

NORD LUCE

The Paid Search Audit Checklist

The same working checklist I use when I open an account for the first time.

Work it top to bottom: each section assumes the one before it is healthy.

From Cam Schoen-Clark, 15+ years in digital marketing, \$10M+ in managed ad spend.

1. Measurement first

If tracking is broken, every number below this line is fiction. Always start here.

- Conversion actions exist and fire.** Check each action's status, source, and last-received date. A "no recent conversions" flag on your primary action is a five-alarm fire.
- Primary vs secondary actions are set deliberately.** Bidding optimizes only to primary actions. Make sure a form spam or a page view is not steering your budget.
- No double counting.** One purchase or lead should record once, not once from the tag and again from an import.
- Ad platform numbers reconcile with your source of truth.** Compare a month of platform conversions against your CRM or order system. Investigate gaps over 20%.
- Consent mode and cookie banners are not silently eating conversions.** Especially for EU traffic, compare analytics purchases against ad-claimed conversions.

2. Where the money actually goes

Most accounts concentrate waste in places nobody has looked at in months.

- Pull spend by campaign, ad group, keyword, and search term for 90 days.** Sort by cost, zero conversions. That bottom slice is your first savings.
- Check network settings.** Search Partners and Display Expansion quietly siphon budget in many accounts. Justify them with data or turn them off.
- Geo report vs where you actually sell.** Presence vs interest settings catch many accounts spending in countries they cannot serve.
- Device and schedule skew.** If mobile converts at a third of desktop but takes half the spend, act on it.
- Brand vs non-brand split.** Know exactly how much of your "performance" is people who already knew your name.

3. Search terms and match types

The search terms report is where intent lives. Read it monthly, minimum.

- Read the top 50 search terms by cost.** Ask of each: would I pay this much for this exact question? Add negatives freely.
- Audit broad match keywords.** Broad plus smart bidding can work, but verify what it actually matched to, not what the platform says about it.
- Build a negative keyword library.** Shared lists for jobs, free, DIY, competitors you do not want, and irrelevant verticals.
- Check for keyword self-competition.** Overlapping ad groups bidding against each other split signal and muddy reporting.

4. Ads and assets

Free improvements. No budget required.

- Every ad group has a complete responsive search ad.** Distinct headlines, not twelve rewordings of one claim.
- Ad copy answers the query.** Landing the click on relevance is cheaper than bidding your way there.
- Sitelinks, callouts, and structured snippets exist at account or campaign level.** They are free real estate on the results page.
- Ads point at the right landing pages.** The most specific page that answers the query, not the homepage.

5. Bidding and budget structure

Smart bidding needs signal. Fragmented accounts starve it.

- Each campaign's bid strategy matches its conversion volume.** Target CPA or ROAS on a campaign with three conversions a month is guesswork wearing a lab coat.
- Check budget-lost impression share.** If a proven campaign is budget-capped while a weak one spends freely, reallocate.
- Consolidation over fragmentation at low spend.** Under roughly 50 conversions a month, fewer campaigns concentrate learning data.
- Targets are set from your economics, not platform suggestions.** Know your break-even CPA before the platform picks one for you.

6. After the click

If clicks are fine and conversions are not, the account is rarely the problem.

- Landing page speed and mobile experience.** Test on a phone over cellular, not your office WiFi.
- The page states the offer and next step above the fold.** A visitor should know what to do within five

seconds.

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- Forms ask for the minimum.** Every extra field costs conversions. Ask for the rest later.
 - Analytics confirms engagement.** High bounce on paid landing pages with healthy queries means a page problem, not a keyword problem.
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Want a second pair of eyes?

I do this professionally. If you'd like me to run this audit on your account and tell you plainly what I'd fix first, the first look is free. Email camrick@nordluce.com or visit nordluce.com.