



From good to excellent:

The Performance Max checklist

Discover the winning formula for launching a successful PMAxcampaign with our Performance Max Checklist.

This works even as a step-by-step guide to unlock the full potential of this type of campaign. Did you think that it's fully automated and you don't need to do anything? Well, you were wrong. Don't just aim high, reach new heights instead.



Created in partnership with Thomas Eccel, Google Ads expert

This PDF was created in collaboration with Thomas Eccel, a recognized Google Ads expert with over 5 years of experience in the field. With more than 60,000 followers across LinkedIn and Twitter, Thomas was recently voted one of the Top 50 Most Influential PPC Experts of 2024.

Thomas began his Google Ads journey at the Google Ads Support team in Lisbon through Accenture. He then advanced to managing large European accounts as an in-house Google optimizer via Cognizant. In 2021, he took his expertise further, working with various accounts at Jung von Matt IMPACT in Switzerland.

His mission is to provide valuable resources and insights for fellow Google Ads professionals, helping them optimize their campaigns and stay ahead of industry trends.

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Make sure your data feed is fully optimized

Check if all products are present in Google Merchant Center

This might sound trivial, but it happens quite often that marketers leave some products behind.

TIP: Also, make sure your out-of-stock products are still in your feeds. Otherwise, your campaign will have to learn from scratch once the product is back in stock and appear as new in your feed.

All product titles are fine-tuned and include most of the essential information

Rich product titles should be clear, informative, and accurately describe listed products. To ensure this, include relevant keywords, product type, and brand name. But be careful, there is a limit of only 150 characters, and Google shortens your title to 75 characters. So, put the most important information first.

GTIN, EAN, MPN and/or SKU

These identifiers assist Google with correct product identification.

Google category and Product type

Categorize your products properly in Google's taxonomy. This, along with the product type, helps Google understand what your product is about.

Product descriptions describe the products

This is essential for machine learning to quickly understand your products. We suggest describing your product, target audience, and its benefits here.

Use sale_price field to highlight promotions

This field tells your customers how much you charge for your product during the sale. In Google Shopping, this is a very visible attribute that could significantly increase your conversions. See requirements [here](#).

Ensure data accuracy

Your data feed should be accurate and approved by Google. Resolving errors can significantly enhance a campaign's performance.

Optimize data feed attributes

Having all attributes in healthy condition will have a direct impact on your performance.

Include optional attributes like `<color>`, `<size>`, `<material>`, `<gender>`, `<age group>` to improve visibility.

Promotions & discounts: Utilize `<sale_price>` and `<promotion_id>` attributes for campaigns targeting specific deals.

Lifestyle and additional images: Add `<additional_image_link>` and `<lifestyle_image_link>` to give variety and context.

You images meet and videos Google's requirements and catch people's attention

There is no shopping campaign without a product image. Check if your images and videos meet [Google's requirements](#). Also, keep in mind that this is the first content of your ads that people see. Properly cropped images and a unified background can work wonders.

Use the `[video_link]` attribute to provide more visuals for your product as an add-on to your image attributes. Videos can show a product from different angles or demonstrate the product in use, and with the first Video Shopping Ads live in 2024, Google will surely push them in the future.



Take advantage of a Feed management platform

Dotidot's Feed management platform can help you with most of the tasks above and prevent any future errors from happening. Just set up rules and create your super-feed.



Implement Feed management strategies

Create labels for your products using updated data from Ad and Analytics platforms. For example: Zombies, top-performers, high-margin etc.



Check your product listings in Merchant Center Next

Check if your products are eligible and do not show any errors or warnings in your Merchant Center. Make sure your feed is regularly fetched and up-to-date.

Take a bird's-eye: Revisit your PPC strategy



Examine the structure of all your PPC campaigns

Understand the interaction between Google's campaign types. Read our [**Everything you ever wanted to know about Performance Max**](#) to understand how Search and PMax campaigns work altogether.

Verify your conversion tracking

In the privacy-centric era of marketing, tracking data has become a significant challenge for marketers. Since Performance Max operates as a smart campaign, it requires at least one properly functioning conversion goal, sourced from either GA4 or custom Google Ads tracking goals.

Conversion tracking is the foundation of PMax campaigns in a cookieless future and drives the Smart Bidding algorithm. To optimize performance, I recommend using robust conversion tracking, preferably native Google Ads conversions with Enhanced Conversions. Additionally, combine offline and online data through Google's offline conversion tracking (OCT) and implement Consent Mode V2.

Strategize how to build your Performance Max campaigns

You'll likely run multiple campaigns. Best practice is to categorize your PMAX campaigns by your objectives. For example, you might structure your campaigns based on various product margin levels, like one campaign for products with a 400% tROAS, the next for 500% tROAS, and the last for 600% tROAS for products with lower margins.

Plan how to structure the Asset groups for each campaign

There are many ways to approach Asset groups structure. You can divide it by product types, brands, categories or even target audiences. Or it can be a combination of several rules too.

Ensure you don't mix promo Asset groups with general Asset groups in a single campaign

If you're running a promotion, always edit the content (headlines, descriptions, assets) of your existing Asset groups instead of creating new ones. Why? Creating new ones can confuse the algorithm, and once the promotion ends, it could be challenging to return to the previous performance level. If you intend to run a separate Asset group with general promotional messaging, create a new campaign for that purpose.

Analyze performance for further optimization.

Use scripts to analyze the performance of your PMax campaigns by placement: Search, Shopping, Display, and Video. The key advantage is the ability to view the main KPIs for each placement, allowing you to quickly identify which placements are driving performance and which are not. If you are running a PMax Full Asset campaign and notice that Video is underperforming, consider reducing the number of YouTube videos to a minimum of one video per asset group.

TIP: Instead of relying on third-party scripts, you can analyze performance for placements and assets directly in Dotidot.

Main settings

Choose the right bidding strategy

When launching a Performance Max campaign, you have two options:

Maximize Conversions: This option aims to achieve the highest number of conversions within your budget. You can utilize target CPA (cost-per-action) to set cost boundaries.

Maximize Conversion Value: If you aim for higher-value conversions, even if they are fewer in number, this is your choice. Employ target ROAS (return on ad spend) to ensure cost-effectiveness.



Value-based bidding has recently become very popular among marketers, as it can increase the quality of your conversions. How does it work? This strategy considers stage-specific conversion values rather than simply assigning a value to the final conversion stage. It works for both Lead Generation and E-Commerce clients.

For example, imagine you are a Lead Generation advertiser with three primary conversion actions: Time on Page (30+ seconds), Newsletter Signup, and Submit Contact Form. The Submit Contact Form action is the most important and is assigned the highest conversion value, helping the algorithm understand that it should focus on maximizing these conversions.

– Thomas Eccel



Include logos in all available formats

We highly recommend including various logo creatives, encompassing different backgrounds, including transparent ones. Google's intelligence will select the most conversion-friendly option.

Upload images relevant to each Asset group

Images should be tailored to the specific Asset group. Alternatively, you can utilize brand images. Ensure image diversity by featuring various backgrounds, claims, pictures, etc. Also, present them in different formats: landscape, square, and portrait.

Upload videos relevant to each Asset group

The same principle applies to videos. Use either generic videos or asset-specific ones. Always upload at least one YouTube video to your Asset Group, if not Google Ads will create one automatically for you and usually they are not the prettiest ones.

Ensure Product listing groups align with Asset groups

Review the linked listing group to confirm that all relevant products are included. Given Performance Max's focus on the Shopping channel, this step is crucial.

Create all the available assets

You have access to various asset formats (formerly known as Ad extensions). We strongly recommend utilizing all of them. Three assets, in particular, are essential for optimal campaign performance: **Sitelinks, Callouts, and Structured Snippets**. [Learn more about these assets](#) for additional information.

Always use the most relevant Final URL

Many marketers may not be aware, but Google crawls the connected site to gather data for improved targeting. For example, if your Asset Group is all about t-shirts, using the homepage's final URL won't be as effective. Instead, ensure you provide the most accurate URL available.

Optimize audience signals for each Asset group

If your Performance Max campaign isn't achieving the desired results or if you want the algorithm to learn quickly, ensure that audience signals utilize all available features. Consider these tips:

Prioritize your own customer lists

Customer lists should be your top choice if you have sufficient customer data. Real-life data aids Google in identifying potential customers effectively. Your customer list targeting is used in Smart Bidding and optimized targeting to help you get the most out of your campaigns. Customer Match is currently available on Search, the Shopping tab, YouTube, Gmail, and Display.

Search intent audiences help a lot

Search intent audiences (people searching relevant keywords) provide valuable insights into what your audience is actively seeking.

Recognize the importance of website audiences

Focus on website visitors especially when customer lists aren't available. Segment audiences based on specific categories, products, and even website converters.

Explore interest-based audiences

Optional

While interest-based audiences can provide some additional value, you should keep them as the last option. The tips mentioned above will have the most significant impact. Consider interest-based audiences as a supplementary step to explore.

Advanced settings



Account level negative keywords

While it may not initially appear to be related to the Performance Max campaign, it is quite the opposite. If you are aware of specific keywords that your campaign should not bid on, specify them in your Negative Keywords Lists. The challenge here is that these negative keywords apply to all campaigns. If this poses an issue, you can contact Google to link a specific Negative Keywords List exclusively to the Performance Max campaign.

Coming soon: Google announced in 2024 that PMax campaigns will soon be eligible for campaign-level negatives, a feature requested by the PPC community since the launch of PMax in November 2021.



Exclude brand keywords from your campaign

Optional

If you are running a separate Brand campaign, you should be safe as the Search campaign will get the priority over PMAX while bidding for your brand keywords. Nevertheless, we recommend utilizing the new Brand Exclusions feature to not only eliminate your brand keywords but also competitor keywords.

Pro tips from the pros

Utilize a marketing automation platform

If you want to gain an edge over your competition, this is a must. Automation platforms offer a range of features that can fine-tune your Performance Max campaign. Don't be fooled into thinking that having Performance Max means less work for you. To achieve the best performance, you still need to keep your data up-to-date and align your campaign structure with your inventory. Automation rules will be immensely helpful.

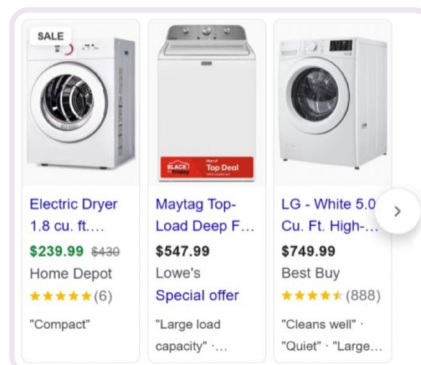
TIP : Dotidot combines a Feed Management platform with advanced marketing automation. It can be the only solution you need to elevate your campaign's performance.

Experiment with images beyond official Google's policies

Experienced performance marketing specialists have discovered that you can sometimes push the boundaries of Google's official image policies. Feel free to try various backgrounds for your product images, especially if you have multiple variants of the same product.

In November 2024, a very clever and creative shopping image example was spotted by Bob Meijer, where the advertiser added a „Black Friday – Top Deal“ overlay to their washing machine image to highlight their special offer. The image was not flagged by Google and likely boosted the eCommerce conversion rate.

TIP : Dotidot's image editor enables dynamic image editing. Use it to boost click-through rates and sales in the Shopping channel.





Leverage price competitiveness

If you're using a Feed Management platform, make the most of Price Competitiveness reports in Google Merchant Center. Label your products based on this data and use it to your advantage.



Test audience signals

Optional

To speed up the learning phase of your campaign, consider duplicating the Asset group and using different audience signals. Give it some time and retain the one that delivers the best results. Adopt advanced metrics like CPI (Conversions Per Impression) and RPI (Revenue Per Impression) to assess campaign-level effectiveness.

Revisit this list for continuous optimization





**Campaigns that perform,
strategies that win**

Feed management

Product strategies

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