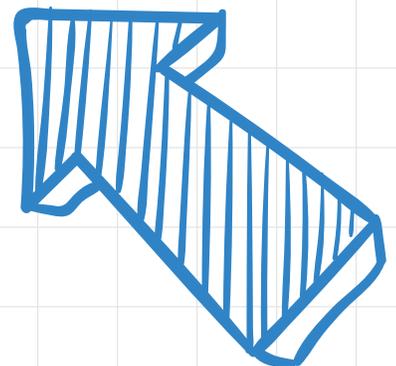
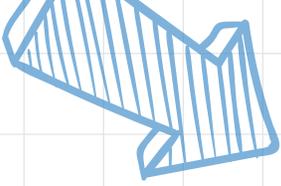


5 Ways to Get Smarter about your PLA Campaigns

By Bob Michaelian
EVP of Marketing Services at Connexity

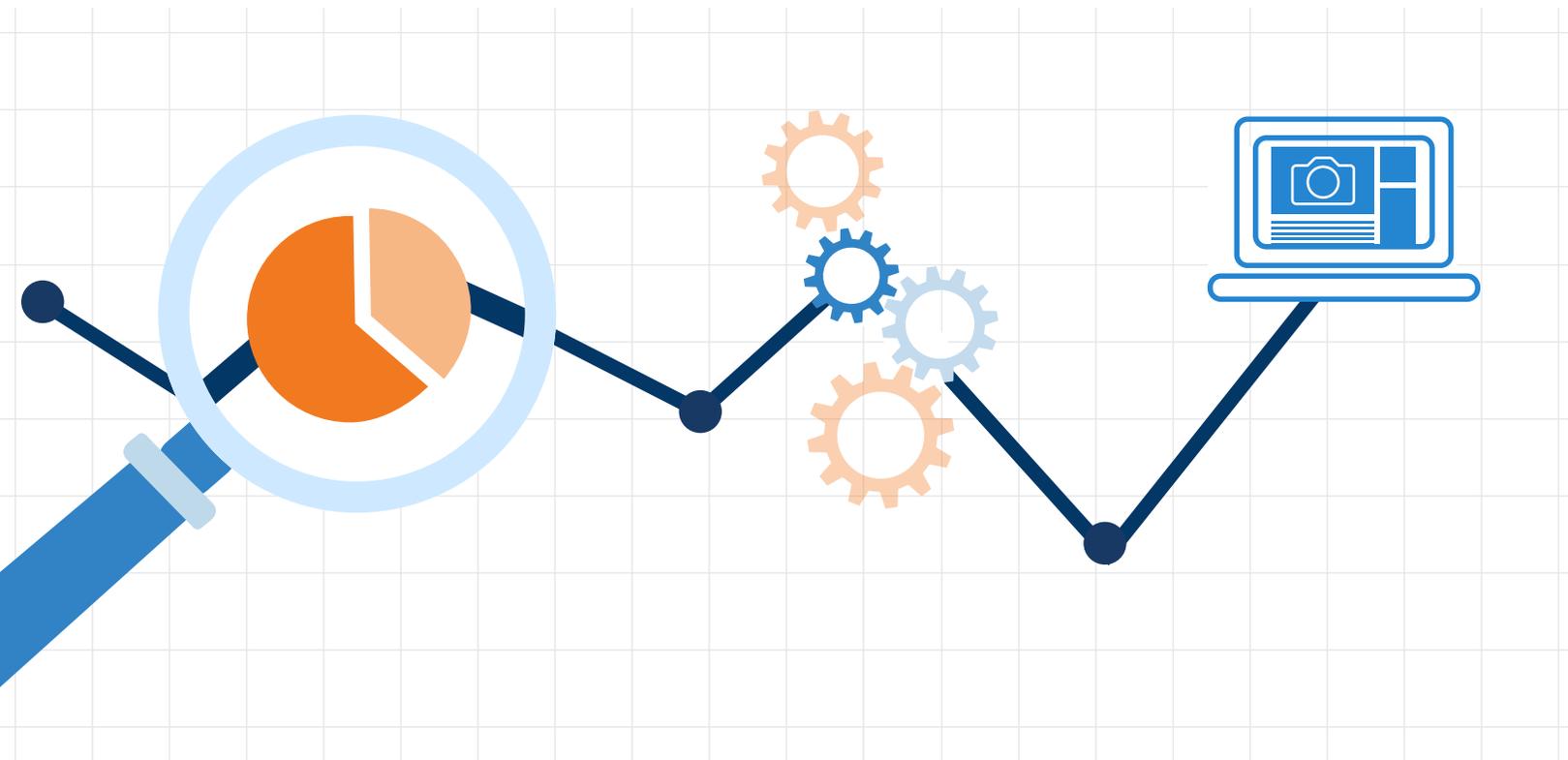


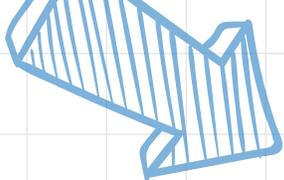


Although PLAs can deliver high conversion rates, getting a positive ROI has become harder and harder.

It's not that the ad format has lost its effectiveness—don't worry, it hasn't—but increased competition for ads, evolving provider requirements, and other factors have made managing PLA campaigns much more complex.

As improving ROI becomes more challenging, marketers need to get a whole lot smarter about optimizing their PLA campaigns. Here are 5 simple tips for making the most of your PLA budget.





1 Get Granular When Setting Up Your Feed and Campaigns

When it comes to setting up your product feeds and PLA campaigns, the more granular you are, the more flexibility you'll have to optimize your campaigns and feature your best sellers.

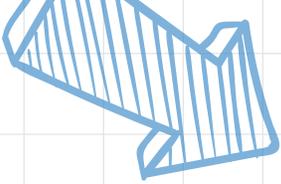
TIP HOW DO I SET MY FIRST BIDS OUT OF THE GATE?

A common setup approach is assigning your starting bids by product margin. For items with a higher margin, you can afford a higher bid, whereas lower margins may require more careful bidding in order to see a return on your investment.

As brands, product lines or individual offers separate positively or negatively, segment them into their own bid groups

What exactly do we mean by “granular?” When you set your bid for your product groupings, you can go broad (for example, set the same bid amount for all men and women’s sneakers) or you can go granular (bid 10% more for women’s Nike Air Max 2015 sneakers).

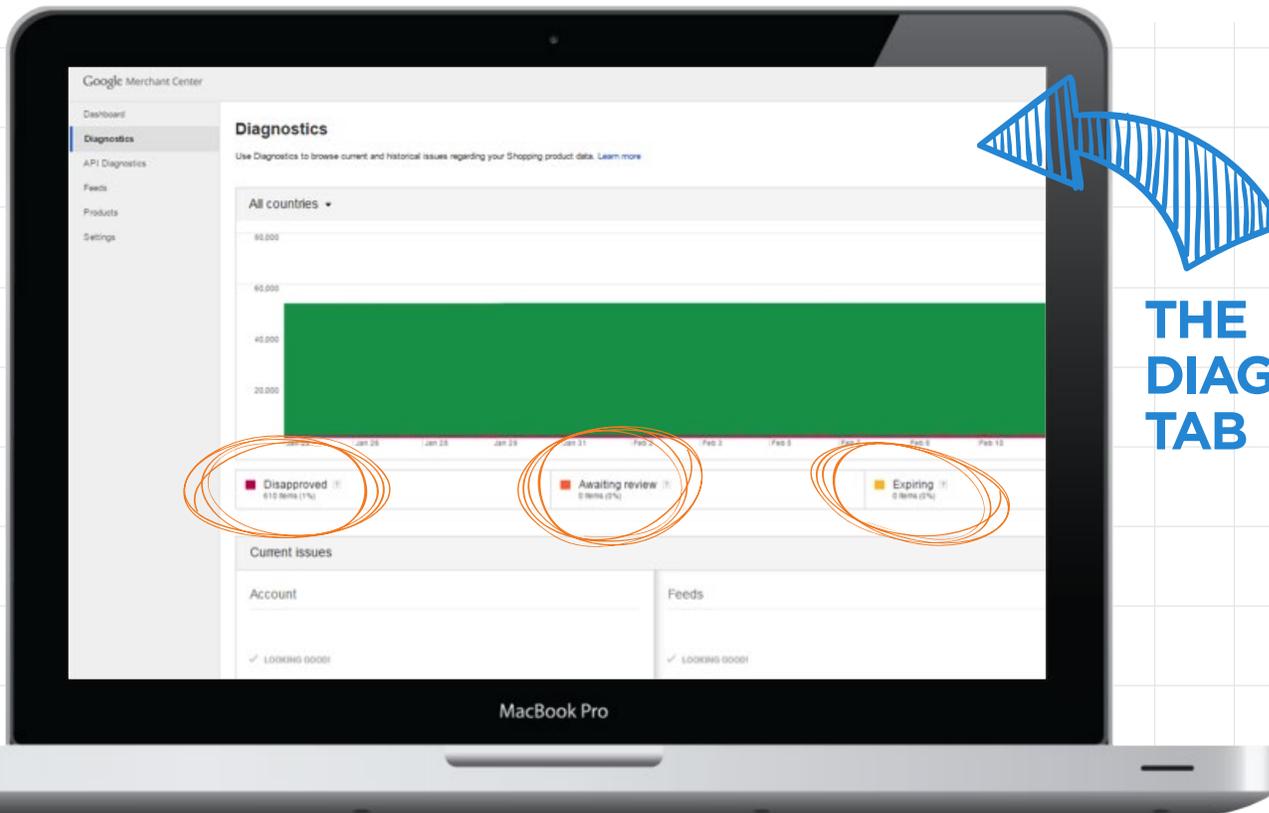
You don’t want to bid too much—or even at all—for brands, styles or models that don’t convert well in a PLA campaign. At the same time, you may want to bid more aggressively for specific products that do, especially if you find that you can upsell certain orders with related products or accessories.



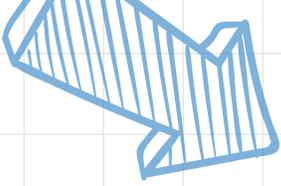
2 Listen to the Engines and Monitor Your Data Quality

Over the past year, Google and Bing have become much more aggressive about policing their requirements for PLA's.

Specifically, to create a better user experience, the search engines are screening ads to see if they click to out-of-stock pages, and are scanning ads to ensure that product attributes such as pricing information, sizing, colors, material and shipping costs all match your data feed.



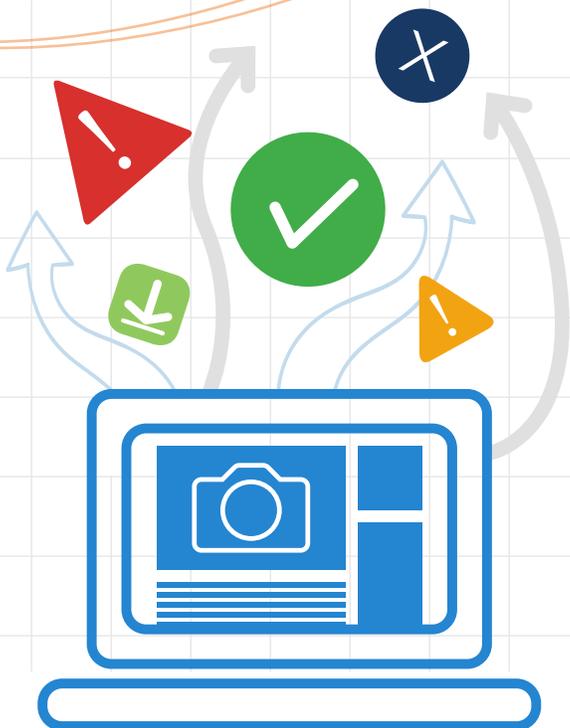
**THE
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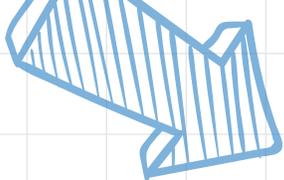
If there is a mismatch, they'll provide specific feedback via the Google Merchant Center, under the Diagnostics Tab. If it's not fixed within a few days or if the account is in danger of suspension, Google will send you an email. If discrepancies happen frequently, or are particularly egregious, they may take down your entire PLA campaign.

To ensure your campaigns aren't flagged or removed, sign into your Google Merchant Center daily to check for feedback, and address any discrepancies as quickly as possible to avoid any interruptions in serving your ads.

Keep an eye on your current product feed issues to avoid any interruptions



Current Issues > Items		
Issue	Country	
Insufficient product identifiers. Missing GTIN attribute	United States	▲
Temporary item disapprovals due to incorrect prices	United States	▲
Automatic item disapprovals due to policy violation	United States	▲
Generic images	United States	▲
Invalid images	United States	▲
Encoding problem in attribute: description	United States	▲
Missing recommended attribute: google product category	United States	▲
Restricted usage GTIN	United States	▲
Coupon code GTIN	United States	▲
Short descriptions	United States	ⓘ
Capitalized titles	United States	ⓘ



3 Listen to your Customers and Look for Trends

Your initial product feed is essentially your best guess on how your products and offers will convert. It's a starting point, nothing more. You'll start to receive consumer feedback the very day your PLA campaigns launch.

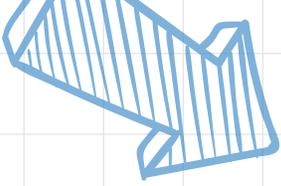
TIP WANT TO ADJUST YOUR BIDS, BUT UNSURE HOW IT WILL AFFECT YOUR PERFORMANCE?

AdWords [Bid Simulator](#) can estimate what your performance would have been if you'd set different bids over the last 7 days.

Once the data starts rolling in, look for patterns. Did consumers click on your ad? Did they ultimately convert? Did they abandon the shopping cart once the shipping and handling costs were added?

Keep an eye on spending patterns over time, and remember seasonality; just as jackets will sell better during the winter, certain products may sell well initially, but fail to convert consumers two weeks later.

All of these trends are your customers providing direct feedback to your offers – be sure to respond to patterns by adjusting bids up or down to better meet your ROI goals. PLAs can become expensive if you're not getting the conversions you need. To ensure strong ROI, optimize your product feeds and campaign offers based on consumer response as frequently as possible.



4 Test Often, But Strategically

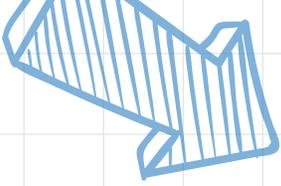
As mentioned above, PLA performance isn't static, so you'll need to work at earning ongoing sales and profitability. The best way to ensure continued success is by testing all aspects of campaigns, including modifying product titles, images, product descriptions, promotional text, merchant promotions and of course your bids.

The optimal combination for your products may be a moving target, but you can find it by constantly testing.



IF YOU HAVE LIMITED RESOURCES, FOCUS ON PRODUCT TITLES.

They are relatively easy to optimize, and can yield big results. Put key product features (product type, style, etc.) in the first 25 characters. After that, test other attributes, like color, size, brand on material to see what performs well.



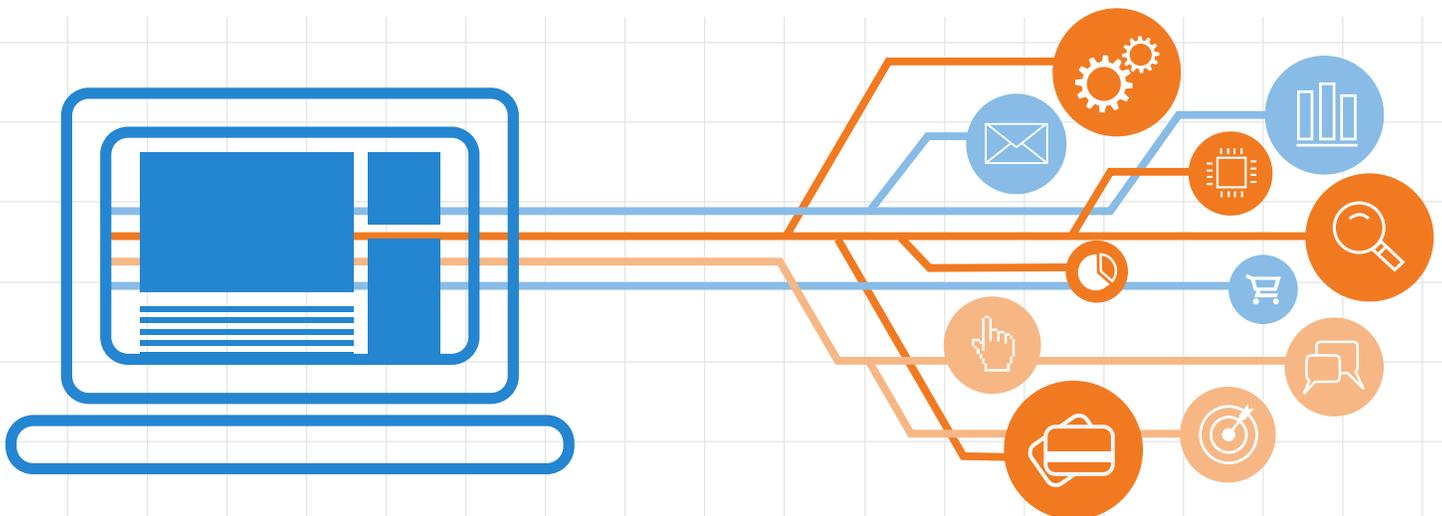
5 Don't Ignore Bing

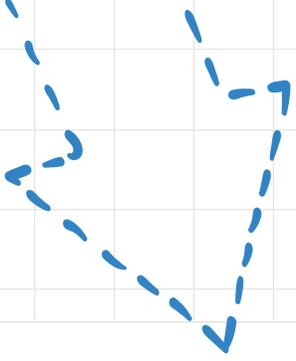
Though Google is the dominant PLA player, if you really want full distribution you can't ignore Bing's Product Ads (which now also feed into Yahoo!). Of course, that means you'll need to create and actively manage two distinct product feeds and campaigns, which isn't easy, especially given how Google has stepped up its policing policies.

NOT SURE IF BING IS FOR YOU?

Consider the demographics you are targeting for specific products. For example, shoppers older than 45 are much more likely to use Bing. Does this fit the target audience for any of your products?

However, if you have the resources, the additional overhead may well be worth it. Since fewer marketers are running ads on Bing and Yahoo!, you can rank higher for certain terms and acquire customers for a lower cost. It can vary from one advertiser to the next, but in many cases participation in Bing's program will drive as much as 15-20% in incremental sales.





If this all sounds a bit daunting to you, remember there are plenty of companies out there who can help you manage an effective and profitable PLA strategy.

Getting the most out of your PLA's will require persistence, testing and regular optimization. For many eCommerce companies it makes sense to seek help from experts who have the right experience.

At Connexity we have managed over 2,500 PLA campaigns over the last 15 years. We are ranked:

TOP 10
GOOGLE PLA
ADVERTISTER

TOP 2
BING
ADVERTISTER

We leverage intelligence from:

> 1 BILLION
RETAIL DATA POINTS

100 MILLION +
MERCHANTS

*To learn about how we can help you increase your ROI in your PLA campaigns, **contact us.***

