

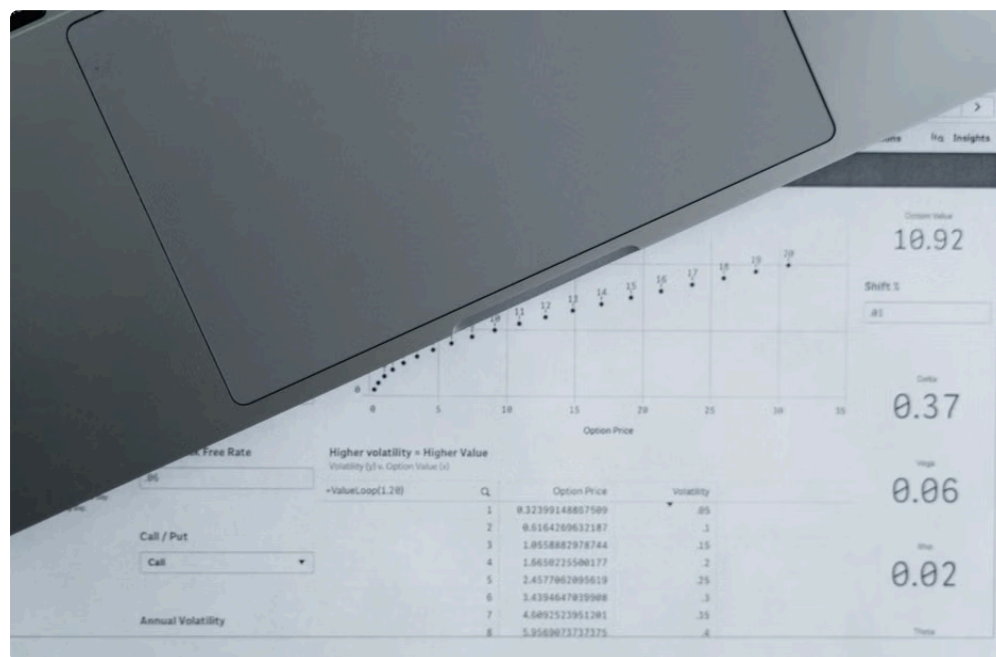
A pay-per-click (PPC) audit is a structured review of an advertising account, its measurement setup, and the pages people land on after clicking an ad. The goal is to find what is working, what is wasting budget, and what needs fixing before making changes. It is not simply a list of settings to switch on or off.

For Google Ads, a useful audit connects campaign decisions to business outcomes: qualified leads, sales, bookings, or another clearly defined result. It should account for the whole path from search query to ad, landing page, and recorded conversion. Without that view, an account can look efficient in the interface while producing poor-quality leads—or appear ineffective because conversions are not being tracked correctly.

This guide explains what a PPC audit should cover, how to use a **google ads audit checklist**, and how to assess the specialists or agencies doing the work. It [google analytics 4](#) also covers a less common but important audit issue: dead marketing resources, including pages that return a 410 Gone error.

What Is a PPC Audit?

A PPC audit is a time-bounded assessment of paid advertising activity. It typically reviews account settings, campaign organization, keywords and search terms, ads, bidding, budgets, audiences, landing pages, and conversion measurement. The recommendations should be specific enough to prioritize and implement—not just observations such as “improve targeting” or “optimize the account.”



An audit is not the same as ongoing management. It identifies risks and opportunities based on available evidence; management involves testing and acting on those findings over time. Nor should an auditor assume that a high click-through rate or low cost per click is a business success. The right performance measures depend on what the company needs from advertising and whether lead or sales quality can be measured.

Start With Context Before Changing Anything

Before touching an account, ask: **What changed last week?** The same question applies to a longer audit period. A sudden shift in cost or lead volume may follow a budget change, tracking release, landing-page redesign, promotion, seasonality, or changes in sales follow-up. Without a change log and business context, it is easy to attribute a result to the wrong cause.

Gather the essentials first:

- The business goal and the actions that count as valuable conversions.
- The audit period, compared with a relevant prior period or seasonal baseline.
- Spend, revenue or lead value, qualified lead rate, and sales outcomes where available.
- Recent account, website, CRM, offer, and staffing changes.
- Access to Google Ads, analytics, tag management, the website, and CRM reporting as appropriate.

Use dated reports and note the time zone, attribution settings, and comparison dates. A screenshot without context is not evidence of a trend. Keep a running checklist of access, settings reviewed, issues found, and actions still awaiting confirmation.

Google Ads Audit Checklist: The Core Review

1. Account and campaign settings

Check account time zone, currency, auto-tagging, billing status, linked products, and access permissions. Then review campaign-level settings: networks, locations, languages, schedules, devices, and bidding strategies. Confirm that location targeting matches the business's service area and that the location option is appropriate for the goal. A local contractor may not want to pay for clicks from people merely interested in a distant city.

Look for overlapping campaigns, unintended targeting, and settings that differ without a reason. Record the issue and its likely impact before changing anything. Some settings affect delivery, so changes should be deliberate and documented.

2. Account structure review

An **account structure review** asks whether campaigns and ad groups are organized in a way that supports budget control, relevant ads, and useful reporting. The answer is not "use as many campaigns as possible" or "put everything in one campaign." Structure should reflect meaningful differences such as service lines, geography, business priority, or budget requirements.

Review whether:

- Campaigns have clear purposes and sensible budgets.
- Ad groups contain closely related themes rather than unrelated services.
- Brand and non-brand activity can be evaluated separately where useful.
- Search, display, video, and other campaign types are not being mixed in a way that obscures results.
- Naming conventions make performance reports understandable to someone who did not build the account.

Complexity is not inherently good. A structure that creates extra maintenance without improving control or insight is not an upgrade.

3. Keywords, search terms, and exclusions

For search campaigns, compare the keywords in the account with the actual search terms that triggered ads. Check match types, search-term relevance, negative keywords, and whether important queries are being routed to the right campaign. Look for irrelevant intent, duplicate coverage, and useful queries that may be missing from the targeting plan.

Do not judge a keyword on volume or cost alone. A search term can be inexpensive but unqualified, or costly yet profitable. Where lead quality data is available, connect it to search terms and campaigns rather than treating every form submission as equal.

4. Ads, assets, and budgets

Review whether ad messages match the search intent and the page they lead to. Check headlines, descriptions, calls to action, ad assets, policy status, and any claims that need substantiation. Confirm that offers and prices are current. For a business that advertises a specific service, a generic landing page and generic ad can create unnecessary friction.

Assess budgets and bidding in context. Identify campaigns limited by budget, but do not automatically increase spend. First establish whether the campaign is bringing in the right outcomes and whether there is a credible opportunity to spend more efficiently. Similarly, an automated bidding strategy needs suitable conversion signals and enough relevant data; it is not a substitute for a measurement plan.

Tracking and Conversions: Verify Before Judging Results

Tracking and conversions are central to any credible PPC audit. Confirm which actions are tracked, where they are recorded, and whether each action represents a meaningful business outcome. A thank-you page visit, phone call, online purchase, and qualified sales opportunity are different events. They should not be treated as interchangeable without a clear reason.

Check for duplicate conversion actions, missing tags, broken event triggers, incorrect values, and conversions counted more than once. Review primary versus secondary actions and make sure bidding is not optimizing toward low-value events simply because they are easy to generate. Compare Google Ads reporting with analytics, CRM, call tracking, or transaction records while allowing for differences in attribution and reporting windows.

Test the user journey where possible: submit a test lead, make a test call, or complete a test purchase. Confirm that the event fires once and that lead data reaches the right destination. Follow applicable consent and privacy requirements. If tracking is unreliable, label performance conclusions as provisional and fix measurement before recommending major budget shifts.

Landing Pages and Dead Marketing Resources

A PPC audit should follow each important ad path to its destination. Check that the page loads, works on mobile, explains the relevant offer, and gives visitors a clear next step. Review form functionality, phone numbers, page speed, trust signals, and consistency between the ad and page. A strong campaign cannot compensate for a broken or outdated destination.

Also inspect older marketing resources: campaign pages, downloadable guides, event pages, and blog posts used in ads or referenced by other pages. A dead resource can waste paid clicks and frustrate visitors arriving from organic search, email, or backlinks. Decide whether to restore the page, replace it, redirect it, or retire it intentionally.

What a 410 Gone error means

An HTTP **410 Gone** status means the requested resource has been intentionally removed and is not expected to return. A **404 Not Found** means the server cannot find the resource; it does not explicitly state that the removal is

permanent. Both indicate that the requested page is unavailable, but they communicate different intent to clients and search engines.



Status What it communicates Common use 410 Gone The resource was deliberately removed and is expected to stay removed. A retired promotion or guide with no suitable replacement. 404 Not Found The requested resource could not be found; permanence is not specified. A mistyped URL or page that may have moved or been removed.

For SEO, neither status is automatically a penalty. Search engines may remove unavailable URLs from their indexes over time. The practical impact depends on the page's links, traffic, search visibility, and whether a relevant replacement exists. A 410 is not a shortcut for improving rankings, and serving a 410 for a page that should exist can make the problem worse.

How to replace a dead marketing resource

1. **Confirm the page is intentionally retired.** Check the URL, server response, CMS status, and whether the resource was moved accidentally.
2. **Assess its value.** Review paid traffic, organic visits, conversions, backlinks, and references from other pages.
3. **Choose the right outcome.** Restore it if it remains useful; create a replacement if the audience still needs the information; use a relevant redirect if a close successor exists; or return a 410 when the resource is permanently gone and there is no suitable replacement.
4. **Update the visitor journey.** Replace links in ads, emails, navigation, and related content. If you redirect, ensure the destination genuinely matches what visitors expected.
5. **Test the result.** Check status codes, redirects, mobile usability, forms, analytics events, and ad destinations.

Website infrastructure matters here. A team running a site on **Apache** or **Ubuntu** may configure status codes and redirects at the server level, in application code, or through a content management system. The implementation should be tested in the live environment: a page that displays a "gone" message but returns a 200 status is not the same as a genuine 410 response.

Evaluating Google Ads Specialists and Agencies

A good specialist can explain what they will inspect, what access they need, how they will validate tracking, and what the deliverable will include. Ask for a sample audit structure or a clearly scoped proposal. Pricing should specify whether the work is a one-time review, implementation, or ongoing management; avoid comparing proposals that bundle different services.

Use these questions to assess a provider:

- How will you define a qualified conversion for this business?
- What will you check in the account and on the landing pages?
- How do you test tracking and reconcile platform reports with CRM or sales data?
- Will you provide dated findings, evidence, priorities, and implementation steps?
- Who owns the account, data, conversion setup, and landing pages?
- What is excluded from the quoted price, and what requires additional approval?

Be cautious of guaranteed rankings, guaranteed lead volumes without assumptions, or claims that a secret account structure fixes everything. Ask for context behind case studies: industry, date range, budget, conversion definition, and what changed. Companies such as **Marketing91** can be useful sources of general marketing education, but a practical audit still needs to be based on the advertiser's own data, goals, and technical setup.

Turn Findings Into a Prioritized Plan

An audit should end with a short action plan, not a pile of screenshots. Separate urgent measurement or destination failures from strategic opportunities and optional experiments. For each recommendation, state the evidence, expected effect, effort, owner, and how success will be measured.

Priority Example finding Next step High Primary lead conversion is not firing reliably. Repair and test tracking before evaluating bid performance. High An active ad points to a retired resource. Pause or update the ad and provide a relevant destination. Medium Search terms show repeated irrelevant intent. Review negatives and targeting, then monitor query quality. Test A relevant service has limited coverage. Design a controlled test with a budget and success criteria.

Final Checklist

A useful PPC audit should leave the business able to answer:

- Are campaigns aligned with actual business priorities?
- Does the account structure support control and clear reporting?
- Are search terms, ads, budgets, and landing pages relevant to one another?
- Are tracking and conversions accurate enough to guide decisions?
- Do active ads and important links lead to working, appropriate resources?
- Are recommendations prioritized, priced clearly, and assigned to an owner?

The point of an audit is not to make an account look complicated or to change settings for the sake of activity. It is to establish what is happening, identify what prevents reliable performance, and set out the next steps with evidence. Start with what changed, verify measurement, and only then decide where the budget should go.