

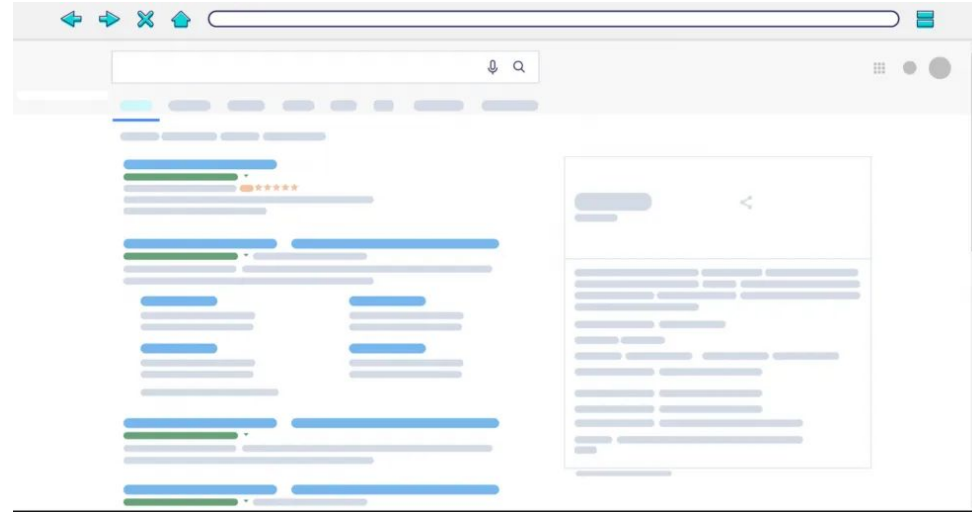
# Search Marketing 101

# Introduction to Paid Search



# What are Paid Search Ads?

- The core placement that paid search ads appear on is the Search Engine Results Page (SERP). The SERP is the page that loads after making a search on a search engine.
- The results shown on the SERP blend organic listings with paid search ads, which are triggered by a search query matching keywords that are purchased by an advertiser.
- The advertisers are only charged when a user clicks on the ad (Cost-Per-Click).



# Why Paid Search?

- In addition to simple keyword matching, ads can be tailored to a specific target.
- Ads can be targeted based on demo, age, HHI, and user location. Additional targeting includes time of day/day of the week, mobile vs desktop, specific user interests, website activity, and even internal CRM lists.
- Costs can be tightly controlled - advertisers only pay when a user clicks, and bidding and budget safeguards can be put in place to limit costs.
- Powerful measurement capabilities to track KPIs including orders, leads, calls, store visits, app installs, or awareness.

The screenshot shows a Google search for "content marketing". The search bar is at the top with the Google logo on the left and search, voice, and image icons on the right. Below the search bar, it says "About 2,550,000,000 results (1.43 seconds)".

The first organic result is an advertisement for DemandJump: "Content Marketing Strategy - Blog & Content Creation Guide". The snippet reads: "Developing a Content Marketing Strategy Doesn't Need To Be Stressful. DemandJump Can Help. Find Content Strategy Templates Using DemandJump To Drive Action From Your Landing Pages. Uncover Competitive Gaps. Become a Thought Leader." The URL is <https://www.demandjump.com/content/strategy>.

The second organic result is an advertisement for Fiverr: "Content Creators on Fiverr - Marketing Content Services". The snippet reads: "Upgrade Your Content Game With Professional Article & Blog Post Services. Find Content Creators Now On Fiverr. Best Freelancers From All Over The World. + 800 Top Rated Sellers. 24h Delivery Possible. Professional Service. + 100,000 Sellers. Millions of Services. Quality Copywriters · Proofreading & Editing · Video Testimonials · Translation Services". The URL is <https://www.fiverr.com/>.

The featured snippet is for Content Marketing Institute: "What is Content Marketing? - Content Marketing Institute". The snippet reads: "Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action." The URL is <https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/what-is-content-m...>

On the right side of the search results, there is a "Content marketing" knowledge panel. It includes a "Content marketing books" section with a grid of book covers: "Epic Content", "Everybody Writes", "Content Inc.", and "They Ask You Answer". Below that is a "People also search for" section with icons for "Marketing", "Social media", "Digital marketing", and "Advertising".



# Paid Search Terminology

## Impressions

- The number of times an ad is shown

## Clicks

- When a searcher clicks on an ad

## CTR (click-through rate)

- The percentage of impressions that results in clicks (clicks/impressions). The higher, the better
- Signals ad relevancy

## CPC

- How much each click costs, on average

## Conversions

- Determined by client - any important action taken on site
- E-commerce businesses count a sale as a conversion while lead gen businesses count form fills & phone calls

## CVR (Conversion Rate)

- The percentage of users who completed a conversion after clicking on your ad. The higher the better.

## Cost/Conversion

- Cost per Acquisition/Action/Conversion
- The amount you have spent on paid search, divided by the number of conversions generated. The lower the better

## ROAS / ROI (return on ad spend or investment)

- Calculated by dividing revenue by cost
- The higher the better

# What Are the Main Search Engines?

- Google is far and away the largest paid search provider, comprising 92% of paid search traffic. This includes Google Search, Google Shopping, Google Image Search, YouTube, Gmail and the Google app, as well as websites and search engines using the Google search algorithm.
- MicrosoftAds properties account for 7% of paid search traffic. Ads are shown on Bing, Yahoo, DuckDuckGo, and several hundred other partner search engines, all powered by the Microsoft search algorithm.
- Smaller third options that operate using a variety of remnant placements and independent algorithms, such as Ad.net, account for the remaining 1% market share.

The Google logo, consisting of the word "Google" in its signature multi-colored font.The Microsoft Bing logo, featuring the four-pane Windows logo icon to the left of the text "Microsoft Bing".The Yahoo! logo, featuring the word "yahoo!" in a bold, purple, lowercase sans-serif font.

DuckDuckGo

The Ad.net logo, featuring the text "Ad.net" in a bold, black, sans-serif font, with a small multi-colored dot above the letter "n".

# Paid Search vs. Organic Search

The screenshot shows a Google search for "iphone 13". At the top, there are navigation tabs for All, Images, News, Shopping, Videos, and More. Below the search bar, it indicates "About 4,000,000,000 results (0.77 seconds)".

**Shopping Ads:** A section titled "Ads - Shop Apple iPhone 13 Mobile Phones" displays five product cards. Each card includes an image of the phone, a price, and a carrier. The products are: Apple iPhone 13 - Pink (US\$0.00, For 30 months, T-Mobile), Apple iPhone 13 - Blue (US\$0.00, For 30 months, T-Mobile), Apple iPhone 13 Pro Max (US\$99.99, For 30 months, T-Mobile), Apple iPhone 13 - 256GB (US\$0.00, For 36 months, AT&T), and Apple iPhone 13 (US\$0.00, For 30 months, T-Mobile).

**Search/Text Ads:** Below the shopping ads, there are two text ads. The first is from AT&T: "The All New iPhone 13 For \$0 - Get Yours Today with AT&T®". The second is from Verizon: "iPhone 13 Offer At Verizon - Up To \$800 Off w/ Trade In".

**Organic Search:** The organic search results start with a link to "iPhone 13 and iPhone 13 mini - Apple (CA)". The snippet includes information about the screen size and camera features. Below this is a link to "New Buy iPhone 13" with a snippet mentioning the dual-camera system.

Shopping Ads

Search/Text Ads

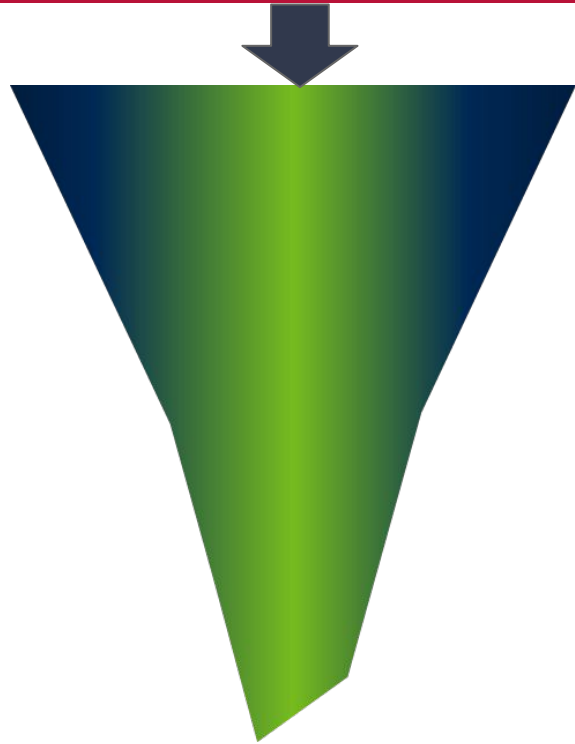
Organic Search

**Shopping** ads often appear above both text and organic listings, showing products relevant to a user's search. These are ads as well, and are priced and charged on a CPC basis.

**Search or Text** ads appear above the Organic results and are noted with an "Ad" icon.

**Organic Search** listings are based on SEO, or Search Engine Optimization, rankings. These positions are not paid for, but are ranked and positioned based on page relevance, site speed, and other criteria.

# The Marketing Funnel



Top of funnel (Awareness): Non-branded search, Display and Discovery. Increase brand awareness and target new visitors.

Mid-funnel (Interest/Consideration/Evaluation), including Conquesting and in-market audiences, build interest and demand for products or services.

Bottom of funnel (Commitment/Sale/Conversion): Branded search, Shopping, and PerformanceMax. Generate conversions by targeting searchers who are ready to buy



# The Importance of Mobile



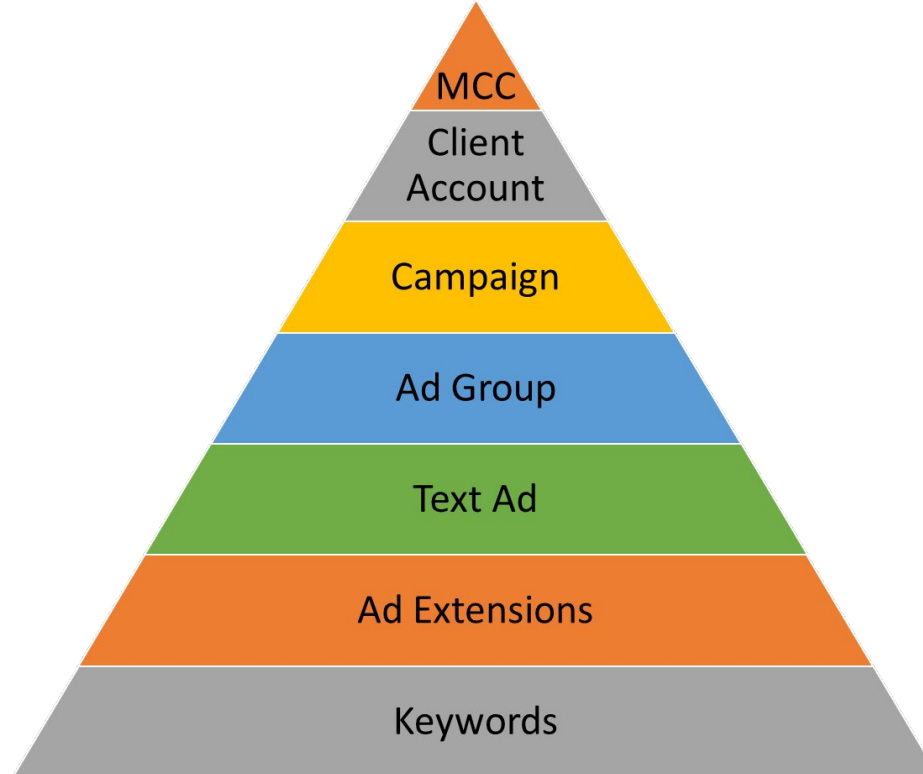
- Almost 80% of users have made a purchase using their smartphones in the last 6 months. Mobile advertising is more important than ever.
- Mobile's share of ecommerce is projected to exceed 75% in 2023.
- Currently, 63% of total ad spending and 52% of ad clicks come from mobile devices.



# Paid Search Anatomy



# Campaign Structure



# Introduction to General Campaign Types

## Brand

- Include the client's name and any variations
- Less competition and generally a lower cost per click (CPC) while driving higher conversions
- Captures the halo effect of other marketing efforts

## Non-Brand

- Includes more generic terms around the products or services the clients offers
- Reaches users a bit higher in the sales funnel who may not be as familiar with the brand
- Increases visibility and awareness

## Conquesting

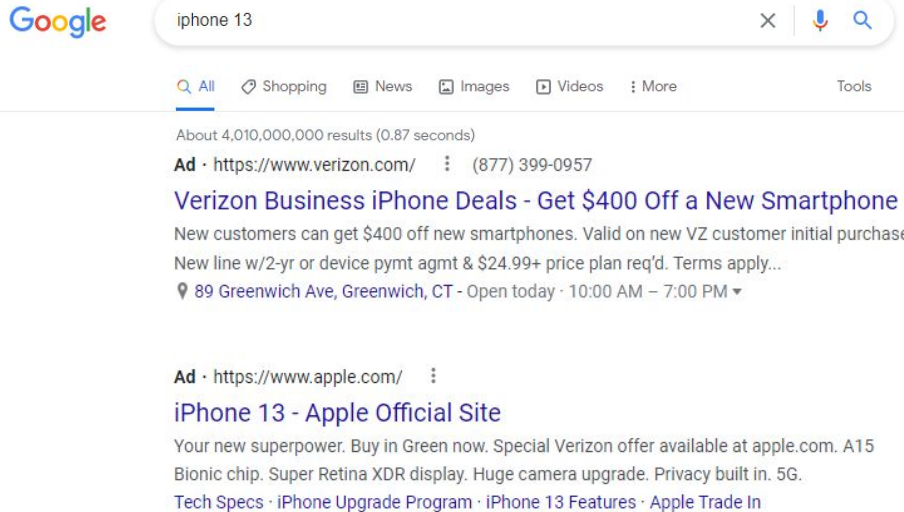
- Bidding on competitor terms to gain market share

## Remarketing

- Specifically targets previous site visitors, cart abandoners, previous purchases, or internal CRM lists



# Campaign Types – Search



The screenshot shows a Google search for "iphone 13". The search bar contains "iphone 13" and the search button is visible. Below the search bar, there are navigation links for "All", "Shopping", "News", "Images", "Videos", and "More". The search results show "About 4,010,000,000 results (0.87 seconds)".

**Ad** · <https://www.verizon.com/> · (877) 399-0957

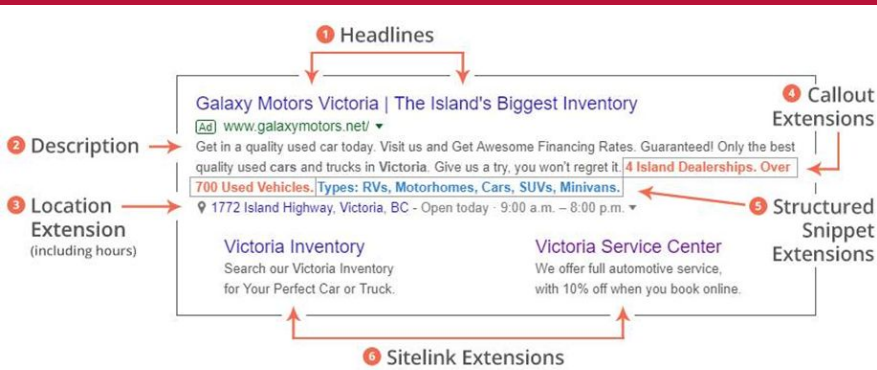
**Verizon Business iPhone Deals - Get \$400 Off a New Smartphone**  
New customers can get \$400 off new smartphones. Valid on new VZ customer initial purchase. New line w/2-yr or device pymt agmt & \$24.99+ price plan req'd. Terms apply...  
📍 89 Greenwich Ave, Greenwich, CT - Open today · 10:00 AM – 7:00 PM ▼

**Ad** · <https://www.apple.com/>

**iPhone 13 - Apple Official Site**  
Your new superpower. Buy in Green now. Special Verizon offer available at apple.com. A15 Bionic chip. Super Retina XDR display. Huge camera upgrade. Privacy built in. 5G.  
Tech Specs · iPhone Upgrade Program · iPhone 13 Features · Apple Trade In

- Search or Text ads appear above organic results and are noted with an “Ad” icon.
- Search ads reach users who are searching for products and services. The user’s search query is matched to the keywords the advertiser purchases to deliver the most relevant ad in the ad group.

# Anatomy of a Search Ad



## Headlines

- 30 Characters maximum
- Often contains keywords or offers

## Description

- 90 Characters maximum
- Highlights details about the product or service
- Often contains a call-to-action

## Display URL

- A shortened URL of the landing page

## Responsive Search Ads (RSAs)

- Comprised of up to 15 headlines and 4 descriptions
- Google algorithms combine headlines and descriptions to make the most relevant ad for the searcher's query
- CTRs tend to be 5-15% higher than ETAs

# Ad Extensions

Ad extensions increase the “footprint” of the ad on the SERP, and provide additional details and service or product offerings that are relevant to the user’s needs.

## Callouts

Adds additional text to an ad, like “free shipping” or “24/7 customer support.”

## Sitelinks

Links searchers directly to specific pages or areas of the website

## Structured Snippets

Showcases information potential customers will find most valuable by selecting a predefined header (product or service category) and supporting details

## Promotions

Highlights sales and promotions for people that are searching for the best deals

## Call

Encourages searchers to call your business by adding a phone number or call button to ads

## Lead Form

Generate leads by letting searchers submit their information in a form directly in the ad

## Location

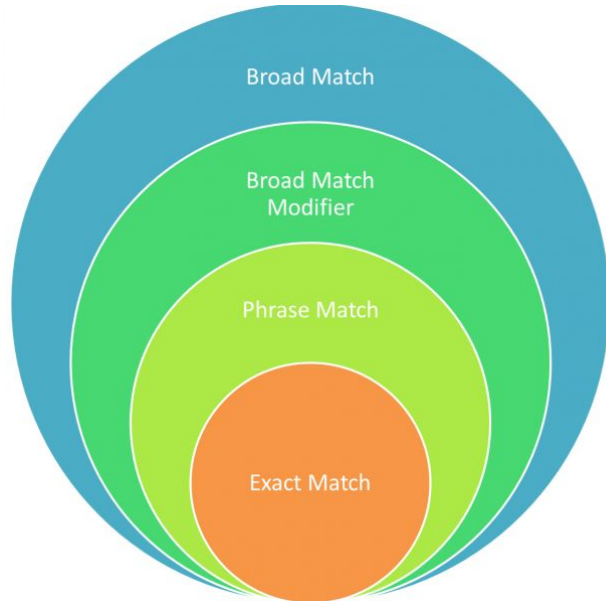
Encourages searchers to visit the business by showing a mapped location, a call button, and a link to your business details page—which can include your hours, photos of your business, and directions to get there.

## Price

Highlights the price of a particular product or service

# Keyword Match Types

Keywords trigger ads based on how they line up with a user's query. The query is matched to the keyword according to a set of criteria (match type).



## Broad Match

Broad match is the broadest and match the searcher's intent. Ads may show on searches that relate to the keyword, which includes searches that don't actually contain the keyword.

## Phrase Match

Ads may show on searches that include the meaning of your keyword. There can also be words in front of and after the keyword. Syntax for phrase match is **"quotations"** around the keyword.

## Exact Match

Exact match is the tightest matching keyword type and gives you the most control over who sees the ad. Ads may show on searches that are the same meaning or intent as the keyword. Syntax for exact match is **[brackets]** around the keyword

## Negative Keywords

Negative keywords exclude your ads from showing on searchers with that term. This helps eliminate irrelevant traffic.



# Keyword Quality Scores

Quality Score	CPC Relative to Baseline 5 Quality Score
10	50.0% Discount
9	44.2% Discount
8	37.5% Discount
7	28.6% Discount
6	16.7% Discount
5	Market Baseline
4	25.0% Increase
3	67.3% Increase
2	150.0% Increase
1	400.0% Increase

- A keyword's Quality Score is the main determinant to how much a click will cost an advertisers.
- Quality Scores are scored according to three criteria: relevance of the ad to the keywords, relevance of the landing page to the keywords, and expected CTR.
- A Quality Score of 5 will index a click at the market baseline cost. Higher Quality Scores will price the keywords at a discount, while lower Quality Scores will price the same click at a premium.
- By improving ad copy and landing page relevance, and having concisely apportioned keywords and ad groups will have a large impact on CPCs.



# AdRank

**AD RANK =**

**CPC BID × QUALITY SCORE**

- While a Quality Score determines CPCs, AdRank determines ad position.
- AdRank is calculated by multiplying the CPC bid for a given keyword by its Quality Score.
- Within the auction, the ad that has the highest AdRank wins the auction, and receives the highest placement.
- This means that having a high Quality Score is equally as important as how much you're *willing* to pay in determining how much you *actually* will pay and where your ad will show relative to other ads in the auction.

# Bidding Strategies

A campaign's bidding strategy dictates which KPIs or targets Google's algorithm will use to find the best, most relevant matches to user search queries.



**Manual CPC** allows the most control over bids. Advertisers set a maximum CPC they are willing to pay per click for each specific keyword.

**Target Impression Share** sets bids with the goal of showing the ad on the absolute top of the page, on the top of the page, or anywhere on the page of Google search results, and is used to increase visibility.

**Maximize Clicks** sets bids to help get as many clicks as possible within the budget, and is used to increase site traffic

**Maximize Conversions** sets bids to help get as many conversions as possible within the budget, and focuses on conversion volume.

**Target CPA** sets bids to help get as many conversions as possible within a target CPA range, and focuses on conversion cost efficiency.

**Maximize Conversion Value** sets bids to help capture as much revenue as possible within the budget, and focuses on conversion revenue.

**Target ROAS** sets bids to help capture as much revenue as possible within a target ROAS (return on advertising spend), and focuses on conversion profitability.

# Campaign Targeting

A campaign's targeting strategy instructs the Google algorithm on which users, or types of users, should be targeted with ads based on their search queries and interests.

**In-Market Audiences** reach users based on their recent purchase intent.

**Affinity Audiences** reach users based on what they're passionate about and their habits and interests.

**Detailed Demographics** reach users based on long-term life facts (age, genders, household income)

**First Party Data Segments** reach users who have directly interacted with your business.

**Website and App Visitors** reach people who have visited your website and/or apps.

**Customer Match Audiences** reach your existing customers based on your CRM data.

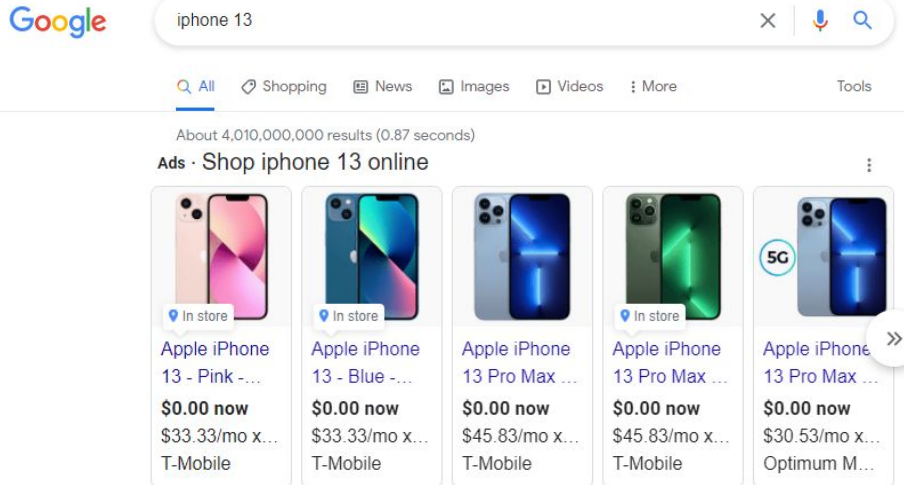
**Similar Segments** reach new users with similar interests to your website visitors or existing customers.



# Other Campaign Types



# Campaign Types – Shopping

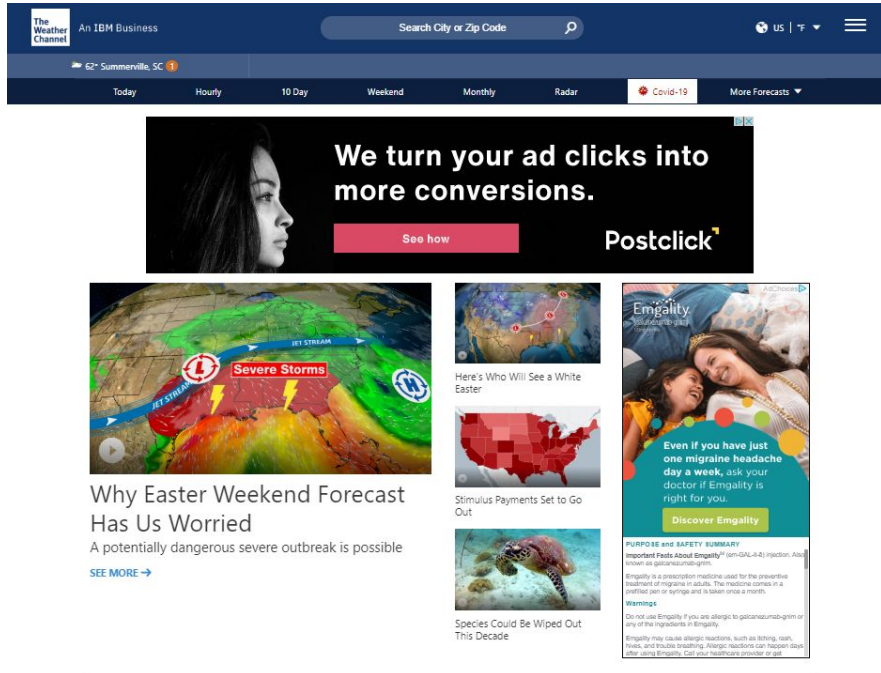


The screenshot shows a Google search for "iphone 13". The search bar contains "iphone 13" and the search results page displays "About 4,010,000,000 results (0.87 seconds)". Below the search bar, there are navigation tabs for "All", "Shopping", "News", "Images", "Videos", and "More". The "Shopping" tab is selected. The search results are titled "Ads · Shop iphone 13 online". There are five shopping ads displayed, each featuring a product image, a price, and a retailer name. The ads are for Apple iPhone 13 models: Pink, Blue, Pro Max, and Pro Max 5G. The prices are listed as "\$0.00 now" with a monthly payment option. The retailers are T-Mobile and Optimum M... (partially visible).

Product	Price	Retailer
Apple iPhone 13 - Pink	\$0.00 now \$33.33/mo x...	T-Mobile
Apple iPhone 13 - Blue	\$0.00 now \$33.33/mo x...	T-Mobile
Apple iPhone 13 Pro Max	\$0.00 now \$45.83/mo x...	T-Mobile
Apple iPhone 13 Pro Max	\$0.00 now \$45.83/mo x...	T-Mobile
Apple iPhone 13 Pro Max 5G	\$0.00 now \$30.53/mo x...	Optimum M...

- Shopping ads often appear above both text and organic listings, showing products relevant to a user's search. These are ads, and are priced and charged on a CPC basis.
- Search ads also reach users who are searching for products and services. The user's search query, however, is matched to the keywords listed in the product description housed within the advertiser's product feed. This feed is administered from Google Merchant Center.

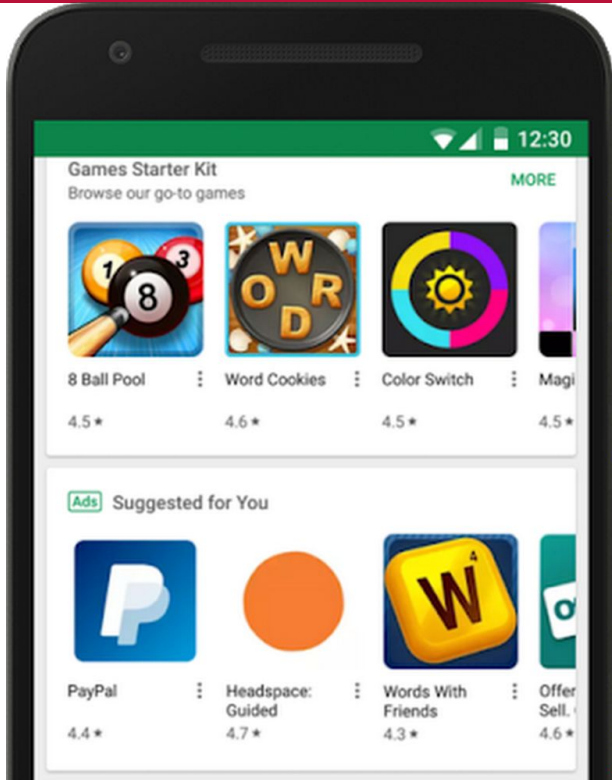
# Campaign Types – Display



The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of The Weather Channel website, including the logo, "An IBM Business" tagline, a search bar for "Search City or Zip Code", and location settings for "Summerville, SC". Below the navigation bar is a large Postclick advertisement with the text "We turn your ad clicks into more conversions." and a "See how" button. Underneath the ad are several content tiles: a weather map titled "Severe Storms", a map titled "Here's Who Will See a White Easter", a map titled "Stimulus Payments Set to Go Out", and a tile for "Emgality" with the headline "Even if you have just one migraine headache day a week, ask your doctor if Emgality is right for you." and a "Discover Emgality" button. The Emgality tile includes a "PURPOSE and SAFETY SUMMARY" section with text about the medication's use and warnings.

- Display ads are not directly related to paid search ads, but the campaigns are administered within a Google Ads account.
- Rather than text ads, Display ads are image based ads that show on websites across Google's AdSense network
- Display ads can be a powerful adjunct to a search campaign, and they're often used for Remarketing.
- Can be used as a top of funnel tactic to boost awareness.

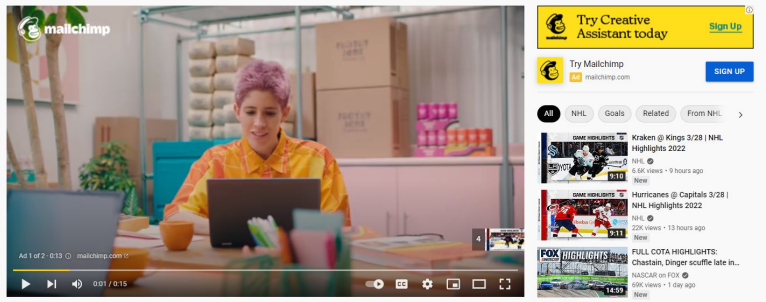
# Campaign Types – Universal App



- Like display and shopping ads, these ads are not directly related to paid search ads, but are administered within a Google Ads account.
- Ads appear across Google Search, Google Play (Android only), YouTube, Google Display, and Google Discover.
- Search queries are contextually matched to keywords in the app description.
- Campaigns can be tailored to target app installs (new users) or app engagement (existing users).
- These campaigns are billed on a cost per install (CPI), cost per action (CPA), or return on ad spend (tROAS).

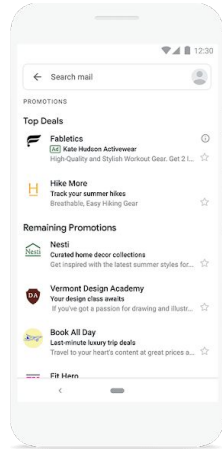
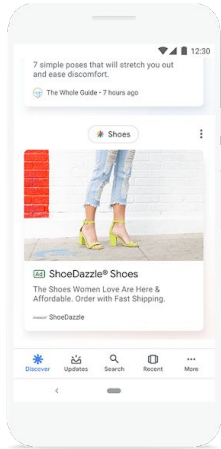
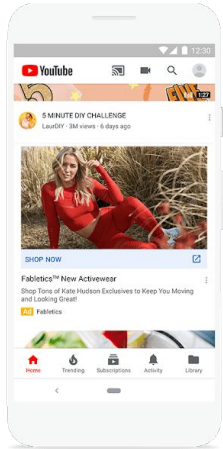


# Campaign Types – YouTube



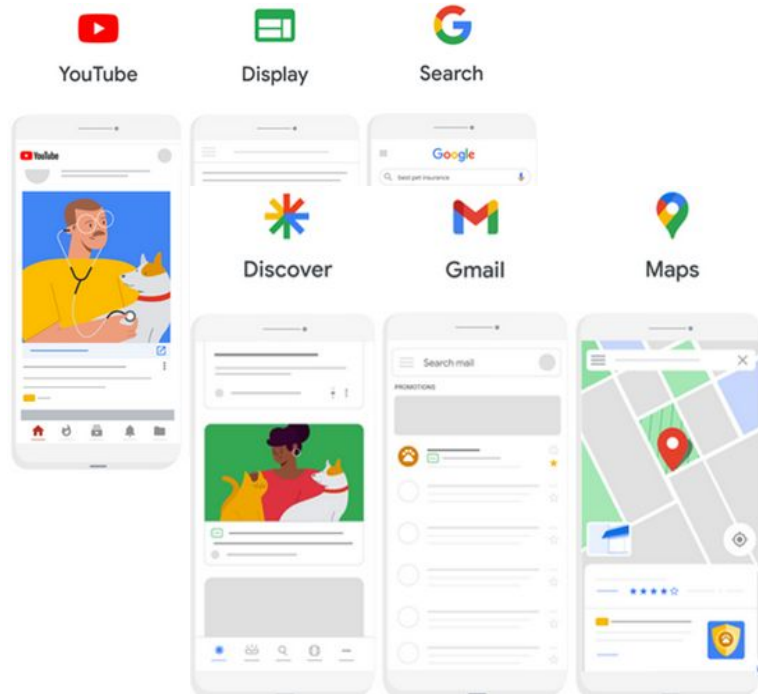
- These are video-focused ads that run on YouTube and other video channels. There is a companion banner ad that runs alongside the main video piece.
- YouTube ads are mainly used to boost awareness, but there is a conversion-focused component.
- Can be displayed before, after or during YouTube videos
- Queries are matched to the app description.

# Campaign Types – Google Discovery



- These are multichannel and native ads that run across several Google properties, including the Google app and within Gmail.
- The ads contain rich content in a native ad unit.

# Campaign Types – Google PerformanceMax



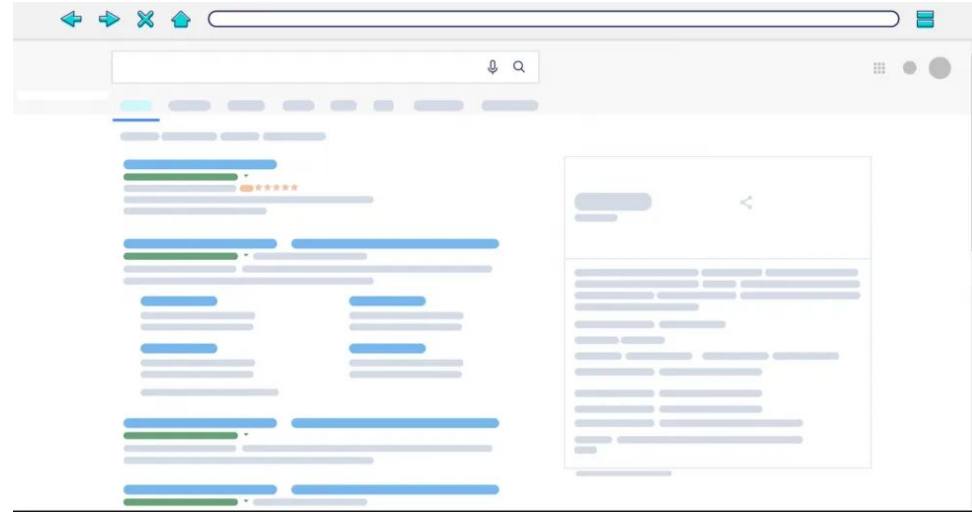
- PerformanceMax campaigns are almost completely automated, using machine learning to match users' intent with product or service they're looking for.
- Focusing on conversions and revenue, these campaigns influence awareness and consideration and drive direct response.
- PerformanceMax can wholly replace Smart Shopping and Discovery campaigns, and can complement Universal App and Paid Search campaigns.

# Introduction to Organic Search



# What Is Search Engine Optimization (SEO)?

- Search Engine Optimization, or SEO, is the process of taking steps to increase a site's visibility on the search engine results page (SERP) when people search for products or services related to the business.
- SEO combines technical optimizations, content optimizations, relevance and linking optimizations, and reputation management to make it as easy as possible for the search engines' algorithms to find, index, and then match a site to a user's query.



# Search Engine Optimization Terms

## Index

- Verb: When the search engines fetch and crawl a page, then add it to their index.
- Noun: the index entry for each page describes what the page is about and records the location (URL) of each page.

## Crawl

- The process of looking for new and updated web pages. The search engines discover new or updated URLs mostly by following links from other pages and checking the sitemap for changes.

## Crawler

- Automated software that crawls (fetches) pages from the web and indexes them.

## Googlebot/Bingbot

- The generic name of Google/Bing's crawler.



# Search Engine Optimization Terms

## Backlinks

- Inbound links from an external site back to the owned site, usually to a piece of content.

## Authority

- The external guidance on how authoritative or reputable a page or domain is, based on factors including keyword relevance, backlinks, reputation, and technical efficiency.

## On-Page/Off-Page

- On-Page: Ranking factors dealing with content and layout of a site.
- Off-Page: Ranking factors outside the direct sphere of influence of the site, including backlinks, reviews, social shares, and user-specific factors (browser, geolocation, etc).

## Technical SEO

- Technical and infrastructure efficiency of a site, including security, HTML, site speed, sitemaps, robots.txt, and structured data markup.

# Organic Search Listing Structure

URL →  
Title →  
Snippet →



Nike  
https://www.nike.com › ...

## Nike. Just Do It. Nike CA

Discover our Icons · **Nike.** Just Do It. Dunk · **Nike.** Just Do It. Air Max Pulse · **Nike.** Just Do It. Air Force 1 · **Nike.** Just Do It. Air Jordan 1 · **Nike.** Just Do ...

Sitelinks {

- ### Sale - Up to 40% Off

Men - Sale Shoes - Women - Sale Clothing - Kids - Sale Jordan - ...
- ### Women

Explore the latest styles and innovations from Nike Women ...
- ### Men

Men's Trainers & Shoes - Men's Clothing - New Men's - Air Force 1
- ### Kids

Shoes - Older Kids - Clothing - Older - Kids - Teens Collection



# Organic Search Listing Terms

## Title

- The main link in organic search results.
- Populated by the title tag assigned to the page.
- Maximum length is 70 characters.

## URL

- The page on your site that the title links to.
- Keyword-rich and descriptive URLs are informative and let the search engines and the user know what the page is about.

## Snippet

- The description of the page, and is usually pulled from the meta description.
- Rich snippets are structured and provide additional information, like ratings or reviews.

## Sitelinks

- Additional sub-listings that direct users to other relevant pages on the site.
- Generally limited to six, sitelinks are generated automatically based on how well-structured the site is.

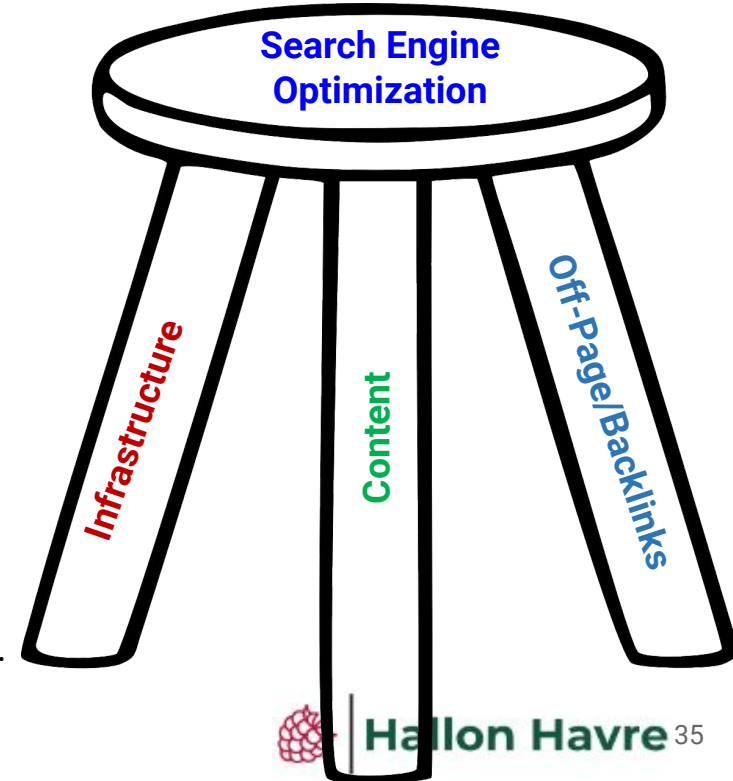


# Organic Search Ranking Factors



# SEO Elements

- Think of SEO as a stool with three legs. Each leg supports a different way the website relates to the search engines (infrastructure), users (content), and other websites (off-page).
- Optimizing the **infrastructure** of the website sends a signal to the search engines that the website is well-maintained, well-organized, and well-ordered, making it easy for the search engines to efficiently crawl the site's content.
- Optimizing **content** makes it easy for users to get to what they're searching for, and allows the search engines to "understand" what the site's pages are about.
- Optimizing **off-page** elements, such as backlinks, sends a signal about how relevant the site is in the greater "community". This is a vote of confidence for the "authority" of the site.



# On-Page SEO Factors: Infrastructure

- HTML titles remain the most important HTML signal that search engines use to understand what a page is about. Unique and descriptive titles, in concert with keywords in the URL, tell the search engines what the page is about.
- Header tags, bold, italics, and underline tags also tell the search engines which keywords are “important”.
- Internal and external links should be hyperlinked with a keyword relevant to the page being linked.
- To assist with visual elements, ALT-tags are important. Search engines can’t tell visually what’s contained in an image. ALT-tags “tell” the search engines descriptively what is contained in the image.
- Relatedly, SRT files contain a video’s subtitles, and are valuable in helping the search engines to index and understand video content.



# On-Page SEO Factors: Infrastructure

- Speed and security are the #1 infrastructure ranking factor. Google measures this through 6 elements collectively known as Core Web Vitals.
- Technical aspects of how the site is built, and how easily the crawlers can reach and index the site, is another major factor. Even with excellent content, if the site isn't crawlable, the search engines can't index the site, and the site won't show up in the results.
- A site's mobile version is an increasingly important factor. The mobile version should be fast, adapted to mobile's smaller screen size and reduced functionality, and should mirror what users see on the desktop version.
- A site's URL structure is also important. Including relevant keywords in the URL itself is an easy way to convey what's housed on the page to both the user and the bots crawling the site.



# On-Page SEO Factors: Content

- Authentic, valuable content is the single most important factor for search engine visibility. This is what draws users to a site, and is the major source of keywords matched by the search engines.
- Content is considered valuable if it's keyword-rich, relevant, original and non-duplicated, and timely.
  - News-related content should be cited, accurate, and in-depth.
  - Artistic content should be original and skillfully executed.
  - Informational content should be accurate and comprehensive.
- Site content can be housed across the site, or within a blog or other content repository - as long as the search engine's bots can access the content.
- The crawlers scan site content to learn what each page, and by extension, the site as a whole, is about.



# Off-Page SEO Factors: Off-Page (Reputation)

- Trust in a website and its perceived authority represent how reputable the site is.
- Domain and Page Authority represent how much the site is recognized as a “leader” in the space the site operates in. Some of this authority is assessed by automatic signals (the site content, the longevity of the site, security, etc.) and some of this authority is assessed by human raters.
- How engaged with the site users tend to be is another factor around reputation. Bounce rate, time on site, pages per session affect the site’s reputation.
- The actual reputation algorithm the search engines use are a black box, but sites you would consider reputable are likely the same sites Google and Bing do as well.



# Off-Page SEO Factors: Off-Page (Backlinks)

- Backlinks are inbound links on external sites that link back to the site. Backlinks are vital to how search engines find new pages to index.
- Backlinks can be thought of as “votes for relevance”. Defined as inbound links from external sites, the more backlinks a site has, especially from higher ranking, reputable websites the more the search engines will hold the site in esteem.
- When a higher ranking site links back, that site’s domain and page authority passes through to the site being linked back to. This is commonly referred to as “link juice”.
- Not all TLDs (top level domains) are created equal. Generally, backlinks from .gov, .edu, and .org domains tend to carry more weight than links from .net and .com domains.





# Off-Page SEO Factors: The User

- User-related factors are mostly outside the site's direct control.
- Geography, language and culture all factor into deciding if a site's content "speaks" to users in the areas being served. User location is also a factor. "Near me" searches will produce far different results in one locality vs another.
- A user's recent search history also affects rankings. A prior query can be used to contextualize the results for the user's next search.
- User experience is also important. The search engines want the user to be shown relevant results, as well as have a positive user experience on the site. On-page factors such as content and architecture play a role here, as technical hierarchy, a lack of pop-ups, and clear navigation tend to deliver a better user experience.
- User intent signals also affect rankings, as the search engines can guess as to the intent of the user's search.



# Negative SEO Factors: Deliberately Misleading

## Cloaking

- A deliberate attempt to trick the engines by showing the search engines something different than what you present to users.

## Keyword Stuffing

- Excessively repeating keywords across a page or the site. Keyword density is not as important as it once was, and now the search engines value reading user intent and providing quality content.

## Hiding

- Similar to keyword stuffing, but the site tries to hide the stuffed keywords by matching the font color to the background, or placing the keywords offscreen.

## Piracy

- Hosting plagiarized or illegal content.

## Schemes

- Such as paying for backlinks. Backlinks that are paid for can be placed, but won't pass link equity. To avoid being penalized, adding a "nofollow" or "sponsored" attribute should be included.



# Negative SEO Factors: Poor Technical Aspects

- Other factors that are less deliberate also negatively influence rankings.
- Slow site speed, especially on mobile.
- Poor site security and not having an SSL certificate.
- Broken links and images.
- Duplicate content
- Poorly structured meta content
- Having an out of date or poorly structured sitemap
- Having a poorly configured robots.txt file



# Up and Coming SEO Factors

- Searches made with digital voice assistants like Alexa and Siri tend to be more contextual and conversational in nature, further amplifying user intent as a major ranking factor.
- Google Image Search is the world's second largest search engine. Users searching for images that are hosted on a site will necessarily bring traffic in. Having descriptive ALT-tags and good “neighboring” text around images provides additional context to the search.
- YouTube is the world's third largest search engine. Title and description tags, as well as SRT (SubRip Subtitle) files, are critical to successful ranking of video on both YouTube and Google. Similar to ALT-tags, SRTs give the search engines something to index against.
- Local search for the service industry and brick and mortar stores is increasingly important. Ranking highly within directories (Yelp, TripAdvisor, etc.) is important as a site's listing *within the directories* will generally rank higher organically than the site's own ranking.

