

25 EXPERTS ON THE

# BIG 2018 PPC TRENDS

YOU NEED TO KNOW

WRITTEN BY  
DANNY GOODWIN

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**PPC**  
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# DANNY GOODWIN

Executive Editor of Search Engine Journal. In addition to overseeing SEJ's editorial strategy and managing contributions from a team of 60+ industry experts, he also writes news and articles about SEO, PPC, social media marketing, content marketing. Danny has been a professional editor, writer, and ghostwriter in the marketing industry for 10 years, creating content for SMBs to global brands, spanning all things search and digital. He formerly was managing editor of Momentology and editor of Search Engine Watch.

# 25 EXPERTS ON THE BIG 2018 PPC TRENDS YOU NEED TO KNOW

Another exciting year of PPC is almost over. That means its time to gaze into our crystal ball to see the future of paid search, with the help of some of the smartest industry experts.

Artificial intelligence and voice search were among the hot topics in our [2017 edition of PPC trends](#). And it looks like we'll be hearing a lot about those again over the next year.

So what are some other big PPC trends you need to know about in 2018?

Better audience targeting (and strategies) appear to be the big consensus for 2018.

Will automation continue to grow in importance?

Will advertisers start investing more in social platforms, such as Facebook and LinkedIn?

And what the heck is up with the Google AdWords interface? Will we get a solution or more frustration in 2018?

Read on to find out what 25 of the top marketing experts say will be the biggest PPC trends for paid search, social ads, and remarketing in 2018 – and beyond.



# JEFF BAUM

**Director of Services, Hanapin Marketing**

The biggest trend for PPC marketers to focus on in 2018 is adopting machine learning. Between Google upgrading its smart bidding technologies, updating ad rotation settings, and rolling out smart display campaigns, they've signaled that machine learning is critical to performance increase.

As a PPC marketer, it'll be important to take advantage of machine learning to gain deeper insights into account performance and its underlying drivers so account managers can make more informed strategy decisions. Leveraging machine learning will drive creative messaging, audience targeting, and bidding in new, more granular ways that allow marketers to gain a leg up on their competition.



# ILYA CHEREPAKHIN

**Executive Director, Acronym**

In 2018, I foresee marketers getting pushed on two fronts: unleashing the intelligence of audience management and making strides with voice search. Other challenges – multi-channel attribution, smart bidding automation, and cross-device analytics – will remain. However, I believe that [audience management](#) and [voice search](#) will open up even greater frontiers for success.

Integration of audience data with paid search campaigns brings the much-needed intelligence behind keyword inferred demand. Keywords are still the key determinant of a user's needs.

However, with added audience targeting, marketers can now tailor messaging, user

experience, and monetization strategies a lot better. Successful marketers will set themselves apart by customizing their efforts at scale and creating dedicated strategies for paid search prospecting together with retargeting.

While still evolving, voice search can't be ignored. Marketers need to rethink their strategies – for both for PPC and natural presence – as voice taps into a different type of behavior than that of a typical mobile user. It won't be enough to continue using your current mobile search approach.

True leaders will go beyond executional adaptation, rethinking the entire marketing planning for the voice user. It will be necessary to have new marketing objectives, reconsider what products or services are the best fit for voice users, and create new mobile experiences for them.





# JUSTIN FREID

**Senior Vice President – Search, Social & Emerging Media, CMI Media**

Looking forward into 2018, changes in consumer behavior will continue to evolve how we market to them through paid search.

With another holiday season on the books where in-home gadgets like Amazon's Echo/Dot and Google Home are at the top of everyone's list, we should begin to see additional shift toward purchases and searches being done through voice command.

As this behavior changes, companies like Amazon and Google will see opportunities to create new advertising formats. This presents a great opportunity for paid search/biddable media managers to use their intent-based media strategy thinking to capture active searchers/shoppers.

I also envision brand safety playing a large role in various biddable media decisions.

For a long time, it's been all about getting in front of the right person as efficiently as possible. But we must continue to ensure our brands are being represented alongside content that is credible and safe.

Within the last six months, this specific issue has been highlighted by larger advertisers removing their ad buys from large publishers. This sets up 2018 for publishers to make significant improvements in brand safety capabilities.

This can potentially come with a shift in supply and demand. With fewer impressions available, brand-safe impressions could come at a higher cost.

Enhanced segmentation will also continue to help drive change in 2018. From demographic bidding to cookie data, marketers will begin taking more

advantage of highly segmented audiences and provide a more customized and personalized experience.

Currently, widespread retargeting efforts are easy to use but poorly executed. Having these options at your fingertips in places like AdWords will make them more accessible and increase adoption by advertisers.



# DANIEL GILBERT

CEO, Brainlabs

Here are three trends to watch in 2018:

## **1. Audiences Slightly More Important in Search**

As much as I love keywords, next year is probably the first time in the history of search where a solid keyword strategy won't be enough in itself.

The best PPC in 2018 will include effective audience targeting, too, using similar and in-market audiences, and retargeting based on integrated data from search, display and video.

The keyword is still in charge, but audience data will separate the civilians from the superheroes.

## **2. Google Will Try to Invade More of Our Territory**

If you're at least half decent at search, resist the temptation to use DSAs – they're for amateurs. Google may have mastered(-ish) autonomous driving, but PPC strategy is still safely within the remit of humans.

As always, be ready to build your own automation whenever Google chips away at your control: this year it was exact match and daily budgets, expect a few more invasions next year. Be vigilant.

## **3. Google Shopping**

Either it will keep getting more and more awesome, or the European Commission will force Google to undo all their good work.

If the latter, could be a hard couple of years for Google and all those who rely on it (like me).

No real advice, just keep your fingers crossed.



# ANDREW GOODMAN

President, Page Zero Media

What are the big stories for PPC marketers as we go into 2018?

## 1. The New AdWords Interface

Almost every seasoned PPC practitioner I know is howling with dismay at the apparently forced switch to the “New AdWords Interface.” Is this a vanity project run amok?

Granted, the old interface looks plain. But unlike Google Analytics, we aren’t merely “viewing” our AdWords accounts, we’re working with them for hours a day, doing countless small tasks. These tasks are not getting faster for us under the new interface.

Every advertiser I know, currently, is switching back to the old interface by hunting around for the little wrench icon to revert, possibly several times daily. How is that helping our productivity?

We beg of Google: give us at least two years' more of continued access to the old interface. This is far beyond the "you'll get used to it and it will be better for you," like flossing your teeth. It is ruining my day.

Looking ahead, I'd suggest that various third-party layers may come more heavily into play; very unfortunately, third parties might be forced to think in terms of building tools just to mimic tasks that are now clunky to undertake in the AdWords interface. I weep at that kind of duplication, but it may become necessary at some point. ("Old interface emulator," anyone?)

## **2. It's a Great Time to Be a Data Analyst**

Detailed and high-quality reporting is often a source of detailed insights that can lead not only to account tweaks but entire changes in corporate strategy. As a PPC marketer, although we do seem

to have to go through this exercise in full every two years, I'd be seeking to fully revamp my reporting routine, including investigating Google Data Studio as a solution.

And PPC marketers will do well to familiarize themselves with other Business Intelligence (BI) tools, whose capabilities are rapidly evolving. Just as some capabilities in analytics have trickled from large enterprises all the way down to the small business level, some enterprise analytics tools that once served larger enterprises are under threat from upstarts that serve the mid-market.

### **3. Increasing Facebook & LinkedIn Budgets**

Facebook and LinkedIn budgets should increase by 100-200 percent next year (unless you've been overspending wildly there).

As a caveat, though, force yourself to acquire new customers in these channels, as well as AdWords and Bing. Don't lean so heavily on remarketing or you won't grow.





# MARK IRVINE

**Senior Data Scientist, WordStream**

Marketing has never been about the semantics, and I guarantee that digital marketing is going to continue to follow suit in 2018.

In the past year, we saw the depreciation of “exact match” keywords and the rise of more keyword-free solutions like dynamic search ads and new shopping campaign formats. Even when creating ad copy, Google is turning away from semantics control and automated ad rotation and even creating ads on behalf of advertisers.

Search isn't dead, the keyword isn't dead, but you'll find yourself behind in the next year if that's still your sole focus.

Instead, digital marketing is turning toward the personal and targeting the right people.

Facebook (and nearly all social) advertising exclusively connects us to different audience solutions, rather than semantics, and Facebook's 40 percent growth in ad revenue in the past year is a strong indicator that it's effective and resonating. And the search engines know this trend too.

In the past, the engines made big bets on semantics and new ad formats (ETAs, anyone?). But now half the innovations out of the search giants are audience solutions – RLSA, Similar Audiences, Customer Match, Demographics, Life Event targeting, and coming soon – In Market and Consumer Pattern targeting.

Similarly from Bing, we all had the same thought when Microsoft bought LinkedIn – and it was about how we could leverage that audience data within the search platform. The key to success in 2018 and beyond is thinking of who and how people are reaching us, and how we can make sure we're reaching all the right people.



# PAULINE JAKOBER

**CEO, Group Twenty Seven**

Next year, I predict that Google will put more resources into audience targeting methods — especially on the Search Network — while, at the same time, advertisers will become increasingly sophisticated users of existing AdWords targeting options.

Current targeting options outside of keywords on the Search Network are unwieldy, especially when trying to target specific groups of individuals based on multiple attributes. Today, the only way to do this is by exclusion, which is cumbersome.

Google will address this shortcoming through a slow shift in focus from keywords to user intent. Google has already blurred the lines between

different keyword match types, for example. And perhaps it will eventually eliminate keyword match type entirely (although it seems unlikely this will happen as soon as next year).

Google will be emboldened to continue this “keyword to user intent” transition as advertisers become more skilled at targeting their preferred audiences by other means, such as demographic targeting. Most advertisers are well versed in location and device adjustments, but few of us are as well versed in the demographic targeting that was introduced in 2016.

For example, I can see advertisers using demographic options to exclude or set lower bid adjustments for some demographic segments, such as gender or age, when data warrants it.

Of course, one argument against layering in this kind of targeting is the significant portion of “unknown” in our data. But I expect advertisers will develop strategies to manage unknown

data as well, such as separating “unknowns” into different ad groups and adjusting bids accordingly.

Facebook advertisers are accustomed to the precise target options available on that platform. Google will surely strive to offer its users a comparable experience in the coming year.



# JENNIFER (JOHNSTONE) LOPEZ

**Global Director of Biddable Media at LEWIS  
Piston Agency**

In 2018, I expect to see the following:

## **Increase in Voice Searches**

More marketers will be adding longer-tail keywords into their paid search account, and working to understand if there truly is enough difference between standard text-based search and voice search to warrant additional builds. Though my guess is there will only be small gains, many marketers are hoping the incremental will help them reach their 2018 goals.

## **Mobile Continues to Grow**

No surprise there – it's been the year of mobile for many years now. However, Google is now really making an effort to reach out to PPC professionals to make sure their websites and landing pages are mobile-friendly.

In many instances, we've had Google offer to walk us through how to create AMP pages, how to optimize for mobile site speed and more. For accounts without dedicated SEO teams or web development teams, we definitely recommend that PPC teams work on making sure the site is mobile optimized.

## **Expanded, More-Precise Targeting**

In 2017, we saw the addition of email-based Customer Match to expand our remarketing efforts and tighten up our messaging. In 2018, we will see additional audiences become available in AdWords – one of which will be address-based Customer Match.

## **Complications from the New AdWords Interface**

As expected, the new AdWords interface has really thrown some marketers for a loop. Though the new interface claims to be faster, many marketers are citing how much slower it is, and that it tends to crash.

While there are some great new features only available in the new interface (and it's not going away, so you might as well switch over now), there are some things left to be desired. For one, our custom views and templated reports weren't carried over to the new interface and if this is true for all accounts, it means many PPC professionals are going to need to recreate their views, filters, and reports.





# LARRY KIM

CEO, Mobile Monkey

At a high level, Facebook Ads and Google ads offer two completely different ad targeting methods:

- Search is for businesses where people know what they're looking for, but not where to find it.
- Social is great for when you know who the target audience looks like in terms of demographics, interests and behaviors – and want to get in front of them without having to wait for them to search.

In 2018 and beyond, Facebook and Google will copy each other's ad targeting features.

For example, Facebook could offer "in-market audiences" based on searching and browsing behavior (remember that most major sites in

the world have the Facebook tracking pixel installed). This would be far superior to the existing, static audience segments that Facebook offers.

If you liked the Porsche company page 10 years ago, you're still in that audience today, and it certainly doesn't indicate that a purchase is imminent – Google in-market display advertising audiences are so much different in this respect as their audiences are dynamically populated in real time by factoring in customer intent: adding people who are searching for Porphes, and removing people who appear to have lost interest, giving a huge advantage to Google.

Conversely, Google's search audience targeting is extremely limited. Where Facebook offers tens of thousands of built-in audience segmentation options for every imaginable type of person, Google only allows for targeting based on a measly 3 criteria:

- Age.
- Gender.
- Parental status.

Yet Google has just as much data on our identity as Facebook does, they just choose not to expose it as Facebook has done, for privacy reasons.

Hopefully, 2018 will be the year Google finally opens up demographics/interest and behavioral targeting across their search ad products so that we can target not only keywords, but also the people behind the searches. Google absolutely needs to do it for performance and competitive reasons, or else risk losing even more ad dollars to Facebook.



# PETE KLUGE

**Group Manager, Product Marketing, Adobe Advertising Cloud**

A few areas where we expect there to be a big focus next year include more streamlined options to deliver relevant experiences across offline and online marketing – including search, as well as more audience integrations with marketing automation solutions.

We also expect to see an increased emphasis on feed-driven experiences, search to TV advertising connections and more options for connecting offline or in-store purchases to online advertising channels and optimization.



# AARON LEVY

Senior Team Lead, Paid Search, Elite SEM

There'll be two major trends to dominate PPC in 2018, both working closely together to deliver a better experience to consumers with (hopefully) less effort from advertisers: **Audiences + Automation.** 2017 showed a myriad of features getting their debut in the light, but at this phase, most are just coming out of Beta – I predict they'll be fully in the limelight in 2018.

The two will work closely hand in hand.

Google clearly has the leg up on data collection – their persistence in all facets of life (home, mobile, and work) means they have a pretty clear idea of who searchers are and what they're looking for. They have a ton of data on who we

are, when we do things and how we do them. They can paint a picture of who audiences are and map them out into separate categories, which to date has primarily been a focus for display.

Once these tools are fully layered into search, I expect we'll see micro-economies start to develop as everyone gets aggressive on the most desirable audiences.

As a result of all of this shiny new data, we should start to see far more robust automation tools beyond bidding and targeting. Google's already started to roll out "smart" bid systems galore; these tools will get better and better over time the more they learn, so they should be in the mainstream going forward.

I suspect we'll see some friction between Google/Bing and third party tools as a result, though I'd expect Google to continue to have a powerful open API for them to play with.

We won't see the death of keywords or the death of the PPC manager any time soon. Even self-driving cars have steering wheels after all; we'll just need to shift our focus from day to day manual adjustments to focus more on intent + psychographics while letting machines do our bidding (pun intended).



# ANDREW LOLCK

**Lead PPC Manager, Founder, Savvy Revenue**

## **The Predictable: Shopping Ads Will Become Less Profitable, Unless...**

I saw this come true especially in the 2017 Christmas season. When comparing Shopping Ad campaigns year-over-year, spend increased significantly, and ROI decreased for accounts where Shopping wasn't actively managed and optimized.

I accredit this to the amount of search queries that Shopping ads have been expanded to. But at the same time PPC managers need to get out of the mindset that Shopping Ads just takes care of itself.

It was definitely true that you'd have high ROI with Shopping Ads with the switch of a button just a couple of years ago, but not today.



I highly recommend anyone working in e-commerce to get to the forefront of Google Shopping campaign optimization, including feed optimization.

Trying to optimize Shopping campaigns without optimizing the feed is like trying to optimize a website for search engines without touching the site. No matter what you do, you can't fix a broken site. Same thing with your feed.

## **The Contrarian: Voice Search Will Not Matter in 2018**

Or said in another way: I don't think we can take advantage of voice search in 2018.

We are not able to differentiate our ads to voice searches. We are not able to identify which searches are voice searches (i.e. like Search Partners for instance). We are not able to serve new ad formats to voice searches.

Voice Search will be a new entity that we need better control over and we need the ability to measure performance for voice searches differently. I just don't think we'll get any of those things in 2018, which is why I predict that even though we'll all be using voice search, then it will not matter for most of us managing search ads.

## **The Guess: Google Will Try to Automate Campaign Management**

My prediction is that Google will continue adding things to the interface that do two things at the same time:

- Automates campaign management for the end-advertiser
- Complicates campaign management for agencies

Now, I'm not saying that Google will come out with completely automated AdWords campaigns. My prediction is based on Google introducing more elements that take control away from savvy PPC managers.

I'm not one of those people who believe Google doesn't want to work with agencies. I've first-hand seen how much they've ramped up agency support in the latter years and I know they're focusing on having superb relationships with agencies.

But honestly, the department that works with agencies is a completely different entity inside Google than the one working on the new interface and campaign management features.

And that team is not doing anything for the interface to be easier for the more savvy PPC managers. Whether it's removing the ability to rotate ads and run their automated bid management at the same time, or it's the new Universal App Campaigns, then they're slowly taking away options for customization.

This gives an opportunity to third-party tools.

PPC managers aren't going away, and we'll not want to follow Google down the rabbit hole of a mediocre, limiting AdWords interface.

Imagine a group of real PPC managers getting together and designing a brand new experience for managing AdWords layered on top of their API. See that's neat. It'll be a big investment for any company to make, but if Google continues going this route, then you'll have all PPC managers in the world wanting to work in your tool.



# MELISSA MACKEY

Search Supervisor, gyro

2018 is going to be all about A's: audiences and artificial intelligence.

**Audiences** have been big for a while. Ever since remarketing came on the scene and Facebook started running ads, we've been focused not just on what keywords people are using to find us, but who they are.

Keywords have always been somewhat of a mystery to clients – they don't necessarily understand how keywords work, or even what keywords are. But every marketer understands audiences.

Traditional media is sold based on audiences.  
Business schools teach students about audiences.  
We all understand them inherently.

We're already starting to see search powerhouses like Google and Bing introducing more ways to target audiences, and that will continue in 2018. Let's face it – Facebook is leading the pack when it comes to efficient audience targeting, and Google wants to avoid losing market share.

Keywords aren't going away anytime soon, but audiences are where it's at.

**Artificial intelligence**, or AI, has become a buzzword in 2017. In 2018, we'll see AI become a bigger part of marketing workflows.

Much has been made over Google's introduction of using AI for attribution modeling and conversion optimization – in 2018, utilization of Google's AI will skyrocket. Bid management platforms are starting to adopt AI into their algorithms as well.

While AI seems to improve performance, it will be important to remember that ultimately, human interaction is still important. There will probably be some big shakeups when organizations start depending too much on AI.



# ELIZABETH MARSTEN

**Lead PPC Manager, Founder, Savvy Revenue**

Last year, I stated that when it comes to e-commerce it would be the need for feeds, more of them and more often and I'd say that the trend was there, but not as prevalent as I thought it would be. So I'm staying close to this as a trend for 2018 as well.

## **Advertising on Amazon**

Advertising on Amazon means that you have to be selling on Amazon (which is a whole other post) and the primary way you sell on Amazon is through feeds, not just your catalog here and there, but with the volume and speed needed (if not more) to power Google Product Listing Ads, especially around pricing and inventory.



Pinterest also opened up their self-serve advertising options late this year with keyword, audience and interest targeting and while you can upload and work within the program manually, you need a product feed to scale it.

## **Enhanced/Unique Product Content**

Content has always been a top of mind need, you can bring a user to page via PPC, but that last click to buy, if not price driven, can come down to the information provided. Whether that's a review, a how to video, multiple or unique images, bulleted details about the features, or fit and feel details.

With marketplaces like Amazon, eBay, and Walmart also buying PLA traffic to drive to their product detail pages (and depending on the vertical, having visible impact to rising CPCs and available SERP inventory), the need to be competitive and unique not only for users, PLA SERPs and Quality Score, but also beneficial to anywhere else product data is submitted or lives will increase.



# MICHELLE MORGAN

**Director of Client Services, Clix Marketing**

I believe there are going to be two seemingly conflicting trends in PPC in 2018. In some ways, marketers are going to have to work harder to even get the same results they've seen in the past, whereas in other areas, we're going to have to learn to let go and let the channel algorithms work for us.

## **Working Harder & Creativity**

Audience targeting rose as a big influencer on PPC performance in 2017. I believe this impact will continue in 2018, but marketers will have to spend more time optimizing to gain similar or better results.

It seems like many folks I talk to have had the frustrating experience of attempting to scale in social channels after a successful test and finding that performance decreases as scale increases.

To overcome this issue, marketers need to continuously update who they're targeting, the messaging they are using, and shift away from offering only the bottom of the funnel conversion actions.

Brands that are unwilling to shift from a direct selling message to something more helpful or valuable, particularly in B2B, will find it harder to continually generate positive numbers month over month.

## **Automation & Letting Go**

Many of us started as search marketers and thus have a seemingly insatiable need to control every aspect of our campaigns. But, a couple of things make me think we're going to need to give that up for the sake of algorithmic efficiency.

- Social channels are more heavily emphasizing automated bidding. Personally, I find the automated bidding in these networks to be superior to what I can do manually, and I see better results with it. It's hard to put this in a "set it and forget it" type of place, but it's honestly what's best for the campaigns. I believe there's potential for this to be true with search as well, though in my opinion, the algorithms have some advancing to do first.
- In Google, we've seen the rise of ad component creation rather than ad unit creation. In Smart Display Campaigns, as well as Universal App Campaigns, you simply provide components of an ad (headlines, descriptions, display URLs and images for Smart campaigns) that are rotated and optimized for you. Facebook also has a similar feature coming down the pike that's being rolled out to select accounts.

I believe that in 2018 advertisers will need to think about ad creation in complimentary components rather than full ad units. We'll have to give up some control to use these, but I have a feeling that we're not going to be given a choice in the long run.



# JD PRATER

**Director of Growth Marketing, AdStage**

There are four main trends that I'll be keeping my eye on in 2018:

## **1. Google-Facebook Duopoly Continues**

The Google-Facebook duopoly is the ultimate one-two knockout for marketers. In 2018, we'll continue to see more budget allocated to these networks as the main drivers of conversions and revenue.

## **2. Deeper Funnel Metrics like Offline Conversions**

CMOs are focusing on measuring the ROI of total marketing spend, according to Gartner. To do so, marketers will need to measure and optimize beyond leads and look to down-funnel metrics to understand the full story.

I predict they'll adopt Facebook's Offline Conversions and AdWords custom conversions to justify their ad spend. Others will look to third-party data analytics tools to help them with ROI measurement, analysis, and reporting.

### **3. Amazon Ads**

Amazon is the elephant in the room. According to Digiday, they're looking to hire 2,000 people in New York City to focus on their ad offerings. After growing to over \$1 billion ad business in 2017, I predict that Amazon will again double in revenue by offering new ad types, expanding inventory, and adding new advertisers.

### **4. GDPR & User Tracking**

Data is everything in marketing and advertising. We're going to see user tracking and targeting becoming more challenging in 2018 (as if it wasn't already).

Apple announced they'll prevent cross-site tracking in Safari with their [Intelligent Tracking Prevention](#). That browsing information data is routinely used for retargeting, interest, and other behavioral ad targeting.

In addition, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a new set of standards designed to strengthen the control individuals have over their personal data goes into effect May 2018. With the possibility of a data slow-down, marketers should plan ahead to ensure your business is ready to adapt and shift.



# LISA RAEHSLER

Founder, Big Click Co.

In 2018, we will see significant portions of PPC media budgets shift from Google AdWords to other ad outlets. Ad platforms like Bing Ads, LinkedIn, and Facebook will look like more attractive options that can no longer be ignored, especially by SMBs.

This will happen for a few reasons, generally speaking:

- **Lower CPCs:** While this is not 100 percent the case, let's face it, AdWords can charge very expensive CPCs in some industries. The process of jumping through their various quality score hoops can be a waste of time when you can simply use another platform to get similar results.



- **Detailed audience targeting and demographics:** AdWords has some great audience targeting, but ad platforms like Facebook and LinkedIn take personal interests, demographics, and career stats to a new level. Advertisers are clamoring for more specific targeting and will flock to it for the right price.
- **Known platform/usability:** While it may seem minor, the new AdWords experience may be just a frustrating enough experience to push some advertisers into other platforms they have dabbled in but not fully dived into.

Given that, ultimately a well-balanced approach is the best bet, but shifting budgeting and platform efforts will likely be a strategy is to evolve in PPC in 2018.



# DAVID SZETELA

**Owner & CEO, FMB Media**

Google's attempt to standardize on the "new AdWords experience" will be met by fierce resistance.

Google has stated that access to the "old interface" will be discontinued sometime in 2018. But the reaction to the new interface has been universally negative, even prompting some advertisers to beg for an easier way to keep the old interface active.

I believe Google will need to postpone shutting off the old interface to 2019 or even beyond.



# ANDY TAYLOR

**Associate Director of Research, Merkle**

I anticipate paid search marketers in 2018 will need to focus on areas that have already been steadily growing over the last couple of years.

Traffic will continue to shift to mobile, a shift that continues to increase the importance of locally-focused ad units like Local Inventory Ads and Google Maps ads.

Audience targeting capabilities will continue to expand, and marketers will need to continue to grow their understanding of the incremental gains that come from remarketing and which experience (landing page, ad copy, offer, etc.) changes drive real value for different segments of customers.

Google Shopping ads will continue to infiltrate more and more areas on the SERP as well as outpace text ads in terms of growth for retailers.



# FREDERICK VALLAEYS

**CEO, Optmyzr**

Machine learning has played a huge role in AdWords since before anyone really talked about machine learning when it was used to calculate Quality Score and Ad Rank. But in just the past year we've seen machine learning applied to several new areas, leading to some cool new features for advertisers:

- Improved automated bidding thanks to better conversion modeling with data-driven attribution models.
- More advanced automated ad rotation using more signals about each user.

- More advanced targeting with custom in-market audiences.

In 2018, we'll continue to see more improvements in PPC automation driven by more sophisticated machine learning and artificial intelligence. What I find most exciting is that advertisers have more options than ever to leverage this technology because it's being integrated into third-party tools, and it's even available for advertisers to build their own custom solutions with Google Cloud Machine Learning Engine.

As a result of the shift toward more automation in PPC, I think advertisers will need to think about three key things to be successful in 2018 and beyond:

- Better understanding the technology so better decisions can be made about which tool to use in different situations.
- Creating a strong process for letting account managers work together with new technology.

There are countless of examples showing that the best results happen when humans leverage machines rather than compete against them.

- Retraining staff for new roles as legacy work is being taken over by machines.



# DUSTY VEGAS

**Founder, Ascent Digital Consulting**

2018 will be the year when we begin to see the true power of automation. Eventually, the days of having a PPC analyst manually changing bids will be gone. That time is far off, but we are starting to see the beginning of it now.

AdWords has been emphasizing its automation strategies like Enhanced CPC and Target ROAS now more than ever. Strategies like these take the manual work out of our hands and lets algorithms do the heavy lifting.

Instead of pouring over bids manually, we punch our KPIs into the tools and guide them to success. Think of the difference between driving a car and pedaling a bike – that's what's going on right now.

Keeping up with the advances in automation will be vital as the years go on. In 2018 you will see more companies testing and adopting automated solutions, from Google or from a third party, in the name of growth and improved efficiency.

Google co-founder Larry Page's original goal with AdWords was to create a seamless platform that did 90 percent of the work for you. Every day Google gets a little closer to realizing his dream.





# PURNA VIRJI

**Senior Manager of Global Engagement,  
Microsoft**

The two main trends we'll see in 2018 are a result of the impact that advances in AI will have on search. We'll see this impact in the form of how we more effectively target and engage our audiences.

## **Better Targeting with In-Market Audiences**

Remarketing has, over the years, proven the model of better relevancy having better results. We've been able to take it further with lookalike audiences and custom audiences, but what I am most excited about are "In-Market Audiences."

[These curated audiences](#) are created when predictive intelligence identifies users who have shown purchase intent signals within a particular category. For Bing Ads this includes searches and clicks on Bing and page views on Microsoft

services, to create audience lists that are unique to Bing Ads.

The best part about these lists is that they make it easy to get up and running in just a few minutes – there's no need to wait for a list to grow or to implement any code on the website. Plus, it allows you to get in front of people who may be interested in your product but may not be familiar with your brand, helping to widen your reach.

In our initial tests, we're seeing extremely encouraging results, so I'm excited to see this continue to roll out.

## **Conversation for Success**

When we think conversations, we automatically think voice search. While that's incredibly relevant and continuing to grow in leaps and bounds, I'm excited about how Bing is incorporating chatbots within the SERPs.

First [announced in May](#), Bing believes the future of search will be more conversational than what we're

used to at present. Why make the searcher work hard to find what they're looking for when they can ask a bot?

Try it yourself, Bing "Monsoon Seattle" on your desktop and have some test chats with the bot.

Conversation can help make interactions feel more natural and personal, and can be a great way for a brand to build a relationship with their audience. Bing is even [testing a chatbot extension](#) for PPC ads in a beta program.

The New Surface Pro - Microsoft® Official Store  
Ad: [www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com)  
The Slimmest, Lightest Surface. Just 1.69 lbs. Free Shipping. Order Now!  
FaceSense Display Shipping & Returns Full HD Display Intel Processor  
**Chat with Cortana Bot**  
The New Surface Pro  
Transforms from PC to tablet to Studio Mode. Free Shipping!  
**Surface Pro 4 Offer**  
Save Up to 20% Off  
Select Surface Pro 4 Devices.  
The New Surface Pro  
Starting at \$799. Just 1.69 lbs. Free Shipping. Order Now!  
New Surface Laptop  
Performance Made Personal. Free Shipping. Order Now!

The stats are clear, [80 percent of businesses](#) want to use chatbots by 2020. Want to be one of them but not sure where to start? Check out a ton of free resources online such as the [Bot Framework](#).



# SUSAN WENOGRAD

**Partner, Paid Social & Paid Search Advertising,  
Five Mill**

PPC in 2018 is going to be full of continued growth in the paid social landscape.

As advertisers get more on board with things like selling funnels and sequential messaging, the need to remarket to users based on what they do in-platform will grow.

This was a hallmark of many abilities Facebook gave to advertisers in 2017, allowing for things like remarketing based on length of certain videos watched, or interactions with posts and ads. This will continue to grow into other user actions that are desirable, and the options to get even more specific on the existing targeting is likely.

I also suspect we will continue to see further monetization options for Facebook with options appearing in the Watch sector to continue capitalizing on the rise of video.

Feeling pressure from the Facebook behemoth, other platforms will have to continue to step up their game.

I see so many wasted opportunities for Pinterest, and hold out hope 2018 will be their year to start making larger strides with their offering.

LinkedIn has started catching up nicely this past year after stagnating for quite awhile. I believe we will continue to see that growth of offerings in 2018, likely with the addition of audience expansion features like lookalikes, or something similar.

Twitter and Snapchat will continue to wrestle with an offering that can appease the returns needed by advertisers to justify placing any bulk of money there.



# KIRK WILLIAMS

**Founder, ZATO**

I think successful PPC marketers in 2018 will need to do four things:

## **1. Better understand how PPC plays into the overall mix of each unique account's channel complexities**

It's just as dangerous to apply a single model of attribution to every account in your book, as it is to just rely solely on last click attribution.

We have found that chasing the [perfect attribution model](#) is a myth. It's not possible, so in every account we need to do the best with the tools we have, to identify which model best fits into a specific client's objectives and space.

It's also wise to compare different models within Analytics and AdWords to identify if certain

campaigns lean one way or the other (for instance, remarketing will lean towards last click and brand awareness, high visibility terms will tend towards the first click).

The exciting thing is that we also keep seeing advances in tech and tracking for attribution modeling to become more accurate.

## **2. Figure out how to use automation well**

We need to figure out how to avoid either:

- Being lazy in relying on automation to do everything in an account (it can't).
- Being a Luddite in refusing to ever use automation in an account.

Identify what things can be automated in an account, and embrace it!

Run bidding rules, rely more on (good) automation for picking successful ad tests, accept our machine learning overlords' suggestions for

ad variants, and identifying keywords to exclude at scale.

Then, you as the human PPCer can be freed up to focus on what you bring to the account.

### **3. Maneuver into more of a customer service role**

Figure out how you can position yourself in PPC to be irreplaceable (by a machine). The way I see it, that is primarily going to happen in customer-facing positions.

You, the human, still have to identify key strategies and the path to implementing them.

You still have to report on things, not simply spewing data, but creating a storyline with the data that culminates in actionable decisions.

You still have to talk the client down from that dumb test they want to run in the account that will kill the account.



There are plenty of client-facing roles for the technical PPCer in 2018 and beyond, so find what the machines can't duplicate (yet) and move yourself into that.

#### **4. Get over New UI Hatred**

The PPC marketer in 2018 is going to have to come to grips with the fact that the new AdWords UI is here to stay.

At some point, we need to mourn the loss of the old UI (I've probably spent more waking moments with the old UI in the past 7 years than any single human... I'm married with 4 children... so I'm with you in mourning its passing!) and move on.

There are certain things in the new UI that are terrible, but the best way to get used to it, is, well, just to get in it and start using it!

So, commit to it, accept it, and dig in. Otherwise, you run the risk of being surprised when Google flips the switch, and that will really be problematic for your career!



# BEN WOOD

**Marketing Services Director, Hallam Internet**

In 2018, I think there will be three notable trends to watch out for:

## **Real-Time Bidding (RTB)**

Programmatic marketing is something advertising are still struggling to adopt. However, with an increased number of automated bidding strategies being deployed by Google in 2017, next year is likely to be the time where advertisers really start to increase their programmatic activity.

With growing ad cost, there needs to be much more focus on “smarter” bidding and more efficient campaign management.

## **Network Expansion**

Increased competition has led to consistent rises in advertising costs. We are now finding many smaller businesses, who may be wrongly accused of lacking ambition, now entertaining a variety of different advertising networks, breaking away from the traditional selection of Google Search, Shopping, Display and Bing Search.

Expect to see smaller businesses trial paid social as their appetite to improve advertising efficiency continues to increase in importance. This network expansion will benefit PPC marketers through the advanced use of audience list data built across social networks, which can then be replicated through RLSAs to target Google AdWords ads.

## **Video Advertising from SMEs**

Like with many new advertising channels, the success of it is driven by Google's investment in it. The search engine are now providing advertisers

very low priced/or even free tools (director for business) to help SMEs get video assets created for YouTube and the GDN.

In 2018, I believe we will be seeing far more businesses use this channel than previously.