ANNA'S TIP

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1. Search ads that appear within Google or Bing are essentially free to the platform. They have an opportunity cost versus hard cost.

2. Focus on your business goals rather than on your current conver-sion rates to start. How many new customers do you want monthly, quarterly, annually? Of all the actual opportunities you have to present your solutions to a new qualified customer, which percentage do you win? Of all the "leads," what is your typical demo or proposal shared rate? This will serve as your new baseline to set an online budget.

3. Conversion rates can vary by industry based on seasonality. For retailers, Q4 is the highest-grossing revenue quarter; in solar, Q3 is the hottest; for trade schools, it's Q1. You must take that into consideration when launching your solution and give your campaign enough time to work before pressing pause.

4. In the new G4 Analytics, Google is now using the concept of "engaged traffic" to show how many people stayed on the site versus focusing on the number of people that didn't. So this is the metric to look at and is considered un-bounced traffic.

5. Never use drop-down menus on your website. It places the burden on the customer to pick a path. You want to guide them on their journey. Organize content using internal menus, tabs, or toggles to make sure customers don't get lost or confused on their way to conversion.

6. Print out the brand foundations exercise annually and then review your responses year-over-year. See what is different (if anything) about your team's answers and then review your current website's content. Yes, reread everything. Ask yourself if your brand's direction is still aligned with your current site's copy, imagery, and site map.

7. Trust your instincts and keep it simple. Overthinking this journey is a waste of your time. The most important thing is that you understand the concept that different users will come to your site for unique reasons, and we must show them what is most important for them.

8. Before you pick a framework, identify all the user experiences from your customer journey exercise. Will you need an events calendar? Does your site need to take a payment? Will you be storing personal infor-mation? Will your site be multilingual? These features and functions must be available via website plug-ins for any framework you choose to ensure you keep your development costs low and installation time fast.

9. Always look at the total number of active installations before picking a theme. Avada has over 900K active installations with 25K five-star ratings. This guarantees that they will always support the product and continue to invest in new features and designs. Don't pick a partner that hasn't updated to the latest version of WordPress and has fewer than 40K installations.

10. Try to plan out your promotions at the beginning of the year centered around holidays and do the math before creating online sales. Create best-case and worst-case scenarios and then only if you MUST generate cash flow quickly should you break from the plan. Create other opportu-nities to increase sales from your existing customer base using targeted messaging and more urgency with limited product releases or presales - no promo required.

11. Always maintain ownership of your domain and never give anyone your login. If someone requires access, you can grant them "delegate" access to your account using their email, protecting your property.

12. Always pick an open-source software to keep costs low and ensure you have the control and choice to use another developer or partner at any time.

13. A great partner in this space is Osana.com, which offers a pixel and backend to manage all things related to ensuring your business is meeting global obligations online with cookie preferences, and secure forms to request account deletion, etc. They also are so confident that their worldwide solutions are top-notch that if a protected domain is the subject of a lawsuit, they will cover $200K worth of legal fees. Great support and highly recommended!

14. Don't ever upload a list from a third party into your email program without first running a verified double-opt-in message. This can also be accomplished from your mail provider, but ask yourself, is it worth it? With so much noise and email clutter, what do you think the likelihood of someone opening your email is without any previous interaction with your brand? If they did open it, will they be happy that you found them or annoyed? Don't put your brand in the junk category. This type of strategy is a dead end.

15. Make sure your website leads and paid vendor leads go directly into your CRM and are not received via email. Lead providers should be able to use webhooks, web-to-lead forms, Zapier, or custom scripts to create leads directly into your CRM and pass over the required fields: name, email, phone, address, notes, appointment day/time, lead source, and assign it to the correct user on your team for next steps. If you're using WordPress as your website framework, ALWAYS install CRM backup (a free plug-in) that will serve as a backup for all form submissions. Redun-dancy is key online. It's best practice to be a little paranoid (technology breaks) and make sure you never lose a lead.

16. Your online marketing budget should be fluid, which means that you have spending goals by month or quarter, but will only spend what you must. If you don't spend it all in the outlined month, it should roll over into the following month to meet online changes in demand. Sometimes this also means spending far more during key demand periods.

17. Before hiring a media company to conduct an online campaign on your behalf ask them what their attribution model is. If their answer is anything besides thirty-day or seven-day click and twenty-four-hour view-through, run for the hills.

18. To generate a fast and dirty UTM, use a builder -> https://ga-dev-tools. google/campaign-url-builder/ and print out my cheat sheet to get started with naming hierarchy best practices.

19. Create a company leads-goal for marketing and closed sales goals for sales. There will be ways to track leads by source, but it will never be pure because the customer's journey online and offline coexist (and the goal of both is to get the customer to arrive at your website). The only way to track a pure conversion from paid search is if it happens on the same visit.

20. Ask your media partner how they acquire their data. If the answer is "lists" or if they use the word "geo-fencing," back away slowly.

21. Make sure to ask how your partner acquires data and that when using third-party sources how they created those seed lists. This includes the age of the data, that is, thirty-day refreshed list of Individuals who are New Homeowners based on surveys, social media data, sweepstakes, online activity, public records, and purchase data.

22. Make your alt tags as descriptive as possible, which will increase the total keywords on your site and ensure that all users will have the best experience. To make on-page SEO easier, install a plug-in like Yoast (WordPress) that will help you write meta titles that are the correct length. Visit thecovertcode.com for detailed tips on on-site SEO.

23. To this day, Google will not allow clients or agencies to stay with the same rep. The only exception is if you are an agency-approved Google advertiser, but that requires you to manage all accounts from a single account, which is not ideal because you can't separate billing (i.e., use different payment methods). This also influences your ability to report on clients' measured conversions because the full account will link to all of their G4 accounts. The overall result is not favorable for anyone. For business owners reading this, you now have no control of your account to verify that your ads ran or conversions fired. Best practice is to set up your own verified business account and then grant third-party access to your agency or team to manage on your behalf, always maintaining ownership level and billing control.

24. Only use Google Search or Microsoft Search for intent ad campaigns. Do not use partners, display, or remarketing campaigns. The same rules apply on both platforms.

25. Be careful when planning budgets in Google because they are based on thirty days from the start of your campaign, not monthly. This can impact your marketing reporting and also get you into trouble if you stop the campaign early, as they may have already spent more than they should (front-loaded) and you potentially could be missing out on impression share, that is, they have to continue to show your ad even if they overspend your budget. Always note your campaign date start and plan spend over the next thirty days for reporting.

26. Don't panic and make rash decisions based on your optimization score or warning message from Google to switch your strategy. Every day, Google will make optimization recommendations on your account (the same ones every day). You just need to reject them and your score will go back up to 100 percent.

27. Always use CallTracking and listen to calls generated from your paid search campaigns, manually tagging them as a qualified lead, or if not, add clear tags like solicitor, service not provided, out of territory, or wrong company, so you can identify patterns in search and drill down to your true cost-per-lead by campaign and paid source. Check thecovertcode.com for more tips and recommendations on CallTracking

28. There are ways to view the number of conversions at a granular level inside of Google, which can help you get an idea of how well you're doing without leaving the platform. Just click "tools and settings" under measurement "conversions" in the top left corner, select "view all con-version actions," and now you can see each, and the total count as well as repeat rate (same customer fired two events).

29. Never advertise on your own business name unless a competitor is. That is one of the easiest ways to overspend. If no competitor is adver-tising your name and a customer comes to Google and searches for you, your organic website will pop up right at the top first organic position. If you are advertising on your name or don't have a negative keyword list with your company name in it, your expensive ad will appear right above your organic listing and 30 percent+ of people will click on the first thing they see, drastically impacting your budget and goals to acquire new customers. If an advertiser is bidding on your name, create a unique "brand protection campaign" and set a low CPC of $1 max. As this is your company, Google will most likely show you as the top result and then the competitors beneath you (before your organic listing).

30. Front-load your marketing spend for launch. After your initial $1,500 spend, commit to another three weeks with search impression share over 50 percent on all campaigns to get a real view of your potential. Starting and stopping campaigns online result in the algorithms' learning process breaking. That means you are starting over again, so don't do that. Whatever your annual marketing budget is, go ahead and allocate 50 percent to search and stick with it, making optimizations to increase results.

31. Always select the setting "optimize" that allows the remarketing platform to test and choose the ad that delivers higher performance. There are other ways to control ad delivery, including options to rotate ads, run ads in sequence (based on number of displays each user sees before switching creative), or prioritize delivery.

32. Always place at least two pixels for remarketing companies so that you can ensure that ads are being served. As AdRoll is easy to set up, start there while you go through the steps to get approved by Criteo and StackAdapt. Although these are vetted solutions, there are many other companies and they might provide similar value and oversight, so just make sure to use your Covert Code guidelines when selecting a partner.

33. With regard to CPC bidding, when you first start a remarketing campaign, you will need an audience pool of at least one hundred users before ads really start to be served. Start with an aggressive bid (maybe $2) to dangle a carrot to the platform, urging them to serve as many ads as possible. Schedule daily reports that show your spend, win rate, and CPC and then, as with search, adjust your bid up or down to reach the desired win rate. Note: 1.0 percent means 100 percent, and 0.47 means 47 percent. It is possible to win over 100 percent; it depends on the number of scrolls. If you have a 200 percent or 300 percent win rate, that means you're winning ad display on the second and third scroll. In StackAdapt, the platform will suggest a CPM, so just stick with that, or if you want to be more aggressive, go up a dollar. Go get 'em, tiger!

34. For advertisers not physically located in the area you're trying to target, always add your zip code into the targeted list and make sure your browser is not blocking ads. Then visit your website often and make sure you are seeing ads. If you have been running for over a week and are seeing reported impressions or measurable daily per-user frequency and have not ever seen the ad yourself, then chances are you have the wrong partner. Want to see how it should work? Visit covertcommunication.com and enjoy! Remember, I'm only being charged if you click.

35. Social media is an opportunity to engage with your audience in a two-way conversation. If you don't want to commit to this, then pick another way to control your messaging. Remember, even with a paid social media, the end users can still make comments that are public and seen by all other people your ad is reaching.

36. Always create long-tail lifetime ads in social channels (thirty days) and give the platform time to deliver the best results and "make the match." The shorter the campaign length, the higher the cost to deliver impres-sions and generate clicks.

37. Visit thecovertcode.com/partners to get access to all of our preferred referral programs. Anyone who signs up using our link will help support a local Hawaii nonprofit. We also have negotiated special COVERT rates to help you get the very best solutions for your business.

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