LLC or any other platform or company mentioned within it, including the businesses referenced in its case studies. Google, Google Ads, and all other product names, logos, and brands referenced are trademarks of their respective owners and are used here for identification and reference purposes only.

Advertising platform features, policies, and pricing change frequently. The information in this book reflects publicly available platform documentation and policy current at the time of writing and may no longer be current by the time you read it — always verify current requirements directly with the platform before making business decisions.

Nothing in this book constitutes legal, financial, tax, or professional advice. Consult a qualified professional before making decisions based on the strategies described here.

Table of Contents

PHASE 1: THE GOOGLE ADS TRUTH BOMB

Chapter 1: Why Most Brands Set Their Ad Budget on Fire

Chapter 2: The 5-Step Formula to Turn Clicks Into Cash

PHASE 2: THE TRAFFIC ALCHEMY FORMULA

Chapter 3: Precision Targeting

Chapter 4: The Click Trigger

Chapter 5: Landing Page Lockdown

PHASE 3: THE MONEY MULTIPLIER MACHINE

Chapter 6: The ROAS Reactor

Chapter 7: The Feedback Firehose

Chapter 8: KPI Glossary and How to Read Your Own Numbers

PHASE 4: WINNING THE LONG GAME

Chapter 9: Automation, Scaling, and Segmentation

Chapter 10: Real-World Case Files

Chapter 11: The Same Formula, Different Companies

PHASE 5: Playbooks, Troubleshooting, Execution, and What Changed in 2026

Chapter 12: Three Playbooks

Chapter 13: The Mistakes That Quietly Kill Google Ads Accounts

Chapter 14: Your 30/60/90-Day Implementation Roadmap

Chapter 15: What Changed Since This Formula Was Built

Chapter 16: A Few Tools Worth Keeping Handy

Chapter 17: Work With Me Directly

PHASE 1: THE GOOGLE ADS TRUTH BOMB

Chapter 1: Why Most Brands Set Their Ad Budget on Fire

Let's get brutal for a second.

Most Google Ads campaigns are built by marketers who wouldn't spend their own money on the keywords they're bidding on. That's the difference. That's the problem.

Google doesn't care if your ads convert. They care if you keep spending.

If you're losing money on Google Ads, it's not your fault. It's your system.

This book will show you the 5-step formula to turn Google into your personal ATM machine. You'll learn how to stop being a donor and start being a predator.

Coming up in the next chapter, I'll break down the exact framework that's driven millions in sales for clients across ecommerce, SaaS, and lead gen.

Quick Diagnostic: Is It the Budget, or Is It the System?

Before you read another page, check which of these are true for your account right now. If two or more are true, the problem in Chapter 1 is you, not the platform:

You cannot say, without opening the account, what your cost per conversion was last month.

Your ad groups each hold more than 10-15 keywords covering noticeably different search intents.

You have not looked at the Search Terms report in the last two weeks.

Your landing page is the same page your organic traffic lands on, not something built to match a specific ad promise.

You changed your bid strategy or budget in the last 10 days and are already judging whether it "worked."

Every one of these gets a fix later in this book, chapter references are in the sections above. None of them require a bigger budget to solve.

Chapter 2: The 5-Step Formula to Turn Clicks Into Cash

Here's what you'll master in this playbook:

1. **Target the Right Intent** – Get in front of buyers, not browsers.
2. **Create Demand with Your Ad** – Hook them with hyper-relevance.
3. **Capture the Conversion with the Right Page** – Eliminate bounce killers.
4. **Control the Budget Like a Pro** – Bid smarter, not higher.
5. **Refine Relentlessly** – Data doesn't lie, use it.

I call it Traffic Alchemy – turning eyeballs into bank deposits.

In the next Chapter, we go into Step 1. Targeting. This is where your campaign either thrives or dies.

Before You Start: What You Actually Need in Place

This book assumes a few things are already true. If they are not, set them up first, everything else in this book is built on top of them:

Admin or Standard access to the Google Ads account, not view-only, so you can actually make the changes described here.

Conversion tracking installed and firing correctly, either through a Google Ads conversion tag, imported Google Analytics 4 conversions, or both. Skip this and every optimization in Chapters 6 and 7 turns into guesswork.

Google Analytics 4 (or an equivalent) linked to the ad account, so you can see what happens after the click, not only the click itself.

A Google Tag (gtag.js) or Google Tag Manager container installed sitewide. Enhanced Conversions and Consent Mode, both covered in Chapter 14, depend on it.

At minimum 2-4 weeks of patience before judging any result. Google’s own bidding systems need real conversion volume to learn from, the exact thresholds are in Chapter 6.

PHASE 2: THE TRAFFIC ALCHEMY FORMULA

Chapter 3: Precision Targeting – Find Buyers Who Bleed Money

If your ad shows up in front of a casual browser, you've already lost.

We target people who are on the verge of buying, who are problem-aware, who are looking for answers with their wallet in hand.

Targeting Stack:

- **High Intent Keywords:** "buy", "near me", "best + [product]"
- **Brand Interception**: Show up when they search your competitors
- **In-Market Audiences:** From Google's own behavior data

Match Types: What They Actually Do Now

Broad match now leans hard on Google's AI to interpret intent rather than matching literal words. That is an advantage once your account has strong signals (real conversion data, first-party audiences, a tight landing page) feeding it, and a budget-killer before it does. Under 20 conversions a month, start with phrase and exact match so you can see exactly which queries are spending your money, then layer in broad match once you have enough conversion data for Smart Bidding to steer it responsibly.

Phrase match now also matches on meaning, not just word order, so a phrase-match keyword like "knee pain shoes" can trigger off a search like "running shoes for bad knees." Check the search terms report weekly regardless, meaning-based matching still occasionally pulls in traffic you did not intend to bid on.

Exact match is the tightest control left, but it is not literally exact either, Google still expands it to close variants: misspellings, plurals, and same-intent rephrasing. Use it for your highest-value, highest-intent terms, where you want maximum control over which specific ad and landing page fires.

Negative Keywords: The Targeting Stack's Other Half

Every layer in the Targeting Stack above works by inclusion. Negative keywords are the exclusion half, and most accounts under-invest in them. Build three lists before you spend another dollar:

An account-level "always exclude" list: free, job-seeking, DIY, refund, and course/training terms almost never convert into a paying customer for a product or service business, and they show up in nearly every account regardless of niche.

A brand-protection list: run your own brand terms in a separate, tightly controlled campaign, and add your brand name as a negative to your generic, non-brand campaigns so they stop competing with each other in the same auction.

A weekly "found in the wild" list: pull the Search Terms report (Insights and reports → Search terms) every week and add anything irrelevant that spent money without converting. Done consistently, this single habit does more for account efficiency than almost any bid change you can make.

Google Ads also supports account-level negative keyword lists you can apply across multiple campaigns at once, including giving Performance Max some exclusion control it did not used to have. If you run Performance Max (Chapter 9), build a shared brand and irrelevant-term list there instead of trying to manage negatives inside the campaign itself.

Layering Audiences Without Shrinking Your Reach to Zero

On Search campaigns, add in-market and affinity audiences as "Observation," not "Targeting." That keeps your full keyword reach while letting you see which segments convert best, so you can raise bids on the ones that perform instead of accidentally cutting off buyers who simply are not in a pre-built segment.

Customer Match, uploading your own email or phone list, is the highest-signal audience available, because it is built from real customers or

leads, not Google’s guess at someone’s interests. Add a Customer Match list of past purchasers as an observation audience with a bid increase, and add a separate list of past purchasers as an exclusion on new-customer acquisition campaigns so you are not paying full price to re-acquire people who already bought.

Standalone "similar segments" audiences went away, but the same lookalike effect now happens automatically inside broad match and Performance Max once they are fed a strong Customer Match or conversion signal. That is another reason clean first-party data (Chapter 14) has become a targeting lever, not just a privacy checkbox.

Geo and Device: The Adjustments Most Accounts Never Touch

After 4-6 weeks of data, pull a location report segmented by city or region. It is common to find that a fifth to a third of locations are producing the bulk of conversions at a fraction of the cost of the rest. Increase bids on the winners; decrease or exclude the locations burning spend with no conversions.

Do the same with the device segment. Mobile, desktop, and tablet behavior differs by industry, a B2B lead form often converts better on desktop, while an ecommerce impulse purchase often converts better on mobile. Check your own data before assuming either way, then adjust bids to match.

Targeting Audit Checklist (Run This Monthly)

Search terms report reviewed in the last 7 days, irrelevant queries added as negatives.

Account-level negative keyword list built and applied to every non-brand campaign.

Brand terms excluded from non-brand campaigns and running in their own brand campaign.

Top-performing locations and devices identified, bid adjustments applied.

In-market and affinity audiences added as observation, not hard targeting, with bids adjusted to real performance.

Customer Match lists refreshed at least monthly, with past purchasers excluded from acquisition campaigns.

One client selling DTC gear got 1,340% ROAS just by shifting from generic to intent-based keywords.

Next, let’s make sure your ad gets clicked with magnetic copy.

Chapter 4: The Click Trigger – Crafting Irresistible Ads That Make People Move

You've got 3 lines to make someone stop scrolling and click.

Most brands waste that space with fluff.

My Ad Copy Formula:

- **Headline 1:** Direct benefit or product promise
- **Headline 2:** Urgency, offer, or social proof
- **Description:** Answer their problem in their language

Bonus: Use numbers, emotional triggers, and power verbs.

Responsive Search Ads: How Google Actually Wants You to Build Them

Google's own guidance is direct: use as many unique headlines and descriptions as you can, up to the maximum of 15 headlines and 4 descriptions, so the system has enough material to test real combinations instead of showing the same one or two variations to everyone. Fewer than 8-10 headlines leaves performance on the table.

Cover different angles, not reworded versions of the same line: one on the core benefit, one on urgency or offer, one on social proof or a number, one that directly answers the likely search query, one on a guarantee or risk-reversal, and one that plainly names the product or service for relevance matching. Variety is what lets Google's testing actually learn something.

Pin sparingly. Pinning a headline to a fixed position locks it in place across every combination, which feels safer but stops the system from testing whether a different opening line converts better. Google's own data shows advertisers who improve Ad Strength from "Poor" to "Excellent" see roughly 15% more clicks and conversions on average, only pin something for a genuine compliance or legal reason, not because you are attached to a specific line.

Check Ad Strength on every ad group and treat "Poor" or "Average" as an unfinished task. It is telling you the asset pool is too thin or too repetitive for the system to build enough unique, meaningful combinations.

Keep messaging consistent between your headlines and your landing page (Chapter 5). An ad promising "Same-Day Quotes" that lands on a generic homepage with no quote form above the fold is exactly the mismatch that damages Quality Score and conversion rate at the same time.

Ad Extensions (Assets) Are Not Optional

Sitelinks, callouts, structured snippets, and call assets are not decoration, they are additional real estate in the auction and they feed directly into Ad Rank. Fill in every asset type relevant to your business:

At least 4 sitelinks pointing to different pages (pricing, testimonials, a specific product or service, an FAQ), not four links to the homepage.

4-6 callouts highlighting concrete features or guarantees: Free Shipping, 24/7 Support, No Contract, Money-Back Guarantee.

Structured snippets relevant to your category (Types, Services, Brands) where your industry supports them.

A call asset if phone leads matter to your business, especially on mobile.

Leaving these blank is one of the most common, easiest-to-fix problems in accounts that "should" be performing better than they are.

A Practical Headline and Description Template Bank

Use these as starting formulas, then swap in your own numbers, product name, and offer. Aim to fill 12-15 headline slots by mixing several of these angles rather than 15 versions of one idea:

Benefit + timeframe: "[Result] in [Timeframe]" — e.g. "2X More Leads in 7 Days."

Direct offer: "[Discount/Offer] on [Product/Service]" — e.g. "20% Off Your First Order."

Risk reversal: "[Guarantee], No [Objection]" — e.g. "Money-Back Guarantee, No Contract."

Social proof: "[Number] [Customers/Reviews/Brands] [Verb]" — e.g. "12,000 Customers Switched."

Direct answer to the query: restate the likely search almost verbatim — e.g. searcher types "emergency plumber near me," headline reads "24/7 Emergency Plumber, Same-Day."

Urgency: "[Offer] Ends [Timeframe]" — only use this if it is literally true, a fake countdown is a fast way to damage trust and, on some platforms, invite policy trouble.

Category/relevance: plainly name what you sell — e.g. "Custom Leather Wallets" — for the searches where relevance matters more than cleverness.

Descriptions (4 slots): use one to restate the core benefit in a full sentence, one to answer the most common objection or question, one to state the guarantee or proof point, and one with a clear call to action ("Get a free quote in under 2 minutes").

A/B Testing That Actually Produces Answers

Every 2-4 weeks, check the Asset performance report in each ad group, rated Best, Good, or Low. Pause the "Low" performers and replace them with new variations built on whatever is working in the "Best" group, same angle, different wording. This is a rolling process, not a one-time setup.

For a true head-to-head test, price-led messaging versus benefit-led messaging, for example, use Google Ads' Experiments feature to split

traffic evenly between two ad groups or campaigns, rather than relying on RSA asset-level data alone, since RSA testing is not a clean, controlled split.

An ad with "Get 2X More Leads in 7 Days" will crush "Affordable Marketing Solutions" every time.

Up next, we talk about the deadliest leak in your funnel – the landing page.

Chapter 5: Landing Page Lockdown – The Conversion Catcher Framework

They clicked. Now don't lose them.

Your landing page must:

- Match the ad promise
- Be mobile-first and blazing fast
- Eliminate friction and choice paralysis

Structure:

- **Headline**: Mirrors the ad
- **Subheadline:** Explains the value in 1 sentence
- **CTA Button:** Clear, action-packed
- **Proof:** Testimonials, badges, features

The Anatomy of a Page That Actually Converts Ad Traffic

Above the fold, visible before any scrolling, especially on mobile, needs exactly three things: a headline that mirrors the ad's exact promise, one sentence of supporting context, and a single clear call to action. Every other element, navigation menus, secondary offers, social links, is a way for someone to leave without converting.

Cut the main navigation menu on pages built specifically for ad traffic, or at minimum remove links that lead away from the conversion path (blog, careers, unrelated product categories). A landing page's job is narrower than a homepage's job.

Match the visual language of the ad. If the ad shows a specific product, discount, or claim, the first thing a visitor sees on the page should be that same product, discount, or claim, not a generic hero banner. Breaking this "scent trail" is one of the most common unforced errors in paid traffic.

Page Speed and Mobile: Where Budgets Quietly Leak

Run the landing page through Google’s free PageSpeed Insights (pagespeed.web.dev) and treat a red mobile score as an active revenue leak, not a future to-do. Every additional second of load time past roughly 2-3 seconds costs measurable conversion rate, and most ad traffic today arrives on mobile.

The most common fixes: compress and lazy-load images, remove unused apps or scripts from page builders like Shopify or WordPress, and avoid auto-playing video above the fold. Most modern page builders have compression and app-cleanup settings built in, you rarely need a developer to fix this.

Test the actual mobile experience yourself, not just a desktop preview. Tap the CTA button with your thumb. Try filling out the form one-handed. If it is awkward for you, it is costing you conversions.

Trust Signals That Do Real Work

Specific, attributed proof beats vague claims every time, a named testimonial with a real result beats "Trusted by thousands." A recognizable payment or security badge near the CTA reduces last-second hesitation on any page asking for money or contact information. A visible guarantee or return policy, stated in plain language, removes the single biggest objection on cold traffic.

If you have real logos of companies or publications you have worked with or been featured in, use them, they carry more weight than almost any other proof element on the page.

Forms: Every Field Costs You Conversions

For lead generation, audit the form field by field and ask "do I need this to make the first contact, or can I get it later in the sales process?" Name, email or phone, and one qualifying question is often enough for a first touch, every additional field measurably lowers completion rate.

Add inline validation (an error shown immediately, not after full submission) and a visible progress indicator on any multi-step form, both reduce abandonment.

Confirm Your Conversion Tracking Actually Works

Before judging any landing page's conversion rate, use Google Tag Assistant (tagassistant.google.com) or Google Ads' own tag diagnostics (Goals → Conversions → Diagnose tags) to confirm the conversion tag fires on a real test submission, not just that it is installed.

A landing page redesign that "failed" is sometimes a broken tracking tag from the redesign wiping out the conversion count, not an actual drop in performance. Rule this out first, always, before you touch the design again.

Landing Page Pre-Launch Checklist

Headline and offer match the ad exactly.

Single clear CTA above the fold, visible without scrolling on mobile.

PageSpeed Insights mobile score checked, red flags fixed.

Navigation stripped down or removed on the conversion path.

At least one specific, attributed trust signal near the CTA.

Form fields reduced to the minimum needed for a first touch.

Conversion tag tested with a real submission and confirmed firing.

I helped a client go from 0.8% to 12.6% conversion rate by redesigning their page to mirror their ad and simplify the call to action.

Now we move into the money engine: controlling your bids and budget.

PHASE 3: THE MONEY MULTIPLIER MACHINE

Chapter 6: The ROAS Reactor – Bidding, Budgeting, and Burn Control

The secret to scaling is not spending more. It's spending smart.

My Rules:

- Start with the manual CPC for control
- Use bid adjustments by device, location, and schedule
- Analyze impression share loss due to budget, then plug leaks

Manual CPC vs. Smart Bidding: Picking the Right One for Where You Are

Manual CPC still earns its place, mainly at the very start of a new account or campaign, when you have little or no conversion data and want full control while you learn which keywords and audiences actually work. Once you have enough data, hand-adjusting individual bids stops being the highest-leverage use of your time.

Maximize Conversions (with an optional target CPA) is Google's own recommendation when the goal is conversion volume within a budget and every conversion is worth roughly the same to you. It needs no historical conversion data to start, though Google recommends at least 30 conversions in the past 30 days before you judge or adjust it.

Target CPA works the same way but lets you set a specific cost-per-conversion ceiling. Use it once you know what a conversion is actually worth to your business and want predictable unit economics over raw volume.

Target ROAS (Maximize Conversion Value with a target) is the right call the moment your conversions carry different dollar values, a higher-AOV ecommerce cart, or deals of different sizes in a pipeline, and you want the system to chase value, not just count. Google requires more data to run this well: 15 conversions in the last 30 days for Search and Shopping campaigns, and it needs accurate, dynamic conversion values feeding in, real order values, not a flat placeholder, to work properly.

A practical progression for a new account: Manual CPC or Maximize Conversions (no target) for the first 2-4 weeks to build conversion volume, then Target CPA or Maximize Conversions with a target once you know your numbers, and Target ROAS only once you are tracking real conversion values and have crossed Google's minimum thresholds.

Why Smart Bidding "Learning Periods" Wreck Results

Every time you change a bid strategy, or make a major edit to a campaign already on one, Google Ads resets into a learning period, typically 1-2 weeks, where performance is often worse and less predictable while the system recalibrates. The most common self-inflicted wound in Google Ads accounts is changing the bid strategy, budget, or targets every few days out of impatience, which means the account never leaves the learning period long enough to actually perform.

Give any bidding change a minimum of 2 full weeks, and ideally enough time to accumulate at least 30 conversions, before judging or changing anything else. If you must make a change, change one variable at a time, budget, or target, or targeting, so you can tell what actually caused the result.

Budget Pacing: The Math Most Accounts Skip

Divide your monthly budget by roughly 30.4 (average days per month) to get your real daily budget, and set campaign daily budgets slightly below that as a buffer, Google Ads is allowed to spend up to twice a daily budget on any given day as long as the monthly total does not exceed roughly 30.4 times the daily budget.

Check "impression share lost to budget" monthly, in the Impression share columns. A high number here means you are leaving profitable, already-proven traffic on the table simply because the campaign runs out of budget before the day ends, that is a budget problem, not a targeting problem, and it is worth solving before touching anything else in the campaign.

Conversely, if impression share lost to budget is near zero and impression share lost to rank is high, more budget will not help, the ad or bid is not winning enough auctions. The fix is in Quality Score, ad relevance, or the bid strategy (Chapter 7), not the wallet.

A Simple Budget Allocation Worksheet

Start with your total monthly ad budget, then split it by funnel stage using the segmentation in Chapter 9: roughly 15-20% top-of-funnel (broader awareness or remarketing-list-building), 50-60% middle and bottom-of-funnel high-intent search, and 20-25% brand and remarketing to people who already showed interest.

Reserve at minimum 10% of the total as a testing budget for a new keyword theme, a new ad variation, or a new campaign type, an account that never tests new things eventually stalls even while its existing campaigns keep performing.

Revisit this split monthly based on which stage is actually producing conversions at your target cost, not just which stage you assumed would.

One client cut their CPL by 42% and increased conversions 3X just by switching from auto bidding to controlled manual with dayparting.

Next, we make your campaigns bulletproof by feeding them the right signals.

Seasonality Adjustments: For Real Spikes, Not Routine Ones

Smart Bidding already accounts for routine seasonal patterns on its own, weekday-versus-weekend traffic, typical holiday upticks, without any manual input. A seasonality adjustment is a different, more surgical tool: it tells the bidding system to expect a specific, temporary conversion rate change for a short, defined window, a flash sale, a product launch, a one-time promotion.

Use it for events lasting roughly 1-7 days, and treat 14 days as close to the ceiling, Google's own guidance is that seasonality adjustments are not built for longer stretches. Set it a few days before the event starts and let it expire on its own once the event ends, campaigns return to baseline automatically rather than needing a manual reversal.

Only use this for a genuinely unusual spike or dip you can reasonably estimate, for example expecting a 40-50% conversion rate lift during a 3-day sale, not for the normal Friday-versus-Monday variation Smart Bidding already handles. It is available for Target CPA and Target ROAS campaigns across Search, Shopping, Display, Performance Max, and App, under Tools & Settings → Bid Strategies → Seasonality adjustments.

Chapter 7: The Feedback Firehose – Optimize Fast, Scale Hard

Don’t wait for 30 days of data to optimize. Move fast.

Track:

- CTR
- Quality Score
- Conversion Rate by Ad Group
- Search Term Reports

Optimization Moves:

- Pause underperforming ads
- Add negative keywords weekly
- Use A/B testing on extensions and headlines

Quality Score, Decoded: What the Three Ratings Actually Mean

Google is explicit that Quality Score itself is a diagnostic tool, not a direct input into the ad auction, but the three signals behind it, Expected CTR, Ad Relevance, and Landing Page Experience, absolutely do feed into the real-time Ad Rank calculation that decides your position and price. In practice, fixing the same things that move your visible Quality Score also lowers your actual cost per click. Treat the score as a symptom checklist, not a vanity metric.

Expected CTR (Above Average, Average, or Below Average) measures the likelihood your ad gets clicked for that specific search, compared to other advertisers on the same query over the last 90 days. A "Below Average" rating usually means the ad copy is not specific enough to the keyword, fix it with tighter ad groups (fewer, more closely related keywords per group) and headlines that use the actual search language.

Ad Relevance measures how closely your ad matches the intent behind the search. "Below Average" here almost always traces back to overly broad ad groups, one ad group holding "shoes," "running shoes," and

"trail shoes" together forces one ad to try to serve three different intents. Split it into three tighter ad groups instead.

"Below Average" Landing Page Experience is fixed by everything in the Chapter 5 checklist: message match, load speed, mobile usability, and a clear, easy next step. This is the component most accounts ignore, because it happens outside the Google Ads interface itself.

Because all three ratings are relative to other advertisers on that exact search, a "Below Average" score is not necessarily a sign you are doing something wrong in absolute terms, it can mean everyone else bidding on that term has simply built a tighter, more specific setup than yours. Competitive keywords need more precision, not more budget.

A Realistic Optimization Cadence

Daily, 5 minutes: check for any campaign that stopped spending, a disapproved ad, an exhausted budget, or a billing issue.

Weekly: review the Search Terms report and add negatives; check Asset performance and refresh anything rated "Low"; check impression share lost to budget versus rank.

Every 2 weeks: review Quality Score components on your top-spending keywords; check device and location performance for bid adjustments.

Monthly: run the full Targeting Audit Checklist (Chapter 3); confirm your bid strategy still matches your data volume (Chapter 6); check Landing Page Experience ratings and re-test anything scoring "Below Average."

Quarterly: reassess your funnel-stage budget split (Chapter 6); review whether new campaign types are worth testing given your current results.

The Search Term Audit Process, Step by Step

Pull the Search Terms report at the campaign or ad group level, sorted by cost, over the last 30 days.

Mark every term that spent money with zero conversions as a negative keyword candidate, add the clearly-off-intent ones immediately.

For terms that spent money and converted but are not in your keyword list yet, add them as new exact-match keywords, this is genuinely free keyword research paid for by traffic you are already buying.

For terms in a gray zone, some spend, no conversions yet, but plausible intent, let them run another 1-2 weeks before deciding, a click or two is not enough data to call it dead.

After this, we step into long-term scaling using automation and segmentation.

Chapter 8: KPI Glossary and How to Read Your Own Numbers

Every metric below has one honest caveat attached: "good" depends on your industry, your average order value or deal size, and your funnel stage. Anyone who hands you a single universal benchmark without asking what you sell is guessing. Use these definitions to read your own account's trend over time, that matters far more than comparing yourself to a stranger's average.

The Core Metrics

CTR (Click-Through Rate): clicks divided by impressions. Tells you whether your ad is compelling relative to how often it is shown, a low CTR on a high-impression keyword usually means the ad copy (Chapter 4) or the keyword-to-ad match (Chapter 3) needs work.

CVR (Conversion Rate): conversions divided by clicks. The clearest single signal of whether your landing page (Chapter 5) and offer match what the click expected.

CPC (Cost Per Click): what you actually pay per click, driven by your bid, your Quality Score components (Chapter 7), and how competitive the auction is for that keyword.

CPA (Cost Per Acquisition, or cost per action): total spend divided by conversions. The number that actually matters for profitability, since a low CPC with a poor CVR can still produce an expensive CPA.

ROAS (Return on Ad Spend): conversion value divided by spend, shown as a multiple (4X ROAS means $4 back for every $1 spent) or a percentage (400%). Only as accurate as the conversion values feeding into it, garbage in, garbage out applies directly here.

Impression Share: the percentage of eligible auctions you actually appeared in. Split into "lost to budget" (you would show up more if you spent more) and "lost to rank" (you would show up more if your ad or bid quality were stronger), these two have completely different fixes (Chapter 6).

Quality Score: Google’s 1-10 diagnostic score built from Expected CTR, Ad Relevance, and Landing Page Experience (Chapter 7). Not an auction input directly, but a proxy for the signals that are.

Ad Strength: a separate diagnostic, Poor through Excellent, specific to Responsive Search Ads, measuring asset variety and relevance. Not the same thing as Quality Score, covered in full in Chapter 4.

Why "What’s a Good CTR, CVR, or CPA" Is the Wrong Question

A 2% CTR might be strong for a broad awareness campaign and weak for a branded exact-match campaign. A 15% landing page conversion rate might be excellent for a low-commitment newsletter signup and mediocre for a $50 impulse purchase. A $200 CPA might be a disaster for a $30 product and a bargain for a $3,000 service. Any of these numbers, without knowing your margin, average order value, or funnel stage, is close to meaningless.

The more useful question is whether a number is improving, flat, or getting worse for this specific campaign, over time. Track your own trend monthly using the optimization cadence in Chapter 7, rather than chasing a benchmark from an industry blog that does not know your margins or your market.

Attribution: Why Your Numbers Never Quite Match Your CRM

Data-driven attribution is now the default model for most conversion actions in Google Ads. It credits a conversion across the touchpoints that actually contributed to it, based on comparing the paths of people who converted against people who did not, instead of handing 100% of the credit to the last click before conversion. A keyword or campaign that looks weak on a pure last-click basis can still be doing real, uncredited work earlier in someone’s path to buying.

Data-driven attribution works at any data volume, but Google recommends at least 200 conversions and 2,000 ad interactions within a 30-day period, across Search, YouTube, Display, and Demand Gen, before it can identify reliable patterns. Below that volume, treat the

attribution split with a bit more skepticism, there is simply not enough data yet for high confidence.

This is also a major reason Google Ads rarely matches your CRM or bank account exactly. Different attribution windows, different definitions of a "conversion," modeled conversions filling gaps left by consent choices (Chapter 14), and cross-device journeys all add legitimate, explainable gaps. Track directional trends inside Google Ads' own numbers over time rather than trying to reconcile them to the exact dollar against a separate system.

Reading the Auction Insights Report

Impression Share: the percentage of eligible auctions you actually showed up in, your starting reference point for every other column in this report.

Overlap Rate: how often a specific competitor's ad showed in the same auction as yours. A high overlap rate with one competitor tells you exactly who you are actually fighting for that keyword set, useful for deciding where to sharpen your own offer or ad copy.

Position Above Rate: how often that competitor's ad showed in a higher position than yours when you both appeared. A rising position above rate against a specific competitor, with your own budget and Quality Score unchanged, usually means they raised bids or improved ad quality, worth investigating either way.

Top of Page Rate and Absolute Top of Page Rate (Search only): how often your ad appeared above the organic results at all, and how often specifically in the very first position. Track both over time on your highest-intent campaigns, a falling absolute top of page rate on a brand or high-intent campaign is an early warning worth checking before it becomes a revenue problem.

Outranking Share: how often you either ranked above a competitor or showed when they did not. Check the Auction Insights report monthly, available inside any campaign, segmented by device for a sharper read, as a competitive check, not just an internal one.

A Simple Monthly Scorecard

For each core campaign, log spend, conversions, CPA, and, if you track it, ROAS, side by side with the prior month. Four numbers, one line per campaign, five minutes a month, and you will catch a bad trend line months before it becomes a crisis.

PHASE 4: WINNING THE LONG GAME

Chapter 9: Automation, Scaling, and Segmentation

Once your system is stable, we inject automation.

- Use rules to auto-adjust bids
- Layer in remarketing lists
- Run dynamic search ads for long-tail coverage

Advanced Tip: Segment campaigns by funnel stage. Use TOFU campaigns to educate, MOFU to compare, and BOFU to convert.

This is how you 10X scale without losing ROI.

Automated Rules That Are Actually Worth Setting Up

Pause any ad automatically if it has not spent in 3 days, this catches disapprovals and delivery issues before they quietly cost you a week of lost traffic.

Send an alert if daily spend on any campaign exceeds 150% of its average, this catches a bid strategy or budget misfire fast, before it becomes a real loss.

Increase bids automatically on keywords that cross a strong conversion-rate threshold over a rolling 30-day window, so the system compounds toward what is already working without you checking daily.

Set these up under Tools & Settings → Rules, and let a rule run "preview only" first before switching on automatic execution, so you can confirm it would not have made a bad call on real data.

RLSA: Remarketing Lists for Search Ads

RLSA lets you bid differently on search campaigns depending on whether the searcher has already visited your site. It is one of the highest-return, most underused levers in Google Ads, because you are paying for traffic that is already warm.

Build at minimum three remarketing lists: all site visitors (last 30 days), cart abandoners or form-starters who did not complete (last 7-14 days), and past purchasers or converted leads (last 180 days). Apply all three as observation audiences on your core search campaigns with bid increases, then consider a dedicated campaign targeting only the cart-abandoner list, with more aggressive bids and messaging that speaks directly to "you were just here."

Exclude past purchasers from broad acquisition campaigns unless you are specifically running a winback or upsell campaign aimed at them, otherwise you are bidding against yourself to re-acquire someone who is already a customer.

TOFU, MOFU, BOFU: Actually Structuring the Funnel

Bottom of funnel (BOFU): your highest-intent exact and phrase match keywords, "buy," "pricing," "[competitor] alternative," your own brand terms. Highest bids, tightest budget control, this is where most of your budget should sit because it is closest to a transaction.

Middle of funnel (MOFU): comparison and consideration terms, "best [category] for [use case]," "[category] reviews," broad match keywords with strong negative keyword hygiene. Landing pages here should compare options and build a case, not just ask for the sale immediately.

Top of funnel (TOFU): Display, Demand Gen, or YouTube campaigns aimed at building remarketing list volume and awareness rather than immediate conversion. Judge this spend as an investment in cheaper BOFU and MOFU retargeting later, not on its own immediate ROAS.

The common mistake is either skipping TOFU entirely, starving the remarketing lists that make RLSA and Display remarketing work, or over-investing in TOFU relative to BOFU, spending on awareness while under-funding the high-intent campaigns that actually close. Check the budget split against the rough guide in Chapter 6 every quarter.

Performance Max: What It’s Good At, and Where to Keep a Hand on the Wheel

Performance Max runs across Search, Display, YouTube, Gmail, Maps, and Discover from one campaign, using your assets, feed, and Smart Bidding target. It tends to perform best once you already have strong conversion data and creative assets from your existing campaigns to feed it, it is a scaling tool more than a discovery tool for a brand-new account with no data.

Feed it real assets: at minimum 3 landscape and 3 square images, a logo, and multiple headline and description variations, and connect a product feed if you are ecommerce. A thin, minimum-effort asset group performs like a thin, minimum-effort ad, even inside an AI-managed campaign.

Use audience signals, Customer Match lists, your best-performing in-market or affinity segments, to help the system find the right people faster at launch. This shortens the learning period rather than leaving it to guess from a cold start.

Apply account-level negative keyword lists and brand exclusions so Performance Max is not quietly competing with your dedicated brand or search campaigns. This campaign type has historically had far less exclusion control than standard Search, more on this in Chapter 14.

Check the Placements and Insights tabs monthly, the closest thing Performance Max offers to a search terms report, and do not treat this campaign type as fully "set and forget" just because it is automated, automated still needs a monthly review.

Next, let’s talk real-world wins.

Google Ads Scripts: When Automated Rules Aren’t Enough

Automated Rules (covered earlier in this chapter) handle simple if-this-then-that logic. Google Ads Scripts, free, built into every account under

Tools & Settings → Bulk Actions → Scripts, let you write actual JavaScript against your account data for anything Rules can't do: cross-campaign logic, custom reporting, or scheduled emails with your own formatting.

Google's own developer documentation includes ready-to-adapt examples for exactly the tasks this book covers: a keyword script that pauses a specific keyword automatically, a script that pulls click and impression stats for every keyword in an ad group over a chosen date range, and a MailApp script that sends a plain-text, HTML, or file-attached email on a schedule, useful for a weekly performance summary landing in your inbox without logging into the account at all.

You do not need to be a developer to use these. Google publishes a maintained example library at developers.google.com/google-ads/scripts/docs/examples, including a full "Account Summary Report" solution that emails a formatted performance snapshot automatically, copy the example closest to what you need, adjust the campaign or ad group names, and schedule it to run daily or weekly from inside the Scripts interface.

Display and YouTube Remarketing: Creative Strategy Beyond Search

Everything in Chapter 3 through Chapter 7 focused on Search, where someone is actively typing what they want. Display and YouTube remarketing work on people who already visited you but weren't actively searching in that moment, which means the creative, not just the targeting, has to do more work.

Dynamic remarketing on the Display Network pulls directly from a product or service feed (usually connected through Google Merchant Center for ecommerce) to automatically build ads showing the specific products a visitor viewed, not just your brand generically. If you're ecommerce, this is worth setting up before generic Display remarketing, showing someone the exact item they looked at converts meaningfully better than a generic banner reminding them your store exists.

For YouTube, build remarketing lists the same way as Search (Chapter 9's three-list structure: all visitors, abandoners, past purchasers) and use them for in-stream or in-feed video ads with a message specific to where that visitor left off, a cart abandoner sees a different video than a first-time visitor. Keep individual video assets short and lead with the offer or hook in the first 5 seconds, most Skippable in-stream formats are judged on whether someone watches past that point.

Set a frequency cap (Settings → Additional settings → Frequency capping, available on Display and Video campaigns) so the same person isn't shown the same ad dozens of times a day, a genuine, common complaint from consumers about remarketing, and a real driver of ad fatigue and brand annoyance that shows up as declining CTR over time on a list you have stopped refreshing with new creative.

Chapter 10: Real-World Case Files

I worked with a subscription box brand that couldn't get Google Ads to work.

After applying just three steps from this book, they scaled from $400/day in ad spend to $2,500/day with 7.2X ROAS.

Another B2B brand went from $89 cost per lead to $19 CPL using single keyword ad groups and ultra-refined landing pages.

These systems work. Period.

Chapter 11: The Same Formula, Different Companies

The two case studies in the last chapter came from my own client work. This chapter goes wider: three completely different companies, in three completely different industries, none of them my clients, all independently reporting results from the exact plays in this book. I never touched any of these accounts, each one is documented in Google's own published Ads success stories, so you're not relying only on my word for how this formula performs elsewhere.

Octopus Energy: Beating the "Big Six" on Search

Octopus Energy launched in 2016 into a UK energy market dominated by six entrenched incumbents. Search Ads let a brand-new company appear right alongside those larger competitors the moment someone searched for an energy provider, a direct application of the intent-targeting principle in Chapter 3.

On Google's recommendation, Octopus made a bidding move that felt backwards for a company focused on long-term customer value: switching from Target CPA to Target ROAS. They also built reactive keyword campaigns around real news events (energy price hikes, COVID-19 service continuity) rather than static evergreen copy, and tested YouTube for Action campaigns that were originally meant only for brand awareness.

The results, per Google's own case study: a 36% reduction in cost per acquisition, a 22% increase in top-of-page impressions, a 714% increase in YouTube conversions, and, after doubling spend based on Google's predictive modeling of their market share potential, a 9X increase in clicks and 5X increase in sales. Octopus now serves over 3 million UK customers (published in Google's Ads success stories, business.google.com/uk/resources/success-stories/octopus-energy).

PensionBee: Smart Bidding and Responsive Ads at Scale

PensionBee had already grown past the startup stage and needed to defend its position against legacy pension providers while scaling further. Their approach leaned directly on two mechanics from Chapter

6: restructuring Search campaigns for cleaner ad-group themes (Chapter 3's tight-ad-group principle), and shifting to Smart Bidding with Target CPA.

In their own words, from Google's case study: "We simply set our ideal CPA and at the end of the month, we have seen our CPA meet the target cost." They paired this with Responsive Search Ads (Chapter 4) to cut manual creative workload, added Google App campaigns to reach mobile-first users, and used audience targeting to promote specific products, like a Fossil Fuel Free pension plan, to the segments that actually wanted them.

Results, per Google: 100% year-on-year Search campaign growth, a 25% reduction in CPA, a 36% uplift from the restructured Search campaigns specifically, and a 400% increase in app downloads within six months, on the way to 215,000 active customers and £2.7 billion in assets under administration (business.google.com/uk/resources/success-stories/pensionbee).

Kinetica Sports: Shopping Ads Turn Awareness Into Purchases

After a 2020 brand refresh, this Ireland-based sports nutrition company had a narrower problem than the two above: real brand awareness that wasn't converting into actual purchase intent. Their fix started with basic keyword discovery, in their own words, "we weren't aware that people were searching for some of these words", which gave them the foundation for the tighter targeting described in Chapter 3.

Shopping ads became a core part of the mix specifically because the format is more visual than standard Search text ads, letting a nutrition brand show exactly what a customer would be buying before they even clicked. They later repurposed an existing branded video series into YouTube ads to extend reach beyond Search entirely.

Results, per Google: a 267% increase in ROAS, a 600% increase in website traffic, and an 11X improvement in Search CTR (business.google.com/uk/resources/success-stories/kinetica-sports).

What These Three Have in Common

None of these companies did something exotic. Octopus Energy used intent-based Search targeting and switched bid strategies once they had the data to support it. PensionBee tightened its ad group structure and let Smart Bidding do the rest. Kinetica Sports discovered real search demand it didn't know existed and matched it with a more visual ad format. Every one of these moves is a chapter you've already read in this book, Chapter 3, Chapter 4, or Chapter 6, applied by a real company with real budget on the line.

None of these three companies are affiliated with this book or with me, and I'm not claiming they endorse anything here, Google's own case study pages carry the same disclaimer: results are specific to that advertiser and individual results vary. I'm including them because independently published, third-party proof is worth more than any claim I could make about my own numbers alone.

PHASE 5: Playbooks, Troubleshooting, Execution, and What Changed in 2026

Chapter 12: Three Playbooks — Ecommerce, B2B Lead Gen, and Local Service

The 5-Step Formula works across business models, but which lever matters most, and in what order, changes depending on what you are selling. Use whichever playbook below matches your business, alongside the full chapters it points back to.

Ecommerce

Priority order: landing and product page speed (Chapter 5) first, Shopping and Performance Max feed quality second, RLSA and cart-abandoner remarketing third. Ecommerce margins are usually thin enough that page speed and cart-recovery targeting move the needle faster than almost anything else.

Feed quality, accurate titles, images, prices, availability, drives Shopping and Performance Max performance more than bid strategy does. An inaccurate or thin feed underperforms no matter how the bidding is tuned. Audit the feed for missing identifiers, mismatched prices, and out-of-stock items monthly.

Target ROAS (Chapter 6) is usually the right end-state bid strategy here, since average order value varies by product and the business genuinely cares about conversion value, not just conversion count. Get to Google's 15-conversion, 30-day minimum before switching to it.

Build the cart-abandoner remarketing list (Chapter 9) early, it is often the single highest-ROAS segment in an ecommerce account and should be running from month one, not month six.

B2B Lead Gen

Priority order: tight ad groups on high-intent exact and phrase match terms (Chapter 3) first, since B2B search volume is usually lower and every click needs to count more. Landing page form optimization (Chapter 5) second. Lead quality tracking third.

Track leads past the initial form submission, a "conversion" that is actually a low-quality or unqualified lead is not a real conversion for bidding purposes. If your CRM can pass lead-quality or deal-stage data back into Google Ads as an offline conversion, do it, this lets Target CPA or Target ROAS optimize toward leads that actually close, not just leads that fill out a form.

Desktop often outperforms mobile for B2B lead forms, check your own device segment data (Chapter 3) rather than assuming mobile-first applies equally here.

RLSA (Chapter 9) matters more in B2B than almost any other model, because sales cycles are longer, and staying visible to someone who visited but did not convert on the first touch is often what closes the deal weeks later.

Local Service Business

Priority order: location targeting and radius settings (Chapter 3) first, a plumber in Austin has zero use for a click from Denver. Call tracking and call assets (Chapter 4) second, phone calls are often the primary conversion type, not form fills. Google Business Profile and Local Services Ads, a separate but related product, as a complement to standard Search campaigns.

Set a geographic radius that matches your actual service area, not a broad city or region-wide default, and use the location report (Chapter 3) to find and exclude any areas outside your real coverage that are still spending budget.

Import call conversions from Google Ads' call tracking, calls from ads and calls from your website via a forwarding number, so your bid strategy has a real conversion signal to optimize toward, not just form fills that may be a small fraction of total leads for a phone-first business.

Dayparting (bid adjustments by time of day, Chapter 6) matters more here than in most models, a call to an emergency plumber at 2am is worth bidding on differently than the same search at 2pm, depending on whether you actually staff for after-hours calls.

Chapter 13: The Mistakes That Quietly Kill Google Ads Accounts

Most underperforming accounts do not have one dramatic problem, they have three or four small ones stacking on top of each other. Run through this list against your own account before assuming the whole strategy needs to change.

Mistake 1: Judging Performance Before the Learning Period Ends

Covered in Chapter 6, but worth repeating because it is the single most common reason a genuinely good setup gets abandoned early: changing a bid strategy, budget, or major targeting setting resets Smart Bidding's learning period, typically 1-2 weeks. Judging results, or worse, making another change, inside that window means reacting to noise, not signal.

Mistake 2: One Ad Group Trying to Serve Too Many Intents

If an ad group holds keywords with meaningfully different intent, "running shoes," "shoe insoles," "shoe repair," no single ad or landing page can be relevant to all of them, which drags down Ad Relevance and Expected CTR at the same time (Chapter 7). Split ad groups by tight keyword themes, even if it means managing more of them.

Mistake 3: No Negative Keyword Habit

An account that never adds negative keywords is an account slowly bleeding budget on irrelevant clicks that will never convert. This is the single highest-leverage 15-minutes-a-week habit in this book, Chapters 3 and 7 both cover the process, and it is the first thing to check in any account that "used to work better."

Mistake 4: Conversion Tracking That's Silently Broken

A tag that stops firing after a website update, a checkout redesign, or a platform migration does not throw an obvious error, it just quietly reports fewer or zero conversions. If conversions drop suddenly with no change

in traffic or spend, check tag firing (Chapter 5) before touching bids, budgets, or creative.

Mistake 5: Mismatched Ad and Landing Page Promises

An ad promising a discount, a specific product, or a fast turnaround that is not immediately visible on the landing page creates exactly the kind of bounce that tanks Landing Page Experience and wastes the click you already paid for. Message match (Chapter 5) is not a nice-to-have, it is often the single biggest lever on conversion rate available to you.

Mistake 6: Treating Automated Bid Strategies as "Set and Forget"

Smart Bidding still needs the same inputs a manual strategy needs: accurate conversion values, a stable enough environment to learn from, and a monthly check that the target still matches the account's actual data (Chapter 6, and the Performance Max section of Chapter 9). "Automated" means the bidding math is automated, not that the account manages itself.

Mistake 7: No Budget Reserved for Testing

An account that spends 100% of budget on already-proven keywords and ads will plateau, because nothing new ever gets a chance to prove itself. The Budget Allocation Worksheet in Chapter 6 reserves a minimum testing slice for exactly this reason.

Quick Self-Diagnosis: What to Check First, by Symptom

Spend dropped suddenly with no change made: check for a disapproved ad, an exhausted budget, or a billing issue first.

Conversions dropped but clicks and spend look normal: check conversion tracking (Chapter 5) before anything else.

Cost per conversion climbing steadily: check Quality Score components (Chapter 7) and whether a recent bid strategy change is still inside its learning period (Chapter 6).

Lots of clicks, few conversions: check message match between ad and landing page (Chapter 5), and check the search terms report for irrelevant traffic slipping through (Chapter 3).

Impression share stuck low: check whether it is lost to budget or lost to rank (Chapter 6), the fix is completely different depending on which one it is.

Mistake 8: Getting an Ad Disapproved and Not Knowing Why

Google groups the reasons an ad gets rejected into five buckets, and knowing which bucket you are in tells you how to fix it: prohibited content (things that cannot be advertised at all, counterfeit goods, dangerous products); prohibited practices (things you cannot do as an advertiser, misrepresentation, data misuse); restricted content (things you can advertise but only with limits or certification, alcohol, gambling, healthcare, financial services); editorial and technical requirements (formatting and quality standards, correct grammar and capitalization, no excessive punctuation or symbols); and destination requirements (your landing page has to actually work, load properly, and match what the ad says).

Most disapprovals in a normal ecommerce, SaaS, or lead-gen account fall into the last two buckets, not the dramatic "prohibited" ones. Before appealing a disapproval, check: does the landing page load without errors in an incognito window, does it match the ad’s claim, and does the ad copy avoid ALL CAPS, excessive exclamation points, or unverifiable superlatives ("#1," "best," "guaranteed") without support.

If you are in a restricted category, healthcare, finance, alcohol, gambling, legal cannabis, check the current certification requirements in the Google Ads Policy Center before you build the campaign, not after it gets rejected. Certification can take days to weeks to process, and building creative before confirming eligibility wastes real time.

An appeal only works if the underlying issue is actually fixed first. Appealing the same disapproved ad without changing anything just produces the same rejection.

Chapter 14: Your 30/60/90-Day Implementation Roadmap

Reading this book is the easy part. Here is the order to actually implement it in, so you are not trying to do all five phases at once on day one.

Days 1-30: Foundation

Confirm conversion tracking is installed and firing correctly (Chapter 5). Nothing else in this roadmap matters if this step is skipped.

Restructure ad groups around tight keyword themes if they are currently mixed (Chapter 3, and Mistake 2 in Chapter 12).

Build your three negative keyword lists: account-level always-exclude, brand protection, and a starting pass on irrelevant search terms (Chapter 3).

Rewrite ad copy using the full 15-headline, 4-description RSA structure with real variety, not reworded duplicates (Chapter 4).

Run your landing page through the pre-launch checklist and fix anything red (Chapter 5).

Pick a starting bid strategy appropriate to your current data volume, Manual CPC or Maximize Conversions under 30 conversions a month, Target CPA or Target ROAS once you are already past Google’s minimum thresholds (Chapter 6).

Days 31-60: Data and Refinement

Run your first full Targeting Audit (Chapter 3) and Search Term Audit (Chapter 7) now that you have 30 days of cleaner data to work with.

Review Quality Score components on your top 10 keywords by spend and fix whichever component is rated "Below Average" (Chapter 7).

Set up your first automated rules, at minimum a spend-drop alert (Chapter 9).

Build your first remarketing lists, all visitors, cart or form abandoners, past converters, so RLSA and Display remarketing have an audience to work with by day 60 (Chapter 9).

Revisit your bid strategy against Google's minimum conversion thresholds, graduate to a more advanced strategy if you have crossed them (Chapter 6).

Days 61-90: Scale

Apply your budget split across funnel stages using the worksheet in Chapter 6, adjusted based on which stage is actually converting at target cost.

If you have enough conversion data and creative assets, test a Performance Max campaign as a scaling layer, not a replacement for your proven Search campaigns (Chapter 9).

Run the full monthly optimization cadence from Chapter 7 going forward, this is the point where the work shifts from building the system to maintaining and compounding it.

Reassess every 90 days from here. The specific numbers change; the process in this roadmap does not.

Chapter 15: What Changed Since This Formula Was Built

The 5-Step Formula still works. But Google's plumbing has changed enough since 2024 that a few things in your setup need updating:

Third-party cookies didn't get killed off the way everyone expected, Google backed off the full Chrome deprecation and moved to a user-choice privacy model instead. The practical effect is the same either way: more people are opting into stricter privacy settings, so your remarketing lists shrink and refill slower regardless.

Turn on Enhanced Conversions and Consent Mode v2 if you haven't already. They recover a meaningful chunk of the conversion data that cookie erosion is quietly costing you, and Google increasingly treats both as standard setup, not an optional extra.

Google keeps updating its Personalized Advertising policy by vertical (alcohol, health, financial services) throughout the year. Before you scale a campaign in a regulated category, check the current Ads Policy Center rather than assuming last year's rules still apply.

AI Overviews and AI Mode are absorbing a growing share of searches with zero-click answers. Search campaigns are still the part of Google Ads least affected by this, since they run on real-time query intent rather than stored data, but expect more of your impressions to land inside or beside an AI Overview instead of a plain results page.

None of this breaks the Traffic Alchemy formula. Clean first-party data and a habit of checking current policy are just part of running it now, not optional extras.

Setting Up Enhanced Conversions and Consent Mode v2, Concretely

Enhanced Conversions works by sending Google hashed first-party data, email, phone, name or address, alongside a standard conversion, so conversions can still be matched to a user even when third-party cookies or ad click IDs are not reliably available. Turn it on in Google Ads under Goals → Conversions → select a conversion action →

Settings → Enhanced conversions, and set it up either through Google Tag Manager's built-in Enhanced Conversions fields, or by adding hashed customer data to your existing Google tag if you are not using GTM.

Consent Mode v2 is different, it tells Google's tags how to behave based on a visitor's actual cookie consent choice, via your consent management platform, rather than firing full tracking regardless of consent. It has been required for advertisers serving the EEA, UK, and Switzerland since March 2024, and Google has been clear that accounts without it see conversion modeling gaps widen over time as browsers and regulators keep tightening default tracking. If you use a consent management platform, check whether it already has a Google-certified Consent Mode integration, most major platforms do at this point, which makes this closer to a settings change than a development project.

Both of these are now closer to basic setup than an advanced feature, the accounts still missing them are the ones most likely to see confusing gaps between what Google reports and what their own backend or CRM shows.

One More Thing on Quality Score Worth Knowing

Google is explicit that Quality Score itself does not directly enter the ad auction, it is a diagnostic report. But the three real-time signals behind it, predicted CTR, ad relevance, and landing page experience, are folded into Ad Rank calculations live, at auction time. Chasing a higher visible Quality Score number is really a proxy for fixing the same underlying signals that lower your actual cost per click, treat the Chapter 7 breakdown as the more useful frame than the score itself.

Performance Max Exclusion Controls Keep Expanding

Performance Max historically gave advertisers far less negative keyword control than standard Search campaigns, brand exclusions used to require a support request, and general negative keywords were not available inside the campaign at all. Google has been rolling out account-level negative keyword lists that apply across campaign types,

giving Performance Max some of the exclusion control it lacked. If you run Performance Max (Chapter 9), check your account for this under Tools & Settings → Shared Library → Negative keyword lists rather than assuming it is unavailable, this part of the product changes often enough that it is worth checking directly instead of relying on last year's information.

Chapter 16: A Few Tools Worth Keeping Handy

A handful of free tools I actually keep open while running accounts, not a research bibliography, just the ones that save real time every month.

Free Tools Worth Using Every Month

Google Ads' own Recommendations tab is worth a skeptical look, not blind acceptance, some suggestions, like broadening match types or raising budgets, benefit Google's own numbers more than yours. Apply the ones that match this book's framework, fixing Quality Score components, adding assets, and dismiss the ones that just mean spending more without more control.

Google Analytics 4, linked to Google Ads, for seeing what happens after the click, especially useful for catching a landing page or checkout problem that the Google Ads conversion number will not show you on its own.

Google's Keyword Planner, inside Google Ads under Tools & Settings → Planning, for validating search volume and estimated CPC before committing budget to a new keyword theme.

The Auction Insights report, inside any campaign, monthly, to see which competitors you are actually up against for impression share, and whether your position and overlap rate are moving in the right direction.

None of this replaces judgment. Every number and threshold in this chapter can change; the habit of checking the primary source before making a decision does not.

Chapter 17: Work With Me Directly

I’m Zain Ismail. I’ve spent over a decade in digital marketing because the industry needed people who give a damn about performance, not just impressions.

I’ve managed millions in ad spend, generated 8-figure returns, and helped brands in ecommerce, lead gen, SaaS, and crowdfunding. Stop guessing and start scaling.

If you want help building a high-performance Google Ads system that actually prints profit, hit me up.

zain.ismail1997@gmail.com or visit zainismail.pk

This is not theory. This is traffic alchemy in action.

Let’s go from zero to ROI.

—Zain