

A pay-per-click (PPC) audit is a structured review of an advertising account, its conversion tracking, landing pages, and the processes used to manage campaigns. The purpose is to find what is wasting budget, what is limiting results, and what needs verification before anyone makes changes.

A useful audit is more than a list of generic recommendations or a screenshot of a dashboard. It should connect account settings and campaign decisions to business outcomes such as qualified leads, sales, booked appointments, or revenue. It should also show the evidence behind each finding, explain the potential impact, and identify what should happen next.

Whether you run Google Ads in-house or are evaluating an agency, a **google ads audit checklist** helps make the review consistent. It prevents important basics—especially conversion tracking—from being overlooked while attention goes to headlines, bids, and campaign names.

What Is a PPC Audit?

A PPC audit examines how paid campaigns are built, measured, and managed. It can cover Google Ads, Microsoft Advertising, or other platforms, but the core questions are similar: Is the account reaching the right audience? Are budgets and bids aligned with business goals? Can the business trust the conversion data? Are ads sending people to relevant, working pages?

An audit is a diagnosis, not an automatic rebuild. A specialist should understand the account's history and constraints before recommending changes. Start with a question experienced operators ask before touching anything: **What changed last week?** A new landing page, tracking release, budget shift, promotion, or approval issue can explain a sudden performance change better than a sweeping account overhaul.



What Should a Google Ads Audit Checklist Include?

The exact scope depends on the account, but a dependable audit generally covers the areas below. Findings should be tied to a date range, compared with a relevant baseline, and prioritized by likely business impact and effort.

1. Goals, history, and account access

- Confirm the primary business outcome: for example, qualified calls, purchases, or sales opportunities.
- Review the date range, seasonality, promotions, recent changes, and performance history.
- Check account ownership, user permissions, billing access, and change history.
- Clarify lead quality and the steps between an ad click and a closed sale.

Without this context, an auditor can mistake a deliberate test for a mistake or recommend changes that conflict with a sales team's capacity. The audit should state what was reviewed, which dates were used, and any limitations in the available data.

2. Account structure review

An **account structure review** looks at how campaigns, ad groups, keywords, audiences, and settings are organized. Structure should make it possible to control budgets and targeting, understand performance, and act on the data. There is no single "perfect" number of campaigns or ad groups.

- Check whether campaigns separate meaningful differences in geography, product, service, or budget.
- Review location targeting, language, networks, schedules, devices, and exclusions.
- Look for duplicated targeting, conflicting settings, or campaigns competing for the same searches.
- Assess whether naming conventions make reporting and maintenance understandable.

Over-segmentation can scatter data and make management harder. Under-segmentation can hide important differences between locations or services. The right structure is the simplest one that supports the business's targeting, budget, and reporting needs.

3. Search intent, keywords, and exclusions

For search campaigns, inspect search terms—not just the keywords in the account. Search terms reveal what people actually typed and whether ads attracted relevant intent. Review match types, negative keywords, and how often search queries produce qualified outcomes.

- Identify irrelevant or low-intent queries that may be consuming spend.
- Check for useful queries that are being missed or routed to an unsuitable page.
- Review branded and non-branded traffic separately where that distinction matters.
- Confirm that exclusions are not blocking valuable searches.

Recommendations should reflect the account's data and sales model. A search that looks broad may still produce qualified leads; a high-click keyword may be unprofitable if those leads never progress.

4. Ads, assets, and landing-page alignment

Evaluate whether ad messaging is accurate, specific, and consistent with the offer on the destination page. Check headlines, descriptions, ad assets, policies, and approval status. Then follow [Article source](#) the user journey: click an ad, open the page, use the form or phone link, and confirm that the promised next step works.

Landing pages should load reliably, work on mobile, make the offer clear, and provide a reasonable path to conversion. A PPC audit should flag dead pages and broken forms, not simply recommend more ad spend. Where a campaign depends on a resource page or guide, verify that the URL still exists and that it serves the intended audience.

5. Tracking and conversions

Tracking and conversions are foundational. If the account records the wrong actions—or misses real ones—bidding and reporting can optimize toward misleading signals. The auditor should verify the full path from ad interaction to recorded conversion, including tag behavior, analytics configuration, call tracking, consent settings, and any CRM handoff.

- List each conversion action and classify it as primary or secondary based on its role in optimization.
- Test forms, calls, purchases, and other tracked actions on the live site.
- Check for duplicate, missing, or unexpectedly firing conversion events.
- Compare platform-reported leads with analytics and CRM records where possible.
- Review attribution, conversion windows, enhanced measurement or enhanced conversions, and consent-related limitations.

Do not assume that a tag is correct because it appears in a dashboard. Test the user journey and record what happened. For lead generation, distinguish a form submission from a qualified lead when the CRM can return that information. Privacy rules and platform settings affect what can be observed, so document uncertainty instead of presenting modeled or incomplete data as exact.

6. Budget, bidding, and performance controls

Review daily budgets, bid strategies, portfolio settings, shared budgets, and any limits that could prevent delivery. Compare spend and outcomes with the business's targets and capacity. Check whether automated bidding has enough reliable conversion data for its intended goal; automation cannot repair inaccurate inputs.

Look at performance by campaign and relevant segments, but avoid making conclusions from tiny samples. The audit should distinguish a confirmed issue from a hypothesis that needs a controlled test. For each recommendation, state the expected outcome, the metric to watch, and when to review the result.

410 Gone vs. 404: Why Dead Pages Matter

A **410 Gone** response means a page has been deliberately and permanently removed. A **404 Not Found** response means the server cannot find the requested page; it does not by itself say whether the page is permanently gone or whether the URL is incorrect. Both indicate that the requested content is unavailable, but the status codes communicate different intentions.

From an SEO perspective, neither response is a penalty by itself. Search engines may eventually remove unavailable URLs from their index. A 410 can signal that removal is intentional, while a 404 is common for missing or mistyped URLs. The practical outcome depends on the page, links pointing to it, and whether an appropriate replacement exists. Do not redirect every dead URL to the homepage; that can confuse users and search engines when the destination is unrelated.

For paid traffic, the immediate concern is user experience and campaign reliability. An ad pointing to a 404 or 410 page can waste clicks, disrupt a lead journey, and create policy or destination problems. During an audit, test final URLs and tracking templates, including redirects and mobile behavior. A server running Apache on Ubuntu, for example, can be configured to return a 404 or 410 status—but confirm the response with an HTTP test rather than assuming a page's appearance tells you its status.

How to Replace a Dead Marketing Resource

If a guide, case study, calculator, or campaign landing page is gone, first determine why. Was it intentionally retired, moved to a new URL, or removed by mistake? Then choose the response that best serves visitors and preserves the accuracy of the campaign.

1. **Find the affected traffic.** Check ads, sitelinks, tracking templates, emails, and external links that point to the old URL.
2. **Decide whether there is a genuine equivalent.** If the resource has moved, redirect the old URL to its new location. If a closely related replacement exists, make the destination clear and relevant.
3. **If there is no suitable replacement,** return the appropriate 404 or 410 response and remove or update links under your control.
4. **Update the campaign.** Change final URLs, extensions or assets, and any saved links in other channels. Test the new destination on desktop and mobile.
5. **Verify the journey and measurement.** Submit the form or complete the intended action, then confirm the event appears correctly in reporting and the CRM if applicable.

A good replacement is not simply any live page. It should answer the same user need or clearly explain the next best step. If you are researching advertising concepts, a page from Marketing91 may provide useful background, but an audit should still validate platform settings and performance against the actual account and business data.

Evaluating Google Ads Specialists and Agencies

Ask candidates to explain how they audit accounts, verify measurement, and prioritize changes. Strong specialists can describe their process in plain language and show dated evidence with the relevant account, date range, and context—not just impressive-looking screenshots.

- Ask who owns the account, conversion data, and billing relationship.
- Request examples of how they test tracking and connect platform leads to qualified outcomes.
- Ask what they need to know before making changes and how they document those changes.
- Clarify the scope, deliverables, timeline, fee, and any work that is priced separately.
- Ask how results will be measured and how often you will review them together.

Be cautious of guaranteed rankings, guaranteed lead volumes, or recommendations to restructure everything before reviewing conversion data. No responsible auditor can promise results without accounting for competition, demand, budgets, sales follow-up, and measurement quality. A credible proposal says what is included, what is not, what assumptions it relies on, and how success will be evaluated.

What a Useful Audit Deliverable Looks Like

The final report should be actionable, not just comprehensive. It should separate confirmed problems from opportunities to test and include enough detail for another qualified person to reproduce the checks.

Audit area	What the report should show	Example next step
Account structure	Relevant settings, overlap, and rationale	Separate budgets where business priorities require independent control
Tracking and conversions	Test method, event behavior, and known gaps	Fix duplicate events before changing automated bidding
Landing pages	Destination status, relevance, and mobile checks	Replace a dead URL and test the complete conversion path
Priorities	Impact, effort, owner, and review date	Resolve broken conversion tracking before lower-impact copy tests

Final Takeaway

A PPC audit is valuable when it answers three questions: Is the account set up to pursue the right business outcomes? Can the results be measured reliably? What should be fixed or tested first? Use a consistent **google ads audit checklist**, include an evidence-based **account structure review**, and treat **tracking and conversions** as essential—not optional.



Finally, check the whole journey. A well-targeted ad cannot compensate for broken measurement or a dead landing page. A careful audit connects campaign settings, search intent, destination pages, and sales outcomes, then gives the team a clear, verifiable plan for what to do next.