Keeping an Eye on Google's AI
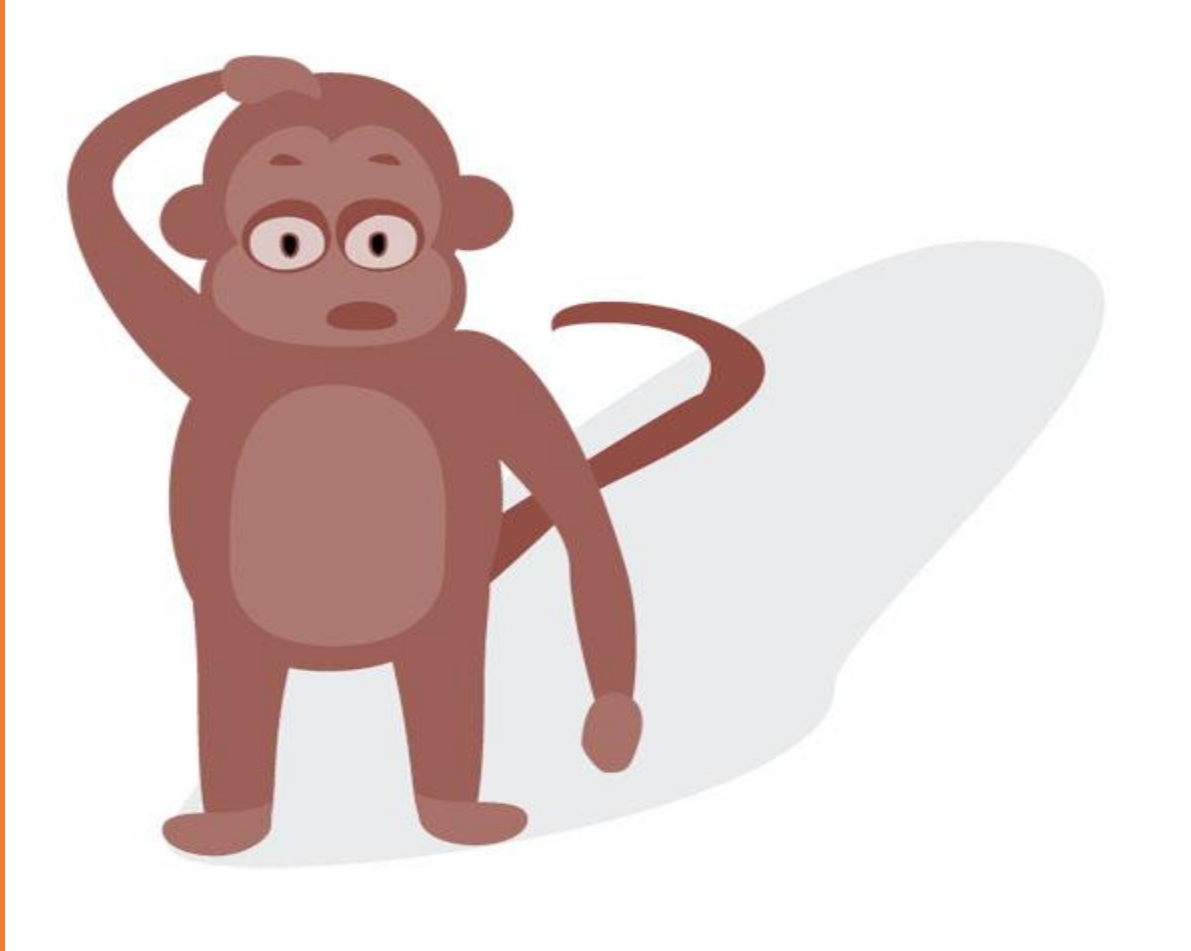
Search Advertising Show 2019

Nils Rooijmans

PROBLEM

Twitter: @thatSearchGuyNL, #searchadvertisingshow

Key Elements of a healthy Business Relationship

Transparency

TRUST

win win

2017

Sundar Pichai, CEO Google

AI Driven

An AI optimizes towards the goals you provide,
based on the input (data) *you* provide.

Google's goals?

How to keep everybody happy?

    End users

    Business partners

      (including advertisers)
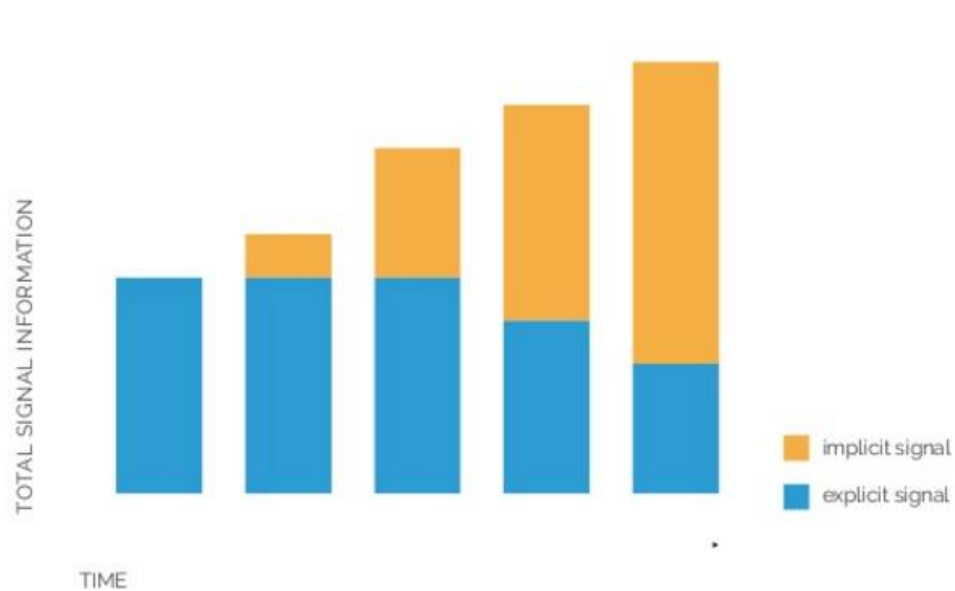
    Employees

    Shareholders

    PPC experts??

Long run VS Short term?

Conflict of interest ?

An AI optimizes towards the goals you provide,
based on the input (data) *you* provide.

Google's data?

SEA MARKETEER VERSUS SMART BIDDING

DAWN OF MACHINE LEARNING

imgflip.com

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How many signals in Smart Bidding?

18 signals of Smart Bidding

SEARCH & DISPLAY & SHOPPING

- device
- physical location (at city level)
- location intent in user query
- weekday and time of day
- remarketing lists
- ad characteristics
- interface language
- browser
- OS
- user activity on your site

SEARCH & DISPLAY only

- demographics

SEARCH & SHOPPING only

- user query

SEARCH only

- search partner network

DISPLAY only

- placement

SHOPPING only

- product attributes in feed

FUTURE SIGNALS

- Mobile app ratings
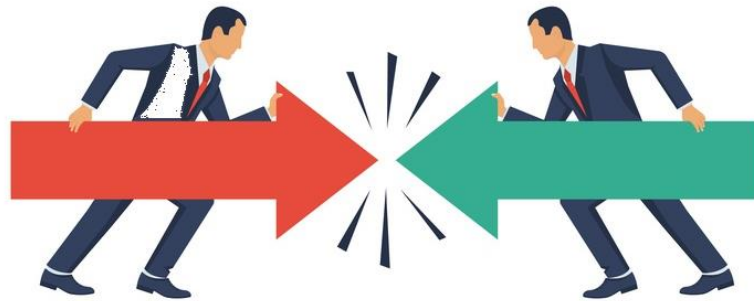- Seasonality
- Price competitiveness (Shopping)

HIDDEN SIGNALS?

- Traffic info?
- Search history?
- Surfer behavior?

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Is 'Smart' AI really smarter?

Or just using more data then we are allowed to use?

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Conflict of interest **?**

G "We've got some new AI stuff for you!"

STAY
CURIE-OUS

NOT CRITICAL
JUST KEEPING IT REAL

quickmeme.com

Twitter: @thatSearchGuyNL, #searchadvertisingshow
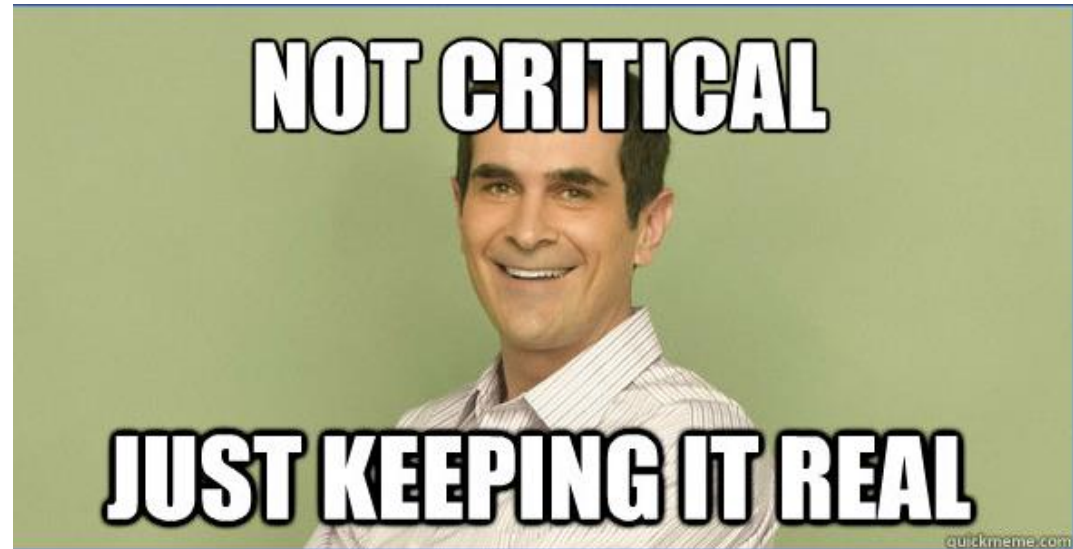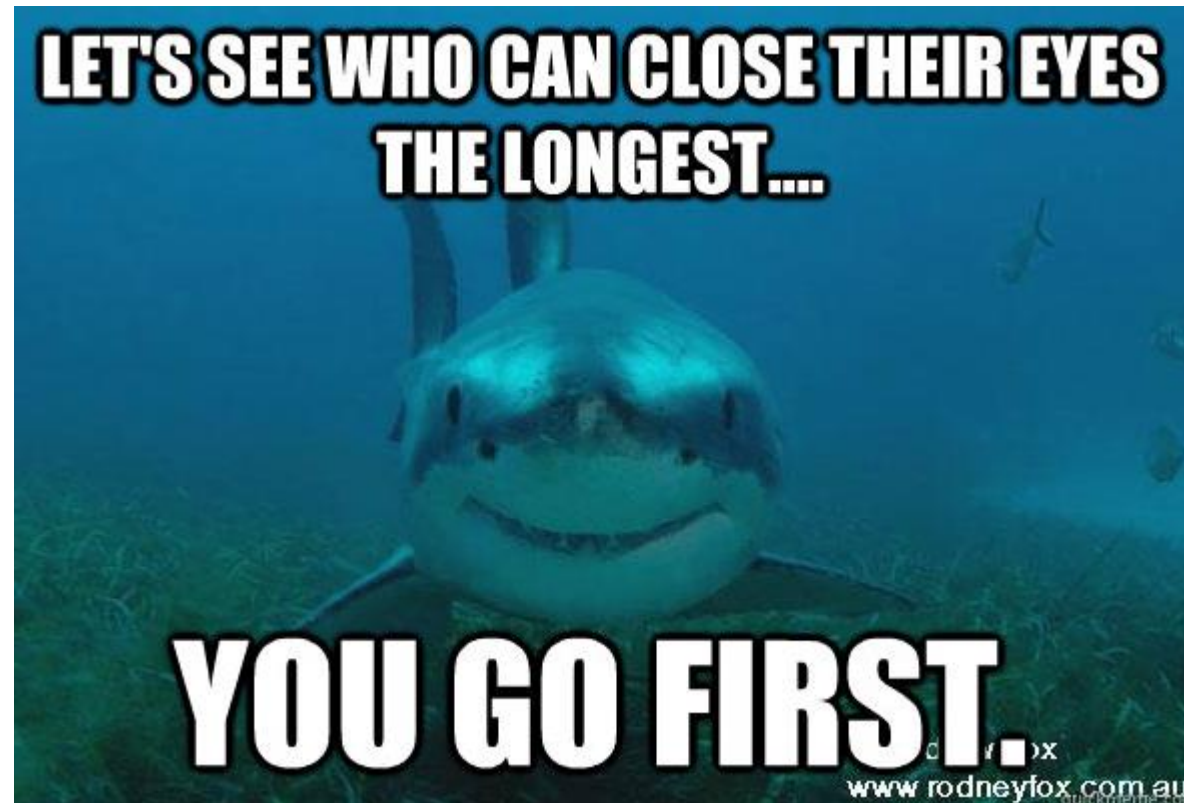
Implement scripts to monitor and control

Let's see what the data tells us.

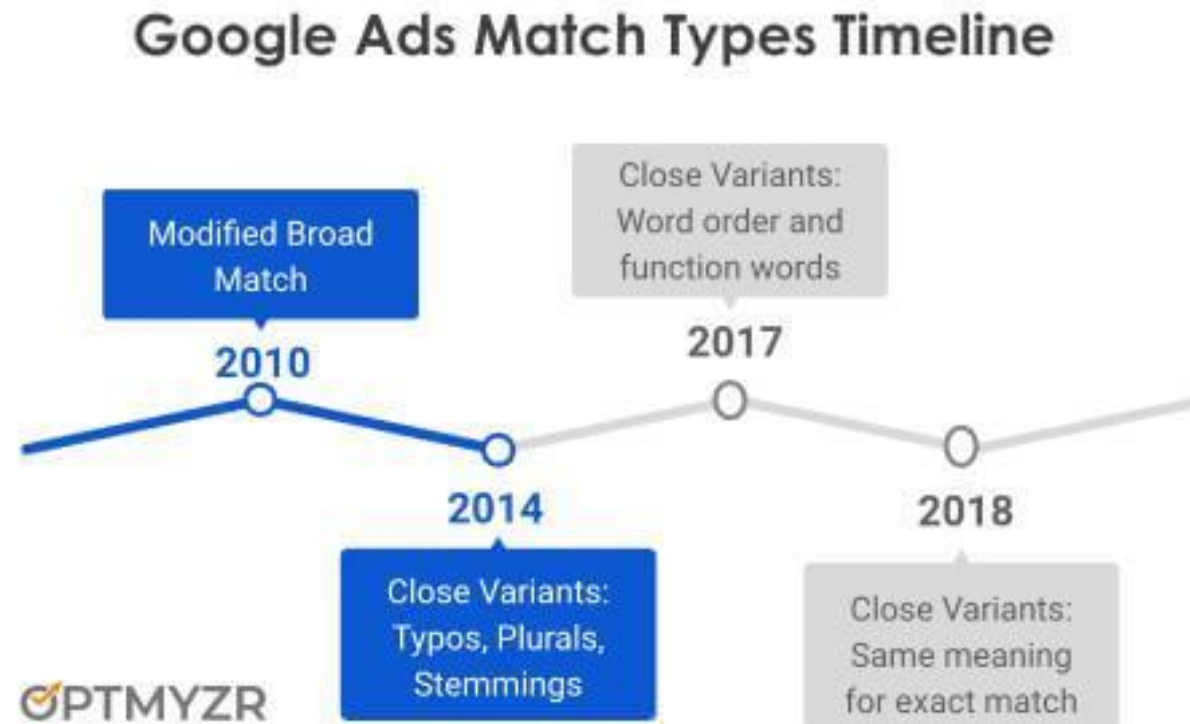# I use scripts to monitor Google's AI for things like:

- Actual CPCs and CPAs of Enhanced Campaigns
(search terms with high CPCs)

- DSA campaign performance
(sudden spikes in impr and clicks)

- RSA performance
(ETAs tend to have a better CPA/ROAS)

- Watch location targeting
(people "regularly in" your targeted location)

#1
Close Variant Match

Sep 2018: Google expands 'exact' match…again

Google Ads Match Types Timeline

Modified Broad Match — 2010

Close Variants: Typos, Plurals, Stemmings — 2014

Close Variants: Word order and function words — 2017

Close Variants: Same meaning for exact match — 2018

OPTMYZR

In theory it works great

"Powered by Google's machine learning, exact match will now match with the intent of a search, instead of just the specific words."

Keyword	Query	Why it matched
yosemite camping	yosemite **national park ca** camping	Implied words
	yosemite **campground**	Paraphrase
	campsites in yosemite	Same intent

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In practice it might do wonders!

Match user query to rebranded company name keyword

`[new brand keyword]` **matches** `old brand search term`

Magical Intent

In practice it might also…

Purse != Handbag

A PURSE? ITS A SATCHEL

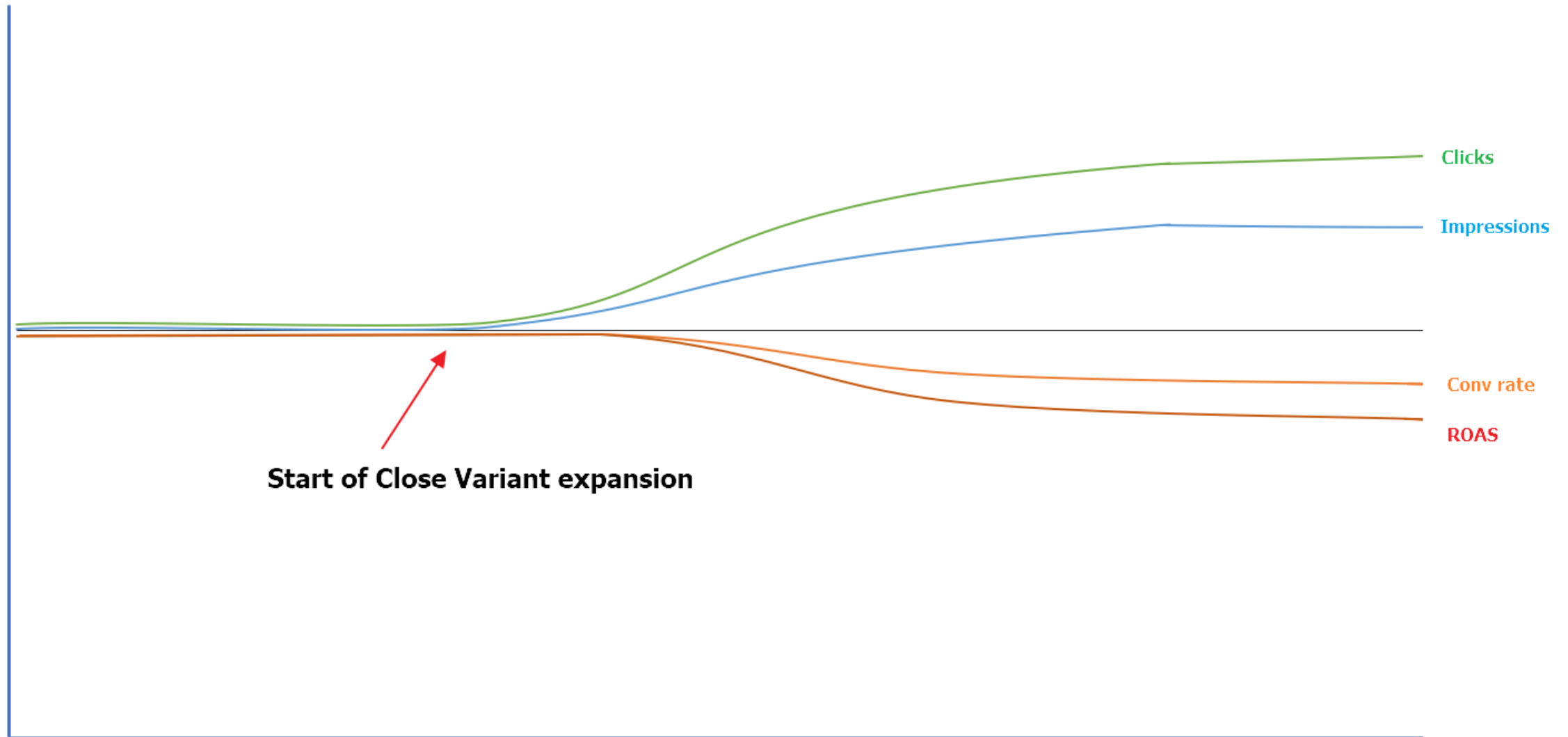|	Search Queries	Target Keyword		Matched by
☐	Total - All Search Queries: 2			
☐	cheap purses	cheap purses	ⓘ	Exact
☐	leather purses	leather handbags	ⓘ	Exact (Close Variant)
	Total - All Search Queries: 2			

SOURCE: Wordstream

Let's monitor the performance using scripts

- For all Exact keywords
  - Aggregate stats on its Close Variant search terms
  - Compare to the performance of the real exact match search term

Keyword	Nr of CV Search Terms	EM Cost/Conv	CV Cost/Conv	Diff Cost/Conv	Total Impressions	EM Impressions	CV Impressions	CV Impression Share	Total Clicks	EM Clicks	CV Clicks	CV Click Share	Total Cost	EM Cost	CV Cost	CV Cost Share	Total Conversions	EM Conversions	CV Conversions	CV Conversions Share
TOTAL	481	7.62	8.68	0.14	99027	95942	3085	0.03	15821	14631	1190	0.08	13585.39	12401.79	1183.6	0.09	1764.47	1628.14	136.33	0.08
	11	17.86	17.33	-0.03	562	107	455	0.81	204	36	168	0.82	278.28	44.3	233.98	0.84	15.98	2.48	13.5	0.84
	60	13.55	17.36	0.28	13700	13472	228	0.02	4472	4358	114	0.03	5758.54	5605.75	152.79	0.03	422.64	413.84	8.8	0.02
	34	17.92	16.12	-0.1	4109	3718	391	0.1	872	783	89	0.1	1116.95	1020.57	96.38	0.09	62.92	56.94	5.98	0.1
	33	0.09	2.43	26.75	1809	1604	205	0.11	803	690	113	0.14	103.89	25.37	78.52	0.76	322.24	289.91	32.33	0.1
	8	11.8	9.87	-0.16	1077	878	199	0.18	396	317	79	0.2	323.58	257.76	65.82	0.2	28.52	21.85	6.67	0.23
	26	0.15	3.43	21.73	1191	1145	46	0.04	586	553	33	0.06	84.11	27.46	56.65	0.67	198.31	181.81	16.5	0.08
	11	12.69	26.4	1.08	371	323	48	0.13	216	182	34	0.16	202.26	169.52	32.74	0.16	14.6	13.36	1.24	0.08

SCRIPT: https://nilsrooijmans.com/effortlessly-monitor-close-variants-with-this-google-ads-script/

Aggregated Exact Match keywords performance

Clicks

Impressions

Conv rate

ROAS

Start of Close Variant expansion

And there's more to come...

Google extends same-meaning close variants to phrase match, broad match modifiers

Broad match modifier keyword	Matched queries before the update	Matched queries after the update
+lawn +mowing +service	services to mow my lawn	grass cutting and gardening services
	lawn mowing and edging service	rates for services that cut your grass

Phrase match keyword	Matched queries before the update	Matched queries after the update
"lawn mowing service"	lawn mowing service prices	grass cutting service near me
	seasonal lawn mowing service rates	local lawn cutting services

Jul 31 2019: This change will rollout in English in the coming weeks, with more languages to follow through 2020.

#2
Daily budget overdelivery

Google: "Let's squeeze out every penny"

2017

2019

So let's monitor using scripts

- Monitor daily overdeliveries

date	account nam	Campaign Name	Ad Spend Yester	Anticipated Spend	Difference
Mar 30,2018			140.53	50	181.06%
Mar 30,2018			10.66	10	6.60%
Mar 30,2018			15.21	13	17.00%
Mar 30,2018			14.82	13	14.00%
Mar 30,2018			81.514986	75	8.70%
Mar 30,2018			13.01	13	0.10%
Mar 30,2018			60.81	60	1.40%

Wait, you said: "Two times?!?"

SCRIPT: https://nilsrooijmans.com/daily-budget-overdelivery-alerts-script/

- Observation: most overdeliveries occur at the start and end of month
- Research idea: compare performance of days with overdeliveries versus days without overdeliveries. (my results differ)

#3
Ad Suggestions

Automatically applied Ad Suggestions

- Google creates ads for you

- Gives you 14 days to approve or reject the ad

- If there is no rejection, then the ad is automatically added live in your account

Good or Bad?

Here's the overall trend that we saw for every account except one:

- Google's overall CTR is lower
  - They will beat the advertiser's CTR quite often
- Google's overall conversion rate is lower
  - They rarely beat an advertiser in conversion rate
- Google's overall CPA is higher
  - They rarely beat an advertiser is CPA

Adalysis

Higher CTR means more $ for big G, not necessarily for the advertiser!

#4
"Smart" Display / Shopping

Set it, forget it

Smart display campaigns use the power of Google's machine learning to automatically:

Connect your business to prospective customers who may be interested in your products

Create beautiful image, native and text ads that fit anywhere across the GDN

Set the right bids to meet your performance goals

How about those placements?

Mark Gustafson and 1 other liked

Michelle M @michellemsem · 19 Jul 2018

Replying to @Pamela_Lund

Totally agreed. In the old interface you used to be able to apply a Negative Placements List to the **Smart Display** campaigns, but it seems they've taken that option away. Dumb. **#ppcchat**

♡ 2

Sean ORourke and 4 others liked

Pamela Lund @Pamela_Lund · 19 Jul 2018

Friendly reminder that if you create a **Smart Display** Campaign in AdWords you can't exclude shitty mobile app traffic because you can't add negative placements. I'm all for automation but no, just no, to this. **#ppcchat**
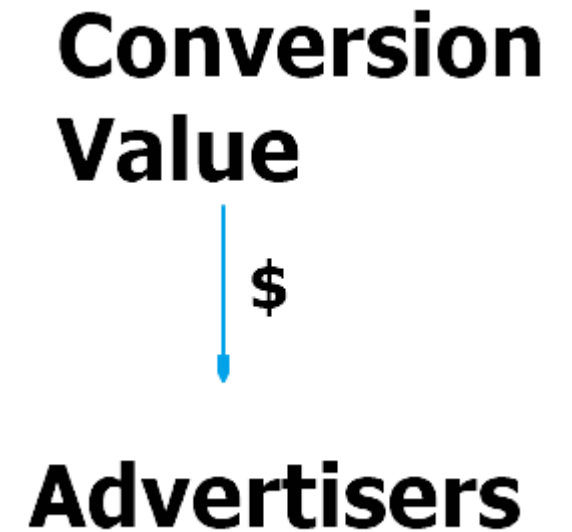
3   ♡ 11

Do you really want the traffic from these TLDs?

`.tk`
`.download`
`.fm`
`.info`
`.live`
`.ru`
`.sale`

NB: Conversion might not mean $

So, Google's AI is trying to do a great job…but
What is the AI optimizing for?

CTR

$\downarrow$ $

Google

$\downarrow$ $

Shareholders

CONFLICTING GOALS?

Conversion Value

$\downarrow$ $

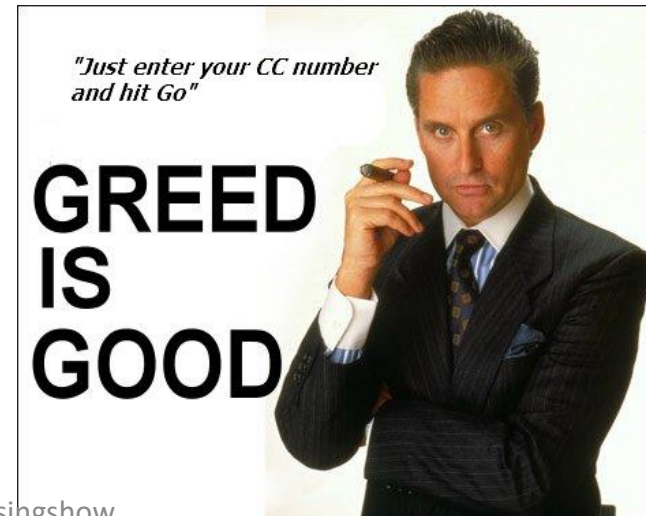**Advertisers**

The push towards AI

AI is Automatically applied in your account

With opt-out option

- Ad suggestions

- Smart bidding

- GDN automated targeting

- Ad rotation setting (AB testing)

- Responsive Ads

Without opt-out option

- Close variant matching

- Overdeliveries

- Cross device conversion tracking

"Just enter your CC number and hit Go"

GREED IS GOOD

Google Reps are pushing

Google reps calling advertisers like crazy ->

"SWITCH TO SMART BIDDING NOW!"

Recommendations automatically applied ?!?

Let's free up more of your time.

We can apply your account recommendations for you, so you can stay focused on running your business.

You're eligible for the new recommendations listed below. We'd like to apply these recommendations for you unless you opt out by 17/05/2019.

Rest assured, this won't increase your budget. We would just be adding new features that could improve the performance of your campaigns.

The following features can be added to help you:

- **Improve the performance of your ads.** Show more relevant ads to potential customers based on their searches with responsive search ads.
- **Bid smarter, grow faster.** Use Maximize conversions to boost sales, calls, and leads.
- **Expand your audience.** Reach additional customers on YouTube and partner sites with Google search partners.
- **Clean up your keywords.** Manage your account more easily by removing redundant and inefficient keywords.
- **Make your keywords work for you.** Manage your account more easily by removing keywords that aren't driving any traffic.

ⓘ You can view the specific recommended features in your account.

We'll apply these recommendations to your account for you unless you opt out by 17/05/2019. For any new text ads, we'll send you an email so you can review them before they go live.

We'll apply these recommendations to your account for you unless you opt out by 17/05/2019. For any new text ads, we'll send you an email so you can review them before they go live.
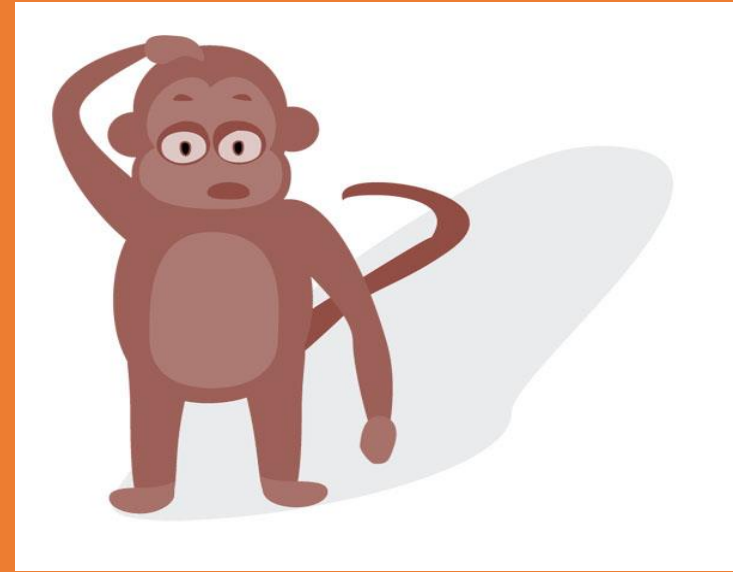

ARE YOU FUCKING KIDDING ME?
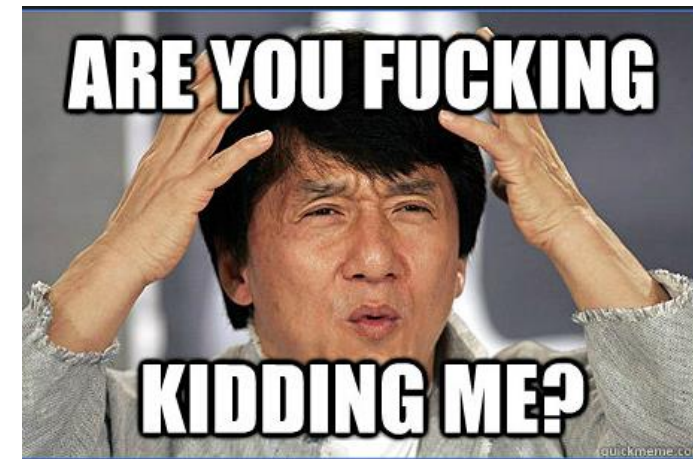
PROBLEM

Google's AI cannot fully be trusted

Google AI goals might not always align with our goals

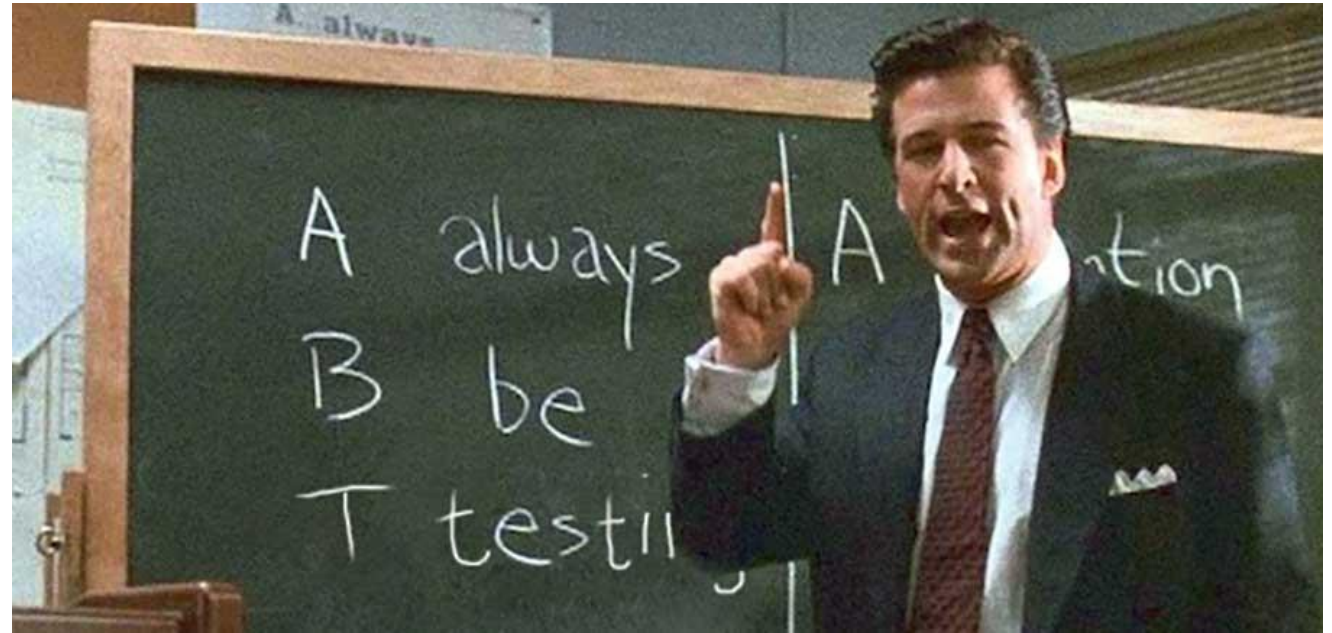Yet Google is pushing it's AI upon us...

Solution

TEST , TEST, TEST

Use Campaign EXPs when you can
(NB: have the *original control campaign*
run the smart bidding you want to test)

Split test using locations if D&E is not an
option (ie Shopping)

Implement scripts to monitor and control

Close Variant match

Simply make exact match exact again

Automatically exclude *all* close variants using scripts
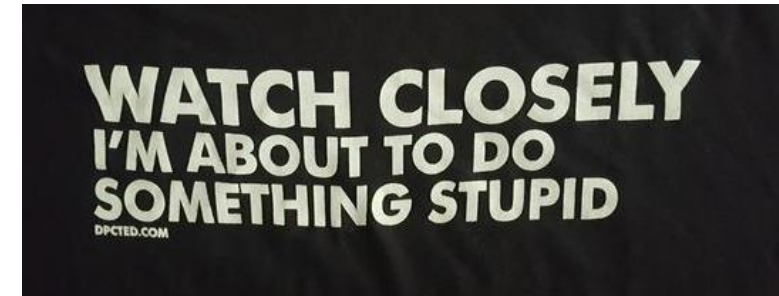

SCRIPT: https://www.brainlabsdigital.com/adwords-scripts-reversing-the-exact-match-changes-from-google/

Let's not throw the baby out with the bath water.

Closely watch damn close variants

- Monitor Close Variants' performance
- Negate bad performing CVs
- Add high volume CVs as separate KW

WATCH CLOSELY
I'M ABOUT TO DO
SOMETHING STUPID
DPCTED.COM

Match type: **Exact match (close variant)**; Keyword text contains **trademark**; Search term does not contain **trademark**   Add filter   ×
RESET

	Search term	ed	Campaign ↓	Ad group	Keyword	Impr.	Interactions	Interaction rate	Avg. cost	Cost	Conversions	Cost / conv.	Conv. rate	Campaign type

Show rows: 10 ▾   1 - 10 of 10,102 |< < > >|

∧dalysis

Use scripts to facilitate the process

Search Term (Close Variant)	Keyword	Impressions	Clicks	Cost	Conversions	Cost per Conv	Negate? (Y/N)	Add as seperate KW? (Y/N)
		361	229	€56	96.9	0.58	n	y
		1514	708	€1,083	81.6	13.27	y	n
		1475	674	€1,011	61.2	16.52	y	n
		94	54	€14	56.1	0.25	n	n
		7519	676	€860	51	16.87	y	n
		332	166	€47	45.798	1.02	n	y
		33	44	€37	40.8	0.92	n	n
		927	376	€325	30.6	10.63	y	n
		17	15	€4	30.6	0.12	n	n
		973	268	€176	27.54	6.39	n	y
		23	12	€13	24.684	0.52	n	n
		1298	337	€492	20.808	23.64	y	n

SCRIPT: https://nilsrooijmans.com/effortlessly-monitor-close-variants-with-this-google-ads-script/

Daily Budget Overdeliveries

Use scripts to pause campaigns when they hit certain daily spend

Limit AdWords Overdelivery to Any Amount You Want
SCRIPT: http://www.freeadwordsscripts.com/2017/10/limit-adwords-overdelivery-to-any.html

Twitter: @thatSearchGuyNL, #searchadvertisingshow

(Smart) Display Campaigns

Disable automated targeting in GDN

Hidden targeting setting at Ad group level:

Use scripts to monitor placements

Date	Campaign Name	Placement	Impressions	Clicks	CTR	Cost	Conversions	Conversion Rate	ROAS
May 18,2019		folderbode.nl	316	11	0.035	0.75	0	0	0
May 17,2019		telefoonboek.nl	848	31	0.037	6.19	4	0.13	0.37
May 15,2019		foldersnl.com	194	11	0.057	1.38	0	0	0
May 15,2019		wekelijkse-folders.nl	1458	12	0.008	1.18	0	0	0
May 15,2019		mail.google.com	167	11	0.066	1.02	0	0	0
May 14,2019		godeals.club	1433	31	0.02	4.16	2	0.06	0.33
May 14,2019		gebruikershandleiding.com	833	11	0.01	3.18	0	0	0

For Smart Display: Exclude bad placements at the account level

SCRIPT: https://nilsrooijmans.com/request-script

Does it really make a difference?

*"After just two months of running Nils' script for one client: Estimated annual **money saved = $8,760 / year**"*

PPC • SEP 3, 2019

WHY GOOGLE SMART DISPLAY CAMPAIGNS ARE NOT SO SMART

SCOTT RIDOUT

seer

SOURCE: https://www.seerinteractive.com/blog/smart-display-not-smart/

Summary

Google will keep pushing it's AI

The interface probably will continue to be simplified
(less data and options for us)

Make sure you monitor the AI performance and provide the right data

TEST TEST TEST

Use scripts to safeguard your campaigns and keep you on track

Resources

A list of the scripts and checklists can be found at:

https://nilsrooijmans.com/sas

https://nilsrooijmans.com/request-script

Use code: SAS19SCRIPTS

Contact me: nils@nilsrooijmans.com