Financial Services PPC

Your guide to success

croud

PREPARED BY BEN KNIGHT, OCTOBER 2018

Foreword

Thanks for downloading your copy of Croud's key recommendations for success in the highly competitive world of financial PPC.

This guide has been put together by Croud co-founder and COO Ben Knight, who has over 15 years' experience of working in paid search, with a particular focus on the financial services sector. As well as working with Croud's finance clients - from Paysafe to Hiscox to AA Car Finance, Ben was previously Head of Search for finance clients at Harvest Digital and The Search Works.

In this guide, Ben sums up some of the key learnings from his 15 years in paid search, outlining the challenges, but more importantly the opportunities for financial services companies to get ahead in PPC today.

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Introduction

Before we dive into the key tactics for success, let's take a step back and consider what may happen in PPC over the next 12 - 24 months - and importantly, how should this influence what you are thinking about at the moment?

In the SERPs, we're seeing continued relegation of organic listings, particularly on mobile, which is contributing to inflating costs-per-click (CPCs) in PPC in the finance sector. There are two key areas of opportunity for PPC specialists in the space - and two key themes of this white paper.

Smarter use of technology

- Being able to effectively apply machine learning techniques and tools to accounts will separate the leaders from the losers.
- The brands that nail relevance (not personalisation) and make the journey super simple, by removing friction, will be those that win.
- New consumer technology such as voice assistants are beginning to offer a new type of media in which to advertise, and we'll undoubtedly see advertising, product, and service increasingly merge. But there will be no space there for brands that aren't useful.

Leveraging data effectively

- We'll see the continued demise of the cookie as the basis for tracking and audience targeting.
- As a direct result, integrating first-party data into digital campaigns will become increasingly important.

PPC in finance

The key differnces

The market as a whole is always changing and developing.

At Croud, we're currently running more than 30 betas for clients with the search engines and this pace of development is not only exciting, it's allowing game-changing opportunities for clients to get more bang for their buck - even in a world where CPCs rise 20% year on year as they have done in financial PPC for the last three years.

Whilst PPC experience is largely transferable across different verticals, with account management consisting of similar tasks conducted in a similar fashion, there are some key differences to bear in mind in the financial sphere. It's worth going back to basics as this can provide huge wins particularly in the financial space. Here we take a look at some of the key ways in which PPC in the financial services sector is different.

Rising CPCs and fewer keywords

The most obvious difference between the finance vertical and many others is the average cost-per-click. Whereas in some verticals £5 CPCs may sound high, £50+ CPCs are not uncommon in finance. In fact, according to recent research by Bing, 28% of the most competitive keywords are in the insurance sector, with a further 27% in financial services.

This is where the basics really come into sharp focus, and it's worth investing in ensuring the fundamentals of your accounts are up to scratch, including:

- Quality scores of 7+ across all the key terms
- Granular ad groups with singular keywords
- A focus on landing page improvements and ensuring your landing pages rank highly for relevance and drive the expected click-through-rates

At a keyword level it's vital to look at the science behind each of these factors.

28% of the most competitive keywords are in the insurance sector, with a further 27% in financial services.

At Croud, we draw data from the site analytics and the ad platforms' reporting APIs into our own data warehouse. We then apply models (built using machine learning technology) to identify the biggest predicted improvements that can be realised from among all the changes we might make to each campaign and account. It's key to prioritising our work.

If you overlay PPC metrics with Google Analytics and SEO metrics, you can determine whether you need to focus on improving the creative, the keyword relevance, or optimising the landing page. Or perhaps the best fix might even be to work on SEO across the site - after all, moving from a quality score of 4 to 8 means your previous £50 CPC bid now gets the same visibility and position on the SERPs as your £25 bid.

The basics of course go much further than just the few factors mentioned here. Regular search query reports, the right match types, a huge amount of negatives - every keyword needs to receive far more attention than in lots of other sectors. In finance you might only have 1,000 high volume keywords, compared with a retailer that has 1,000,000 products. Focus on the basics and apply a little science to win.

A volatile landscape

Faced with high CPCs, when a competitor decides to push your head terms, you can expect very sharp and sudden CPC changes, which can soak up your budget very quickly unless alerts and caps are put in place. Seasonality is not as strong in finance as retail, for instance, which makes predicting these events difficult. One of your key priorities should therefore be to set up machine-led alerts and monitoring - you need to know by the time you're in the office if there is a new competitor on your key terms or brand.

At Croud, we use our proprietary tech platform Croud Control to provide insight; humans then pull the strings to allow the machine to function at its best - ultimately we aim with all process to remove the admin time and focus on results and performance.

Another challenge that you may face is scam advertisers. It is not uncommon to see fake websites imitating your brand and bidding on your brand terms in order to access the log-in details of your customers. Google recognises this is an issue; stay vigilant, flag any suspicious activity and get them removed as soon as possible before they damage the brand.

Bid strategies in times of volatility

Due to the reasons outlined above, sophisticated bid strategies can become challenging to use. With more volatile CPCs, your Search Ads 360 bid strategy may overreact to CPC changes by aggressively pulling back bids until you have no traffic as it tries to achieve your CPA (cost-per-action) target. This results in the need for more elaborate minimum and maximum bid requirements to be put in place for each keyword.

One of your key priorities should therefore be to set up machine-led alerts and monitoring.

There is always a high correlation between CPCs and the value of the product or service you offer. Maintain CPCs with efficient rules and alerts and get very familiar with Auction Insights.

The growing importance of audiences

Audiences are becoming more and more important across all sectors. It's becoming less about the search and more about the searcher. Capturing the correct audience can be possible by utilising the audience levers currently available in the engine.

The Google benchmark for spend moving through audiences was, even only 12 months ago, 15-25% in the finance sector - far behind retail, where the figure was 40%.

Across Croud's finance clients, the figure is now averaging 60%, because the machine not only knows your current customers, but also those you have not yet met who look like your customers, behave like your customers and are actively in the market for your products or services.

With cookie-based remarketing audiences going against many policies found in the highly regulated finance sector, leveraging third-party audiences such as in-market becomes increasingly important.

In-market audiences

Using in-market audiences, which allow you to target searchers in the market for your products or services, is crucial for developing a strong finance audience strategy. Not only do they perform very well, but the volume of users captured significantly increases the size of your audience lists, which means optimisations have more significant impact on overall performance. On top of this, by understanding which in-market segment works best, you can then proactively find these people via Gmail, Youtube, and GDN - to reach them before they hit the volatile landscape.

It's becoming less about the search and more about the searcher.

Similar audiences

There are essentially two types of audiences - those who have interacted with your business (RLSA, customer match), and those who have not (similar, smart). In many verticals, 'those who have interacted with your business'-based audiences are usually the bread and butter of your audience strategy. You may likely find this to be the opposite in the finance space.

Customer match conversion rates are on average four times higher than a standard click - but customer match usually accounts for less than 1% of your total traffic. As a result, we're seeing a considerable rise in use of similar users for search. It's far easier to work with similar users for search than customer match, and the huge growth of spend in this area indicates just how effective it is as a product - allowing you to find many new customers who act and behave online like your current customers - another sign that signed-in users are far more powerful than using cookie-based tracking.

Customer match conversion rates are on average four times higher than a standard click

A different approach to RLSA

Due to the nature of many financial products and services, you may find users don't come back to the site to buy again, but instead to log in, manage their account or complete other actions that don't generate conversions or revenue. For this reason, it's likely your RLSA (remarketing lists for search ads) performance is poorer than in other sectors.

Depending on the nature of the product, you may therefore want to extend your RLSA lists into the maximum 540-day window to adapt to the purchasing cycle. This could involve taking into account 12-month renewals, detargeting, using more relevant messaging, deep linking to a more relevant page, and more. There are many ways to improve performance using RLSA, but careful planning and testing is required to succeed with RLSA in finance.

When you get RLSA right, conversion rates are typically twice that of a normal click, so test strategies as much as possible to get the best results and reap the rewards.

Getting tracking and reporting right

Whilst focusing on CPA or cost-per-lead may seem like the obvious choice, there are often deeper considerations needed to ensure the best outcome, including:

Online to offline

Finance products are often more complicated than other sectors, with customers often requiring further information and reassurance before making a purchase. Phone calls are likely to convert off the back of a paid search click; this is especially true for mobile traffic. Linking these back together will ensure the value of mobile traffic is not being overlooked, which could result in valuable calls being optimised out of paid search activity.

Tying LTV data back to your performance will give you a more realistic view of success

Lifetime value (LTV)

Bringing LTV into view can accelerate your paid search performance. Tying LTV data back to your performance will give you a more realistic view of success. High fiving because your Venezuelan CPA is one-third of other markets is useless unless those users are generating proportional revenue.

Key Opportunities

So now we know the lay of the land in the finance space, what are the key areas of opportunity for advertisers in the sector?

Once you've mastered the fundamentals of PPC, following some of the tips outlined above, there are plenty of other ways in which you can differentiate and get ahead in the highly competitive world of finance - here we take at look at just a few.

The growing importance of first-party data

Firstly, it's important to reiterate the increasingly important role of first-party data. By 'first-party data', we mean the data that a business collects and controls for itself; and in the context of digital marketing, the most valuable first-party data will be about:

- a business' leads and customer
- how leads develop
- how customers engage with sites and apps; and
- how customers engage with and purchase products and services over time

Data protection law is tightening globally, with greater governance of personal data and its processing. Users and customers are more and more aware of their rights in relation to their data. It is increasingly not lawful to use online tracking technology to build profiles of individuals for use in marketing without their clear, opt-in consent.

As a result of this shift in the law and society, we're seeing a drop in the volume and quality of third-party advertising data, especially that which is enabled by the operation of third-party cookies. This affects measurement to a degree, but most of all it affects the nature and availability of the audiences we can target with advertising.

Increasingly, these audiences will need to be supplied by first-party data; and ad tech platforms are evolving to support integration with advertiser first-party data, and to use it to activate campaigns. The Salesforce integration between Google's Cloud and Marketing Platforms has been a notable industry development; and the emerging Ads Data Hub product promises to replace and evolve the capabilities that were available via DoubleClick Data Transfer for using first-party data to define custom audiences.

Brand awareness activity

Outstream video ads

Outstream video ads deliver cost-effective, unique reach on sites and apps outside of YouTube. Outstream ads are designed to reach users on mobile devices in moments where they may not have their sound on, so ads will start with the sound muted and allow the user to turn on the sound if they wish to do so.

The ads are served on Google video partner sites and apps, including financial publication sites and mobile apps in the case of the finance sector, and do not require placement within a YouTube video. Think of this format as serving engaging video ads on the Google Display Network.

Hong Kong Tourism Board has seen 30% incremental reach from using outstream video ads.

The ads are designed specifically for mobile devices - allowing the user to automatically scroll past the ad in a feed or click out of it in app. Advertisers are charged on a viewable CPM - requiring that >50% of the ad must be on screen for two seconds or more of continuous video playback.
Hong Kong Tourism board has already seen impressive results from using outstream video ads as part of its global brand campaign - with 30% incremental reach and a 40% lower cost per completed video view.

Responsive search ads

Responsive search ads (RSA), currently in beta, are Google's machine learning answer to ad copy multi variation testing. By providing up to 15 headlines and four descriptions lines, the test has the range to show any combination of headline and description in order to determine the top-performers and achieve the highest click-through rate on a user by user level.

This can provide advertisers with incremental gains in performance which inevitably stack up over time. This quick answer to a strong ad copy test, results in a fast and easy expansion to all ad groups of an account and not just the most significant. On top of this, using RSA also frees up time, allowing account managers to focus on other areas of development.

Direct response activity

TrueView for action

TrueView for action campaigns help drive leads and conversions by adding prominent calls to action (CTAs) and headline text overlays to your video ads. Using this video campaign subtype, you can encourage customers to explore your product or service, share their contact information and take other actions valuable to your business. To ensure laser-focused targeting of customers close to purchase, overlaying the activity with both in-market and custom intent audiences is key.

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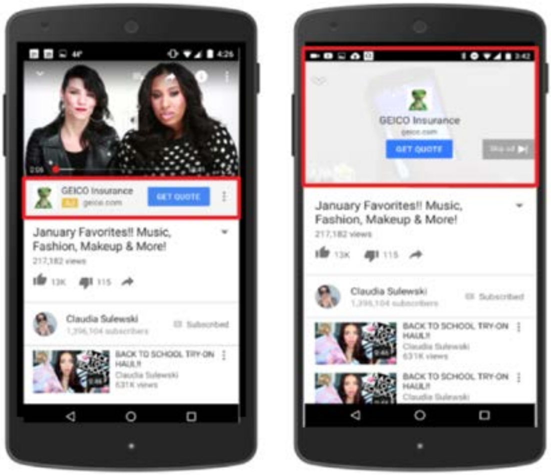
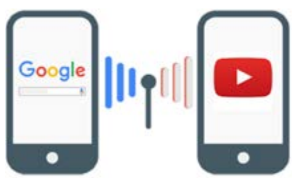


In-market audiences use search signals to identify users most interested in what you have to offer, ensuring that your ads are in front of them. For example, you can use in-market audiences to target users who have displayed behaviour that indicates they're in the research phase of purchasing an insurance policy, or are looking to apply for a balance transfer credit card.

Custom intent audiences are a new feature, currently in beta, that allows you to create audiences based on your search keywords and therefore reach people who are actively searching for your product on Google. This means that they're great for businesses looking to utilise YouTube for lower funnel activity. The approach here would be to take your highest converting keywords from your search campaigns and create an audience of users who are searching for those terms within Google search.

Add to this Google's latest changes to life events targeting, which will allow advertisers to target users in the process of buying a home, starting a business, renovating their home or starting a new job, and this format is incredibly powerful for advertisers operating in the finance vertical.



This activity can also be accompanied by six-second bumper ads to capture users' attention on mobile devices.

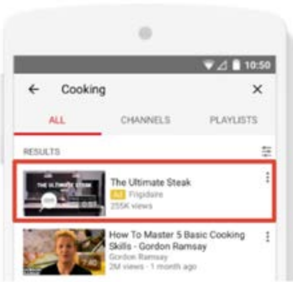
To ensure laser-focused targeting of customers close to purchase, overlaying the activity with both in-market and custom intent audiences is key.

TrueView video discovery ads

TrueView video discovery ads are great for driving reach, and taking the same approach as above with in-market and custom intent audiences means that your ads will only be targeted at users who are close to point of purchase.

They differ from TrueView for action in that they will drive users through to your YouTube watch or channel page, as opposed to your website. It's therefore recommended to use CTA overlays on the videos to drive users through to your site. If you're an insurance provider who is looking to drive quotes, this could be the inclusion of a 'get a quote now' button, for instance.

TrueView video discovery ads can run on the YouTube search results and watch pages for both desktop and m.youtube.com, as well as the mobile app homepage. The ad unit consists of an image thumbnail and up to three lines of text. Clicking the ad will deliver a user to the YouTube watch or channel page to view the video rather than playing the video within the ad unit itself.



Machine learning and hyper-relevant ads

To cut through the noise in the finance sector, it's vital that your ads are as targeted and relevant to the user as possible. The weather and pricing are two key factors to take into consideration in the finance sector. And beyond that, advances in machine learning are opening up exciting possibilities for smart advertisers today.

The weather and pricing are two key factors to take into consideration in the finance sector.

Weather

It goes without saying that we are all affected by the weather - what we choose to wear, how we plan our day, our weekend activities, even the media we consume and our mood and shopping behaviour.

Yet it often gets forgotten. In marketing we tend to focus on the data points that are unique to our discipline (CPCs, audience categorisations, landing pages, and so on) and can sometimes neglect the biggest, most common influences on consumer behaviour. Across Croud's finance clients, we've seen a wet Sunday delivering 25% more sales than a dry, hot, but otherwise equivalent day.

Weather data is published publicly and freely - and it has to be taken advantage of. The techniques we're using at Croud include:

- Dynamic modification of ads and bidding using scripts that collect weather data and control live campaigns.
- Tracking a user's local weather conditions into the record of their behaviour on-site, so that their behaviour can be understood in the context of their weather, locally. This insight informs rules for dynamic modification (above).
- Developing and applying a regression model for demand on call centres during the weekend and off-peak hours, featuring regional weather data. If we can see that demand (with its significant potential to be affected by the weather) cannot be met, it's a very valuable capability to be able to adjust budgets and prevent waste.
- Joining public weather data with ad platform and analytics data, so that weather can be included as a feature in training an audience prediction machine learning model.

Applied live in production, a model like this can allow weather to feature in site, product and pricing personalisation.

Across Croud's finance clients, we've seen a wet Sunday delivering 25% more sales than a dry, hot, but otherwise equivalent day.

Pricing

The performance of a financial product is acutely affected by its price and the prices of competing products. Propositions in this vertical can often be regarded as commodity offerings, with price being a major distinguishing factor for comparison shoppers.

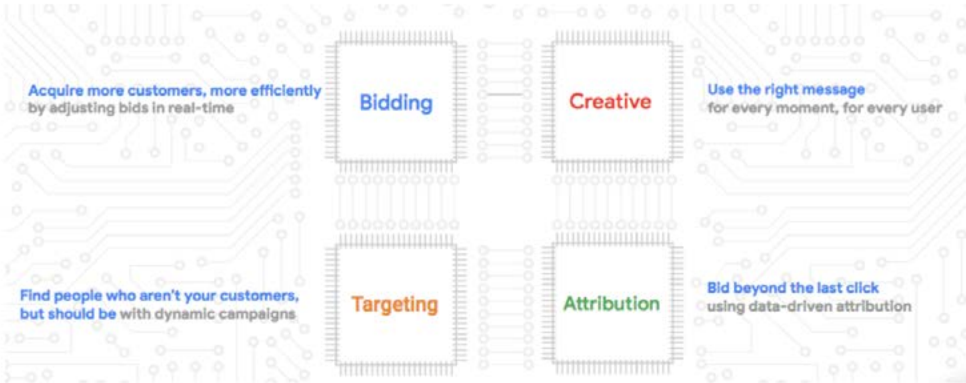
Pricing strategy, then, is extremely important, as is insight into competitor strategies. Knowing how granularly or frequently your competitors are varying their pricing, and being able to see their strategies for these variations, can allow an advertiser to set highly competitive strategies with exactly the amount of detail and effort required (and no more).

Pricing is one of several possible levers to pull in online personalisation. Using a machine learning model for audience clustering, we can identify price-sensitive user types, and, for a new prospect on site, predict their audience type and whether they're likely to be price-sensitive. We can then know whether to make a dynamic adjustment to the cost incurred in acquiring the customer, or to the product price offered.

Using a machine learning model for audience clustering, we can identify price-sensitive user types.

Google and machine learning

Google's machine learning-based products represent a huge step forward around key pillars for success in paid search.



Bidding has moved on from what now feel like prehistoric rules-based mechanisms - and questions like, "are we only changing bids every six hours, every four hours, or every hour?" - to making a different bid for every user. This bid is not only based on past activity and audience data, but whether Google has been able to identify that they are in the market for your products without you ever seeing that user before.

The rapid development in the **creative** space - with new products such as RSA and expanded text ads - is off the back of testing that shows the machine is better at showing which message works best on a user than a human - very exciting times and a space we're watching very closely at Croud.

Think of it like this - you are a hotel provider and a user has searched for first-class flights to New York - and then makes the search, "new york hotels". In the old days, if your best-performing headline text was "Budget Hotels New York 20% off", you would have lost that user. However, today Google can dynamically show "Luxury Hotels New York 20% off" and you've now got a great chance of converting that user.

Targeting has similarly become supercharged. "Finding people who aren't your customers but should be" has given us all new opportunities to really deliver more incremental business from products like similar audiences, in-market, dynamic search ads, customer match, and RLSA. Insurance provider Hiscox has seen impressive results from working with Croud to leverage some of these products - such as a 48% uplift in conversion rate from using smart bidding.

48% uplift in conversion rate from using smart bidding.

Finally, **attribution** has also evolved rapidly to embrace the opportunities offered by machine learning. Rewarding your advertising correctly is critical to your overall success, and we've seen impressive results for clients simply by switching to data-driven attribution (more on that below - in the Measuring performance section).

There are huge rewards to be reaped from turning data and insight into relevant journeys with less friction.

Machine learning and data science

Anyone who has embraced the machine learning-powered products in Google's ad tech will know just how great the products are.

So what are the downsides? The downside in simple terms is that it is built for what Google has access to; its marketplace, however large, does not have access to lots of really important data and context: your internal backend systems, your CRM data, your operating costs, not to mention the detail of the logistical constraints on your business, your relationships with partners and your specific strategic priorities. As outlined above, first-party data is becoming increasingly important, and there is a huge opportunity for brands and agencies to enhance Google's machine learning-based product features by layering in more data - both internal data and from third-party data sources - and by building models that work with the detail of your business context.

So starting with some relatively straightforward data science - how does BA stay competitive with flights to New York against Virgin Atlantic? Well, it scrapes their prices, sees that Virgin are £15 cheaper, and then triggers an alert to pricing, dropping its costs in as near to real time as possible by £20 - basic work for a data scientist.

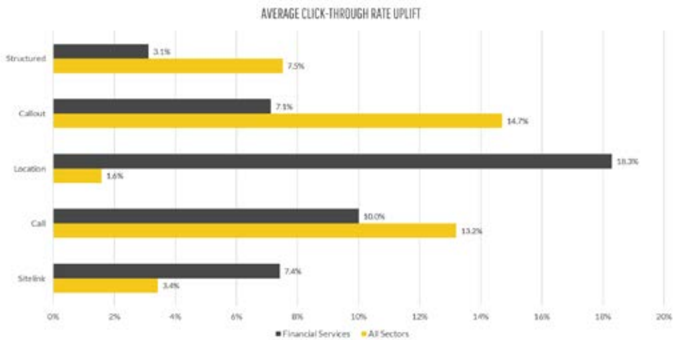
In finance, two of the most important factors historically have been weather and pricing, as outlined above. But now, with machine learning, we can go even further. For example, we might choose to expose all of our marketing and in-house data points and use machine learning to spot fraudulent behaviour - then apply this insight in our marketing channels to stop us wasting money before a fraudulent transaction even happens.

Data scientists in the Strategy & Planning team at Croud have developed a machine learning model for prioritising Google Ads account work and forecasting its impact. We've used Tensorflow, incorporating features of a linear regression model and deep neural network components (this is also known as a "wide and deep model").

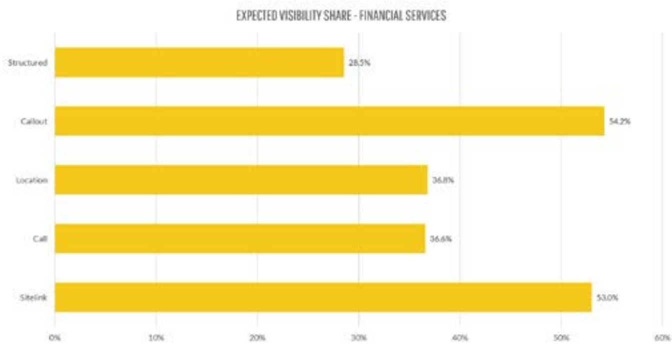
The model is trained on data describing 5.5 billion Google Ads user actions, and for ad extensions, it has learned from 750,000 examples of implementation across various industry sectors globally. It's hosted on Google Cloud ML Engine (part of the enterprise Google Cloud Platform) so predictions can be called at any time and at scale via an API.

The model is a tool for looking ahead - it predicts the impact of Google Ads changes that might be made to any specific campaign we're working on - but industry insight is also a clear benefit of the work.

Taking ad extensions as an example, for the Finance vertical, generally, we can see that the Location-type ad extension is much more capable of causing click-through rate uplift (i.e. when it's visible!) than other types of extension, compared with the all-sector average.

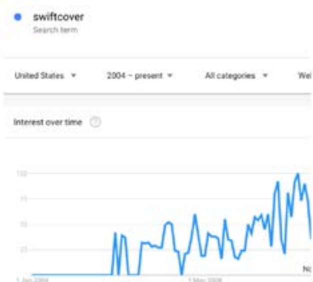


Location extensions, however, aren't as often visible as other types. Croud's model makes predictions for both CTR and visibility, and factors these together to produce insight for prioritising work and predicting results.



There are huge rewards to be reaped from turning data and insight into relevant journeys with less friction. Really understanding your users and serving them highly relevant ads and content by leveraging the power of machine learning is undoubtedly one of the most exciting developments in the digital space today.

After all, if a user can get a bespoke home or business insurance quote more quickly, without having to complete 30 fields, it can only be a positive thing. Just look at search interest for 'Swiftcover' following their campaign with Iggy Pop around getting a car insurance quote in just 60 seconds. Basic consumer priorities haven't changed, and reducing friction through your digital marketing should continue to be the focus.



Last mile marketing and CRO

Within the finance sector, costs of £50+ just for a single click are not uncommon. In peak periods for some sections of this vertical, CPCs can even exceed £120. With CPCs this high, it's essential to make your website the best it can be, to ensure improved returns on that upfront cost. In that "last mile", a user can be convinced to convert, or forced to leave.

Conversion Rate Optimisation (CRO) has been a growing field in digital marketing for a number of years, and big businesses stay ahead of the curve and maximise their ROI by funding and engaging in robust testing strategies that target a site's core user interface and its unique user journeys. Nowadays there really is no excuse not to do this. Google Optimize altered the landscape with a free offering that brought a level of A/B testing to the masses. Hotjar changed the learning experience by bringing session recordings, heat mapping, surveys and more down to a low cost bracket. All this means that you can get started for the same cost that a couple of clicks would have set you back.

There are of course more robust tools that incorporate all of these elements under a single platform, including Visual Web Optimiser (VWO), to name just one option. It's hard to argue against the fact that for the cost of under 10 clicks, you could have the ability to convert 5, 10 or 15% more of your visitors and address that worrying CPA that keeps rising.

In that "last mile", a user can be convinced to convert, or forced to leave.

However, there is one thing you need to do to make sure you have the right starting point: You need to have the right measurement in place to enable you to target the right areas for improvement. More on that in the Measuring performance section below.

Measuring Performance

In the finance sector, we already know costs are very high.

Advertisers in this vertical with the greatest media and customer insight - applied effectively in marketing optimisation - have competitive advantage over the rest.

Generally, we see two types of sales funnels in this sector: 1) the online-only journey, and 2) the online/offline hybrid. They have one thing in common - at different ends of a scale - and that is the form.

The form is the most common area where insight is lacking, data collection is incomplete, and optimisation is beneath its potential. Knowing the user "pain points" - especially, the drop-off and abandonment fields - is vital to being able to monitor performance and increase conversions.
In this area, an analytics tech specialist vendor may be recommended, such as for example Formissimo, an advanced form analytics platform. Use it to get to know exactly where users are struggling, and feed that into your web development team to fix, or, into your CRO team for testing. Findings can be surprising. For instance, triggering the numerical keyboard for entering a mobile number on a mobile form could be the single most effective improvement.

For more traditional journeys which have an initial lead generation form but complete with an offline sale, the lessons above are still very relevant; but you also need to have call tracking in place. Ensuring ROI is attributed correctly to paid digital media is vital in building and optimising your marketing strategy. There are many providers out there; Infinity is one such, which offers intelligence on where all your callers originate and, ultimately, who converts and provides a return. All paid activity and affiliates can be covered and reported on, giving you the peace of mind that what you spend is geared to a return on investment.

Impression share modelling

Due to the nature of the competitive landscape, being able to track and react early to competitor impression share levels is key to controlling budget and efficiency. However, unlike many other metrics and dimensions, auction insight data is not available through the Google Ads API, which makes automated reports very limited and in most cases means that such reporting will have to be a manual and repetitive task.

At Croud, we have automated this process using our Croudie network (1,900+ on-demand digital experts) to pull in daily downloads of the auction insights that feed a third-party dashboard. This allows us to effectively track the development of competitor pushes on certain head terms without the need for an account manager to pull and manipulate the data each time.

Data-driven attribution

When costs are so high, you need to ensure that you're spending your budget efficiently and pushing the top performing marketing channels - which is where data-driven attribution can help. Using a tailored attribution model based on your own business data allows you to see the true contribution of each channel and determine a more accurate ROI.

The starting point for success in conversion attribution is data quality. In order to have an accurate model you need to make sure that conversions are measured reliably, and that all marketing activity within your analytics platform is campaign-tracked correctly and consistently.

For Google Analytics, this means using Google Ads and Marketing Platform integrations correctly, and UTM parameters - structured meaningfully - for media channels where auto-tagging isn't available.

Ensuring ROI is attributed correctly to paid digital media is vital in building and optimising your marketing strategy.

The roles in your media mix of brand, non-brand, prospecting and remarketing activities are all very different. These activity types are each intended to do their own job in supporting a prospective customer through his or her journey to conversion. These activities should therefore be represented separately in your model. This will make for clearer insight, and clearer actions to take as a result.

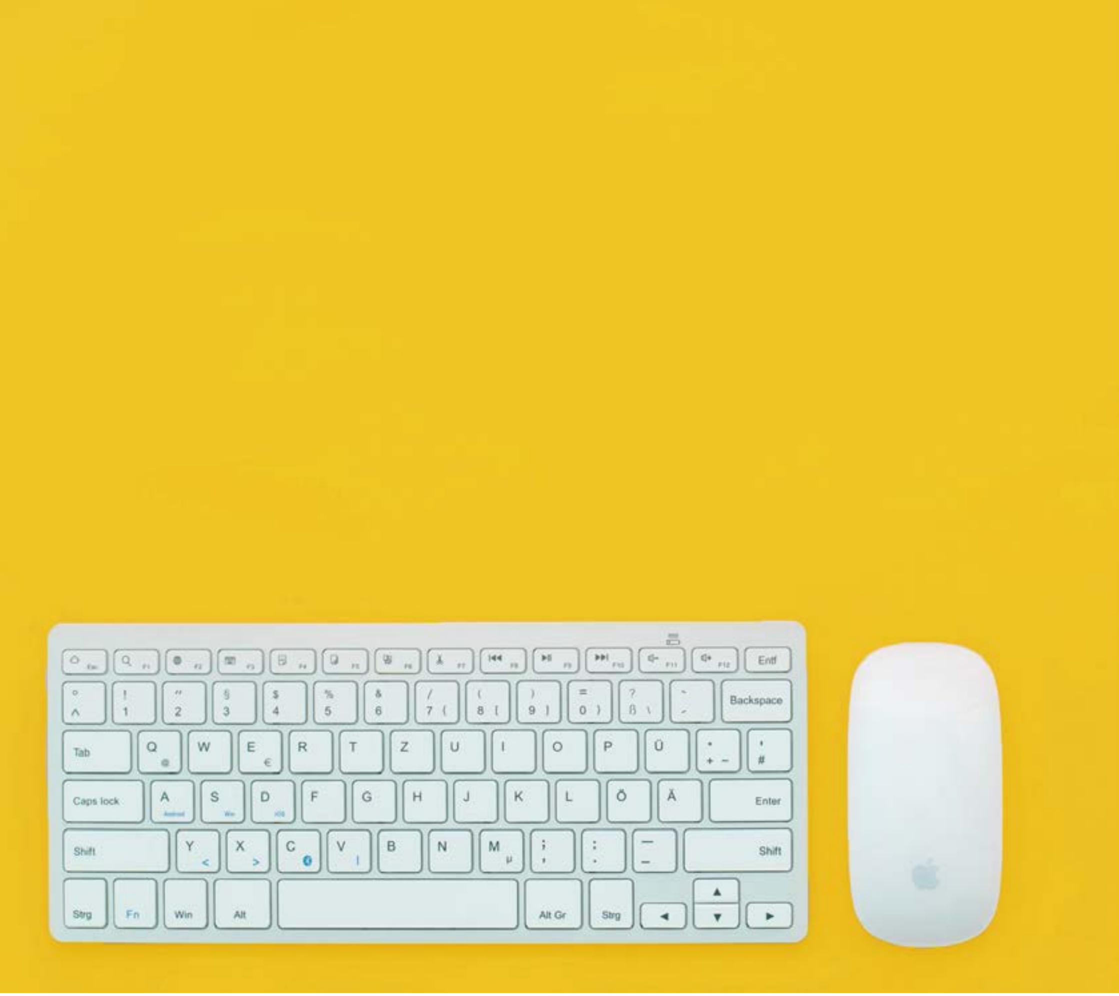
One of the main issues of attribution is the ability to track users across devices. If a user conducts research on a mobile device and then later uses a desktop to convert, these will be seen as two different pathways: one converting, and one non-converting. Facebook overcomes this issue by using the user ID to track logged in users across different devices. Google also now has the ability to track logged-in users across devices using the new Signals feature within Google Analytics (currently being rolled out across accounts) to generate cross-device reports. Using cross-device tracking will aggregate pathways and provide a more accurate view of the customer journey which takes into account the value of mobile.

Closing words

In the finance sector, where costs-per-click are higher than in almost any other vertical, getting the basics right is absolutely vital.

This means not only having high quality scores across the board, and using granular ad groups, but also continually testing and optimising your campaigns - from carrying out CRO initiatives to using Auction Insights to keep a close eye on competitive activity. Ultimately, the focus must be on reducing friction and making the user's experience as seamless as possible.

On top of this, there are huge opportunities around both smarter use of technology and leveraging data effectively. Machine learning, in particular, is a particularly exciting area, and we're already seeing incredible results across Croud's finance clients from using Google's machine learning products, such as smart bidding and dynamic search ads. Finally, a focus on harnessing the power of your first-party data will stand you in good stead for the exciting times ahead.



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