Making the case for Bing Ads
SEM pros embrace a new world of audience and opportunity

Bing Network. Be there.
Search engine marketing (SEM) pros love their jobs for lots of different reasons. Some enjoy solving puzzles; others get a thrill from beating competitors to the punch or helping startups get off the ground. In SEM, standing still means falling behind. Constantly changing SEM technologies challenge pros to do their best—and do it differently from other companies, and differently from what they did last week. For SEM pros, coming up with creative new ideas, testing them out, and getting almost immediate feedback keeps their work fresh and exciting, even fun.

While search may be fun for successful SEM practitioners, it’s also a highly competitive field where missed opportunities can be costly. That’s why seasoned SEM pros are constantly on the hunt for new tools and technology, unique data and insights, previously untapped audiences, campaigns that deliver higher value at a lower cost, and other advantages for themselves, their companies and their clients.

In the following pages, we’ll explain why so many SEM pros today embrace Bing Ads as an essential destination on the hunt for new SEM opportunities. In the process, we’ll look at why so many of these SEM practitioners continue to expand their relationships with Bing Ads—increasing their Bing Ads budgets, adopting its capabilities, and recommending it to clients and colleagues.

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- Elizabeth Marsten, Senior Director, e-Commerce Growth Services, CommerceHub
“Bing creates a healthy market by providing a viable alternative to Google, one in which people can invest their marketing dollars so they expand their audience and don’t stay vested in one place.”

- Paul Vallez, Vice President of Product Strategy and Strategic Partnerships, Kenshoo

But really, we think the case for Bing Ads boils down to one fact: Launching a paid search campaign today using Google AdWords alone means you’re leaving money on the table—or handing it to your competition.

“Bing Ads is so easy to manage that it’s definitely worth it to add it in. Otherwise, you’re basically leaving money on the table,” said Elizabeth Marsten, Senior Director, e-Commerce Growth Services, CommerceHub.

Bing Ads has evolved into a mature and powerful paid search solution with unique capabilities that set it apart from Google AdWords. For industry leaders such as Paul Vallez, Vice President of Product Strategy and Strategic Partnerships at Kenshoo, Bing’s success has earned it an important place in a modern paid search strategy.

“Bing is a solid investment for our customers,” said Vallez. “Bing creates a healthy market by providing a viable alternative to Google, one in which people can invest their marketing dollars so they expand their audience and don’t stay vested in one place.”

BING NETWORK DEMOGRAPHICS:
Earn more, spend more

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<td>have a college degree or higher¹</td>
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<td>have a household income $75K or higher¹</td>
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2. comScore qSearch, Explicit Core Search (custom), January 2017. The Bing Network includes Microsoft Sites Core Search Explicit, Yahoo Sites Core Search Explicit (searches powered by Bing) and AOL Inc. Core Search Explicit in the United States.
A “healthy market” is a good thing, of course, but it’s rarely the reason why search marketers turn their attention to Bing Ads. It’s more about the bottom line: Bing Ads offers relatively low-cost access to a large and demographically attractive audience. With one ad buy through Bing Ads, advertisers are able to reach 138 million unique searchers on the Bing Network who represent 5 billion monthly searches. This accounts for 32.7 percent of the search market.3 Not located in the U.S.? Check out the unique searchers found in one of the 37 countries where we operate.

Scott Redgate, SEM Manager at automotive supplier CJ Pony Parts, added Bing Ads to his company’s SEM mix in 2012 in order to explore this untapped pool of potential buyers. “I didn’t want to lose the possibility of reaching a significant number of potential customers,” Redgate explained.

According to Redgate, the Bing audience turned out to have more potential than anyone at CJ Pony Parts expected.

“Roughly 50 percent of our clicks on Bing Ads are from people who have never visited our site before. Bing does a fantastic job of serving the right ad to the right person—who wouldn’t want that?”

- Scott Redgate, SEM Manager, CJ Pony Parts

3. comScore qSearch, Explicit Core Search (custom), January 2017. The Bing Network includes Microsoft Sites Core Search Explicit, Yahoo Sites Core Search Explicit (searches powered by Bing) and AOL Inc. Core Search Explicit in the United States.

Paul Mead, Founder and Chairman of the European integrated creative agency VCCP, also cited a
variation of the same one-two punch when he explained why Bing Ads plays a prominent role in his SEM budget planning for clients.

“Bing Ads tends to have fewer advertisers compared to Google AdWords, which usually results in less competition,” Mead stated. “Despite representing a smaller slice of the search pie, the quality of the traffic we get with Bing is high. It’s a win all the way around: We get cheaper costs per click, better ad positions, stronger CTRs and better conversions, CPA, ROI and ROAS.”

Once they start working with Bing Ads, advertisers and agencies typically expand their investments to leverage the cost, reach, conversion and other advantages they discover. For example, travel website TravelPass Group increased its spend after Bing Ads boosted its cost per action (CPA) by 24 percent, conversion rates by 19 percent and click-through rate (CTR) by 94 percent—all while lowering cost per click (CPC) by 10 percent.  

“Bing has been a great partner for us,” Mike Hurren, TravelPass Group’s Vice President of Marketing, explained. “We’ve ramped up our spend with Bing and it’s on an equal footing with Google for us.”

Some SEM pros have much longer relationships with Bing Ads—in some cases dating back a decade or more to its origins as MSN’s adCenter platform. Arianne Donoghue, Digital Marketing Manager at travel website icelolly.com, exemplifies this group of expert Bing Ads users. She says that Bing Ads keeps proving its worth to the business, over and over again.

“We’re always asking ourselves: Does this help us to make money? Does it help drive more new customers?” said Donoghue. “Does it add to the journey and the customer experience? For Bing, the answer is almost always yes. That’s why we continue to use it as much as we can.”

Google today may be synonymous with web search, but behind the scenes, Bing plays a much bigger role than even many SEM pros realize. Among other examples, Bing powers the search functionality on:

- Amazon devices, such as Kindle, Echo and the Fire TV Stick with Alexa
- Apple’s Siri and Microsoft’s Cortana voice-search tools
- Xbox One and Xbox 360 consoles
- Mac OS X (Spotlight) and Windows 10

The Bing Ads audience has higher incomes and greater buying power than the average online consumer; includes more college grads and grad-school students; and skews toward households with kids.

A simple formula for paid search success

Bing Ads is challenging the status quo with innovative technology; still many SEM pros agree their favorite Bing Ads feature boils down to one simple word: value.

“Bing is at parity with Google in terms of sales revenue for a very important client of ours. Bing was also at about 35 percent of the cost. In other words, the return on ad spend was not quite 3X, but it was between 2X and 3X better than we’re getting on Google—which is what everyone says they want.”

- Matt Van Wagner, Founder and President, Findmefaster.com

“Bing has historically punched above its weight in terms of search engines through PPC, delivering better conversions. There was a period last year where Bing’s market share here [in the UK] was 20 percent, yet it was driving 35 percent of the calls we were getting.”

- Arianne Donoghue, Digital Marketing Manager, icelolly.com

“The advantage we gain in cost per click [with Bing] gives us a great return on investment—more than 35 percent better than Google AdWords. From 2014 to 2015, Bing Ads revenue jumped 55 percent.”

- Scott Redgate, SEM Manager, CJ Pony Parts
Most SEM pros, however, know there’s a difference between effective search engine marketing and profitable search engine marketing. They want to know whether Bing Ads can support smart, efficient and truly profitable SEM strategies: Are its campaign planning and creation tools easy to use? Can Bing Ads scale to support large campaigns as easily as smaller ones? Can Bing Ads complement existing Google AdWords campaigns without adding cost and complexity?

Bing Ads excels at giving SEM pros the best of all worlds: It offers a smooth and seamless experience for Google AdWords users, yet it also offers unique and innovative features for those who are ready to explore the possibilities.

“The parity that I see within the toolset has made it a lot easier to adopt Bing Ads,” said Marsten at CommerceHub. “I didn’t have to learn a new vocabulary. I didn’t have to invest a lot of hours to adopt this platform. It’s pretty straightforward.”

Most SEM pros say they’ve been surprised and impressed by just how easy it is to run Google AdWords and Bing Ads campaigns side-by-side, because they don’t have to learn to use new tools. However, many pros also say that if you’re not building a new campaign specific to Bing Ads, then you’re missing out on its full potential. They recommend making changes to help ensure that you have the right keywords, copy and landing pages and that you take full advantage of the different

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Compared to Hertz’ Google AdWords campaigns, Bing Ads delivers a 34 percent higher conversion rate and a 7 percent lower cost per click.6

Matt Van Wagner at Findmefaster.com ran two nearly identical campaigns—one with Bing Ads, and another with Google AdWords—in January 2017 for a B2B office equipment company. He spent the same amount of time on each, but had very different results.7

(and better) targeting options in Bing Ads. They also advise other SEM pros to learn the differences between the way that Google AdWords and Bing Ads calculate quality scores.

Linka, a digital marketing agency based in Brazil, was impressed by its experience in 2009 when it launched Bing Ads SEM campaigns to supplement AdWords for major clients including Hertz in Brazil. According to Eric Gomes, a managing director for Linka, his SEM team used the Bing Ads Google Import tool to copy a combination of 1.5 million keywords and ads from Google AdWords over to Bing Ads, as well as up to 200,000 negative keywords, campaigns, ad groups and extensions. “We used it once, and it worked like a charm,” Gomes said. The firm then spent some time editing and customizing the data, but, as Gomes said, “It’s perfect not to need to create everything from scratch.”

REAL-WORLD RESULTS:
Bing Ads vs. Google AdWords

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Bing Ads overall return on advertisement spending almost 2X better than Google AdWords (7.2 vs. 4.1)

Bing Ads average order value on Shopping Campaigns 2X greater than Google AdWords

Percentage of overall revenue:

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<tr>
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<th>Bing Ads</th>
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“What I really like is Bing Ads’ aggressive and incredibly quick turn on making sure that anything that has been introduced in Google AdWords is in Bing Ads as quickly as possible.”

- Matt Van Wagner, Founder and President, Findmefaster.com

Since launching Hertz’ first Bing Ads campaigns at the end of 2014, Linka has doubled the company’s budget. Compared to Hertz’ Google AdWords campaigns, Bing Ads delivers a 34 percent higher conversion rate and a 7 percent lower cost per click, according to Linka.8

Bing Ads has maintained its seamless, turnkey migration capabilities with Google AdWords even as both products continue to evolve and roll out new features. In fact, according to Redgate at CJ Pony Parts, over time it has actually become easier to work with both products. “[It’s] easy to manage in terms of carrying over changes,” he said.

“Bing Ads always rolls out new functionality with an eye toward its global customer base—using a rolling timetable to include Bing Ads users around the world in each new release rollout process.”


“What I really like is Bing Ads’ aggressive and incredibly quick turn on making sure that anything that has been introduced in Google AdWords is in Bing Ads as quickly as possible,” added Matt Van Wagner, Founder and President, Findmefaster.com. “That’s huge.”
Bing Ads allows flexibility for different locations, ad scheduling, languages and ad rotation targeting at the ad group and campaign level where Google AdWords only offers this at the campaign level (therefore, no need to create a new campaign to have different settings).

You can schedule ads to run at a certain time of day—say, 9 a.m.—and Bing Ads will display that ad when it’s 9 a.m. in the searcher’s time zone. Google AdWords uses one time zone for each account, so if the account is based on the East Coast, West Coast searchers will see it at 6 a.m.

Bing Ads offers demographic targeting that automatically increases your keyword bids when your target genders or certain age groups are searching—improving the chance of your ads being shown to the demographic groups you want.

Bing Ads still allows the option to include close variant queries as matches. Google AdWords forced this change, i.e., “close variant” matching target across all match types, including common misspellings, plurals, and grammatical stemming of these phrases and exact match keywords.

Bing Ads approves ads almost immediately, while Google AdWords takes much longer, often two days.

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Bing Ads Sitelink Extensions can all point to the same page, while in Google AdWords, each sitelink must point to a different URL. This gives more options and better landing page targeting.
Bing Ads has established itself as a paid-search technology innovator that works closely with clients to solve problems and roll out new and useful capabilities. Let’s look at a few examples to understand what these innovations mean to you and how they shape perception of Bing Ads as a true partner—and not simply as another technology vendor.

More targeting options

One of the first things many Bing Ads users notice is how much easier it is to define useful and specific audience targeting compared to other platforms.

Currently, Bing Ads targeting elements include expected CTR, ad relevance and landing page experience, which get rolled up into the quality score. Bing Ads can generate reports on campaigns, ad groups and historical performance trends, going beyond the usual keyword reporting available on Google AdWords. Unlike Google AdWords, Bing Ads reports on partner syndication performance, showing which partner sites are performing and which are not, so you can focus your investment accordingly.

According to Donoghue at icelolly.com, these capabilities have a major impact on how she thinks about finding and reaching her ideal target audience. “It’s about who people are and what their interests are,” Donoghue said. “It’s always been easier to do that with Bing Ads and to get better conversion as a result.”

Bing Ads also allows demographic targeting with bid modification options—another set of features not available today on Google AdWords. These allow advertisers to target ads at the group level—for example, applying geo-targeting to a defined ad group without changing the default campaign-level targeting.

The key to success, Donoghue noted, is to look for demographic trends that indicate potential targeting opportunities and to move quickly to exploit them. “We’ve frequently got incremental performance boosts from our campaigns by applying our demographic data to campaigns and running them again in Bing Ads,” she said.
Donoghue cited the Bing Ads quality score as another example of Bing Ads offering unique audience insights not found on Google AdWords. The score, measured on a scale of 1-10, assesses the relevance of a user’s keywords, ads and landing pages when compared to customers’ search queries and other input.

“Bing Ads has long offered the ability to see your historical quality score information, rather than the snapshot for the current day you get in Google AdWords. The ability to see how the optimizations we make affect our quality score and to track how this changes over time is extremely useful,” explained Donoghue. “We can then take those learnings and apply them to Google AdWords—which helps boost overall performance.”

Donoghue’s comments reflect a sentiment shared by other veteran Bing Ads users that the platform offers access to a wider variety of data than Google AdWords, in addition to offering more valuable and interesting ways to turn SEM data into actionable insights.

Van Wagner expressed this sentiment in more direct terms. “Google is very stingy with the query data that they give us,” he stated. “Bing Ads, on the other hand, delivers a lot more usable data as to what’s really on people’s minds when they’re typing in a query.”

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“Before you spend anything on Bing Ads, you can test. Bing Ads Intelligence gives you amazing insights—for free.”

- Arianne Donoghue, Digital Marketing Manager, icelolly.com

Van Wagner added, “Ironically, the data we get from Bing Ads actually helps improve our Google AdWords campaigns. It shows us more keyword areas that we weren’t aware of on Google that are showing impressions without clicks.”

Donoghue cited the Bing Ads Intelligence add-in for Excel as yet another example of Bing Ads making SEM data accessible and actionable for its users. “Before you spend anything on Bing Ads, you can test. Bing Ads Intelligence gives you amazing insights—for free,” she stated. “You can benchmark what competitors are doing and get a good feel for where the best return or the volume is likely to be.”

WATCH OUR WEBCAST:
The Science of Excel for PPC Marketers
Product Ads and Bing Shopping Campaigns

“Product Ads are a familiar feature to many Bing Ads users. Product Ads are designed to make a user’s retail ads pop on a search results page; the ads showcase products in a larger format with images, text, price information and the company name.

Product Ads have proven their value to users: For example, Summit, a changemaker in Europe’s online retailing industry, reported that on average, Product Ads have a 45 percent higher click-through rate than text ads. For many users, however, the real payoff comes from Bing Shopping Campaigns—a simple way for advertisers to organize, manage, bid on and report on their Product Ads. Bing Shopping Campaigns also give advertisers control over targeting, deep insight into performance data, and the ability to manage Product Ads consistently across advertising platforms.10

Marsten at CommerceHub said her team now relies on Bing Shopping Campaigns to maximize the value of clients’ Product Ads budgets. “We took notice when Bing Ads rolled from Product Ads campaigns to Shopping Campaigns and made it super easy to do the transition,” she said. “We tested Shopping Campaigns out with a few clients and saw so much improvement that, after two weeks, we decided to transition all our clients, right away.”

Megan Taggart, Senior Account Manager with Aimclear, also praised Bing Shopping Campaigns for its ability to cut significant campaign management challenges down to size. “The improvement in managing campaigns from the UI [with Bing Shopping Campaigns] has been a game changer, delivering great performance and internal efficiency gains,” she stated.


14

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WATCH OUR WEBCAST:
The Science of Remarketing

Perhaps nothing frustrates marketers more than searchers who look interested, able and willing to buy—and then drop off the radar, never to be seen again. Remarketing tactics offer a solution: a way to keep high-value prospects visible and accessible to advertisers, and to help bring them back when they’re ready to make a purchase.

For Bing Ads users like TravelPass Group, remarketing has become a highly strategic activity. “The travel-buying process is just that—a process,” said Hurren. “We see a large majority of our customers converting within 24 hours, but visiting the page multiple times.”

Redgate at CJ Pony Parts said he often increases his bid for people who’ve already qualified and visited the website or a specific section of the website. This technique helps him refine his targeting. “Bing’s audience, right off the bat, is a little bit more targeted than Google’s,” explained Redgate. “When you add in the ability to do Remarketing in Paid Search, it adds a whole other layer to it.”

No more missed opportunities
Finally, most SEM pros at some point circle back to their relationships with the Bing Ads team as a key strength. While technical support in the traditional sense plays a role here, most of these Bing Ads customers clearly had something else in mind—a level of collaboration, listening and engagement that goes above and beyond.

John Nuzzi of Carat, the SEM agency that won Bing Ads’ Optimizer of the Year Award, said he views the Bing Ads support staff essentially as an extension of his own SEM team. “The people we work with [at Bing] understand what we are trying to do,” Nuzzi stated. “Every time we have a question, they come to us with solutions that work and that are thought out—not just, ‘Hey, check out our helpdesk.’ They really care about our business.”

“Bing Ads has won a lot of goodwill and loyalty from people like myself because it provides such a good user experience,” explained Donoghue. She and Van Wagner, both long-term Bing Ads users, praise the company’s responsiveness—and both have worked with Bing Ads to define and develop new feature requests and updates. Through the use of open betas and pilots available to SEM pros, Bing Ads maintains a leadership role in the industry that keeps it responsive to user needs and able to deliver the functionality they want.

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Recommending Bing Ads to clients and colleagues

For SEM pros working in agency settings, client relationships hold a very special status. Earning a client’s trust is often a time-consuming task; the last thing any search marketer wants to do is undermine that effort with an ill-conceived recommendation.

It speaks volumes, then, to see agency marketing experts position Bing Ads as an essential part of their clients’ SEM mix.

Van Wagner at Findmefaster.com said he’s accustomed to dealing with new clients who see Bing Ads as an also-ran or a niche player. When he suggests a trial run on Bing Ads—typically by shifting funds away from their lowest-performing Google AdWords keywords—many of these clients initially decline the offer.

The problem, Van Wagner said, is that he knows his agency can’t deliver the best possible SEM results using just one platform. When a client says, “no, thanks,” to Bing Ads, Van Wagner stands his ground and explains his position. “We don’t take a client on without putting them onto Bing Ads. That’s just a given,” he explained.

The results, Van Wagner said, speak for themselves.

“I have never had anyone—anyone—take their investment down on Bing after we got them going,” he explained. “Even my most Google-centric clients break into a big smile because they’re immediately seeing what they want: higher sales levels at a great price.”

In broader terms, according to Donoghue at icelolly.com, even non-agency users find that Bing Ads can help them to establish a reputation for leadership and innovation with partners and clients.

“Bing is building a relationship with us and other advertisers that’s more about the long term than the short term,” said Donoghue. “Early on, I was able to use Bing Ads to run a report and instantly see the components of quality score, what they are for my individual keywords, how I can improve them, and where I stand to make the biggest gain if I fix a keyword that may be substandard. That made me look great in the eyes of the clients—and I couldn’t have done it with Google.”

“I like the innovation I’ve seen time and again with Bing,” Donoghue concluded. “It’s blazing its own trail and delivering features that have real value to me and my clients.”
SEM pros tell a consistent story about the value they get from Bing Ads—a story that’s easy to measure in click-throughs, conversions, revenue and other hard-data metrics. And many emphasize an additional point: They see tremendous long-term potential in their Bing Ads relationships in ways that metrics can’t capture—at least not yet.

Taggart at Aimclear, for example, said she’s particularly excited about Microsoft’s acquisition of LinkedIn and what it will mean for Bing Ads to add LinkedIn to its audience reach and targeting capabilities.

“Bing’s potential to improve demographic targeting will be especially powerful for verticals where query intent between B2B and B2C users is currently indistinguishable,” she said. “We believe this will give Bing Ads an immense competitive advantage in uncovering premium B2B psychographic audiences as layering filters within Bing search.”

Other SEM practitioners see similar potential in Microsoft’s rapidly growing Windows 10 user base, given Bing Ads’ embedded presence in the platform’s search feature and in the new Edge browser available only to Windows 10 users. Some also cite Bing’s role in voice search, including Microsoft’s Cortana and Apple’s Siri, as an even bigger long-term opportunity.

“It’ll be really interesting in the future for paid search because of the rise of voice search and the use of [virtual] personal assistants,” Marsten at CommerceHub said, especially given the potential for “voice search campaigns, ones that specifically target voice search queries or users and/or personal assistant users.”

In big-picture terms, Marsten and her SEM peers share the same vision for a future with Bing Ads. It’s a platform that won them over as a way to diversify beyond Google AdWords and to capture valuable audience and demographic opportunities. Bing Ads has kept their loyalty with a host of features that make their jobs easier and more effective. When they look to the future, they see Bing Ads making all the right moves to help them land the next round of SEM opportunities.
Learn more from our live and on-demand webcasts. Join the experts as they cover the latest tips, tricks and trends, from cutting-edge SEM strategies to the most effective ways to use Bing Ads features to grow your business.